

NICKY SOHN

A TALE OF THE BUNNY AND THE TURTLE

FOR ORCHESTRA

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(2025)

Instrumentation

Flute 1, 2 (doubling piccolo)

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet 1, 2

Bassoon 1, 2

Horn in F 1, 2, 3, 4

Trumpet in C 1, 2, 3

Trombone 1, 2

Bass Trombone

Tuba

Timpani

Percussion 1. Whip, clash cymbal, tubular bells, vibraphone, woodblocks, tam-tam

Percussion 2. Marimba, anvil, clash cymbal, suspended cymbal, triangle

Percussion 3. Bass drum, glockenspiel

Percussion 4. Triangle, snare drum, suspended cymbal, xylophone

Harp

Strings

Duration - ca. 14 minutes

Program note —

The stories we are told as children shape our sense of morality, values, and the logic we use to move through the world. I grew up in Korea and came to the United States as a teenager, so the stories that influenced me most in childhood were Korean folktales. These are stories that everyone in Korea knows, but are unfamiliar to many outside of it. Through music, I want to share those stories and invite listeners into that world.

A Tale of the Bunny and the Turtle is based on the Korean folktale **별주부전**. In the story, the Dragon King of the sea falls gravely ill, and the only cure is said to be the liver of a rabbit. A loyal turtle is sent to the land above to bring a rabbit back to the underwater palace. With flattery and promises of wonder, the turtle persuades the rabbit to travel with him to the sea, where the truth of the situation is revealed. Faced with death, the rabbit survives through quick wit, claiming that his liver has been left behind on land. When the turtle carries him back to retrieve it, the rabbit escapes, leaving the others to face the consequences.

Revisiting this story as an adult has been surprising. As a child, I understood it in very black and white terms, with a clever hero and a triumphant ending. Now, I find myself thinking more deeply about what follows that victory. The shame and guilt the turtle must feel after failing his mission, and the fate of the Dragon King, who is not only a ruler but also a son, a father, and the center of an entire kingdom. These layers of consequence make the story feel less like a simple moral lesson and more like a reflection of real life, where one person's survival often comes at the expense of another.

The music follows the narrative of the story very closely, unfolding like a tone poem across twelve sections. Each section traces a moment in the tale, from illness and persuasion to deception and escape. I am happy to share this Korean folktale through sound, and whatever meaning or moral listeners take from it is entirely their own.

A Tale of the Bunny And the Tiger in 11 sections

- I. The Dragon King of the sea fell gravely ill, and none of his doctors could find a cure.
- II. At last, it was revealed that only the liver of a rabbit could restore his health.
- III. The loyal but slightly bumbling turtle volunteered to fetch the rabbit from the land above.
- IV. With steady strokes, he swam up through the waves toward the unfamiliar human world.
- V. On the shore, he met a lively rabbit, quick of wit and full of curiosity.
- VI. The turtle flattered and persuaded the rabbit, promising wonders beneath the sea.
- VII. Tempted by tales of riches and beauty, the rabbit climbed onto the turtle's back.
- VIII. They descended into the glittering Dragon Palace, full of splendor and majesty.
- IX. There, the rabbit discovered the terrible truth—that his liver was wanted as medicine.
- X. Thinking fast, he claimed he had left his liver at home, stored safely on land.
- XI. The turtle believed him and carried him back, but the rabbit leapt away the moment they reached the shore.
- XII. Left behind, the turtle returned to the palace in shame, while the rabbit laughed in freedom on the hillside.

Transposed Score

Commissioned by the Atlanta Chamber Players as First Prize Winning
Commission in the 2024 Rapido!® Composition Contest

A Tale of the Turtle and the Bunny

Nicky Sohn

I. The Dragon King of the sea fell gravely ill, and none of his doctors could find a cure.

♩ = 120

Flute 1 2

Oboe 1 2

Clarinet in B♭ 1 2

Bassoon 1 2

Horn in F 1 2

Horn in F 3 4

Trumpet in C 1 2 3

Trombone 1 2

Bass Trombone

Tuba

Timpani

Perc. 1 Tubular Bells

Perc. 2 Marimba

Perc. 3 Bass Drum

Perc. 4 Triangle

Harp

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

1 2 3 4 5

f *p* *f* *p* *f*

[illegible]

This page of the musical score is for a symphony orchestra, featuring woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings. The score is in 3/4 time and includes various dynamics and articulations. The page is numbered 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 at the bottom.

Woodwinds:

- Fl. 1 & 2:** Flutes 1 and 2. Both parts start with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. They then play a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*). Flute 1 has a breath mark (*>*) at the beginning.
- Ob. 1.2:** Oboe 1 and 2. Both parts start with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. They then play a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).
- Cl. in Bb 1.2:** Clarinet in Bb 1 and 2. Both parts start with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. They then play a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).
- Bsn 1.2:** Bassoon 1 and 2. Both parts start with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. They then play a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).

Brass:

- Hn in F 1.2 & 3.4:** Horns in F 1 and 2, and 3 and 4. Both parts start with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. They then play a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).
- Tpt in C 1.2.3:** Trumpet in C 1, 2, and 3. All parts start with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. They then play a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).
- Tbn. 1.2:** Trombone 1 and 2. Both parts start with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. They then play a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).
- B. Tbn. & Tba:** Baritone Trombone and Tuba. Both parts start with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. They then play a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).

Percussion:

- Timp.:** Timpani. Starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. It then plays a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).
- P1. Tam.:** P1. Tam. (P1. Tam. Scrape). Starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. It then plays a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).
- P3. B. Dr.:** P3. B. Dr. (P3. B. Dr.). Starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. It then plays a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).

Strings:

- Hp:** Harp. Starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. It then plays a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).
- Vln I & II:** Violins I and II. Both parts start with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. They then play a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).
- Vla:** Viola. Starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. It then plays a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).
- Vc. & D. B.:** Violoncello and Double Bass. Both parts start with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a five-measure rest. They then play a melodic line with a crescendo to fortissimo (*ff*) and a decrescendo to piano (*p*).

[illegible]