Edgar Allen Poe – "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839)

This is a short story written by Edgar Allan Poe, an American writer (1809-1849). It was published in 1839, and is gothic fiction, which includes themes of madness, family, isolation, and ghosts.

Story

Frederick receives a letter from his boyhood friend, Roderick Usher, who complains of an illness and asks for help. He subsequently travels to his friend's house. When he arrives at the house, he notices a long, thin crack extending around the house.

It is later revealed that Roderick's twin sister, Madeline, is also very ill and often falls into cataleptic trances. Roderick and Madeline are the only remaining members of the Usher family.

Roderick tells Frederick that he believes that his house is alive, and that it is somehow connected to the vegetation surrounding it. Also, Roderick believes that his fate is connected to the house.

Roderick later tells him that his sister has died and insists that she be entombed for two weeks in the family tomb, located in the house, before being permanently buried. So, Frederick helps Roderick to put her body in the tomb, and he notes that Madeline has rosy cheeks. During the following week, both men become increasingly agitated, but for no apparent reason.

A storm arrives. Roderick goes to Frederick's bedroom, which is situated directly above the vault, and he throws open the window. There is a lot of lightning.

Frederick tries to calm Roderick, but, as he speaks, cracking and ripping sounds are heard from all around the house. They hear Madeline's voice, and many other strange noises. Roderick becomes increasingly hysterical, and eventually says that these sounds are being made by his sister, who, in fact, was alive when she was entombed.

The bedroom door is then blown open to reveal Madeline standing there. She falls on her brother, and he falls to the floor, dead. The house starts to crumble. Frederick runs away from the house. As he runs, he notices a flash of light behind him, which causes him to stop and look back. As he watches, the House of Usher falls to the ground, and sinks into the tarn*. He watches in disbelief as all traces of the house disappear into the water, forever.

** tarn – an old word for "lake"*

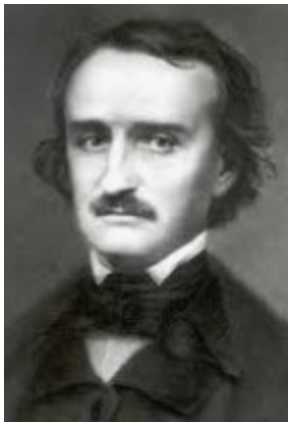
The Alan Parsons Project

Alan Parsons (born 1948) is an English audio engineer, songwriter, musician, and record producer. He was involved with the production of several significant albums, including the Beatles' "Abbey Road" and "Let It Be", and Pink Floyd's "The Dark Side of the Moon" for which Pink Floyd credited him as an important contributor. Alan formed his own group of musicians, called "The Alan Parsons Project", which made many recordings between 1975 and 1990, most of which were commercially successful. The group often integrated orchestras into their musical pieces. Alan continues to produce music as a solo musician.

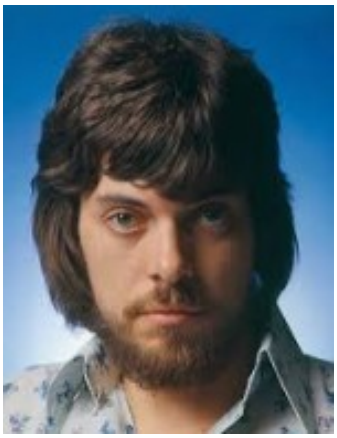
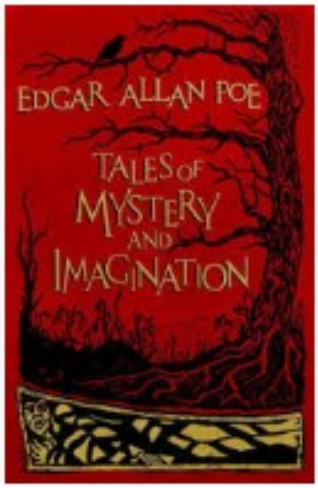
The Alan Parsons Project – "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1976):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4K6j0m2mxE

"Shadows of shadows, passing. It is now 1831, and as always, I am absorbed with a delicate thought. It is how poetry has indefinite sensations, to which end music is inessential. Since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry. Music, without the idea, is simply music. Without music, or an intriguing idea, color becomes pallor, man becomes carcass, home becomes catacomb, and the dead are but for a moment, motionless."



Edgar Allen Poe, c. 1840



Alan Parsons, 1976