



WILL O' THE WISP

Jeremy Bell

Program Notes

Folklore of European countries told of ghostly lights seen by travelers at night, especially over bogs, swamps, and marshes. These luminescent beings were called will-o'-the-wisps, coming from the word wisp, which is a bundle of sticks or paper used as a torch, and the name “Will,” giving the meaning the “Will of the torch.” In literature, will-o'-the-wisps were often associated with metaphorical meanings of hope. The lights, it was told, were often fairies or elemental spirits that would guide lost travelers out of the woods, but in some stories, the spirits have been known to be sinister, leading wanderers deeper into the woods only to extinguish their flame abruptly, leaving the person farther from their path home and in complete darkness. As a result, they also became signs of malevolence and false hope, which is why they were known in Latin as *ignis fatuus* or “fool’s fire.”

Throughout different cultures of the world, Will-o'-the-wisps have been called by many different names. In European cultures, the atmospheric ghost lights have been called jack-o'-lanterns, friar's lantern, hinkypunk, and hobby lantern. Throughout Mexico, they're called **brujas** (witches), which people believed to be witches that transformed into the lights. The Bengalis call the lights **aleya**, meant to confuse fisherman and make them lose their bearings. Some even believe them to be the ghosts of fisherman who died.

For “story” of this piece, I used the Welsh folklore that says the light is a “fairy fire” held by a púca, a small goblin-like fairy that was usually mischievous in nature. In Writ Sikes’s book *British Golbins*, he mentions a tale of a peasant travelling home at dusk. Ahead of him, he sees a bright light held by a “dusky little figure” that he follows for several miles until he find himself at the edge of a vast chasm with water rushing below him when suddenly the small creature leaps across the gap, holds the lantern high above its head, and letting out a pernicious laugh, blows out the flame. The wanderer is now left in darkness at the edge of a precipice.

Will-O'-The-Wisps begins with dusk settling upon the land, and as darkness begins to swallow the light, the wanderer sees a faint glow ahead of him, signified by the Flute melody at measure 19. This light creates a feeling of hope as the harmony changes to an Abmaj7 chord in measure 25. In the melody, a small motive is used throughout the piece to signify the small blue lights of the wisps that pop up along the journey. There’s a constant feeling of wonder and uncertainty, though, given by the borrowed Db minor chords that briefly enter and dissipate, creating this sensation of doubt. As the traveler follows the light deeper into the forest, a stream can be heard in the Alto Saxophones at measure 37 as an oscillating 16th-note figure, reminiscent of Smetana’s *The Moldau*. The sound grows stronger as the strength of the stream grows to the sound a more torrid river until the wanderer finds himself at the edge of a giant waterfall at measure 52. The theme of hope returns as the view of the cascading water fills him a sense serenity. In measure 67, the original motive of the púca from measure 19 returns and the opening thematic material is recapitulated with more chromatic dissonance. Measure 76 is the climax of the piece as the goblin blows out the flame, leaving the peasant lost in complete darkness. The Abmaj7 chord is now replaced with an Ab minor with a major 7th, creating a feeling of fear and unease. A flicker of a hope returns, however, as small blue flames flicker in the black. The wisps, wishing the traveler a safe journey home, illuminate a path through the trees as the piece comes to a close.

Will o' the Wisp

As twilight extinguished the light from the world,
They appeared on a cool summer’s eve.
Around and about, they would fade in and fade out,
Their blue flames would dance on the breeze.
Whisp’ring to lost trav’lers, the wisps would cry out
As their song echoed through the trees.

The sky now cast in Cimmerian black
Would fill the wand’rer with unease.
As spirits flickered in the darkness of night
Casting a cerulean haze on the leaves.
Lighting a path through the wood, but does it lead in or lead out?
That remains yet to be seen.

Will-o'-the-Wisp

FULL SCORE
Duration - 3:00

Of spirits and sprites, as men walk by night,
May the guiding light show thy path that's right.

Jeremy Bell
(BMI)

Mysteriously ♩ = 76

The score is arranged in a multi-staff format. The top section includes Flute, Oboe, Bassoon, B♭ Clarinets (1 and 2), B♭ Bass Clarinet, E♭ Alto Saxophones 1-2, B♭ Tenor Saxophone, and E♭ Baritone Saxophone. The middle section includes B♭ Trumpets (1 and 2-3), F Horn (1-2), Trombones (1 and 2-3), Euphonium, and Tuba. The bottom section includes Mallets 1, Chimes, Percussion 1 (B.D.), Percussion 2 (Sus. Cym., Crash Cymbals/Triangle), and Timpani. The score is marked 'Mysteriously' with a tempo of ♩ = 76. Dynamics range from *ppp* to *mp*. Performance instructions include 'div.', 'straight mute', 'stagger breathing', 'Slow motor', 'Soft Yarn Mallets', and 'Tune: G, C, D'. A large '2' and '4' time signature change is visible at the end of the score.

Will-o'-the-Wisp
Full Score

poco rall. **a tempo**

Fl. *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *sotto voce*

Ob. *mp* *mf* *p*

Bsn. *mp* *pp*

1 Cls. *mp* *mf* *pp*

2-3 Cls. *mp* *mf* *p* *pp*

B. Cl. *mf* *pp*

Alto Sax. 1-2 *mp* *mf* *p* *mp*

Ten. Sax. *mp* *mf* *pp*

Bari. Sax. *mp* *mf* *pp*

8 **poco rall.** **a tempo**

1 Tpts. *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *pp* *div.* *pp* *mp* *pp*

2-3 Tpts. *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Hn. 1-2 *mp* *mf* *pp*

1 Tbns. *mp* *mf* *pp*

2-3 Tbns. *mp* *mf* *pp* *a2*

Euph. *mp* *mf* *pp*

Tba. *mp* *mf* *pp*

Mallets 1 *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Mallets 2 Chimes Bells *mf* *mp*

Perc. 1 *mp* *mf* *pp*

Perc. 2 *mf* *p* *mf*

Timp. *pp* *mf* *pp*

8 9 10 11 12 13 14

Tune G -> Ab
Tune D -> Db

rit. **17 a tempo**

Fl. *mf* *pp* *Solo mp expressively*

Ob. *p* *mf* *pp*

Bsn. *mf* *pp*

1 *div.* *p* *mf* *pp*

2-3 *a2* *p* *mf* *pp*

B. Cl. *mf* *pp*

Alto Sax. 1-2 *a2* *mf* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Ten. Sax. *mf* *pp*

Bari. Sax. *mf* *pp*

rit. **17 a tempo**

1 *p* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

2-3 *pp* *mp* *p* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Hn. 1-2 *mf* *pp*

1 *mf* *pp* *pp* *p* *pp*

2-3 *mf* *pp* *pp* *p* *pp*

Euph. *mf* *pp*

Tba. *mf* *pp*

Mallets 1 *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *p* *sotto voce*

Mallets 2

Perc. 1 *mp* *pp*

Perc. 2 Triangle *p* *pp*

Timp.

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22

25

Tutti

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

1
Cls.

2-3
B. Cl.

Alto Sax. 1-2

Ten. Sax.

Bari. Sax.

25

1
Tpts.

2-3

1-2
Hn.

1
Tbns.

2-3

Euph.

Tba.

Mallets 1

Mallets 2

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Timp.

23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

Fl. *mp* *mf* *pp*

Ob. *mp* *p*

Bsn. *p*

Cl. 1 *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Cl. 2-3 *pp*

B. Cl. *p*

Alto Sax. 1-2 *f* *mf* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Ten. Sax. *mp* *p*

Bari. Sax. *f* *pp*

Tpts. 1 *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *p*

Tpts. 2-3 *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *p* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Hn. 1-2 *mp* *p*

Tbns. 1 *f* *pp* *pp* *p* *pp*

Tbns. 2-3 *f* *pp* *pp* *p* *pp*

Euph. *f* *pp*

Tba. *f* *pp*

Mallets 1

Mallets 2 *mp* *p* *mp* *pp*

Perc. 1 *p*

Perc. 2 Triangle *p* *pp*

Timp.

Will-o'-the-Wisp
Full Score

8

Ob. *mp* *mp* *mf* Play

Fl. *mp* *mp* *mf*

Ob. *mp* *mp* *mf*

Bsn. *mp*

1 *pp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Cl. 2-3 *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

B. Cl. *mp*

Alto Sax. 1-2 *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Ten. Sax. *mp*

Bari. Sax. *p* *mf*

1 *mf* *senza sord.*

Tpts. 2-3 *mf* *senza sord.* *a2*

Hn. 1-2 *mf* *a2*

1 *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *mp*

Tbns. 2-3 *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *mp*

Euph. *p* *mp*

Tba. *p* *mf*

Mallets 1 *p* *mf*

Mallets 2 *p* *pp*

Perc. 1

Perc. 2 Triangle *p* *pp*

Timp.

39

40

41

42

43

44

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

1
Cls.

2-3

B. Cl.

Alto Sax. 1-2

Ten. Sax.

Bari. Sax.

1
Tpts.

2-3

Hn. 1-2

1
Tbns.

2-3

Euph.

Tba.

Mallets 1

Mallets 2

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Timp.

p *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

p cresc.

p cresc.

mp *mf*

a2 *mp* *mf*

mp *mf* *a2* *mf*

p cresc.

p cresc.

p cresc.

p cresc.

mf

Chimes *f*

p

p

p

45 46 47 48

Will-o'-the-Wisp
Full Score

10

49

molto rit.

Fl. *f* *mp* *ff*

Ob. *f* *mp* *ff*

Bsn. *f* *mf* *ff*

1 Cls. *mf* *mp* *ff*

2-3 Cls. *mf* *mp* *ff*

B. Cl. *f* *mf* *ff*

Alto Sax. 1-2 *mf* *mp* *ff*

Ten. Sax. *f* *mf* *ff*

Bari. Sax. *f* *mf* *ff*

49

molto rit.

1 Tpts. *f* *mf* *ff*

2-3 Tpts. *f* *mf* *ff*

Hn. 1-2 *f* *mf* *ff*

1 Tbn. *f* *mf* *ff*

2-3 Tbn. *f* *mf* *ff*

Euph. *f* *mf* *ff*

Tba. *f* *mf* *ff*

Mallets 1 *mp* *f*

Mallets 2

Cr. Cyms. *ff* *mf* *ff* *mp*

Perc. 1 *ff* *mf* *ff* *mp*

Perc. 2 *p* *ff*

Timp. *ff* *mf* *ff*

49 50 51 52

54 a tempo

Musical score for woodwinds and strings, measures 53-59. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Clarinet 1 (Cls. 1), Clarinet 2-3 (Cls. 2-3), Bass Clarinet (B. Cl.), Alto Saxophone 1-2 (Alto Sax. 1-2), Tenor Saxophone (Ten. Sax.), and Baritone Saxophone (Bari. Sax.). Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, *mp*, and *pp*. A 'Play' instruction is present above the Flute part in measure 58.

54 a tempo

Musical score for brass and percussion, measures 53-59. The score includes parts for Trumpets (Tpts. 1, 2-3), Horns (Hn. 1-2), Trombones (Tbns. 1, 2-3), Euphonium (Euph.), Tuba (Tba.), Mallets 1, Mallets 2 (labeled 'Bells'), Percussion 1 (Perc. 1), Percussion 2 (Perc. 2), and Timpani (Timp.). Dynamics include *mp*, *p*, *mf*, and *pp*. An *a2* instruction is present above the Horns part in measure 58.

Fl. *poco rall.* *a tempo*
Ob. *mp*
Bsn. *mp* *mf* *p*
1 Cls. *mp* *p* Play
2-3 Cls. *p*
B. Cl.
Alto Sax. 1-2 *a2* *pp*
Ten. Sax. *mf* *pp* *mp*
Bari. Sax.
1 Tpts. *a2* *mp* *a tempo*
2-3 Tpts.
Hn. 1-2 *mf* *pp*
1 Tbn. *mp* *mf* *p*
2-3 Tbn. *mp* *mf* *p* stagger breathing
Euph. *mp* *mf* *p* stagger breathing
Tba. *mp* *mf* *p* *pp*
Mallets 1 *mp* *pp*
Mallets 2
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Timp.

67

Fl. *mp* *pp*

Ob. *p* *mp*

Bsn.

1 Cls. *mp* *pp* *p* *mp*

2-3

B. Cl.

Alto Sax. 1-2 *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Ten. Sax. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Bari. Sax.

Hn. 1-2 *pp* *mp* *pp*

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of the musical score, covering measures 66 to 72. It includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Clarinet (Cls.), Bass Clarinet (B. Cl.), Alto Saxophone (Alto Sax.), Tenor Saxophone (Ten. Sax.), Baritone Saxophone (Bari. Sax.), Horns (Hn.), Trumpets (Tpts.), Trombones (Tbns.), Euphonium (Euph.), Tuba (Tba.), Mallets 1, Mallets 2, Percussion 1 (Perc. 1), Percussion 2 (Perc. 2), and Timpani (Timp.). The score features various dynamics such as *mp*, *pp*, *p*, and *mp*, along with performance instructions like *div.* and *straight mute*. A box with the number '67' is placed above the first measure of the Flute part.

67

1 Tpts. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

2-3 *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *p*

Hn. 1-2 *pp* *mp* *pp*

1 Tbns. *pp* *p* *p* *p*

2-3 *pp* *p* *p* *p*

Euph. *pp* *mp* *pp* *p*

Tba.

Mallets 1 *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *p*

Mallets 2

Perc. 1 *ppp*

Perc. 2

Timp.

66 67 68 69 70 71 72

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of the musical score, covering measures 66 to 72. It includes parts for Trumpets (Tpts.), Trombones (Tbns.), Horns (Hn.), Euphonium (Euph.), Tuba (Tba.), Mallets 1, Mallets 2, Percussion 1 (Perc. 1), Percussion 2 (Perc. 2), and Timpani (Timp.). The score features various dynamics such as *pp*, *mp*, *p*, and *ppp*, along with performance instructions like *div.*, *straight mute*, and *stagger breathing*. A box with the number '67' is placed above the first measure of the Trumpets part.

allargando

76 a tempo

FL. *mp* *f* *mp* *f* *mp*

Ob. *mf* *f* *pp*

Bsn. *mp* *mf* *f*

1 Cls. *mp* *mf*

2-3 B. Cl. *mp* *mf* *f*

Alto Sax. 1-2 *p* *f*

Ten. Sax. *pp* *mp* *p* *mf* *f* *mp*

Bari. Sax. *mp* *mf* *f*

stagger breathing

div. (b)

Play Solo

Tutti

allargando

76 a tempo

1 Tpts. *pp* *mp* *pp* *f*

2-3 Tpts. *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

1-2 Hn. *mp* *mf* *f* *mp*

1 Tbn. *pp* *mf* *f*

2-3 Tbn. *pp* *mf* *f*

Euph. *pp* *mf* *f*

Tba. *mp* *mf* *f*

Mallets 1 *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *f*

Mallets 2 *f* *f*

Perc. 1 *f*

Perc. 2 *p* *mf*

Timp. *p* *f*

senza sord.

Chimes

stagger breathing

a2

84

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

1

Cl.

2-3

B. Cl.

Alto Sax. 1-2

Ten. Sax.

Bari. Sax.

84

Tpts.

2-3

Hn.

1

Tbns.

2-3

Euph.

Tba.

Mallets 1

Mallets 2

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Timp.

molto rit. al fine

Fl. *mp* Solo

Ob. *p*

Bsn. *n*

1 Cls. *p* Play *mp* Solo *p*

2-3 Cls.

B. Cl. *ppp*

Alto Sax. 1-2 Hn. 1-2 *mp*

Ten. Sax. Solo *pp* *ppp*

Bari. Sax. *p* *ppp*

1 Tpts. *mp* senza sord. **molto rit. al fine**

2-3 Tpts. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *ppp*

Hn. 1-2 *mp*

1 Tbns. *p* *ppp*

2-3 Tbns. *p* *ppp*

Euph. *p* *ppp*

Tba. *p* *ppp*

Mallets 1 Vibraphone Medium mallets *mp*

Mallets 2

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Timp.