

CLASSICS WITH KIDS

How to incorporate classical music in your classrooms

Benefits of classical music:

1. Music stimulates the parts of the brain that are related to reading, math and emotional development. It releases tension. It can also create tension.
2. It stimulates the connection between the left and right hemispheres of the brain. It creates new pathways in the brain.
3. It enables children to be creative and express themselves.
4. It can stimulate their imaginations.
5. It can focus their attention.
6. It improves memory.
7. The complexity of classical music seems to prime the brain to solve spatial problems more quickly
8. It can energize or relax.
9. Can provide a means for personal expression.
10. It's fun!.

Auditory perception and discrimination, creative movement, dramatic interpretation, music curriculum

Carnival of the Animals, by Camille Saint-Saens

1. Lots of poetry – read some of the poems
2. Discuss some of the instruments
3. Act out the way the animals move
 - a. *Aquarium* – scarves or parachute (See also, *Can You Hear It?*)
 - b. *The Tortoise* – place a carpet square on the child's back and see if she can crawl to the music without losing it.
 - c. *The Lion* – listen for the roaring. Have a parade and stop and roar when appropriate
 - d. *Kangaroos* - hopping
 - e. *The Swan* – scarves or ribbons
 - f. *The Elephants* – do a slow Can-Can. Then, play the Can-Can music from Orpheus in the Underworld by Offenbach to hear how it really should sound.

Peter and the Wolf, by Sergei Prokofiev

1. Make cards with a picture of each instrument and others with a picture of each character. Have children match the character with the appropriate instrument.
2. Talk about instrument families.
3. Act out story with or without puppets.
4. Discuss ways the duck might have gotten out of the wolf's belly.

MARCH MUSIC

1. Listen to *March of the Tin Soldiers* by Leon Jessel. Ask what the children think happened at the end of the piece. (When the music goes down the scale at the end)
2. *Grand March from Aida*, by Verdi
3. *March from The Nutcracker* by Tchaikovsky
4. *Radetsky March* by J. Strauss
 - a. At various times compare and contrast these marches.

BUGS...

***La Danza Tarantella* by Rossini**

1. Explain that tarantella is a dance. People thought if they were bitten by a particular poisonous spider and they did this “crazy” dance they would not be harmed by the poison.
2. Make tambourines and dance to the music.

***Flight of the Bumblebee* by Rimsky-Korsakov (See also, *Can You Hear It?*)**

1. Fly around the room and freeze when the music is paused.
2. Draw or paint to the music.
3. Compare to Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*

***Perpetual Motion, Violin Caprice # 16* by Paganini**

***The Fly* by Couperin**

GOOD FOR DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION

***Peer Gynt Suite* by Grieg**

1. *Morning* – this is fun to do during a day-night unit and act out sleeping, waking, stretching, yawning, etc. and getting up
2. *In the Hall of the Mountain King* – this is fun to do during a dinosaur study. You can act out the hunting process and, at the end, the catch!

JUST FOR FUN

***Surprise Symphony* – *Andante from Symphony #94*, by Hayden**

Explain that Hayden wrote music that was often played at dinner parties after the guests had eaten a large dinner and they were often full and sleepy. *Pretend to be full and sleepy*. Play the music. It starts out quiet and gets quieter. Listen for the surprise.

***Beethoven’s Wig*, Sing Along Symphonies**

Talk about Beethoven and the time in which he lived. Play some of Beethoven’s 5th Symphony. Then explain that someone took that music and put some funny words and illustrations to it. Look at the book as you listen to the CD.

Also on the CD are funny words and “beeps” set to the *Moonlight Sonata*.

Can You Hear It? The Metropolitan Museum of Art

This is a book with photographs of famous works of art and tracks from various pieces of classical music to go along with each picture. Our favorites include:

- *The Flight of the Bumblebee*
- *An American in Paris* (listen for the street sounds)
- *Carnival of the Animals: Fossils*. Listen for *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*
- *Comic Duet for Two Cats* – This is always a huge favorite and the children will want to hear it again!

COMPOSERS

Read *Mozart Finds a Melody* by Stephen Costanza. Follow that by playing the third movement of Concerto #17 in which the orchestra introduces the starling's melody.

OTHER "BIRD" MUSIC

Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks by Mussorgsky. Describes the efforts made by chicks to hatch from their eggs

Third Movement of Concerto # 17, by Mozart. The starling has a small head and a slender body with black feathers and white spots. It can mimic sounds in its environment. Mozart loved birds and kept them as pets. Mozart had a pet startling and some say he wrote the starling's song into his concerto and some say the starling learned it from hearing a melody that Mozart composed. (See also *Mozart Finds a Melody*)

Toy Symphony by Mozart. In this music are the sounds of the cuckoo, the nightingale, the green woodpecker and the quail. Their sounds are made mainly with whistles.

Il Gardellino by Vivaldi. This is about a goldfinch which has a lovely song consisting of high, fast trills followed by longer lower pitched sounds.

"The Bird" from *Peter and the Wolf*

"The Swan" from *Carnival of the Animals*

"Hens and Roosters" and "Aviary" from *Carnival of the Animals*.

"Song of the Lark" by Tchaikovsky from *Album for the Young*. The lark is a bird with spotted brown feathers which provide great camouflage in deserts and meadows and marshes. It has a remarkable song full of variations and can last up to an hour.

BALLET

The Nutcracker by Pytor Ilyich Tchaikovsky

- Discuss what ballet is
- Read the story of the Nutcracker
- Invite the children to share nutcrackers they may have at home
- Watch parts of a Nutcracker video
- Invite families to donate ballet costumes and shoes they are no longer needing and let the children dress up and dance.
- Play various pieces from The Nutcracker and encourage the children to dance.

Cinderella by Sergei Prokofiev

- See above
- Read *Cinderella* stories from other lands and compare and contrast them.

The Houston Ballet will send a docent to your school to tell your students about various ballets and to show them video clips of the ballet they are teaching.

VOCABULARY:

Composer – a person who makes up music in his or her head and then writes it down so others can play it and/or sing it.

Opera – like a play, except people sing to each other instead of speaking.

Ballet – a dance that tells a story

Instruments – the thing we use to make musical sounds. Instruments are grouped families:

1. The String Family (they all have strings to make their sounds): violins, violas, cellos, double basses, guitars, harps
2. The Woodwind Family (some are metal; some are wood and you blow into them to make a sound): flute, clarinet, oboe, saxophone, bassoon, recorder
3. The Brass Family (made of brass and are also blown into to make a sound): trumpet, tuba, French horn, trombone
4. Percussion Family (these are hit or shaken to make a sound): tympani or kettle drums, various drums, xylophones, chimes, triangles, tambourines, cymbals, wood blocks.
5. Keyboard family (these instruments all have a keyboard to play to make sounds): piano, harpsichord, and the organ, the King of the Instruments.

Orchestra – a team of musicians who all together to make beautiful music.

Conductor – the person who leads the orchestra

Baton – the stick the conductor waves to help the musicians know what to do.

Voice – the oldest instrument in the world. You can use it to sing most anywhere.

Choir – a group of people all singing together just as an orchestra plays together.

Band – a group of people playing instruments together, as the orchestra does, but with no string instruments.

Choreographer – the person who makes up the steps in ballet. He or she chooses steps that help tell who a character is and how that character is feeling.

Drama (in ballet) – dancers have to act while they are dancing so the audience will know how they are feeling.

Décor – the backgrounds and costumes that help us understand where the ballet is taking place. Props are part of the décor that are usually carried in the dancer's hands, like the nutcracker that Clara carries.

Costumes – what the dancers wear

Naomi H. Black, August 2015 Weekday Ministries Conference