COMPOSER: **MODEST MUSSORGSKY** (1839 - 1881)
(moe.DEST moo.ZOR.skee)

COMPOSITION: **"**The Promenade" and "The Gnome" from **Pictures at an Exhibition** Orchestral version arranged by Maurice Ravel.

FEATURES:

1. **Program Music –** music that describes an event or situation, in this instance a visit to an art exhibition. (**Autumn,** by Vivaldi, describes the season so it is also considered program music.
2. **Orchestration –** the piece was originally written for piano. Maurice Ravel arranged the music for full orchestra, just as the "Little Fugue" was arranged from Bach's organ work.

BACKGROUND:

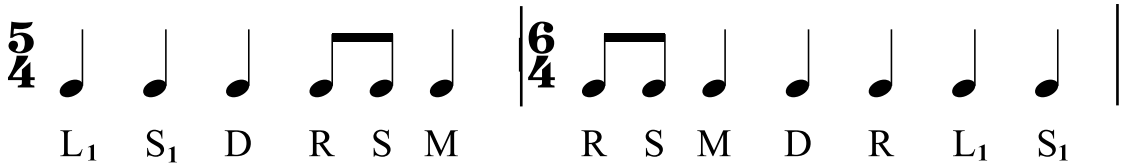
The Composer: Mussorgsky was a self-taught musician. He was born to an aristocratic family, but lost all wealth when serfdom was abolished in Russian. He was never a "successful" musician and he had to work as a minor official in the Russian Government for a living. He lived a dissolute life. His music is highly original – he didn't always follow the rules, in part because he was mostly self-taught.

The Composition: Mussorgsky wrote Pictures at an Exhibition after seeing an exhibition of paintings by a friend who had just died. He went home and wrote Pictures on the piano. "The Promenade," which describes walking between the pictures, is repeated throughout the longer work. It occurs at the start of the piece in this excerpt. "The Gnome" describes a painting of a gnome with crooked legs shrieking about wildly. It could be good Hallowe'en music. The French composer, Ravel, arranged Mussorgsky's piano piece for orchestra and the Japanese composer Isao Tomita used Pictures as the inspiration for a pioneer synthesizer work.

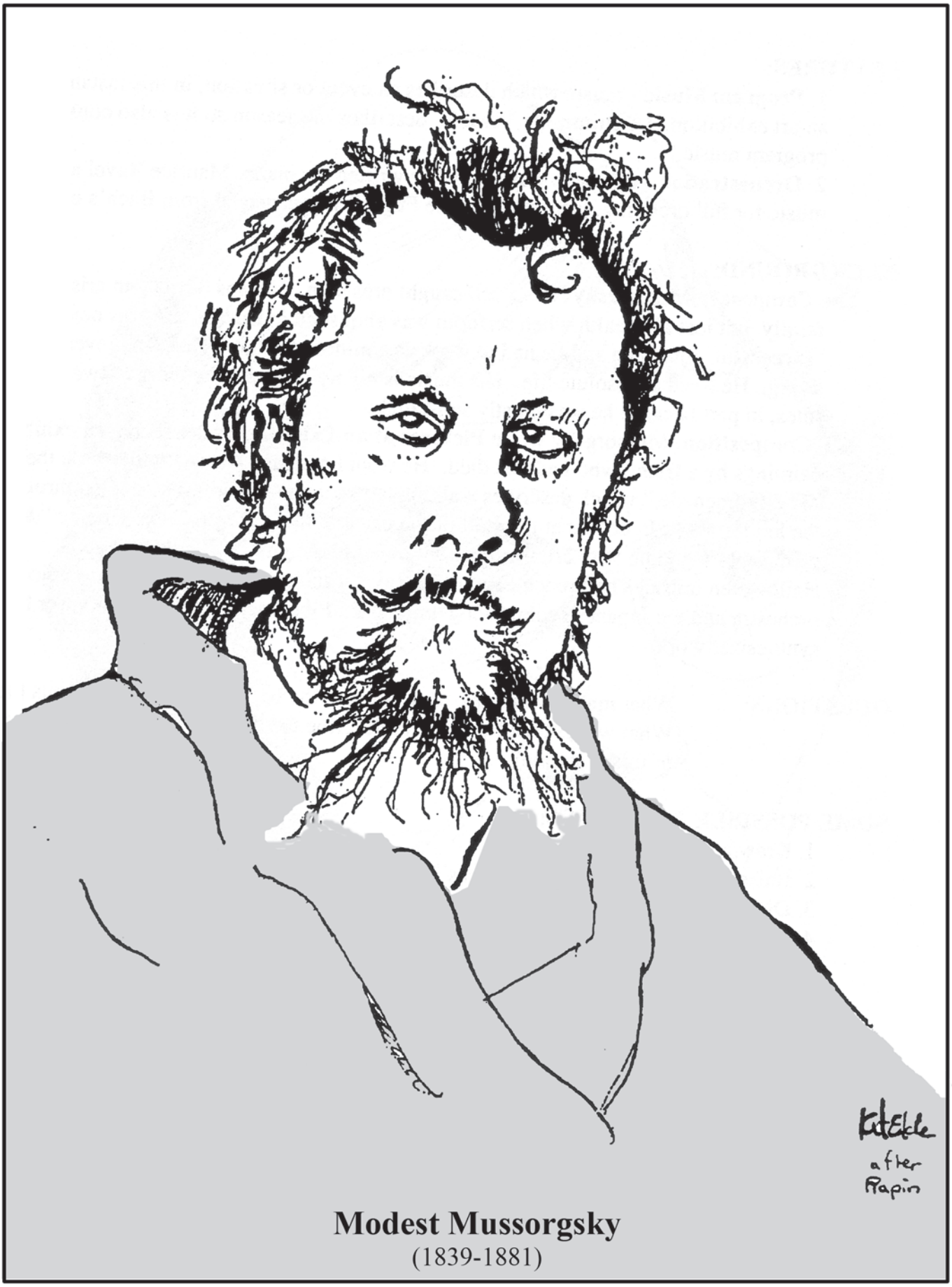
QUESTIONS: What makes you think of walking at the beginning? What happens then? What words could you use to describe the difference between the two parts of this selection?

SOME POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. Draw a picture of the Gnome
2. Raise hands when Mussorgsky sees "The Gnome."
3. Discuss the arrangements. Would Mussorgsky like them? Do you?
4. Lean the Promenade Theme.



5. Listen to the rest of **Pictures at an Exhibition.**
6. Older students may learn the odd rhythm of "The Promenade." It is an eleven beat pattern: one bar of 5/4 and one of 6/4. Try counting it silently to yourself while you listen.



Modest Mussorgsky
(1839-1881)