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Monday Music Memo 28 – 2 October 2023



The Flight of the Bumblebee

"Flight of the Bumblebee" is an orchestral interlude written by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov for his opera *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, composed in 1899–1900. Its composition is intended to musically evoke the seemingly chaotic and rapidly changing flying pattern of a bumblebee. BUT here are the surprises.

First the laws of aerodynamics prove the bumblebee should be incapable of flight. The origin of this claim has been difficult to pin down with any certainty. John H. McMasters recounted an anecdote about an unnamed Swiss aerodynamicist at a dinner party who performed some rough calculations and concluded, presumably in jest, that according to the equations, bumblebees cannot fly.

Then – they cannot sting. False, they can and their sting has no barbs so they are able to sting you repeatedly.

And yes - they can hover.

All this does not apply to Lang Lang who has flying hands, does not hover but the performance stings nevertheless.

Flight of the Bumblebee – Lang Lang

<https://youtu.be/ptRsnhiP1dc>

1: 14 minutes



Mike Walker's response

Not sure if this is a true story Peter, but I heard of a presenter of a BBC radio record programme in the 1950`s who was either fired or severely disciplined for inadvertently announcing his next record as "The Bum of the Flightlebee".

Some more in the same vein:

- To be pacific (instead of to be specific)
- An escape goat (instead of a scapegoat)
- Damp squid (instead of damp squib)
- Nipped it in the butt (instead of nipped in the bud)
- On tender hooks (instead of on tenterhooks)

Mistakes can make us laugh.