

## **Let's Hear That Again!**

Ways to help children connect with recorded music

By Gloria Nelson

During the last five years, I have heard my students repeat that statement frequently after listening to music written by great composers. As I reflect upon this trend, I attribute it to the following instructional strategies:

- Making up words to 'glue' melodic themes into student thinking
- Creating maps to highlight certain sections of compositions
- Learning the rhythm syllables of certain themes
- Developing listening guides
- Using movement and drama to focus attention on certain sections or themes
- Reading aloud to students about the childhood lives of composers

The greatest advantage in developing and using these strategies with my students has been their increased interest in music other than the "top 40". Thinking up new ideas to "catch their ears" has also given me the pleasure of becoming much more familiar with the compositions that were used.

For purposes of demonstrating these strategies, I have selected four compositions and four different strategies.

[Piano Concerto in A Minor, First Movement](#) by Edvard Grieg

[An American in Paris](#) by George Gershwin using the instructional strategy

[Overture from L'arlesienne Suite No. 1](#) by Georges Bizet

[Violin Concerto in D Major, Opus 61, Third Movement](#) by Ludwig van Beethoven

**Piano Concerto in A Minor First Movement** (Edvard Grieg)  
By Gloria Nelson (Oregon)

Step 1: We learned the initial melodic theme by singing the following words: We also tapped in our palm and spoke the rhythm syllables of the initial theme.

Step 2: The initial experience of listening to a recording of the concerto was greeted by smiles of delight as the students recognized our “Melody Words”. While the concerto was played, we kept track of how many times “Melody Words” fit the melody of the music. I asked the students to raise their hands each time they heard the theme, and I kept a tally at the chalkboard. At other times, the students kept their own tallies. Often they got different answers which provided a good reason to listen again to check answers.

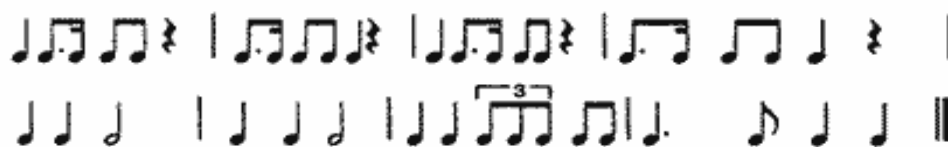
Step 3: We perused the listening guide together.

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Listening Guide for Edvard Grieg's  
**Piano Concerto in A Minor**  
by Gloria Nelson

1. Brief **timpani** roll. The **piano** plays alone using full descending chords followed by ascending arpeggios.

2. **Woodwinds**, with underlying support of strings, begin the main theme:



3. **Strings** repeat the second half of the main theme at a louder dynamic level.

4. The **piano** repeats the main theme.

5. **Strings and piano** join together to repeat the last half of the main theme.

6. **SUDDENLY** the **piano** begins a playful section with skips and leaps at a little faster tempo. Several changes in dynamic levels happen during this section as the orchestra accompanies the piano. It ends very quietly.

7. In a quiet legato manner, the **low strings** begin playing the main theme. The **piano** echoes this idea and continues to lead the orchestra growing into a very rhythmic and dramatic section that ends with the brass instruments.

8. **Flutes, horns, and strings** manipulate the main theme which is played twice.

9. **SUDDENLY** a change by the **whole orchestra** leads to the piano section which builds in intensity.

10. The **piano** returns to the main theme. The **strings** follow with the second half of the main theme.

11. Return of the **piano** playing the main theme in a lively manner. The orchestra and piano play together. The tempo becomes slower.

12. The **low strings** return with a quiet legato playing of the main theme.

13. The **piano** repeats a quiet legato playing of the main theme.

14. The orchestra returns to the main theme but with a different melodic twist.

15. Using precision, a quiet volume, and a slower tempo, the **piano** plays the first two measures of the main theme several times.

16. The **piano** plays the complete main theme using full chords with fill-in flourishes that show off the skill of the pianist.

17. The **orchestra** begins to prepare for the finale. The **piano** joins in and the piece ends on a sustained chord.

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## **An American in Paris (George Gershwin)**

By Gloria Nelson

**Step 1:** In order to begin this experience, I believed it important for students to connect with feelings they may have had while traveling to a place that was new to them. Initially, I posed the following questions;

- “How many of you have traveled to a place you had not been before?”
- “Was this place in this country or a different country?”
- “What feelings do you remember during this experience?”

I instructed the students to please take a few minutes to share their answers with a partner. Next, I asked a few students to share with the class what their partner told them.

**Step 2:** The next step was to locate Paris on the map and to hear what some of our students knew about that city. Since several of my students had been there, they served as a rich resource. A few students also offered to do some research to find out such things as the population of Paris and its points of interest, etc.

**Step 3:** Students were given listening guides

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*Listening Guide for George Gershwin's*  
**An American in Paris**  
*by Gloria Nelson*

1. Begins with a rhythm pattern called "the walking theme" that looks and sounds like this:



2. The car horns of Paris traffic blare this rhythm:

3. Short-fast passages played by **xylophones**.

4. A slight pause followed by a slowing of tempo.

5. "Walking theme" enters again followed by a new melody by the **trombone**.

6. New theme enters with the **clarinet** playing this rhythm:



7. This theme is repeated by the **brass** section.

8. Flute intersperses "walking theme."

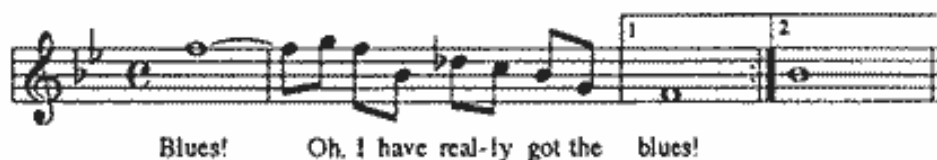
9. Very animated section using the rhythm pattern previously played by the **clarinet**.

10. Slower section featuring the **oboe** playing the melodic line.

11. Very spirited section. How many instruments or instrument families can you identify playing in this section?

12. **Violin** plays as if it is "speaking" to the visitor for awhile.

13. Using a slow tempo, the **trumpet** plays a "blues" melody (as if the visitor is feeling homesick). Try these words with this theme, "Blues, oh, I have really got the blues."



14. Noisy, cheerful theme using the Charleston (a popular dance of the times) rhythm as its foundation. (Maybe the visitor met someone from back home and chatted awhile and then felt better.)

15. "Walking theme" returns with a hint of the "blue" melody. But the "blue" melody is definitely overshadowed by the lure of having a great night in the city of Paris.

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The instructions were, “With a partner, please figure out the rhythm sections by tapping and speaking the rhythm syllables. Let me know when you are ready to share your ideas.”

Then I wandered throughout the class listening to them and giving help where needed. After sharing ideas, we tapped and said the rhythm sections together as a class.

**Step 4:** We listened to a recording of “An American in Paris” and followed the guide for as many times as the students showed an interest. The highlight of our initial listening experience was identifying the “car horn” and “walking theme” sections. (At a later date, five of my students actually performed on bicycle horns with the Oregon State University Symphony Orchestra.)

**Step 5:** The second favorite involvement was singing the words I created for the “blues melody,” “Blues -----oh, I have really got the blues. (*See listening guide above.*)

Initially, I sang the melody and words to the students and had them echo the same a few times. I also talked about how Gershwin’s visitor may have been feeling a bit homesick. Then we sang the tune again with a little more emotion (actually, we hammed it up quite a bit!) before we listened again.

**Step 6:** As previously mentioned in the Grieg Piano Concerto portion of this article, on an enlarged listening guide, we place magnets or other markers to indicate what was heard.

**Step 7:** We talked briefly about how music plays such an important role in enhancing the plot of movies and television programs. In a later lesson, I asked the students if they knew of other composers who had used music to describe feelings, to make people think of a certain place, or to enhance a story plot. They mentioned such compositions as “In the Hall of the Mountain King” (Greig), “Danse Macabre” (Camille Saint-Saens), music from “The Lion King” as well as their Disney favorites.

# Overture from L'arlesienne Suite No. 1 (Georges Bizet) By Gloria Nelson

Bizet used the melody of the French carol, "March of the Kings" as a basis for this composition, which is in the format of theme and variations. The following activity took one 30-minute period.

## March of the Kings

French Carol

Three great kings—— I met at ear - ly morn,—— With  
all their ret - in - ue were slow - ly march - ing:  
Three great kings—— I met at earl - y morn,—— were  
on their way to meet the new - ly born. With  
gifts of gold brought from far a - way,—— And  
val - iant war - riors to guard the king - ly trea - sure. With  
gifts of gold brought from far a - way,—— And  
shields all shin - ing in their bright ar - ray.

The next time I teach this lesson, I might proceed more slowly to give students more thinking time. We worked in learning teams of four or five students to create ideas for a story based on the music.

**Step 1:** Before gathering into our learning teams, I told the students to pretend that the Governor of Oregon was coming to Corvallis and that they were to write a play for his visit. We discussed the meaning of the word 'plot.' "We are going to let a musical composition be our guide as we create the lot for our play. What are some elements in music that might dictate your ideas? Please discuss this question with your team and be prepared to report one of your ideas to the class."

**Step 2:** Each team was given a worksheet and one pencil.



Worksheet

# Overture from L'arlesienne Suite No. 1

by Georges Bizet

Team Members:

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Remember, when working in teams,

1. Make sure you hear and accept ideas from everyone in your group.
2. Keep a record of your ideas. You can assign one person to record or take turns being recorder.

The main plot of our story:

Act 1

Act 2

Act 3

Act 4

As I played the initial theme many times, the students were to create and write a very brief synopsis of the plot for their play.

**Step 3:** After noting the importance of having each act enhance the main plot, we continued on to subsequent acts, first listening to each variation then allowing students time to discuss and jot down ideas. We did this for as many times as the students needed. The discussion was lively, to put it mildly

**Step 4:** Each team was invited to take turns reading its ideas to the class. Included in this activity were comments on how the music affected the decisions that were made for each act (variation). To promote the discussion, I asked questions such as:

- “How did the melody guide your thinking?”
- “Were your decisions based more on the rhythm or the melody?”
- “In what way did the dynamic levels create more ideas?”
- “In which act did the tempo play the most significant role for your decision-making process?”

I found creating a plot and acting out their own stories a meaningful way for my students to internalize the idea of theme and variations. They appreciated the variety of ideas that emerged from different teams and wanted to act out their own ideas the next time they came to class.

**Step 5:** We learned “March of the Three Kings,” the old French folk song on which this composition is based. The students made the connection as soon as they heard the melody.

**Step 6:** In the future, this process could lead to the study of other pieces of music in which folk songs or other familiar melodies were used as the germ for the composition. Other compositions of this nature that are worthy of study include:

**America – Variations on America** by Charles Ives

**Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star** – Variations on “Ah, vous dirai-je Maman by Mozart

**While Strolling One Day** – Acadian Songs and Dance by Virgil Thomson

**English folk songs** – Folk Song Suite by Vaughn Williams

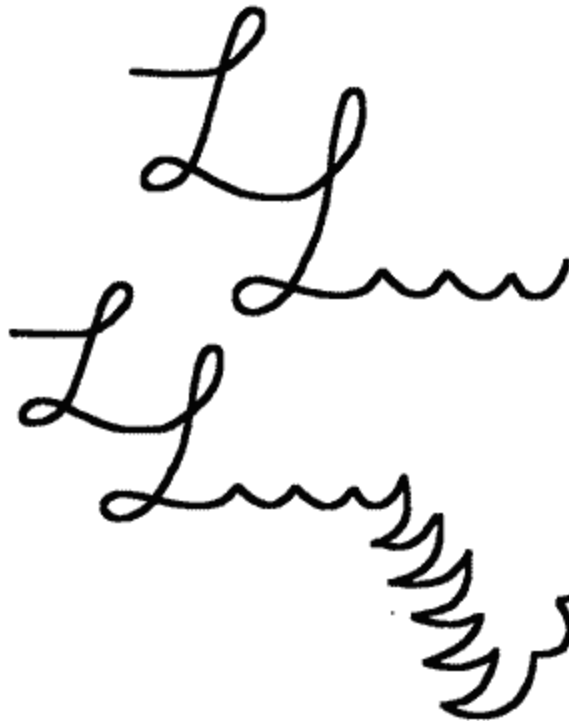
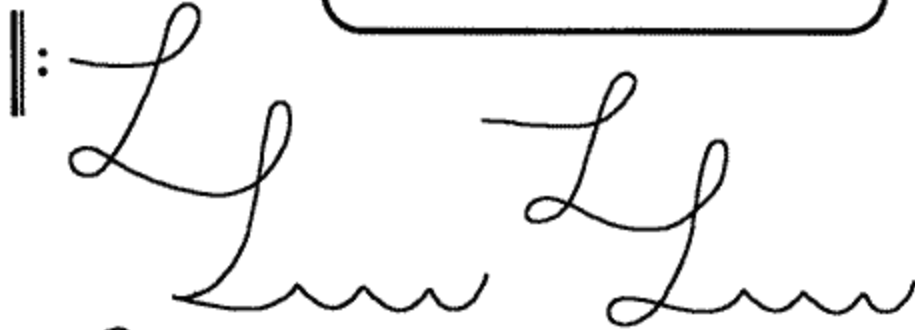
**When Johnny Comes Marching Home** – American Salute by Morton Gould

**Violin Concerto in D Major, Opus 61,**  
Third Movement (Ludwig van Beethoven)  
By Gloria Nelson

My students have become intrigued with the rondo form and love anticipating the reappearance of that which is familiar. The following map was developed to help primary students identify the A theme of Beethoven's Violin Concerto which features the rondo form. Other parts of the composition were not used initially.

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**Violin Concerto in D Major  
Opus 61, Third Movement**  
*by Ludwig van Beethoven*



Map by Gloria Nelson

**Step 1:** As we investigated a large copy of the map on the chalkboard, I asked several questions to help my students predict what musical sounds might be heard in this composition:

- “What is the first thing you noticed about this new map?” The students were asked to share with the partner next to them. Then, we had several students come to the chart to point out and verbalize their thoughts about the map.
- “Do you think it will take a long or a short time to read this map?” “Why?”
- “Will the music go fast or slow?” “Can you tell us why you think that?”

**Step 2:** Initially, we listened to the music and followed only the first section of the map, that which lies between the repeat signs. After the first listening, I asked the children if they discovered any part that was difficult to read. (Many times, with primary children, extra study must be given when considering which path to follow at ‘loop’ intersections. That is one reason I kept this map very simple.)

**Step 3:** When most of the children could successfully listen and follow the map for the first section, we went on to the next section and discussed why those lines were thicker. The students provided a variety of answers, but we usually came to the consensus that that part will be louder than the first.

I used this mapping experience to motivate students to listen to the entire composition. They waited, attentively listening for the familiar “A” sections of the composition, and they were encouraged to make their own maps in the air.