

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

Summary

Using excerpts from Mussorgsky's 'Bydlo', students explore the expression of mood through music and visual art.

Materials

Classical Music Start-up Kit CD 2 and CD player; paper and colored pencils, pens, paints, or crayons; book with color prints of artwork

Background for Teachers

Composer Profile

Composer

Modest Mussorgsky (mo-DEST muh-SORE-skee)

Nationality

Russian

Birth - Death

1839-1881

Excerpt

Bydlo' (BID-low) from Pictures at an Exhibition (1874)

Era

Nationalist

Mussorgsky was famous (or infamous) for his originality. Many people, including many of his friends who were also composers, didn't like and couldn't understand his music. They thought it was too rough. But Mussorgsky didn't believe that all music should be pretty. He did not believe that it was a composers job to 'detail, one by one, carefully measured drops of prettiness.' He liked instead to write music that described the real lives of Russian peasants. This piece is part of a larger work called Pictures at all Exhibition a set of musical vignettes inspired by the paintings of Victor Hartmann. Hartmann was a close friend of Mussorgsky's, and when he died in 1873 a commemorative exhibition of his work inspired Mussorgsky to compose Pictures at an Exhibition, his best-known work. 'Bydlo' is Mussorgsky's musical interpretation of a painting of a Polish oxcart, its heavy wooden wheels slowly grinding along under a large load. Interestingly, no Hartmann painting of an oxcart has ever been found.

Vocabulary

form

- the constructive or organizing element in music, the way a composer takes a basic theme and then repeats it, alters it, and/or makes contrast to it.

timbre

- (also called tone color) the quality that distinguishes the sound of one instrument or voice from another; a clarinet and an oboe playing the same note, or a male voice and a female voice singing the same note, are said to have different timbres.

melody

- a pleasing succession of musical tones; the tune.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Student's will explore the expression of mood through music and visual art.

Instructional Procedures

See CMA Table of Contents See composer's profile and picture:

Listen

Introduce the music by telling the students that the inspiration for this piece of music was a painting by a friend of the composer's. Play the piece (selection II). Can the students make some guesses about what the painting depicted? Can they think of anything in their lives that could be the inspiration for this piece of music? What would it be?

Activity

Have the students map out the events in the music with pictures. Suggest that they start by drawing some mountains and a little stream (maybe some snow melting and dripping) in the upper left corner of their paper. They can then work down and across on their paper, drawing pictures of the river at different stages. Make sure they include the hunters with their horses, dogs and horns! Listen to the piece again and have the students indicate on their drawings, using words or symbols, what the musical cues are that indicate changes in the scene. Is it the addition of another instrument? A change in the tempo? A change in volume?

Close

Tell the students that the painting that inspired 'Bydlo' was a painting of a cart pulled by an ox. Having listened to the music, what do they think the cart looked like? What were the wheels made of? Was it empty or full? What did the ox look like? Did the cart move quickly or slowly?

Extensions

Beyond

Related topics

- painting, drawing, visual arts
- 19th century farm life
- 19th century transportation
- art exhibits

Extension Ideas

As a group or with small groups, look through books about art and art history. Look for pictures that look like they could be the inspiration for Mussorgsky's piece or for any of the other pieces on the CDs.

Do the same kind of exercise with any of the works on the CDs--listen to a piece and then draw the picture that comes to mind.

Take a field trip to an art gallery or museum. Is there music playing in the gallery? Can you find a

picture that looks the way the music sounds? Is there any art that reminds you of music you've heard?

Using the timeline (section VII) and other historical references, talk about what it would have been like to live in Mussorgsky's time. If you were a farmer; how would you get your produce to market? How would you get from place to place?

Additional Resources

Mickelthwait, Lucy. *A Child's Book of Art*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1993.

Davidson, Rosemary. *What is Art?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Sancha, Sheila. *The Luttrell Village*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1982.

Greene, Carol. *Poland*. Chicago: Children's Press, 1983.

Edom, Helen. *Living Long Ago: Travel and Transport London*. Usborne Publishing Ltd., 1990.

Pictures at an Exhibition.

Philips. 1990 (video cassette, 109 mins.)

Mussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition

Montreal Symphony/Charles Dutoit London 417299

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