

TIL EULENSPIEGEL

Til Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, Richard Strauss' 15 minute tone poem portraying the 15th century practical joker is a high-paced romp based primarily on two themes. The first of these is heard in the opening phrase of the violins in augmentation, later heard in its definitive form in the piccolo clarinet. The second is the famous horn call. Strauss weaves his brilliant scherzo using these two themes in a variety of guises, along with additional themes helping to depict the various escapades of our roguish protagonist.

I perform the piece using supertitles which are displayed as each new event takes place. These titles may be found under the "conductors' corner" at www.carltopilow.com, and are available for anyone who would like to utilize them. Also, the conductor must be sure that the clarinetist playing the D clarinet part has a part that has been transposed for E flat clarinet.

The first phrase of the violins needs to have a feeling of "once upon a time", as the legend begins. In order to get this sound, playing over the fingerboard may be suggested to the players, as well as using starting on the A string for the first two notes. I have tried a few different bowings, but have settled on up bow, down bow, and then up bow for the pickup to the second bar, and the entire second bar. This bowing enables the second bar to be well sustained, and to lead to the third bar. Then the full value 8th notes in bar 4 connect with the clarinets.

At the 6/8, I like the horn to start a slowly, to help bring out the mischievous character of our hero. The violins can play tremolo here, but then should play measured 16ths for the second call, perhaps slightly off the string, and a bit over the fingerboard. During the horn accelerando, care must be taken that the violins avoid playing a crescendo, which is often a natural tendency in a passage of this nature.

At #1, the oboes must play exactly in time; their sforzando in the 4th bar must line up perfectly with the sforzando in the violins. The same applies for the clarinets in the 6th bar after #1. The divisi parts in the violins in the 5th bar are difficult to read, as they are not, unfortunately, written in the parts on separate lines.

At #2, the violas, cellos, and bassoons must play these 2 bars exactly in time, holding the longer notes for their full value. Inside first violins and outside second violins need to play with lots of energy and precision. The crescendo leads to a single forte, with the subsequent 8th notes fortissimo.

I suggest that the cutoff of the fermata 6 bars before #3 is also the downbeat of the next bar, as Til Eulenspiegel jumps onto the scene. The 8th note 2 bars before #3 must be very short, with the stroke in the strings taking their bows to the tip for the next bar. As Til jumps on his horse, the basses remain forte, while everyone else plays piano. At 3 bars after #3, I have the strings, English horn, and clarinets play expressively, leading to the next bar. Starting at 6 bars after #3, the horns play a fragmented version of the Til theme.

At 4 bars before #4, I employ a difficult but effective bowing used by the Cleveland Orchestra for the violins as follows: down bow for the first 2 dotted quarter notes, up bow for the 16th notes into the next downbeat, down bow for the 2 16th notes, 8th note followed by another down bow for the next 2 dotted quarter notes and up bow for the next dotted quarter note into the downbeat of #4. The double down bow is difficult to execute, but assures the space between the third and fourth 8th note, and also ends the phrase with a flourish with an up bow.

Another Cleveland Orchestra bowing employs up bows for 8th notes in the 2nd and 4th bars after #4, including the downbeats of the following bars.

Note that the downbeat of #5 is a grand pause, and everyone has to finish the previous bar in time. Violins must play at the frog in the second bar of #5. Trumpets are mezzo forte to forte only, not fortissimo, at 4 bars after #5. At 1 bar before #6, the first violins and violas must be cautioned to play their diminuendo, as often the natural tendency for ascending passages is to play louder.

At #6, I do a slightly slower tempo. At 2 and 4 bars after #6, I suggest 3 up bows and a down bow for the strings. As previously noted, the tendency to crescendo for ascending passages can be countered by playing diminuendo; this is the case at 6 bars after #6 for the first violins and 8 bars after #6 for the second violins. Note that the second violins can also play crescendo 9 bars after #6.

At #7, it might be beneficial to rehearse the orchestra without the flute, pointing out that this passage is a 3/4 hemiola. The flute should clip the eighth note for maximum buoyancy. Note that the 3 bars before #8 are essentially 2 bars of 9/8 time. The oboes and English horn ensemble is vital starting 3 bars after #8. I suggest lifting after the second eighth note in the fourth bar, and then striving to play the next 2 bars exactly in time. At 8 bars after #7, the violas need to play strong enough to make an effective diminuendo, and also play measured sixteenth notes. Note that the 2 sixteenth note figures for the cello/bass, flute, and violins starting at 9 bars after #8 must be played precisely on the beat.

The passages from #9 to #11 of Til running amok through the market place are quite extraordinary. Here are some observations:

5 and 6 bars after #9 – bass clarinet and clarinet, play strong and accented

9 bars after #9 – have 2 cymbal players play the crash

6 bars before #10 – 2 ratchet players

4 bars before #10 – timpani secco, with hard sticks

4 bars before #10 – violins, all down bow

#10 – violas and cellos, all down bows

5 bars before #11 – I have the trumpets play 2 separate dotted quarter note flutter tongues, to accentuate Til sticking his tongue out at the world

1 bar before #11 – note diminuendo molto, and bass fortissimo pizzicato

At #11, as Til escapes, the orchestra must play as soft as possible, with diminuendos on the ascending scales. Note the low G in the contrabassoon – perhaps Til hasn't run away at all, he's

just hiding. Also note the displaced 3 eighth notes in the bassoons and violas. A slight accent in the horns 5 bars after #11, the bassoons 9 after #11 and the clarinets 13 bars after #11 help the people playing the 2 sixteenth note, eighth note figures.

At 5 bars after #12, note a steady stream of sixteen notes for 6 bars. I like to rehearse just these sixteenth notes by themselves so that the orchestra can better understand this passage.

At 8 bars before #13, the melody of Til disguised as a priest can be played somewhat expressively, with the eighth notes played a little tenuto with a lift. At #13, the low instruments need to play with lots of expression, with perhaps a little time taken 4 bars after #13. The piccolo clarinet part, parked schelmisch, or mischievously, can be played quickly, as Til peeks from under his monk's hood. The next phrase in the strings can have lots of expression, launched by a forte pizzicato in the basses, and relaxing a bit at 2 bars before #14. I would also suggest articulating the low b flat in the tuba.

The passage starting 1 bar before #14 alternates between a playful Til with his fear of an unfortunate ending. Note that the rest 4 bars after #14 is a sixteenth rest, as opposed to the eighth rest at a parallel place 7 bars after #39. The violin solo can be played with different colors to the sound; I usually suggest that the violinist play 2 open E's followed by an A string E. An almost imperceptible pushing of the tempo may occur 2 bars before the glissando bars.

This glissando may be broken down into 7 groups of 6 notes each. I mark the musicians' parts indicating that I begin conducting in the second bar of the Erstes Zeitmass, rather than the first bar. I find that watching the soloist's left hand for the last bar, when going into first position with the fourth finger on the A flat, works for me. It's also possible for the soloist to give a small indication of where the run ends. Be sure to cue the first violins 1 bar before #15, since the soloist may be relieved to have just finished a difficult solo, while the section players admire the soloist's work!

At 1 and 2 bars before #16, and 4 bars after #16, there are some indications in the cellos and low brass and timpani of what I call "crescendo to nowhere". i.e. a crescendo without a final dynamic. Since these indications may be interpreted in various ways by individual players, I often write a uniform dynamic in the parts. In this case, mf should allow for everyone to play with similar volume.

5 bars after #16 begins an episode which may be described as "Til in love", *liebesgluhend*. At this point, I quicken the tempo slightly. It may be possible with advanced orchestras for the first violins to play this passage on the A string, and the passage at 9 bars after #16 on the E string. A small lift after the C sharp at 9 and 13 bars after #16 in the first violins third flute and piccolo clarinet help delineate the phrase. All grace notes in these passages work best played on the beat. The *drangend* and *steigern* indications imply a steady increase of tempo, especially for the *steigern* bars. Til is very cool and nonchalant at #17, but breaks out into a rage when he is rejected at 4 bars before #18 (*wutend*). I suggest an immediate poco piu' mosso. All eighth note passages here must be played very short and dry, with strings playing at the frog. At 7 bars after #18, I find it very effective to start at mf for the low instruments, with a huge crescendo at 10 bars after #18. At 7 bars before #20, I prefer the crescendo to start piano, to fortissimo. The

horn players must be careful to keep a good sound and good intonation in the *fff*; with 4 or 5 players in unison, there is no need to force the sound. At 5 bars before #20, cut off the horns, and then indicate 1,2 for the clarinet pickup. Another possibility is to have the cutoff also be the downbeat of the bar of the clarinet pickup; technically it's incorrect, but the difference is minor and may be easier to handle. However, I use the former rather than the latter.

#20 begins the section in which Til mocks the scholars and philistines. #20 is marked piano; 5 bars after #20 can be played expressively. From 7 bars after #20 on, the majority of eighth notes must be played drily and in a mocking fashion. Make sure that at the pickup to #21 the low instruments lead and are very steady. Note that the violins play a quarter note at #21, followed by all eighth notes. From #22 on, all eighth notes are *secco*. At 3 bars before #23 and at #23, cello/bass play all down bow, and heavy. At 7 bars after #23, the rhythm is the same, but for many players, the pattern begins one eighth note later. I add a rehearsal number of 23A at this point, since I find that this passage needs thorough rehearsing. At 4 bars and 8 bars after #24, I suggest a crescendo for the oboes, English horn, horns, and trumpets, which adds some character and direction. They can play an accent with a small decay in the previous measure to allow them to make an effective crescendo. At 5 bars before #26, Til finds yet another means of sticking out his tongue at the world through the long trill.

The next section, Til's Street Song, is a frivolous little tune. I suggest all up bows for all the eighth notes after the down bow slurs, retaking the bow after the dotted quarter notes. Note that at 5 bars after #26, the dynamic suddenly changes to *pianissimo*. Quarter note = 132 allows the difficult oboe and bassoon licks to be played playfully, and not frantically. At 15 and 19 bars after #26, note the quarter notes versus sixteenth notes on the downbeat. I take #27 a bit slower, with the quarter note equaling the dotted quarter of the subsequent 6/8 time. The latter tempo might be around dotted quarter note = 72. Note *mf* at 8 bars after #28, and *p* 2 bars later.

I add 28A at *allmahlich lebhafter*, 28B at *Volles Zeitmass*, and 28 C 8 bars later, as these spots often require extensive rehearsing, especially 28C. The same comments refer here as at the beginning of the piece. Be sure that the first eighth note 4 bars before #29 for the first violins is clipped.

#29 begins a long crescendo – careful that it's gradual, and that the bass trombone 4 bars after #29, for example, is not too loud too soon. A bit of very subtle *accelerando*, if needed, can help arrive at full tempo at #30. Note that at 9 bars after #30 there are 2 more bars than in the exposition. Also, the violins in the first bar and the horns and piccolo in the second bar of the phrase at 11 bars after #30 do not appear in the exposition.

At #31, this merry frolic should maintain a scherzo character, and not sound frantic. At 2 bars before #32, the third trumpet can be come out. At #32, the cellos can play with a ricochet bow for the 2 sixteenths and the next eighth note. At 7 bars after #33, I hold the tempo back just a little, and make sure that the strings and bassoon are very soft, with *diminuendo* on the two dotted half notes, so that the flute is easily heard. Around #34, I push the tempo slightly to get back to tempo primo by #35. A single *forte* here, with a crescendo to *fortissimo* and a subito *fortississimo* on the second beat of #36 is very effective.

4 bars before #37 should be frolicsome, but not hysterical. Bring out only the notes with accents, and lay back a bit on the unaccented notes. In the second bar of #37, the bass trombone accents on the last three eighth notes, found in some scores, are incorrect. Note that the theme that is used to bring Til to trial at 10 bars after #37 is the one in which he impersonated a priest, perhaps his worst offense.

At 4 bars before #38, I use several muted “execution” sounding field drums, without snares. Til’s proclaimed innocence at 6 bars and also 14 bars after #38 can be played quite nonchalantly. I hold the fermata 13 bars after #38 longer than the first fermata, demonstrating that the judge is quite serious about the charges brought up against our hero. All the dotted quarter notes in the strings are played down bow. At 5 bars before #39, I take the liberty having everyone resting on the first dotted quarter note as well, so that the piccolo clarinet can be easily heard. I then have the piccolo clarinet play the written F sharp an octave higher to be able to cut through the orchestra. 2 bars after #39, I suggest piano crescendo.

At 2 bars before #40, the judge proclaims Til guilty. Note that violas, cellos, and basses hold through the entire bar during the fortissimo quarter note pickup. The tradition of the piccolo clarinet playing an accelerando as Til is being strung up a tree to be hanged is quite effective. His neck is snapped at the sfz 4 bars after #40, and his body dangles in the air 5 bars after #40, portrayed by the fortissimo in the flute.

The Epilogue can be played slightly slower than the beginning, and perhaps somewhat sentimentally, as if to say “Til Eulenspiegel wasn’t such a bad guy – true, he liked the odd practical joke, but he was a fun loving character who managed to get into a bit of trouble”. The violins can start the Epilogue with two up bows, which is different from the beginning – here the mood is more peaceful. Note that the outside stands of cellos hold through in the fourth bar on the C, while everyone else lifts before the next downbeat. The accented D flat in the second violin in the 6th bar can be played with an expressive vibrato. I like to take a little extra time in the eighth bar. In the last bar of the slow section of the Epilogue, note that the horn attack on the written G is somewhat delicate. The fourth bar of the *sehr lebhaft* can be played with a fortepiano, crescendo, with the last note acting as an exclamation point.

I hope that some of these observations have proven to be helpful, and that every musician gets an opportunity to perform this incredible masterpiece at some point in their career.