



LEVEL

Discovering Orchestral Music

In Level 1 (usually the third grade year), students are introduced to the orchestra. They learn about what makes the orchestra a vibrant, creative community, and they explore basic musical concepts. An understanding of these central musical ideas—Rhythm, Melody, Dynamics, and Musical Layering—is the foundation upon which students' continued progress in the Philharmonic's *Pathways to the Orchestra* is built. At the same time, teachers are encouraged to seek ways to connect this work to the literacy and social studies curricula, especially in regard to the Final Project, which focuses on the adaptation of a story for performance with music.

PHOTO: Michael Divillo



Focal Work
The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra
by Benjamin Britten

As you begin your partnership with your Teaching Artist, your first step is to introduce students to the orchestra and its instruments. First, acquaint them with the families of the orchestra, and then help them become familiar with their sounds.

LESSON 1
The Orchestral Families

- In this lesson, students will:**
- discuss “family” as a concept
 - visually and aurally explore the families of the orchestra

- Materials:**
- *My Musical Journal*
 - musical instrument cards
 - orchestral seating chart (Example 1)
 - four large sheets of paper and markers

ACTIVITY 1:
What Is a Family?

- Discuss the concept of family with your students:
- Who are the members of your family?
 - What do they have in common?
 - What are some differences between them?
 - What makes each person special?

- Can you think of other things besides people that are grouped in families? (e.g., birds, reptiles, dogs) Pick one example and compare and contrast its members.

This year, we will be learning about a musical group called the orchestra. An orchestra is a group of 15 to 120 musicians who play a variety of instruments together. The instruments are grouped into four distinct families: String, Woodwind, Brass, and Percussion. The New York Philharmonic has 106 players; more specifically, it has:

- 67 Strings
- 16 Woodwinds
- 15 Brass
- 5 Percussion, Timpani, and Harp
- 3 Librarians

There are also a personnel manager, a stage manager, and a recording engineer!

ACTIVITY 2:
Categorizing Instruments of the Orchestra

- Distribute one instrument card to each student. Because your class has fewer members than an orchestra, be

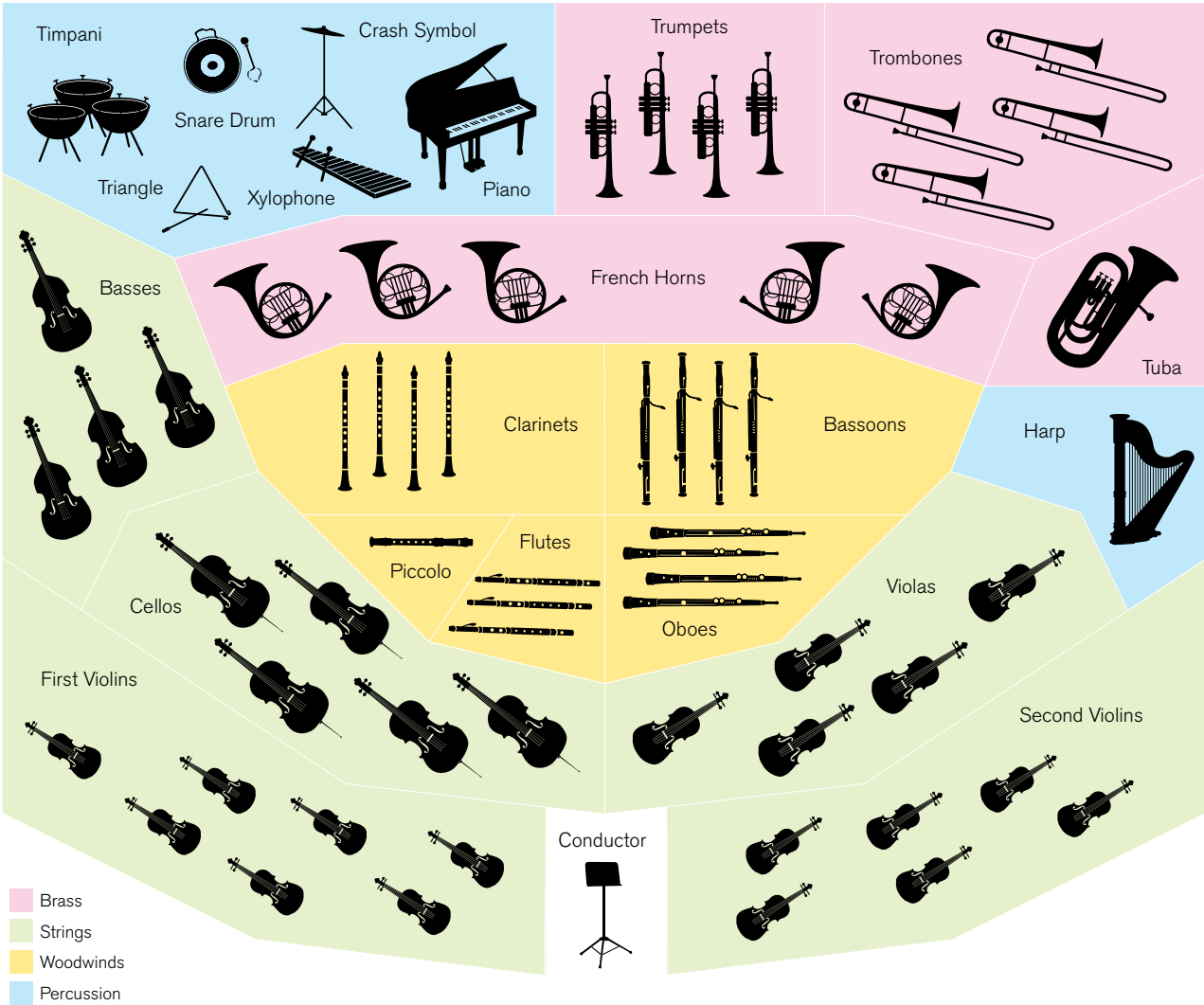
- sure to mix up the cards so that all four families are well represented.
- Ask students to stand in a circle with their instrument pictures, facing out. After the students take a good look at each other’s cards, with no further information, give them thirty seconds to arrange themselves into groups according to which instruments they think belong together.
 - After they have arranged themselves in groups, have them hold their cards out again. Which instruments did they put together and why?

ACTIVITY 3:
Exploring Families of the Orchestra

- Check to be sure students have grouped themselves into the correct families of instruments and make any necessary changes. Then give each group a large sheet of paper and hand out any remaining instrument cards to the appropriate groups. Give them the following assignment:
- Divide your paper in half.

- On the left half of the paper, write the names of your instruments.
 - On the right half, list observations about what your instruments have in common. Note any differences as well.
- Once each group has thoroughly explored its cards, have one member of each group share its findings with the class. After each group shares, tell your class the “official” names of its families: String, Brass, Woodwind, or Percussion. Have the students write the family name in the title space of their papers. Create a wall display of these papers and the instrument cards that go with them.
- Questions for further exploration:
- How do you think sound is created on these instruments?
 - What do you think they are made of?
 - Which instrument do you think makes the highest sounds? The lowest sounds?

EXAMPLE 1



LESSON 2

The Sounds of the Orchestra

We will now explore the timbre, or the distinctive quality of a sound, of each family and its individual instruments. For this lesson we will focus on Benjamin Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*.

In this lesson, students will:

- learn to distinguish the timbres of instrument families and individual instruments
- experience conducting and performing together as a group
- study Benjamin Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*

Materials:

- Level 1 CD
- *My Musical Journal*



The trumpets of the New York Philharmonic, part of the brass family

ACTIVITY 1:

What Do the Orchestra Families Sound Like?

Play Tracks 1–6 of *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. After listening to these tracks, play them once again, and this time, pause the CD between each family as it is presented. Ask students for words to define the timbre of each family:

- Is the sound bright or dark?
- Heavy or light?
- Sweet or powerful?

Try to find two or three key words to describe the timbre of each family. Write them on the instrument family sheets that are already displayed on your walls.

ACTIVITY 2:

Sounding Like an Orchestra

- Divide your class into four groups and assign each a family of the orchestra.
- Let each group decide on a sound they will make that imitates the timbre of their family. They may also pantomime playing the instruments.
- Use hand signals to lead your students in a spontaneous piece of music. You may have each group:
 - Begin and stop at different times



The bassoons of the New York Philharmonic, part of the woodwind family

- Make their sounds at different volumes
- Overlap another group's sounds
- Repeat this activity a few times, and let students conduct. Give each group the opportunity to be each orchestral family.

ACTIVITY 3:

Learning More about the Instrument Families

Now play the entire *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* (Tracks 1–20). Have students take out their music journals and write observations about the timbre of each family. Supplement students' knowledge with some of the following activities:

- Visit the New York Philharmonic Kidzone's instrument Storage Room, which has pictures, audio clips, and detailed information on every instrument, as well as the Instrument Laboratory with recipes for homemade instruments: nyphilkids.org

Listening Extensions:

Like Benjamin Britten, a number of composers have written pieces of music that introduce young listeners to the families and instruments of the orchestra. *Tubby the Tuba* and *Carnival of the Animals* have been children's classics for decades. More recently, works have been contributed by Jon Deak, former Associate Principal Double Bassist of the New York Philharmonic and storyteller Bill Gordh; and Nathaniel Stookey, who created an orchestral mystery with Lemony Snicket, author of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*.

Jon Deak, composer; text by Bill Gordh: *Roaring Mountain*
George Kleinsinger, composer; text by Paul Tripp: *Tubby the Tuba*
Camille Saint-Saëns: *Carnival of the Animals*
Nathaniel Stookey, composer; text by Lemony Snicket: *The Composer Is Dead*

Reinforcement Through Read-Alouds:

To reinforce and strengthen your students' knowledge and understanding of the instruments of the orchestra, share some of these wonderful illustrated children's books as a read-aloud. Many of these books come with accompanying CDs or CD-ROMs to reinforce the concepts. Karen LeFrak's book was inspired by the New York Philharmonic's stage dog and includes illustrations based on actual orchestra members.

Hayes, Ann; Carmen Thompson, illustrator. *Meet the Orchestra!* San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991.
Helsby, Genevieve; *Those Amazing Musical Instruments!* Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2007.
LeFrak, Karen; Marcin Baranski, illustrator. *Jake the Philharmonic Dog*. New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2006.
Moss, Lloyd; Marjorie Price, illustrator. *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin!* New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 2005.
Snicket, Lemony; Carson Ellis, illustrator. *The Composer Is Dead*. New York: Harper Collins, 2009.
Tripp, Paul; Henry Cole, illustrator. *Tubby the Tuba*. New York: Dutton Juvenile, 2006.



Principal timpanist Markus Rhoten; the timpani is part of the percussion family



Focal Work
March from *The Love for Three Oranges*
by Sergei Prokofiev

Now that your students have learned about the orchestra, you can introduce them to the essential elements of orchestral music. We'll begin with one of the most essential elements of all music: rhythm.

- In this unit, students will:** study Sergei Prokofiev's March from *The Love for Three Oranges* to gain an understanding of the following aspects of music:
- beat
 - tempo
 - rhythm

- Materials:**
- Level 1 CD
 - percussion instruments

ACTIVITY 1:
Defining Beat

- Introduce the concept of beat to your class: *Today we're going to learn about a musical word called **beat**. A beat is a steady pulse. Can you think of a place in your body where you have a beat? Where can you feel the steady, regular pulse of your heartbeat?*
- Tap chests with a steady, even beat, and say the word "beat" with each tap. *Are there other things in the world that keep a steady beat like that?* Responses may

- include clocks, wheels of the subway, the dripping of a faucet, etc.
- Listen to Track 21: Prokofiev's March from *The Love for Three Oranges*, and ask students to tap the beat along with the music. *Does the beat feel very fast, very slow, or somewhere in the middle?*
- Tell your class that **tempo** is the word we use to describe the speed of the beat.
- Listen again and ask: *How does the music make you want to move? What kind of tempo do most marches have [e.g., fast, slow, somewhere in the middle]?*

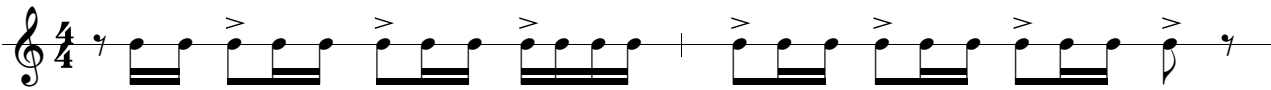
🎧 **Listening Extensions:**
Listen to Manuel de Falla's "Magic Circle" from *El Amor Brujo* (Level 3 CD, Track 7) and Modest Mussorgsky's "Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks" from *Pictures at an Exhibition* (Level 2 CD, Track 24). Can you tap the beat to these pieces? Is the tempo faster or slower than Prokofiev's March?

ACTIVITY 2:
Finding Rhythm in Speech

- Along with a beat, music has patterns of sounds, or rhythm. Form a circle and keep a steady beat by

March Rhythm from *The Love For Three Oranges*

Prokofiev



snapping, patting knees, or clapping. Once the beat is established, speak your name to fit in with the beat and have the class echo you. Students can then take a turn and go around the circle in this manner.

*Variation: students can add names in sequence:
"Mrs. Cruz... Mrs. Cruz, Kaylene...
Mrs. Cruz, Kaylene, John..."
like the old camp game "Concentration."

ACTIVITY 3:
Defining Rhythm

- Repeat the name game, but this time, instead of saying names, have people clap for each syllable of each name. (e.g., Mrs. Cruz = 3 claps, Kaylene = 2 claps, John = 1 clap).
- Define rhythm for your class: *In music, patterns of sound are called **rhythm**. We just clapped the rhythms of our names. Could you feel how the rhythms fit into a steady beat?*
- Try exploring the beat and rhythms of a poem or nursery rhyme. Can you speak it to a steady beat? Can you clap the rhythm of the syllables?

ACTIVITY 4:
Creating Rhythmic Pieces

- Brainstorm a favorite topic with your class and create a chart of related words. For example, "Soda Flavors": Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Sprite, Dr. Pepper, Mountain Dew, Fanta, etc. Practice all the words by speaking and clapping with each syllable.
- In groups, have students arrange the words into their own pattern or sequence. Students should practice performing as a group and with a steady beat, if possible. Distribute percussion instruments to add to or replace the clapping. After performing with the words, have students try omitting the words. Can they perform the rhythms just with percussion?
- Share and Reflect: *How does each piece sound unique? What kinds of musical choices did groups make? What questions do you have for the composers and how they created their piece? What was it like working with rhythms? How did your group decide on its ideas?*

ACTIVITY 5:
Listening for Different Kinds of Rhythm in Prokofiev's March

- Play the following excerpt tracks, and have your students focus on the different kinds of rhythm Prokofiev uses.
- Track 23: Now listen to the opening trumpet rhythm (see Example 2).
- Track 22: Listen to this example of the orchestra all playing the same rhythm at the same time. Repeat and lead students in clapping along. *How do these beats and rhythms feel? Are they strong, weak, heavy, light? Etc.*
- Try chanting along with the rhythm, using these syllables: Tiki ta Tiki ta Tiki tiki tiki ta Tiki ta Tiki ta Tiki ta *How would you describe these rhythms? Are they calm, smooth, agitated, energetic?*
- Track 24: Listen to the oboe phrase. Listen to it repeatedly until students are able to sing the melody. Without the CD, have half the class sing the melody while the other half claps the beat. *How are these rhythms different from the last excerpt? How does the rhythm feel different when you clap it or sing it?*
- Finally, listen to the entire march and see which other rhythm patterns students can identify.
 - *How do the rhythms help create the feeling of a March?*
 - *Does the tempo (speed) stay the same through the whole piece?*
 - *How can you imagine people moving to this music? How would those movements change during different sections?*

🎧 **Listening Extensions:**
Here are some other pieces of music that provide interesting explorations of beat, rhythm, and tempo.

John Adams: *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*
Hector Berlioz: *Symphonie fantastique*; *Roman for IV. March to the Scaffold*
Scott Joplin: *Stoptime Rag*
Steve Reich: *Clapping Music*; *Drumming*
John Philip Sousa: *Roman for March (The Washington Post March)*
Igor Stravinsky: *Pulcinella Suite*



Focal Works
“Simple Gifts” from *Appalachian Spring*
 by Aaron Copland



“Ode to Joy” from *Symphony No. 9*
 by Ludwig van Beethoven

Now you can expand your students' musical abilities by helping them learn about melody—the tune in a piece of music.

In this unit, students will:

- explore melody and melodic contour
- compose their own melodies

LESSON 1

What Is a Melody?

Materials:

- Level 1 CD
- recorders
- *My Musical Journal*

ACTIVITY 1: Improvising Melodies from Shapes

- Ask a student to sketch a simple shape on the board. (e.g., a curvy or angular line; see Sample Shape for Melodic Improvisation on page 11)
- Have another student try to improvise a melody based on the shape, using his or her voice. When the line moves up, the pitch should go up. (A level line would imply a sustained pitch; a squiggly line should imply changes

in pitch, etc.) The sketch provides a structure for the melody. It also serves as a map, or score.

- Have several pairs of students improvise melodies. Once this is going well with students' voices, see if they can improvise melodies using recorders, keyboards, xylophones, or other melody instruments.

Note: many students confuse *pitch* and *volume*. Be sure to differentiate these two qualities by using the terms HIGH and LOW for *pitch* and LOUD and SOFT for *volume*. For the activities in these lessons, focus on *pitch*.

ACTIVITY 2: Mapping Melodies

- Listen to a melody from *Appalachian Spring* by Aaron Copland (Track 25; see Example 5, page 12).
- Listen again, and this time ask the students to follow the melody line with their hands, drawing an invisible line in the air. What does the shape of the melody feel like?
- Listen a third time, and ask your students to trace the shape of the melody with a pencil on paper.
- Have the students hold up their papers so that they can see each other's drawings. Compare the melodic maps.

Sample Shape for Melodic Improvisation



Try using a simple recorder melody for this activity. Ask one or two students to play “Hot Cross Buns” while the other students trace the shape of the tune. Also, if you look at the notation for “Hot Cross Buns” you can see how the notes on the staff mirror the shape of the tune (see Example 3). They probably look similar to the maps your students made while listening to the Copland.

LESSON 2

Building a Melody

In this lesson, students will:

- identify the building blocks (pitches) used to make melodies and explore their relationship to each other (steps and leaps)
- analyze the melodies from Lesson 1 using the analytical tools learned in Lesson 2

Materials:

- Level 1 CD
- recorders
- *My Musical Journal*

ACTIVITY 1: Identifying and Exploring our Melody Building Blocks

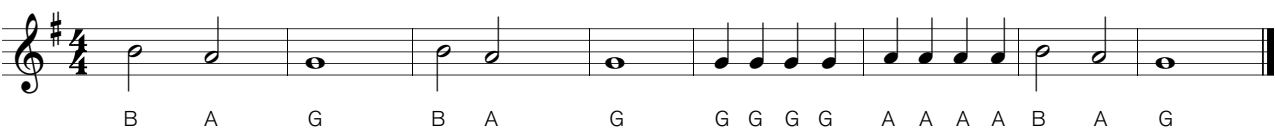
The “building blocks” which make up a melody are pitches (or notes) and they can be arranged in many different ways.

- Draw a staircase on the board, with the notes of the scale written on them, as in Example 4.
- Ask your students to play the notes on the recorder as you point to them on the board. Can they hear the pitches go up as you “climb” the staircase? Down as you descend?
- Explain to your students that one way they will learn to analyze melodies is by looking at the distance between notes. Each note falls somewhere on the staircase of notes. We can analyze melodies by thinking about whether each note is a leap or a step away from the preceding note.
- Using the staircase on the board, try out some steps and leaps, as well as some repeated notes. Have students play notes as you point to them. How does playing a “step” (G to A) feel and sound different from playing a “leap” (G to B, C, or D)? The staircase will give you a tool for choosing notes as you construct your own melody.

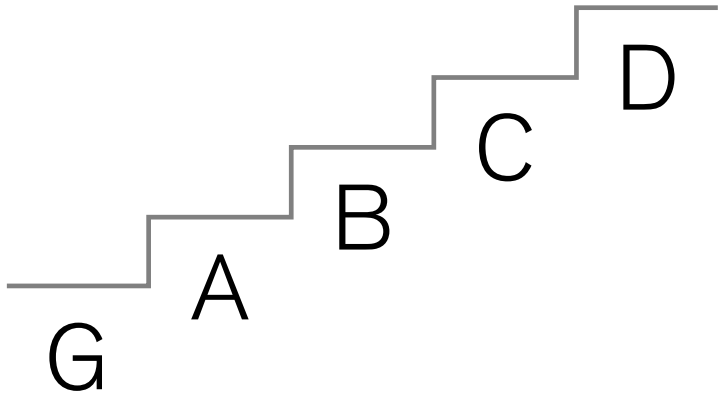
EXAMPLE 3

Hot Cross Buns

Traditional



EXAMPLE 4



EXAMPLE 5

Simple Gifts

Traditional Shaker melody

Sheet music for "Simple Gifts" in G major, 4/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. The notes are: C C F F G A F A Bb C C Bb A G F G G G F. The lyrics are: 'Tis the gift to be sim-ple, 'tis the gift to be free 'tis the gift to come down where you ought to be And when we find our-selves in the place just right we'll be in the val-ley of love and de-light When true sim-pli-ci-ty is gained to bow and to bend we shan't be a-shamed To turn, turn will be our de-light 'till by turn-ing, turn-ing we come round right

PHOTO CREDIT: TK

EXAMPLE 6

Ode to Joy

Beethoven

Sheet music for "Ode to Joy" in G major, 4/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. The notes are: A A B C C B A A F F G A A G G. The lyrics are: Joy-ful, joy-ful, lift your voi-ces, high for all to hear our song Hearts and hands cross sea and land in peace and love for ev-ry one.

ACTIVITY 2:

Creating a Melody

- Have students create a melody, of 6 to 12 notes, that uses a balance of steps, leaps, and repeated notes. They can notate the melodies using the letter names of notes or in musical notation. If you wish, ask them to employ some math skills to see if they have a balance of the ingredients you have asked for.
- Have the students enter their melody into their journals. Ask them to write the pitches and any other tempo or rhythm indications on a blank journal entry page. They have composed their first melody!

ACTIVITY 3:

Listening

- Listen again to "Simple Gifts" from *Appalachian Spring*. Ask your students to listen to (and perhaps sing) this melody thinking about steps and leaps on the staircase of notes. Does it have both steps and leaps? Most melodies have a balance of steps and leaps.



- Now listen to the "Ode to Joy" from Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 (Track 26).
- The "Ode to Joy" is from the final movement, when a chorus joins the orchestra to sing this melody. Ask your students to listen for steps and leaps.
- What do they notice? (This melody is made almost entirely of steps.)
- Can your students think of any reason why Beethoven would choose to write a melody with all steps? (Maybe he did this because it is easier to sing steps than leaps.) Try singing the melody with the words in Example 6.

Let students play "Piccolo Pete, the Noterunner" at the New York Philharmonic's Kidzone, nyphilkids.org.

Listening Extensions:

The following pieces are famous for their melodies, some of which your students will recognize from cartoons. Try tracing the melodies or listening for steps, leaps, and repeated notes.

- Johannes Brahms: Symphony No. 1, Andante sostenuto
- Antonín Dvořák: Symphony No. 9, *From the New World*, Largo
- Joseph Haydn: Symphony No. 94, *Surprise*, Andante
- Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 5, Adagietto, Sehr langsam
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Serenade for Strings in G major, K. 525, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, Allegro
- Jacques Offenbach: Can-Can from *Orpheus in the Underworld*
- Gioachino Rossini: Overture to *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (The Barber of Seville)
- Johann Strauss, Jr.: *An der schönen, blauen Donau* (On the Beautiful Blue Danube)



Focal Work
Symphony No. 6, Pastoral
Fourth movement: Thunderstorm
by Ludwig van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven is famous for his dramatic use of dynamics—the loudness or softness of musical sounds. His Symphony No. 6 uses dynamics as a tool to musically depict scenes from nature.

In this unit, students will:

- improvise and compose musical thunderstorms
- learn about dynamics and how composers designate them
- listen for dynamics in music

Materials:

- Level 1 CD
- percussion instruments
- recorders
- *My Musical Journal*

ACTIVITY 1:
The Rain Game

Without speaking, lead your class in “The Rain Game”, a fun improvisation that simulates the sounds of a thunderstorm. Nodding to indicate that the class should join you, gradually progress through the following sounds:

WIND: rub palms together quickly
FIRST DROPS: snap fingers

SOFT RAIN: tap the palm of one hand with one finger
HARD RAIN: clap hands
POURING: slap hands on the knees over and over
THUNDER: repeatedly stamp feet on floor, or pound fists on the desks

After you build the storm, gradually fade back to soft rain and wind. Reflect with your students:

- *What are the different sounds of a thunderstorm? List them on the board.*
- *Which elements of a thunderstorm did our different sounds suggest?*
- *How can we make this activity sound more like a thunderstorm?*

ACTIVITY 2:
Conducting a Thunderstorm with Dynamics

Now, by following these simple steps, develop a more sophisticated classroom thunderstorm:

- Divide your class into six groups and assign a different thunderstorm sound to each group.
- Have students experiment with creating a sound for their element. They can use their voices or their bodies, or objects in the room.

PHOTO: Courtesy of New York Philharmonic Archives

- Rehearse each group with conducting signals: in addition to using start and stop signals, indicate loudness and softness with your palms (palms upward for louder; palms downward for softer).
- Conduct the class through a musical thunderstorm by starting with one group, then adding another, etc. Vary the dynamics.

ACTIVITY 3:
Orchestrating Your Thunderstorm

Next, take your thunderstorm into a more musical direction by adding instruments:

- Demonstrate a few instruments from a standard classroom percussion set and have students decide which element of the storm each instrument would best express. Pass the instruments out to the appropriate groups.
- Allow students a minute or two to experiment with the different sound possibilities of the percussion instruments.

In nature, a thunderstorm can sound soft and far away, getting louder as it comes closer. In music, this effect of gradually growing louder is called a **crescendo**. A **diminuendo** occurs when the sound gradually becomes softer. Ask students to experiment with crescendo and diminuendo (see Example 7). How softly can they play?

ACTIVITY 4:
Composing a Musical Thunderstorm

Ask students to imagine themselves in a pastoral setting with green grass, a meadow, a rippling brook, and surrounding animals. Then imagine that a thunderstorm begins to set in:

- Decide on an order of events and list it on the board

- (e.g., Distant Thunder + Light Wind; Soft Rain; Lightning + Howling Wind; Hard Rain + Loud Thunder; Softer Rain; Gentle Wind; Silence).
- Add dynamic markings for each event. Below is a list of symbols for the most commonly used dynamics:

pp (*pianissimo*) = very soft
p (*piano*) = soft
mp (*mezzo piano*) = medium soft
mf (*mezzo forte*) = medium loud
f (*forte*) = loud
ff (*fortissimo*) = very loud

ACTIVITY 5:
Performing and Refining Your Thunderstorm

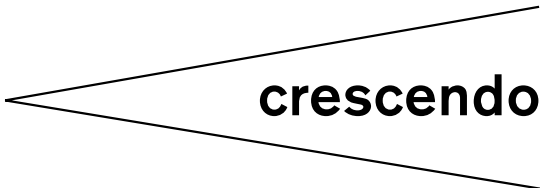
Practice your musical thunderstorm and let a student conduct, controlling the dynamics through hand signals that can be developed in class. Experiment with different combinations or variations in the order of storm events. Once you and your students are satisfied with a version of the thunderstorm, record it.

ACTIVITY 6:
Listening to Beethoven's Thunderstorm

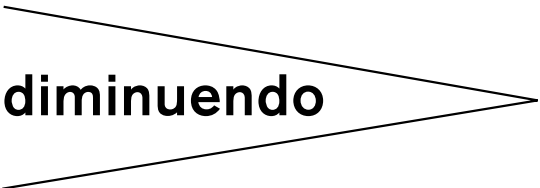
Now listen to the Thunderstorm movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 (Level 1 CD, Track 27).

- Listen first for pleasure.
- Listen again, asking students to notice the following:
What instruments are used to represent thunder?
What instruments do you think represent rain or the wind? How does Beethoven use dynamics to express the sounds of his thunderstorm?
- Listen again, and this time, have students take a pencil or crayon and create a “dynamics seismograph.” In other

EXAMPLE 7



crescendo = gradually growing louder



diminuendo = gradually getting softer

EXAMPLE 8

Rain, Rain, Go Away



words, have them register dynamics by drawing gentle or vigorous zigzags according to the volume they hear.

ACTIVITY 7:
Adding Melody to the Classroom Thunderstorm

A student once commented that the main difference between her class’s thunderstorm and Beethoven’s was that Beethoven’s storm uses melody. Learn the melody above (Example 8) and find a way to add it to your class thunderstorm, or create your own.

Listening Extensions:

Many composers have been inspired by storms. These works by Britten and Mendelssohn describe storms at sea; Druckman’s work takes a more subtle approach and creates an impression of distant lightning. Vivaldi wrote a poem that describes all the different events in his thunderstorm. Berlioz and Rossini created storm scenes for operas. How does each composer use dynamics and the instruments of the orchestra to create their musical storms?

- Hector Berlioz: Royal Hunt and Storm from *Les Troyens*
- Benjamin Britten: *Four Sea-Interludes*, Storm
- Jacob Druckman: *Summer Lightning*
- Felix Mendelssohn: *The Hebrides Overture*
- Gioachino Rossini: *Overture to William Tell*
- Antonio Vivaldi: Violin Concerto in G minor, “Summer,” from *The Four Seasons*, Presto



Teaching Artist Richard Mannoia with students at P.S. 165

UNIT 5

Musical Layers



Focal Work
Symphony No. 7
Second movement: Allegretto
by Ludwig van Beethoven

In music there is almost always more than one voice—or musical line—occurring at once. Imagine a rainbow: colors build one on top of the other to create a beautiful whole. Music is built in much the same way. We call this layering. This unit will explore the multilayered aspect of music and will help your students to be aware of the musical layers that come together in the Allegretto from Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7.

LESSON 1
**Looking for Layers in
Everyday Life**

In this lesson, students will:

- discuss “layers” as a concept
- explore layers in everyday life

Materials:

- unlined paper for each student
- large chart paper
- scissors
- pens and pencils

ACTIVITY 1:
Visualizing Layers

- Distribute unlined paper to each student.
- Divide each piece of paper (short side up) into five equal sections.
 - Draw a slice of bread in the top and bottom sections of

- the paper—these represent the top and bottom layers of a sandwich.
- In the three remaining sections, students should draw three interesting sandwich fillings of their own choice—let them be as creative as their imagination allows!
 - Cut sandwiches, along the folds, into the five separate layers. In small groups, allow students a few minutes to trade and mix layers to come up with the tastiest or strangest flavor combinations.

- Discuss with your students:
- *What do the flavors you’ve picked taste like on their own? How would you imagine the taste would change when combined with the other layers of the sandwich?*
 - *What was their favorite combination of sandwich layers? What was the strangest combination of layers they came up with? Why?*
 - *Was there one layer that was more important or necessary than the others? Is one stronger or weaker than the others?*
 - *Now imagine eating the sandwich—how are the **textures** of each layer different? (i.e., one may be crunchy, one soft, etc.)*
 - *What other everyday things can you think of that have different layers?*

ACTIVITY 2:
Exploring Layers in Sound: Creating a Rain Forest “Sound Scene”

- As a class, brainstorm and chart all the different sounds you might hear in a rain forest. Consider which sounds are close to the ground and which sounds are higher up in the rain forest canopy.
- Assign different students or groups particular sounds from the list, and experiment creating the sounds using their voices, bodies, or objects in the room. Share sounds and reflect: *Which sounds were soft/loud? Heavy/light? Low/high?*
- As a class, organize and layer your sounds into a rain forest “sound scene,” in which the image of a rain forest is conveyed through sounds. In imagining a rain forest scene, consider:
 - which sounds you might hear as a constant
 - which sounds you might hear individually, or intermittently
 - which sounds would be paired with other sounds (e.g., rain might be a constant sound, animal sounds might be occasional).
- Rehearse your rain forest “sound scene” as a class.

- Reflect with your students:
- *What was it like having all the different sounds combined into one scene?*
 - *How do you think we captured the effect of a rain forest? Were our choices more realistic or imaginary?*
 - *How did we create different layers of sound?*
 - *Which sounds stood out most? Why?*
 - *When more than one sound layer was happening at the same time, could you still hear all of the separate sounds?*

ACTIVITY 3:
Turning Your “Sound Scene” into Music

- Ask your class “Which layers of our sound scene could we represent with recorders? Which could we represent with percussion rhythms? Are there any more layers you think we should add or leave out?”
- Choose at least three or four layers to replace with short recorder melodies (2 to 6 notes). Select a few more layers that can be replaced with repeating percussion rhythms.
- Experiment and revise until you’ve turned your “sound scene” into a “rainforest composition.” Rehearse it and perform.



PHOTO: Michael Divito

Classroom teachers can assist with small-group work

LESSON 2
Listening for Layers in
Beethoven

- In this lesson, students will:
- listen for sound layers in the Allegretto from Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7

- Materials:
- Level 1 CD
 - *My Musical Journal*
 - pens and pencils

ACTIVITY 1:
First Impressions

Listen to Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7 from the beginning of Track 28 until 3:28.

- Discuss with your students:
- *Which instruments did you hear?*
 - *What kind of layering was going on?*
 - *Thinking back to our rainforest “sound scene” and composition, what similarities do you notice in the way the piece sounded or was created? What were the differences?*

Listen again and challenge your class to listen for all the different sounds and try to figure out how many different layers there are in this piece. (You may find it helpful to pause along the way and discuss.)

ACTIVITY 2:
Separating the Layers

Just as you did in your rainforest scene, Beethoven uses layering as one of his composing tools. During these activities, your class will work on recognizing individual layers and then hearing the layers as a whole.

EXAMPLE 9

Layer 1 from Symphony No.7, Allegretto

Musical notation for Layer 1 from Symphony No. 7, Allegretto. The notation is in 2/4 time and consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes. Below the notes are labels: Pear, Ap – ple, Pear, Pear, Pear, Ap – ple, Pear, Pear.

- Layer 1
- Have the class select a one-syllable word (like “pear”) and another which is two syllables long (like “apple”).
- In the Beethoven you will hear a repeating rhythmic pattern (see Example 9, below). Try repeating this over and over as a class.
 - Now listen to Layer 1 by itself (Track 29). *Can you hear this repeated rhythm in this layer? What words would you use to describe this layer? Deep, heavy, plodding, serious, mournful?*

- Layer 2
- In the next section, we hear a second layer enter, different from the pattern heard in the music so far. This new layer is slower and more melodic. Try playing it on recorder (see Example 10, next page)

- Listen to Track 30 and listen for the new layer.
- *Can you hear the new layer? How is it different from Layer 1?*
 - *Can you still hear Layer 1? How has it changed? Instruments, register (higher/lower), dynamics (louder/softer), etc.*
 - *What is it like trying to hear two layers at the same time?*
 - *Has the “flavor” of the piece changed with the addition of the new layer? If so, how?*

ACTIVITY 3
Different Ways of Layering

- Taking a blank page to draw in journals, listen to Track 31, a segment that has several different layers.
- While listening, find a way to draw the different layers you hear. This could be with symbols, pictures, lines, a graph, etc.
- Share the drawings as a class. Reflect with your students:
 - *Looking at your drawings, did everyone hear a similar number of layers or was there a big difference in what people heard?*
 - *Can you describe any of the layers?*
 - *How were layers used differently from the first section of the piece?*
 - *What feeling or flavor did this section have and how did it differ from the feeling of the first section?*

Layer 2 from Symphony No.7, Allegretto

Beethoven



ACTIVITY 4:

Listen to the Entire Movement

You have now explored many different kinds of layers, from visual and taste to sound and music. Listen to the whole movement (Track 28). As the piece closes, Beethoven returns to the material from the opening, but with some notable differences. As you listen, pick one layer from the very opening to focus on and when the piece begins to return to the opening material (from 5:11 onwards) see if you can pick up on that layer again, and see how it is similar or transformed. You may wish to take notes in your journal or simply discuss as a class.

Listening Extensions:

Here are some other pieces of music that use layers. Adams's work uses a technique called 'minimalism' where the music is made of repeating layers that change very slowly or minimally. It gives it a very modern feeling and an almost hypnotic quality!

Grieg's work is taken from the fantasy play *Peer Gynt*. The sequence illustrated by the music of *In the Hall of the Mountain King* finds Peer sneaking into the Mountain King's castle. The piece then describes Peer's attempts to escape from the King and his trolls. It begins very softly, and then gradually more and more layers of instruments and volume are added, ending in a dramatic flourish.

Leoš Janáček, after listening to brass bands, had been inspired to write a fanfare of his own, and this first movement only features brass instruments and percussion in a short but dramatic fanfare. Unusually orchestrated, this piece uses twelve trumpets and two bass trumpets, some of which are placed around the concert hall giving a 'stereo effect' in a live concert. The entire fanfare is composed from just a handful of short motifs or patterns, which loop, overlap and gradually modify in layers.

Maurice Ravel starts with a soft, repeating snare drum rhythm, then presents a melody. He gradually keeps adding layer upon layer by having more instruments join in and the dynamics grow with each layer.

John Adams: *Shaker Loops*, Shaking and trembling
Edvard Grieg: *Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1, In the Hall of the Mountain King
Leoš Janáček: *Sinfonietta*, I. Allegretto
Maurice Ravel: *Boléro*



Focal Work

Peter and the Wolf

by Sergei Prokofiev

In Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, a narrator tells a story while selected instruments from the orchestra musically illustrate each character.

In this unit, students will:

- discover how music can depict character
- explore the music of *Peter and the Wolf*
- create a musical setting of a favorite classroom story

Materials:

- Level 1 CD
- recorders
- percussion instruments
- *My Musical Journal*
- a favorite story or poem (see below for suggestions from teachers)
- large sheets of paper

ACTIVITY 1:

Depicting Characters with Themes

Read your students the story of *Peter and the Wolf*. With the help of the class, list the characters on the board, and write down a few descriptive words for each.

Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*

Early one morning, Peter opened the gate and walked out into the big green meadow. On a branch of a big tree sat a little bird, Peter's friend. "All is quiet" chirped the bird happily. Just then a duck came waddling round. She decided to take a nice swim in the deep pond in the meadow. Seeing the duck, the little bird flew down upon on the grass, settled next to her and shrugged his shoulders. "What kind of bird are you if you can't fly?" said he. To this the duck replied "What kind of bird are you if you can't swim?" and dived into the pond. They argued and argued, until suddenly, something caught Peter's attention. He noticed a cat crawling through the grass. The cat thought: "That little bird is busy arguing, I'll just grab him." The cat crept towards him on her velvet paws. "Look out!" shouted Peter and the bird immediately flew up into the tree, while the duck quacked angrily at the cat, from the middle of the pond. The cat walked around the tree and thought, "Is it worth climbing up so high?" Just then grandfather came out. He was upset because Peter had gone out into the meadow. "It's a dangerous place. If a wolf should come out of the forest, then what would you do?" But Peter paid no attention to his grandfather's words. Grandfather



Students presenting their work at P.S. 165

took Peter by the hand, led him home and locked the gate. After Peter had gone, a big grey wolf came out of the forest. The cat raced up the tree. The duck quacked, and in her excitement jumped out of the pond, but she couldn't escape the wolf. He got her, and with one gulp, swallowed her. This is how things stood: the cat was sitting on one branch, the bird on another . . . not too close to the cat. The wolf circled the tree, looking at them with greedy eyes. In the meantime, Peter stood behind the closed gate watching all that was going on. He ran home, got a strong rope, and climbed up the high stone wall. One of the branches of the tree, around which the wolf was walking, stretched out over the wall. Grabbing hold of the branch, Peter lightly climbed over on to the tree. Peter said to the bird: "Fly down and circle over the wolf's head. Only take care that he doesn't catch you." The bird circled the wolf's head while the wolf snapped angrily at him, from this side and that. But the bird was clever, and the wolf simply couldn't do anything about it. Meanwhile, Peter made a lasso and by carefully letting it down, caught the wolf by the tail and pulled with all his might. Feeling himself caught, the wolf began to jump wildly trying to get loose. But Peter tied the other end of rope to the tree, and the wolf's jumping only made the rope around his tail tighter. Just then, the hunters came out of the woods, following the wolf's trail and shooting as they went. But Peter, sitting in the tree, said: "Don't shoot! Birdie and I have already caught the wolf. Now help us take him to the zoo." There was a triumphant procession: Peter at the head; after

him the hunters leading the wolf; and winding up the procession, grandfather and the cat. Above them flew Birdie chirping merrily: "My, what brave fellows we are, Peter and I! Look what we have caught!" And if one listened very carefully, he could hear the duck quacking inside the wolf; because the wolf in his hurry, had swallowed her alive.

In music, a composer will often use a musical theme to represent a character. If your students were to write a musical theme for each of the characters of *Peter and the Wolf*, what kind of music would they compose? List their choices of:

- ORCHESTRATION (choice of musical instrument)
- TEMPO (fast or slow)
- DYNAMIC (loud or soft)
- PITCH (high or low)
- TIMBRE (sound quality)

Play the beginning (Track 23), and let your students try Leonard Bernstein's "Peter and the Wolf Character Quiz." If students guessed themes correctly, what musical clues helped them? If they guessed something else, what were some reasons they chose a different character? Listen to the themes once again, with attention to the musical qualities of each.

PHOTO: MICHAEL DIVITO

ACTIVITY 2:
Exploring *Peter and the Wolf*

Listen to the entire *Peter and the Wolf* (Track 40–63). After listening, review the characters and their themes. Lead a discussion about why Prokofiev may have chosen each particular instrument to represent that character. For instance, *why did he choose the flute to represent the bird? Why the bassoon to represent Grandfather? Why not the other way around?*

Can you imitate any of the themes with your voice? Do they make you feel like moving in a particular way? Do some make you want to move quickly, and others make you want to move slowly?

Throughout the piece, Prokofiev varies each character's theme according to the action of the story. For example, compare Peter's first theme, at the beginning of Track 39, to the variation where everyone is having a parade, at the beginning of Track 61. Ask the class:

- *How has Peter's theme changed? (It's louder, slower, like a military march; it now has brass and percussion added.)*
- *Why do you think Prokofiev made these changes?*

Follow and compare multiple variations of the duck's theme at the beginning of each:

- The duck's first theme (Track 42)
- The duck hopping out of the pond to escape from the wolf (Track 48)
- When the duck is inside the wolf's stomach (Track 49)

How does Prokofiev convey both feelings and action with his music?

ACTIVITY 3:
Creating Themes for Characters

- Select a favorite story or poem from the class library and make a list of the main characters. Next to each character, list the adjectives that best describe him or her.
- Discuss what kind of music would best suit each character. Be sure to decide:
 - TEMPO (fast or slow)
 - DYNAMIC (loud or soft)
 - PITCH (high or low)
 - TIMBRE (sound quality)
 - ORCHESTRATION (choice of musical instruments)
- Divide students into small groups, and have each group compose an original melody or a rhythmic pattern that captures the personality of its assigned character.

ACTIVITY 4:
Creating a Musical Adventure

Once all the themes are composed, revise them as necessary. Then, create a musical story in the style of *Peter and the Wolf* by adding these themes to a reading of the story or poem. You may need to create a chart that indicates when each theme will occur. You may also want to choose a conductor who will point to the chart or to different groups when it is their turn to play their theme. If the themes recur, you may want to vary them according to what is happening in the plot.

Record your performance and listen to it. Ask the class: *In what ways do your musical themes enhance the mood of the story and bring the characters to life? Does the music give listeners a clear picture of the characters?*

Listen again to *Peter and the Wolf*, using your own experience as composers to enhance your appreciation of Prokofiev's musical illustrations.

■ Stories For Musical Adaptation:

Here are some suggestions for books from teachers who have done this project in their own classrooms with success.

Cherry, Lynne. *The Great Kapok Tree*. Orlando, FL: Voyager Books, 2000.

Giff, Patricia Reilly. *Next Stop, New York!* New York: Bantam Books, 1997.

Lionni, Leo. *Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

Lobel, Arnold. *On the Day Peter Stuyvesant Sailed Into Town*. New York: Harper Trophy, 1987.

Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1991.

Scieszka, Jon. *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. New York: Puffin Books, 1997.

Swift, Hildegard; Lynde Ward, illustrator. *The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge*. San Diego: Harcourt, 2002.

Van Allsburg, Chris. *Jumanji*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981.

🎧 Listening Extensions:

Although the following pieces have no narration, the composers tell stories by creating characters with the instruments of the orchestra. In Strauss's *Don Quixote*, a solo cello portrays the character Don Quixote and a solo viola portrays his sidekick, Sancho Panza, as they experience many adventures together. The rest of the orchestra gets to portray sheep, knights, monks, Dulcinea, and other characters. In *Petrushka*, Stravinsky uses instruments to tell the stories of three puppets (a ballerina, a Moorish soldier, and a clown) who magically come to life.

Paul Dukas: *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*
Richard Strauss: *Don Quixote*
Igor Stravinsky: *Petrushka*