

Celebrating WNY

Lesson – *The Iroquois Six Nations and Dvořák*

Companion Videos – “New World” Symphony, Rabbit Dance

Suggested Grade Level

Grades 3-6

Objective

Students will be able to recognize a pentatonic scale used in both a Native American melody from the Allegany reservation and in Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony. They will compare and discuss these melodies, label their notation with solfege syllables, and perform the melodies. Students will gain insight into an element of the indigenous music of Western New York’s Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy.

Suggested Materials

- Video of *Rabbit Dance*, Allegany Reservation, Salamanca, NY and the third movement of Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony performed by the BPO
- Music sheet with two pentatonic melodies (provided)
- Optional: classroom instruments

New York State Arts Standards

MU:Cr1.1.3b-5b

MU:Pr4.2.3b-6b

MU:Re7.1.3a-6a

New York State Social Studies Standards

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

Standard 3: Geography

Standard 4: Economics

Standard 5: Civics, Citizenship, and Government

Procedure

- 1) Western New York is home to the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, otherwise known as the Haudenosaunee “People of the Longhouse.” These native peoples have long and deep cultural traditions that continue to be celebrated today. This includes music. Listen to the *Rabbit Dance* video, recorded by performers of the Seneca Nation, which is one of the Iroquois Six Nations.
- 2) Ask students: What do you notice about this music? What instruments do you hear? How do you feel listening to this music?



- 3) Explain to students that some cultures use particular scales and tonalities more often than others. A common tonality in Europe and America is the major scale or major tonality which is demonstrated in songs such as *The Star-Spangled Banner* or *Happy Birthday*. In the traditions of Native American music, you will often find pentatonic scales which consist of five notes in a specific pattern.
- 4) Sing the two scales with the students: the major scale (Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do) and the pentatonic scale: (Do, Re, Mi, Sol, La). How is the pentatonic scale different from the major scale?
- 5) Using the notation provided, sing or play the *Rabbit Dance* core melody for students on an available classroom instrument. Ask them to sing or solfege along. Then, listen to the recording of *Rabbit Dance* once more and ask students if they can recognize the melody.
- 6) Introduce Dvořák's "New World" Symphony: When the Czech composer, Antonin Dvořák came to live in America, he was very much inspired by the music of the native people here. In his home country, he wrote music using the traditional Czech folk melodies. While in America, he incorporated what he saw as our American musical traditions, for instance, the music of the Native Americans. When he wrote his "New World" Symphony he used some musical elements of Native American music throughout the piece, such as the pentatonic scale.
- 7) Now, watch the video of the third movement of Dvořák's Symphony No. 9. This movement is inspired by a poem called "The Song of Hiawatha" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Dvořák used the pentatonic scale to write the woodwind melody played by the oboe, flute and clarinet, found at time stamp 01:53 on the video. He wanted to invoke Native American melodies here.
- 8) Using the music sheet provided, play the Dvořák melody for the students. This melody uses the same notes as the *Rabbit Dance* – a pentatonic scale in E. Do the students hear any other similarities between Dvořák's piece and the *Rabbit Dance*?



Lesson – *The Iroquois Six Nations and Dvořák* (continued)

1. E Pentatonic Scale



2. Rabbit Dance melody



3. Dvorak 9 - 3rd Mvt melody



Ti (seventh) used as a passing tone

*Note that the one exception in Dvořák's melody is the use of "Ti" as a passing tone in the fifth measure of the notated melody. Does the sound of that measure change if you leave out the "Ti?"

In-person Learning Extension: Composition/Improvisation

Using Orff instruments, boom whackers, or other classroom instruments, have students experiment with the pentatonic scale and create their own melodies.

