

Pictures at an Exhibition Art Competition



The Waverly Arts Center and Wartburg Community Symphony invite artists to participate in their 2026 **Pictures at an Exhibition Art Competition** in celebration of the symphony's October 17 concert to be held in Neumann Auditorium. Each artist must submit a minimum of **one piece** based on the movements of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a piece inspired by works in a gallery.

According to Malcolm MacDonald:

In 1873, Mussorgsky was deeply affected by the death of his great friend Victor Hartmann, a painter and architect. The following year an exhibition of Hartmann's work inspired Mussorgsky to write *Pictures at an Exhibition* (later orchestrated by Ravel). Unpublished until after his death in 1881, it was by far his most important composition for piano solo. Ten pictures, illustrated in separate movements, are connected by the *Promenade*, a theme which leads us through the gallery from one picture to the next.

For each submission, artists are encouraged to **a creative approach**, using the descriptions as a guide to help influence their own representation of the music. The goal of this competition is to embody the *spirit* of Mussorgsky's original work but not to necessarily create a literal translation of it. Artists are encouraged to listen to the music as a source of creative inspiration. Submissions may also include prior works completed by the artist.

Artists can submit piece(s) for the following movements. (Note, only some of the works that inspired these movements remain. See available pictures below.) To access a recording, click [HERE](#).

I. **Promenade**

Here brass perform the "promenade" theme, representing a visitor walking through the gallery.

II. ***Gnomus***

The music depicts a gnome running on crooked legs. Hartmann's picture was a design for a gnome-shaped nutcracker. The jagged pauses and abrupt tempo changes create a sense of unease at the unpredictability of the creature depicted.

III. **Promenade**

This promenade is led by the horn, with answers from the winds. It is calmer and more contemplative than the opening.

IV. ***Il Vecchio Castello* "The Old Castle"**

A troubadour sings before a medieval castle. Here Ravel gives the main melody to a saxophone, echoed by the bassoon.

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V. **Promenade**

The promenade theme once again returns, this time more chipper in nature. The ending creates the illusion that the observer sees the next painting in view and slows down to stop and observe more closely.

VI. ***Tuileries***

This scene depicts a garden in Paris. Woodwinds and strings create a sparkling effect, mimicking the energy of a “dispute between children at play.”

VII. ***Bydlo***

A Polish oxcart rolls along on enormous wheels. Ravel gives the melody to the tuba, illustrating the heavy load that is being carried.

VIII. **Promenade**

A familiar theme once again appears, but this time more somber and heavier in nature. Woodwinds foreshadow the picture that is to come.

IX. ***Ballet des Poussins dans leur Coques* “Ballet of Chicks in their Shells”**

Hartmann’s picture shows sketches of a costume designs for a ballet. Oboes and flutes are used to mimic the sounds of the chicks.



X. Note, we will not be performing *Samuel Goldenberg und Schmuyle*

XI. ***Limoges-Le Marché* “Limoges-The Market Place”**

The French market-women in this clatteringly rhythmic piece are said to be gossiping about a lost cow, a drunken neighbor and some false teeth.

XII. ***Catacombae: Sepulchrum Romanum***

Hartmann depicts himself probing the mysteries of the Roman tombs by the light of a lantern. The brass provide a powerful and haunting depicting of the scene. In the section that follows, *Cum Mortuis in Lingua Mortua*, Mussorgsky figuratively picks up the lantern and continues the quest with a spectral, quasi-religious transformation of the *promenade* tune.



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XIII. *La Cabane sur des Pattes de Poule* “The Hut on Fowl’s Legs”

This is a brilliant grotesque march. Hartmann designed a clock in the form of the hut in which dwelt the mystical witch of Russian folklore, Baba-Yaga.



XIV. *La Grande Porte de Kiev* “The Great Gate of Kiev”

This design was commissioned in 1860 but was never built. Mussorgsky captures the grandeur of this final movement through broad majestic melodies, inspired by the earlier *promenade* theme.



PRIZES

At the discretion of the judges, selected winners will be eligible to receive cash prizes from \$50-\$125 with possible projection during the concert. Participants may also be invited to showcase their work at the Waldemar A. Schmidt Art Gallery (Wartburg College) prior to the performance. The exhibition will be from **October 8 to October 30**.

SUBMISSION DETAILS:

The two-dimensional submissions must be 8” x 10” or larger and unframed for digitizing/display purposes. Entries must be submitted in person between **September 21-October 2**. **Artwork can be dropped off at the main desk at Wartburg's Vogel Library between 8am-4pm weekdays and 1-8pm on Sundays. The library is closed on Saturdays.** Applicants will need to complete a submission form when dropping off their artwork (see next page). Those unable to drop off their submissions directly, are encouraged to contact the Waverly Arts Center at waverlyartscenter@gmail.com.

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Artist Submission Form



Name: _____ (First and Last)

Movement(s) Depicted:

Brief Artist's Statement:

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Additional Notes: