

Classical Music Appreciation (Grades 3-4 / Lesson 1)

Summary

Using excerpts from Benjamin Britten's 'Finale from the Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra' students identify different instruments by their sound and discuss how instruments are grouped.

Materials

Classical Music Start-up Kit CD 1 and CD player with timer; set of Instrument Cards copied from W-5

Background for Teachers

Composer Profile

Composer

Benjamin Britten

Nationality

English

Birth - Death

1913 - 1976

Excerpt

Finale from The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra Musical Era Modern

Era

Baroque

Benjamin Britten was a British composer, pianist, and conductor who believed that it was important for everyone, including children, to understand music. He was known for simple, fresh musical ideas and for his memorable melodies. Our excerpt is the last movement from a 20-minute piece that Britten wrote to accompany a children's film about the different instruments in the orchestra. Britten used a piece composed by Henry Purcell (1659 - 1695), a composer whose music he always loved, and rearranged it so that different instruments were highlighted in different sections. Check your media center or local library to see if The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra is available-- you may find the old film, an LP, or a CD, and it may or may not include narration. Whatever you manage to find, it will be a fun way to help your students become better acquainted with the instruments, their sounds, and their character. This finale is like a quick, three-minute recap of the entire work, so it moves very quickly from one instrument to the next.

movement

- a primary section or division of a musical composition.

orchestra

- a large group of musicians performing together on various instruments

symphony

- a piece of music, written for orchestra, with three to five distinct movements or divisions, each written with its own theme or themes but related in key

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will identify different instruments by their sound and discuss how instruments are grouped.

Instructional Procedures

See CMA Table of Contents See composer's profile and picture See lesson resources (W-3)

Listen

Have the students listen once to the entire piece, asking them to listen carefully for different instruments. Introduce the four families of instruments using the information in Section VI. Talk about the different sounds they make and how they are played. Now listen to the piece again, and help the students to identify which instruments are playing using the timed guide below (also found in the CD booklet on page 6).

winds	strings	brass	percussion
0:00 piccolo	0:47 violin	1:36 French horn	1:58 timpani
0:06 flute	0:57 viola	1:42 trumpet	1:58 bass drum
0:16 oboe	1:02 cello	1:52 trombone	1:58 snare drum
0:22 clarinet	1:09 string bass	1:52 tuba	1:58 cymbals
0:34 bassoon	1:22 harp		

Activity

Now the fun begins! Play the piece again, and have the students stand when they hear their instrument begin playing. By the end of the piece, all the students should be standing. If you can stand the chaos, listen again and have the students stand when their instrument is playing and sit back down when it stops. It will be a real challenge! Discuss how discipline, teamwork, and a good conductor can turn something that could be chaotic into beautiful music.

Close

Have students think of instruments that were not included in this activity (piano, saxophone, guitar, harpsichord, etc.). Can they place them in an appropriate instrument family? How did they decide what went where? Ask the students why they think there are so many instruments in a symphony orchestra. Would it be easy to get so many musicians to work together?

Extensions

Beyond

Related topics

- instrument making
- teamwork
- historical fashion and hairstyles
- head lice and proper hygiene

Extension Ideas

Using a list of instruments, have the students create new instrument families using different characteristics (size, color, shape, how they're played, etc.).

Contact an orchestra in your area and arrange for a field trip to a performance or have a musician

visit the classroom and bring a few instruments. Arrange a tour of a high school band room or visit during a class so the students can see, touch, and try the instruments.

Have students make their own musical instruments. You may wish to divide the class into groups and have them make instruments that would fit into the various families.

Make copies of the 'Instrument Word Search' (W-6) and have the students complete it while listening to the music on either of the 'Classical Classroom' CDs.

Obtain a recording of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* or the Disney cartoon of the same name and use it to further explore the various instruments and the sounds they make.

Additional Resources

Ardley, Neil. *Music*. New York: Alfred A.Knopf, Inc., 1994.

Stewart, Madeau. *Instruments of the Orchestra*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1980.

Wiseman, Ann. *Making Musical Things*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979.

Riehecky, Janet. *Cooperation*. Chicago: The Child's World, Inc., 1990.

Britten: The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra (with narration) Boston Pops Orchestra/Arthur Fiedler RCA 09026-68131

Britten: The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra (without narration) New York Philharmonic/Leonard Bernstein Sony SMK 47541

Prokofiev: Peter and the Wolf The Little Orchestra Society/Dino Anagnost BMG 01612-67067-2

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