

DANCE OF THE COMEDIANS

Teaching/Learning Experiences based on SongWorks Principles

Meet the Composer

Picture of Bedrich Smetana, Father of Czechoslovakia Music (now Czech Republic).

First performed on piano when he was 6 years old. Went deaf at 50 but kept composing, hearing the music in his head. (Beethoven went deaf at 44-45)

Discover from the Score

Show charts out of order and discuss that they are music notation themes for orchestra sounds composed by Smetana. Predict what each theme may sound like. Consider discussing “personalities” of the themes rather than heavy focus on precise rhythms or pitches. Begin each exploration with “What do you notice?” leading to awareness of:

THEME A is very busy and fast and has ups and downs. Lots of 16th notes. Show the hurried sounds by moving hands, arms, head, feet, or whole body in ways to express the idea through movement. Predict possible instruments



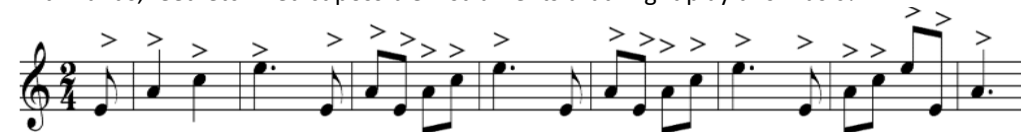
THEME B has “catch your breath” rests at the beginning. How might you express this part of the theme.



THEME C has a stretching part. It is all quarter and eighth notes, but ties occur over some of the bar lines which create a sense of stretch. Explore different ways to stretch with hands, arms, body, etc. What instruments might be playing this music?



THEME D is strong, powerful because of the accents. How might you show the strength and power with hands, feet, etc. Predict possible instruments that might play this music?



THEME E has a melodic pattern which goes up and then takes a long time coming down. How might you show that with your body?



THEME F has smooth parts and syncopated parts. Practice how you might express those contrasting parts by moving hands, arms, body etc.



Listen and Read

Listen to the recording then discuss the order of the themes as the children heard them. Place themes in order while listening and identify them with letters. Play whole piece while “reading” the themes. At the Coda, conduct what you hear. Children may notice that some of the themes repeat more than once. Musicians often use letters to identify order of themes throughout a music composition. (ABCB etc.) [P1, P2P, P4]

Move (feel) the Themes

Organize class into six groups. Consider allowing children to choose their own groups. If they choose to make their own, identify the number of children in the class and how many children are needed for each group. Invite children to choose an empty corner or space in the room to form their group. Pass out a music notation theme card to each group. Invite children to find a way to express the personality of their theme through movement that takes their body through space. Teacher walks from group to group, to assist as necessary. Listen to their ideas and build on them. Chin the sounds of the music so children will not get stuck on the notation but will move to the sound. [P1,P2, P3, P4, P6]

Establish Importance of Silence

Silence is part of music. Music begins and ends with silence. Suggest we show silence with a freeze. Freeze before beginning your theme and freeze at its end. Suggest the children think of a frozen shape that might represent their movement and music, and that they can balance for 3 minutes. When their theme begins, they begin moving, when it ends they freeze while the other groups perform. [P3]

Move (feel) the Music –

Play the music for them to move. Guide children who are unsure about when their theme comes. Suggest that as the coda (end) is approaching, and the themes sound no more, they conduct the music, conducting movement being guided by the sounds until the end. Repeat as needed. [P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7]

Create the Grand Finale

Invite the children to listen to the Coda so together they can decide how to move to the end. Here is where the children begin asking me to play at certain points. For example, “begin when theme F starts.” Or “begin when the whole orchestra begins playing theme E.” [P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7]

Help children notice the following:

- Theme F and theme E at some point are taken up by the whole orchestra. When that happens, everyone might follow the movement of those particular groups
- A couple of climax points occur near the end. See if you can hear them. What might we do to emphasize those specific points.
- What will the freeze at the end look like.
- Put it all together from beginning to end. Enjoy!!!

View Video of Orchestra Playing Dance of the Comedians . [P7]

Suggest they pretend that watching this video is attending a concert which means no talking and no outward movement, but they can imagine themselves moving inside. What do they notice? How many different instruments can they name as instruments appear on the screen? Google a video showing a woman conductor.

“Someday you may want to be in an orchestra,” or “maybe an orchestra conductor.”

ENJOY!

Materials Used

Sound recording of Dance of the Comedians by Bedřich Smetana (I used the recording from Bowmar Orchestral Library along with teaching ideas by Lucille Wood. Distributed by Alfred Publishing.)

Copy of six theme charts displayed out of order.

Video of Orchestra Performing Dance of the Comedians. I used www.youtube.com/watch?v=KY1b52b0Re4

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO GUIDE PLANNING & ASSESSMENT OF THIS LESSON

Principles for Teaching & Learning MUSIC [MP] used to guide this lesson:

1. The major goal of music study is the development of *responsiveness to music*.
2. The *musicality* that is critical to music performance is just as important in music study.
3. The fundamental skill in music behavior is *listening*.
5. A distinction exists between skills and concepts that are *musically easy* and those that are *musically simple*.

Principles for Teaching & Learning [P] used to guide this lesson:

1. Students have the right to *be treated with respect and dignity* for their ideas, skills, and stages of development.
2. Students deserve an engaging learning environment in which they *feel safe* enough to *demonstrate freely their* understandings and skills through various types of participation.
3. Student learning is the responsibility of *both* teachers and students.
4. Learning is holistic and constructive
6. *Accurate and constructive* feedback helps students become independent learners. [avoid “good job.”]
7. Quality of Life is enriched through music

Brain Research Facts (fn. 3):

The Brain thrives on confusion.

The Brain resists logic.

What Children Will Know and Be Able to Do with Music:

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| • <i>Listen analytically</i> to recorded orchestra music | MP3 |
| • Be aware that long music compositions are <i>organized into shorter sections</i> | MP3 |
| • <i>Identify patterns</i> in music as repeated and/or contrasting | MP2 |
| • Hear and <i>Read</i> rhythm patterns | MP5 |
| • Hear and <i>Read pitches</i> going up or down | MP5 |
| • Identify by sight and sound, <i>orchestra instruments</i> | MP3 |
| • Feel music gestures and rhythms through <i>musically expressive movements</i> | MP 1, MP2 |
| • Extend their repertoire of known music compositions and composers | MP3 |
| • Show <i>responsiveness</i> to music | MP1 |
| • Increase appreciation for orchestra music | MP2 |

Growing Music Vocabulary:

themes (ABCDEF), introduction, coda, accent, 16th note, 8th note, quarter note, rest, dotted note, tie, composer, conductor, syncopation, orchestra, violin, tympani, trumpet, oboe, clarinet, string bass, cymbal, finale. What else?

What Life Skills Children Will Be Learning:

Self-control, patience, cooperation, community, new friends, world geography, problem solving, patterns, confidence, coordination, reading left to right & top to bottom, self in space, interpreting symbols for sound. What else?

Resources:

1. Bennett, P. and D. R. Bartholomew. *SongWorks II: Singing from Sound to Symbol*.
2. Bowmar *Orchestral Library*, Lucille Wood, editor. Alfred Music.
3. Caine, R. and Caine, G. *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain*.
4. Hart, Leslie A. *Human Brain and Human Learning*