



In this unit the children are introduced to the piece *A Night on the Bare Mountain* written by the Russian composer Mussorgsky in 1867. This piece of music represents a story. In music this is sometimes called a 'tone poem'. Mussorgsky often used Russian legends and literature as his inspiration and this music describes such a story where witches gather at night on a mountain top, dance through the night and cast spells. The music sounds dramatic and is full of suspense. Introducing the children to a piece of music which tells a story builds on their study of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* at the end of year 1. It also builds on the idea more generally that music can represent other things, such as the wintery sounds of Vivaldi's *Winter* from *The Four Seasons* which they studied in Spring A and the sounds of a storm created in Britten's piece *Storm* studied in Spring B.

In *A Night on the Bare Mountain* Mussorgsky uses motifs (short musical ideas) to structure the piece. He creates suspense by using changes in dynamics (volume) and speed (tempo). The children learn and use motifs from the piece, which they play using tuned percussion, body percussion and their own voices to create their own piece of music full of drama and suspense.

Lesson Sequencing

In lesson 1 the children are introduced to *A Night on the Bare Mountain* and use single words to describe the atmosphere of the piece. They learn that a piece of music can represent a story. Using one of the warm-up songs, the children explore how they can use different dynamics (volume), emphasis different sounds of the words to the song (articulation) and use actions to create suspense in their performance of the song.

In lesson 2 the children explore how Mussorgsky uses different motifs and dynamics to build suspense in *A Night on the Bare Mountain*. A 'motif' is like a short musical idea. 'Dynamics' means how loudly or quietly a piece of music is played. These are both concepts which the children have encountered before in year 2 and year 3. They use body percussion and their own voices to learn two motifs from the piece which make use of different dynamics.

In lesson 3 the children listen to *A Night on the Bare Mountain* again and this time identify the foreboding tune played by the brass near the beginning of the piece, which they call the 'monster' motif. They use this motif to revise what they have learnt in Autumn B and Spring A about showing pitch on the stave using written notation. They use this knowledge to read the notes for the motif on the stave to be able to play it on tuned percussion instruments.

In lesson 4 the children explore how Mussorgsky uses different speeds, (tempi) to create different moods in his music. They listen closely to another motif from the music which is a dance-like tune. At first this appears very fast. It then returns more slowly but gets faster and faster (an accelerando) to reach the same speed at which it first occurred. The children clap the rhythm of the 'dance' motif and then put this together with the 'monster' motif which they created last lesson.

In lesson 5 the children learn that we can put motifs together to give music a structure, just like a story has a structure with different sections. They listen to more of *A Night on the Bare Mountain* and discover how Mussorgsky often makes the music get quieter at the end of a section. This indicates that the music is about to change and go into a new section. They put the four motifs they have learnt in the preceding lessons into a structure to create a piece. They are encouraged to consider changes in tempi and dynamics to increase/decrease the drama and tension of the piece.

In lesson 6, the children perform and record the piece of music which they have built up over the course of the unit. They then evaluate their performance. In doing so, they learn that we can evaluate a performance to make it better next time. By practising the piece so it is ready for performance they develop their skills in playing together as an ensemble and following the teacher who acts as a conductor.

Musical Focus

Representation in sound

- Stories in sound—tone poem

Structure and Form

- Motifs
- Structure created by repetition of motifs

Dynamics/Tempo

·Using changed in dynamics (loud and soft) and tempo (fast and slow) to create a change in mood.

Notation

- Reading stick notation to show crotchets, quavers, minims, rests
- Dot notation for pitch in do-me range on the stave

Links to Prior/Following Units

Year 2

Autumn B—*Beat Music* (Stick notation for crotchets and rests)

Spring A—*Peter and the Wolf* (Representation—musical themes/instrumentation to show different character; Dynamics—crescendo; Tempo—accelerando; Dot notation to show pitch patterns)

Spring B—*Gamelan* (Dynamics—contrast of loud and quiet)

Summer A—*Emotion in Sound* (Representation using sound—sources of inspiration, motifs; Notation—stick notation to show crotchets, quavers and rests)

Year 3

Autumn A—*Off-Beat* (Stick notation to show crotchets, paired quavers, minims and rests)

Autumn B—*Pachelbel's Canon* (Notation—using dot notation for F, A and C on the stave)

Spring A—*Vivaldi's Winter* (Structure/Form and Texture– Programme music which uses motifs to describe a scene, event or emotion; Ritornello structure; Notation—reading/writing dot notation for a minor triad on the stave)

Spring B—*Sounds of the Sea* (Instrumentation—different sections of the orchestra, representation of the sea using different instruments; Structure and form—musical themes that return (rondo form); Dynamics/Tempo—changes in dynamics/tempo to create change of mood)

Year 4

Autumn A—*Working Songs* (Stick notation to show crotchets, paired quavers, minims and rests)

Spring A—*Beethoven's 5th* (Music creating different moods—fate theme; Stick notation to show crotchets, paired quavers, minims)

and rests; Dot notation on the stave to show do-so)

Spring B—*Going Solo* (Form and Structure—ternary form)

Summer A—*Stories in Sound III* (Representation in sound—tone poem, film music; Dynamics—crescendo; Notation—Dot notation for pitch in do-so range on the stave)

Summer B—*Announcing an Entrance* (Notation—Stick notation showing crotchets, paired quavers, minims and rests, time signature and bar lines)

Outcomes

Compose and perform a piece using motifs from 'The Night on Bare Mountain'. Structure piece so it has different sections and apply different tempi and dynamics to create contrasts in mood.

Key Learning Points

- Mussorgsky was a Russian composer who wrote a tone poem called *A Night on the Bare Mountain* which tells a story.
- A 'tone poem' is a piece of music which tells a story.
- Mussorgsky uses different motifs and dynamics to build suspense in *A Night on the Bare Mountain*.
- A 'motif' is a short musical idea
- 'Dynamics' means how loudly or quietly a piece of music is played.
- We can create different effects by playing at different speeds. 'Tempo' means how fast or slow a piece of music is played. 'Accelerando' means getting gradually faster
- We can use dots on a stave to show pitch. Dots can appear in the spaces or on the lines of the stave.

Progression: Technical, Constructive, Expressive

Singing



Children learn and sing call and response and action songs, to warm up at the beginning of each lesson. This develops their technical singing skills which include posture hold, breath control, singing with a pulse, imitating rhythms, varying speed, holding a particular pitch and singing together in an ensemble. Practising songs over the course of six lessons ensures familiarity and increasing sophistication of musical expression. The children use the songs which they sing at the beginning of the lesson to develop their skills in reading notation showing rhythm and pitch and using sol-fa hand signals for pitch. They also use the songs to experiment with using dynamics and articulation to create suspense.

Listening

Children practise 'active' listening, developing their skills in using words to describe the atmosphere that the music creates and identifying changes in pitch, dynamics and speed in recurrent motifs. By listening to the music they begin to have conscious understanding of how music is constructed, focussing on the dimensions of structure/form, dynamics and tempo. By studying these songs, they begin to develop an increasing understanding of the expressive qualities of music from a particular culture/genre.

Practising

Practising creating a piece based on the motifs of *A Night on the Bare Mountain* which makes use of tuned percussion, body percussion and their own voices develops technical motor skills and an internal sense of pulse, rhythm and pitch. Creating the composition develops knowledge of handling structure/form, dynamics and tempo as component dimensions of making music. Practising the skills required for building the piece gradually over the course of the unit, ensures increasing confidence and sophistication in the expressive quality of musical outcomes.

Performing

Working towards performance of a piece over the course of six lessons ensures increased technical accuracy, confidence, fluency, expression and the ability to play securely in an ensemble, following a leader.