

MUSIC LESSON PLAN

Date: Prior to attending the concert performance of “GIVE ME SPACE!”

Grade Level/Subject: 4th Grade/Music

Co-Teaching Model Utilized: As desired; Music teachers and classroom teachers may wish to collaborate in presenting the lesson.

Main Idea

Characterization in music: Composers use musical ideas to express qualities of people, events or places.

Standard

Music: Responding: Anchor Standard 8-Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. Demonstrate and explain how the expressive qualities (such as dynamics, tempo and timbre) are used in performers’ and personal interpretations to reflect expressive intent.

Objectives

Students will describe how composer Gustav Holst used musical elements of pitch (high/low), tempo (fast/slow), dynamics (loud/soft), and timbre (instrument choice) to represent one of the planets in the solar system.

Vocabulary

Movement – a section of a work written for orchestra (such as a suite or a symphony)
Suite – a work written for orchestra that has sections that contrast

Accommodations

Students who have difficulty writing may need to describe their ideas and have someone else write them down.

Assessment Measures

Formative: Questioning students throughout lesson to check comprehension
Summative: Worksheet (What Do You Hear?)

Materials

Audiovisual equipment with Internet access
Listening worksheets for students

PROCEDURES & TIMELINE

Introductory Set

Do you think you could tell a story without using words? How might you do that?

Examples: painting; drawing; movement (mime or dance); instrumental music

Musicians will often perform music that tells a story. We are most familiar with this in the movies since the music soundtrack is an important part of the film.

Work Session

British composer Gustav Holst wrote a piece of music for orchestra he called 'The Planets' and it was first performed in 1918. The music has seven sections, called *movements*, and each movement has a title:

1. Mars, the Bringer of War
2. Venus, the Bringer of Peace
3. Mercury, the Winged Messenger
4. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity
5. Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age
6. Uranus, the Magician
7. Neptune, the Mystic

Students may notice that Earth and Pluto are not included. Astronomers did not discover Pluto until 1930. Gustav Holst wrote the music about the planets in our solar system that can be observed from Earth. He was not trying to describe them in scientific terms as astronomers do. But, the titles do tell us something about characters the planets represent.

Begin with the shortest movement in the suite, Mercury, the Winged Messenger. Ask students what they know about the planet Mercury: closest to the Sun; orbits the Sun once every 44 days; smallest of the planets in our solar system. The planet Mercury is named for the mythological Roman god Mercury, the messenger god. If the music is representing a messenger, how would you expect it to sound? Ask the students to predict how the music will sound in terms of pitch (high/low), tempo (fast/slow), and dynamics (loud/soft). What instruments would they expect to hear?

Listen to a performance of "Mercury, the Winged Messenger" from a CD, mp3, etc. without looking at images. The piece is about 4 minutes long (the shortest movement from 'The Planets'). If you are using a YouTube video, turn off the screen image and listen to sound only. Distribute the Listening Worksheet to students for them to make notes on what they hear.

After listening to the piece, provide time for students to think/pair/share as to what they noticed about the tempo, instrumentation, pitches, and dynamics. Were there similarities in what they heard? What differences were there?

Next, watch the YouTube video performance of “Mars, Bringer of War,” the first movement of *The Planets*, by the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. This movement is 7 minutes long and very dramatic. It is especially helpful because the camera shows the strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion instruments featured at different points in the work.

Closure

For contrast, choose another movement from *The Planets* without identifying by title. Have the students use the Listening Worksheet to note what they hear and then make a prediction as to which planet the music represents.

Lesson References

The Planets, by Gustav Holst, live concert performance by The National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, conducted by Edward Gardner

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=be7uEyyNIT4>

Gustav Holst’s ‘The Planets’: a guide

<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/holst/pictures/holsts-planets-guide/> (online article with pictures of the planets in our solar system)

‘The Planets’ at 100: A Listener’s Guide to Holst’s Solar System (online article from National Public Radio, September 28, 2018, by Tom Huizenga)

<https://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2018/09/28/652700640/the-planets-at-100-a-listener-s-guide-to-holst-s-solar-system>

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

The *pitch* is: Low Medium High (circle one)

The *tempo* is: Slow Medium Fast (circle one)

The *dynamics* are: Soft Medium Loud (circle one)

What instruments do you hear?

What planet do you think this represents?

Venus, the Bringer of Peace

Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity

Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age

Uranus, the Magician

Neptune, the Mystic

Why?