



Language of Music: *Music Sings and Music Dances*



Objective

Students will understand that all music shares the basic elements of melody and rhythm. These elements are found in the music of every culture, but are often expressed in different and unique ways. Students will explore this concept through learning about the different composers and listening to the varied repertoire that will be featured on the concert program.

Suggested Materials

- Recordings of selected works from concert - YouTube link: <http://tinyurl.com/languageofmusic>
- Repertoire list for concert as reference (provided)

Learning Standards

New York State Arts Standards

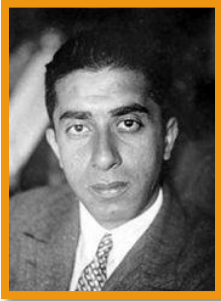
- 3 – Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art
- 4 – Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of Art

Common Core Learning Standards for ELA & Literacy

- Reading, CCR 2, 3 and 7
- Writing, CCR 7
- Speaking & Listening, CCR 2

Procedure

The language of music is spoken through melodies and rhythms – these two basic elements can be found in any music, no matter where it is created. The powerful thing about music is that while all cultures share this art form, each culture has its own unique melodies and rhythms. This program is a sampling of music written by people from different parts of the world. Each piece sings with unique melodies and/or dances with unique rhythms. You can explore as many of the featured pieces with your students as you have time. Encourage discussion after listening to each piece using the prompts and vocabulary listed in each “Let’s Listen” section.



ARAM KHACHATURIAN, 1903-1978, Armenian composer

Aram Khachaturian was born in the country of Georgia, before moving to Moscow to study music at the Gnessin Musical Institute and then the Moscow Conservatory. He started his musical studies playing cello but began writing music not long after entering the conservatory. His music often used Armenian and Eastern & Central European folk music and he became the most renowned Armenian composer of the 20th century. He is still highly regarded in Armenia, where he is considered a "national treasure".

“Sabre Dance” from Gayane

One of Khachaturian’s most popular works was the ballet Gayane, from which the famous Sabre Dance comes from. Aside from being the theme song of the Buffalo Sabres hockey team, you will also hear this famous piece throughout popular culture in tv shows as varied as The Twilight Zone, The Simpsons, SpongeBob SquarePants and the Big Bang Theory. In the original ballet, this piece features the dancers displaying their skills using sabres, which are curved swords. The melody is derived from an Armenian wedding folk tune.

Let’s Listen!

Notice the importance of the **percussion** in this piece – the timpani, or kettle drums lay down the driving beat at the beginning by playing the **base line** - the dominant (5th note in a scale) and the tonic (1st note in a scale). Then, the xylophone leads the orchestra in the famous rhythmic melody. The violins play an almost percussive role in this piece, playing rhythmic off beats throughout. You’ll also notice a lot of **glissandos** (musical glide between notes) in the xylophone and woodwinds that is imitated by the brass section.



KEN SHORLEY, Canadian composer

Ken Shorley has studied with some of the world’s finest percussionists, most notably the South Indian master drummer, Trichy Sankaran. He has received training on pan-global frame drumming, Turkish darabuka, African and Latin American drumming, and European orchestral percussion. Since 1994, Ken has been based in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada and has been on the part-time faculty of Acadia University since 1998. In addition to offering workshops and

lessons in hand drumming, Ken is an active composer and performer. His music has been presented by numerous Canadian and American groups. Selections from his first two CDs, Waterwheel (1999) and Nonagon (2002), are heard regularly on CBC Radio.

Bright Side

Ken Shorley wrote this piece in 2010 for four instruments: darbuka, riq, cajón and caxixi. (See Lesson 1 for more information). A variety of cultures are represented through these instruments – Latin, African and Middle Eastern. His compositions are influenced by the classical music of South India. He incorporates the brief motifs used by traditional Indian mridagam players as a starting point for the complex rhythms.

Let’s Listen!

The piece starts off with the darbuka player introducing a rhythm which the other three players imitate – this is called **call and response**. There are many different **meters** in this piece. See if you can clap a steady beat while listening and notice when you are clapping with the strong beats and when you are on the weak beats. When do you have to adjust your clapping? When are beats divided in two and when are they in three?



ARTURO MARQUEZ, *Mexican composer*

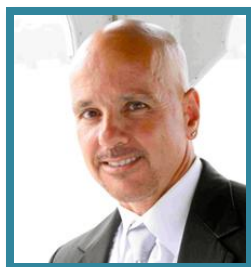
Arturo Márquez was born in Alamos, Mexico in 1950. He is the first born of nine children and he comes from a long line of musicians. His grandfather was a Mexican folk musician and his father was a mariachi musician in Mexico. When he was young, Arturo’s family immigrated to California and they settled in a suburb of Los Angeles. Arturo became famous when he wrote a series of pieces for orchestra called *The Danzones*, which are based on the music of Cuba and the Veracruz region in Mexico. Arturo Márquez now lives with his family in Mexico City and teaches music at the National University of Mexico.

Danzon No. 2

Danzón No. 2 is from a collection of pieces called *The Danzones*. It was included on the program played by the Simon Bolívar Youth Orchestra from Venezuela on a tour throughout Europe and the United States. This is an orchestra of young people who have been studying music since they were very young. Because so many people around the world enjoyed hearing this piece performed by these talented students, it became very well known outside of Mexico. In fact, the performances by this orchestra have also inspired many young people in the United States and around the world to play musical instruments.

Let’s Listen!

Danzon is a type of dance that is popular in Mexican dance halls, where Arturo discovered Latin ballroom dancing. He was inspired by the rhythms and movement of this dance. Danzon No. 2 includes the **clavé rhythm** which is a rhythm developed from a combination of African and Cuban influences. Clavé rhythm is found in many different types of Latin music. Try it!



ED ARGENZIANO, *American composer*

Ed has been a high school music director in New Jersey for 30 years and is now the Director of Instrumental Music/Orchestra at Clearwater HS, in Florida. He also served on the faculty of Fairleigh Dickinson University Middle College. In addition to writing and arranging music for percussion ensembles, he also has been active in National and International Drum Corps. Most recently, he coordinated the 420 member marching cast for the 2014 Super Bowl Half Time Show featuring Bruno Mars and the Red Hot Chile Peppers.

Stinkin’ Garbage

This piece was composed by Ed Argenziano in 1997 for “one large rubber garbage can and as many 30 gallon garbage cans (with lids) AS YOU CAN STAND!” The piece reflects the growing movement within percussion ensembles to explore less traditional sounds and to incorporate theatrics into the performance. You will see it performed with 4 people, but it can be played by many more!

ED ARGENZIANO, Stinkin' Garbage

Let's Listen!

Because the “instruments” used in this piece all have the same type of sound or **timbre** (see Lesson 1 for more exploration) the focus of the piece is much more centered on the complex rhythms throughout and the introduction of different **dynamics**. Notice how the quality of the energy changes when the dynamic gets softer.



FELIX MENDELSSOHN, 1809-1847, German composer

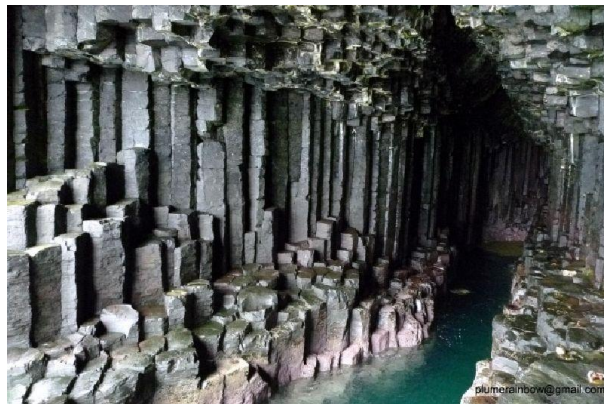
From the beginning of his life, Felix Mendelssohn was involved in music and was considered a child prodigy. He began studying piano at age 6 and was composing his own music by 12. In fact, the famous German poet Goethe compared Mendelssohn to Mozart as a child. He traveled around Europe performing and many of these trips became the inspiration for his music writing. Later in life he took a position as the conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and subsequently founded a major music school in Leipzig which still exists to this day as the oldest music school in Germany.

The Hebrides Overture

Mendelssohn made 10 visits to the United Kingdom performing and conducting his own music and this is where he was inspired to write the Hebrides Overture. He made a trip to Scotland where he saw Fingal's Cave located in the Hebrides Islands off of the coast. After the visit, he sent a postcard to his family with the first musical phrase of the overture sketched on it and a note that said "In order to make you understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides affected me, I send you the following, which came into my head there."

Let's Listen!

Although Mendelssohn calls this piece an **overture** it is really more of a **tone poem**. Overtures are usually a short, introductory piece of music that precedes a larger piece such as an opera or a suite. Mendelssohn's piece does not precede anything but instead is a stand-alone work. It could be considered a tone poem which means that it evokes the content or mood of a poem, short story, painting, or in this case, a landscape. Mendelssohn wanted to evoke the grandeur and loneliness of the cave with flowing melodies that often sound like waves and other times evoke the grand basalt pillars found within. Did he succeed?



Fingal's Cave, Hebrides, Scotland

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Violin Concerto

Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto is one of the most popular and most frequently played concertos for violin of all time. He wrote it for his childhood friend, violinist Ferdinand David, who was the first to perform it. He wrote the piece in 1845, just two years before he died. In fact, he was unable to conduct the premiere of the piece due to illness.



Let's Listen!

This concerto follows the standard form of concertos. It features a soloist that is accompanied by the orchestra. The soloist introduces the melodies and then develops these themes in a virtuosic performance meant to show off his or her technique. Concertos typically have three movements: a fast opening movement, a slow middle movement, and another fast movement which is the finale. You will hear the third or last movement of this concerto. Notice the playful question-answer style of the musical dialogue between the violin soloist and the orchestra.



DINUK WIJERATNE, *Sri-Lankan composer*

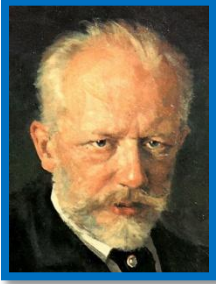
Dinuk Wijeratne was born in Sri-Lanka, grew up in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and then studied music in Manchester England. His talent for writing music was recognized by the American composer John Corigliano and he was invited to study at The Juilliard School in NYC. He now lives in Canada and serves as the music director of the Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra where he continues to compose. His international background has given him a wide range of inspirations which can be heard in his diverse compositions.

“Valdrada” from Invisible Cities

Dinuk Wijeratne was inspired by a novel called *Invisible Cities* written by the Italian author Italo Calvino in 1972. The book is an imaginary conversation between the explorer Marco Polo and the emperor Kubla Khan in which the explorer describes the many different cities he visited on his travels and the fantastical settings and people he saw. Valdrada, as it is described, is a city that sits at the edge of a lake and when travelers arrive they see two cities – the one above the lake and the reflection in the water. Calvino writes “nothing exists or happens in the one Valdrada that the other Valdrada does not repeat, because the city was so constructed that its every point would be reflected in its mirror.”

Let's Listen!

The solo instruments used in this piece allow the percussionists to have a more melodic role than the other pieces that feature TorQ. The city that inspired this piece is symmetrical, where everything that happens in the city above the water also happens in the mirror image city below the water. Therefore, Wijeratne created a piece that has lots of musical symmetries –rhythmic patterns that are repeated, melodies played by one instrument and then imitated by other instruments, etc. See if you can point out some musical symmetries while listening.



PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY, 1840-1893, *Russian composer*

Despite Tchaikovsky's emerging musical talent when he was young, there were little opportunities to make a career in music in Russia at that time, so he originally studied to become a civil servant. However, the newly created St. Petersburg Conservatory allowed him to take advantage of the opportunity to study music. After finishing his studies there, he moved to Moscow to take a position at the Moscow Conservatory teaching music theory. It was here that he wrote many of his compositions and developed his musical voice, which became what is now a recognizably Russian style.

Many of his works are now the most popular music in the classical genre, including *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* ballets and his many symphonies.

1812 Overture

While we associate this piece with the American/British War of 1812, it was actually written to commemorate the Russian victory during the Napoleonic Wars. It was instantly successful when performed in Russia in 1882. Ever since the piece was included on a 1974 Boston Pops Fourth of July concert, it has become a symbol of American patriotism.

Let's Listen!

This famous piece ends with a melody from a hymn called *O Lord, Save thy People*, which represents the spirit of the Russian people as they fight off the French forces. The celebration of victory depicted at the end includes cannons and gun fire as well as church bells, representing the Russian people expressing their joyful deliverance from Napoleon's cruel armies. This piece uses both **soaring melody and driving rhythms** to evoke the joyful nature of the theme while using every instrument family in the orchestra. It starts off with the **strings**, adds the **woodwinds**, then the **brass** and finally the **percussion**.