

# Classical Music Appreciation (Grades 3-4 / Lesson 5)

## Summary

Using excerpts from Rimsky-Korsakov's 'Flight of the Bumblebee', students learn about 'bee havior' and link habits of bees to the musical selection

## Materials

Classical Music Start-up Kit CD 2 and CD player; space for students to move around; copies or a transparency of the Bee Dance worksheet (W-8)

## Background for Teachers

### Composer Profile

#### **Composer**

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (NEE-koe-lye RIM-skee KORE-sa-kaav

#### **Nationality**

Russian

#### **Birth - Death**

1844-1908

#### **Excerpt**

'Flight of the Bumblebee' from The Tsar Saltan opera

#### **Era**

Nationalism

Korsakov had a successful career as a naval officer, but the music he composed as a hobby proved to be so popular that he was invited to teach music at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. He accepted the position, despite the fact that he knew very little about musical notation and had never taught music or led an orchestra before. He had to study furiously just to stay a few days ahead of his students. Best known for his Operas, Rimsky-Korsakov's love for the exotic helped breathe new life into traditional Russian folktales. This piece is part of his opera, The Tsar Soltaa which involves sibling rivalry, a magical island, a Swan Princess, and the young hero, Prince Guidon (GEE-don). 'Flight of the Bumblebee' is the music that plays when Prince Guidon, who has been turned into a bumblebee by his wicked aunts, seeks unmerciful revenge by chasing and stinging his enemies.

## Vocabulary

### **musical notation**

- a visual representation of real or imagined musical sound used to teach music or to instruct performers. Usually understood in classical music to mean Western staff notation, which consists of the familiar 5-line staff, notes, rests, treble and bass clefs, etc.

### **opera**

- a drama that is primarily sung, accompanied by instruments, and staged theatrically. choreography - the art of creating and arranging dances.

## Intended Learning Outcomes

Student's will learn about bee behavior and link habits of bees to the musical selection.

## Instructional Procedures

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

### **Listen**

Ask the students to close their eyes as they listen to the piece (selection 12). Tell them to imagine a bee as it flies. Does a bee fly straight? Have the students share what they imagined as the music played.

### **Activity**

Introduce the idea of how bees communicate. Instead of talking to each other as people do, they dance to tell the other bees important things, like where to find pollen. Use the Bee Dance worksheet or transparency (W - 8) to show the students two common bee dances, the 'round dance' and the 'tail-wagging dance.' In an open space, lead the students through the two dances. Allow the students to practice and have fun dancing around. You may want to play the music again in the background.

Divide the class into small groups (three to five students). Give each group a different 'bee message' to act or dance out. Some possibilities might be 'the Queen is sick,' 'the eggs are hatching, 'look out! here comes the beekeeper!,' 'the honey's ready and it tastes great!,' or '-there's a mean little girl throwing stones at the hive--let's get her!' Give them a few minutes to choreograph their bee dance and then have them perform in front of the class. See if the other students can guess the 'bee message' being communicated. Some of what they come up with may be silly, but the idea is for the children to have fun and use their imagination.

### **Close**

If time permits, have the students decide which 'bee message' would go best with 'Flight of the Bumblebee,' and have that group teach their dance to the rest of the class. Play the piece again and let everyone dance with the music.

## Extensions

### **Beyond**

#### **Related topics**

- animal communication
- social insects
- interpretive dance
- opera

### **Extension Ideas**

Have the students map out the bee dance their group created and write instructions on how it should be performed. Encourage them to use descriptive language to explain what the motions in the dance signify.

Break the students into large groups and help them to write and perform their own operas based on a familiar story or fairy tale.

Divide the students into groups and have them research and report on other animals and how they

communicate (for example: whales and dolphins, wolves, songbirds, elephants, crickets, or dogs and cats).

#### Additional Resources

Hawes, Judy. *Bees and Beelines*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1964.

Micucci, Charles. *The Life and Times of the Honeybee*. New York: Ticknor & Fields Books for Young Readers, 1995.

Biscardi, Cyrus H. *The Storybook of Opera*, vols. I and II. Holmes Beach, Florida: Learning Publications, Inc., 1987.

Englander, Roger. *Opera, What's All the Screaming About?* New York: Walker and Co., 1983.

Kaplan, Carol and Becker, Sandi. *Three Piggy Opera* (cassette and book). St. Louis: Milliken Publishing Co., 1987.

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. *Singing Birds and Flashing Fireflies*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1989.

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. *How Smart Are Animals*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1990.

Rimsky-Korsakov: Tsar Saltan Suite Philharmonic Orchestra/Vladimir Ashkeknazy London 417301

#### Authors

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