

# Classical Musical Appreciation (Grades 3-4 / Lesson 2)

## Summary

Using excerpts from Smetana's 'The Moldau', students explore musical description and use pictures to represent musical events.

## Materials

Classical Music Start-up Kit CD 2 and CD player with timer; Paper and pencils/pens for each student

## Background for Teachers

### Composer Profile

#### **Composer**

Bedrich Smetana (BED-ritch SMEH-tuh-nuh)

#### **Nationality**

Czechoslovakian

#### **Birth - Death**

1825 - 1884

#### **Excerpt**

'The Moldau' (MOLE-dow) Musical Era

#### **Era**

Nationalist

Bedrich Smetana was the first Czech composer to be internationally recognized for the music he wrote. He grew up in Bohemia, married, and started a music institute there. After spending 5 years teaching music in Sweden, Smetana returned to Bohemia--the home he loved. He began writing a vast instrumental monument to his nation, a six-part tone poem called *Ma Vlast* (My Homeland). It took seven years to complete, partly because his hearing began to fail in the process. Each of the six parts depicts a different feature of Bohemia's natural beauty. 'The Moldau' is the second part of this work. It's a musical representation of the Moldau River; tracing the river's course from its source in the mountains to the city of Prague. Our excerpt takes us from the river's source, through the countryside, and past a hunting party. The Moldau has long been a part of music curricula, so check for the complete recording in your library or media center. Then let the class enjoy the entire piece, as the river flows on a moonlit night, passes a peasant wedding, runs the rapids of St. John's and ends its journey in Prague.

#### Vocabulary

##### **tone poem**

- an orchestral form in which a poem or theme provides a narrative or illustrative basis. Also known as a symphonic poem.

##### **tempo**

- the rate of speed and general mood of a musical piece, usually indicated on the score with a series of relative terms: *adagio* (very slow), *largo* (slow), *andante* (moderately slow), *allegro* (fast and lively), *allegretto* (faster than *allegro*), *presto* (faster still).

## **volume**

- the loudness of a sound.

### Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will explore musical description, using pictures to represent musical events

### Instructional Procedures

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

#### **Listen**

Play the piece (selection 9). Have the students call out when they think something is happening with the river. For example, when the small brook joins with another, when the river becomes large enough to have a strong current (1:07), when the water drops down off the rocks to form a waterfall (1:54), when it gets backed up (1:58), or when the water swirls around something (2:49). Tell the students that at one point a hunting party with horses, dogs, and, most importantly, horns, passes by the river (3:04). Can they hear the horns echoing over the water?

#### **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**

Ask the students to share their 'maps' with the class, describing what cues in the music caused them to draw different items or symbols on the page. You may want to allow the students to add color and more details to their drawings while they listen a few more times, and it might be fun to put all the 'maps' up on a bulletin board.

### Extensions

Beyond

Related topics

the water cycle

map reading

poetry

### Extension Ideas

Obtain a recording of 'The Moldau' in its entirety and allow students to imagine and/or draw what the river is encountering at different points in the work

Listen to Liszt's 'The Fountains of the Villa d'Este' (selection 4). It is a descriptive work that portrays water flowing through a fountain. Compare this portrayal of water to the musical description of water in 'The Moldau.'

The Moldau joins the Danube and flows into the Black Sea in Romania. Using a map of Eastern

Europe, have the students trace the course of the Moldau (Vltava) to the sea. Does it flow east to west? North to south? Why does water flow in certain directions? Does it always go in the same direction? What determines the direction a river flows? Using a map of the state or local area, have the students pick out features that would affect the flow of rivers in the area. Assign groups of students to different rivers in the U.S. and have them trace the course of the assigned river, using the map to find out what affects the river's flow.

The Moldau is part of a tone poem. Discuss other types of poems (sonnets, limericks, haiku, etc.). Have the students write a poem about the Moldau or their favorite river.

#### Additional Resources

Berger, Melvin and Gilda. *Water, Water Everywhere*. Nashville: Hambleton-Hill Publishing, Inc., 1995.

Espenshade, Edward B., et. al (editors). *Goode's World Atlas* (19th edition). Chicago: Rand McNally, 1985.

Morris, Scott E., ed. *How to Read A Map*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1993.

Oxlade, Chris. *Maps and Map-Making*. New York: Grolier Publishing, 1995.

Holmes, John. *Writing Poetry*. Boston: Writer, Inc., 1960.

Editorial Board, Roth Publishing, Inc. *The World's Best Poetry for Children*, vols. 1 and 2. New York: Poetry Anthology Press, 1986.

Smetana: The Moldau Cleveland Orchestra/George Szell Sony MK42417

#### Authors

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