

Let's Listen 2

The pieces for these lessons are taken from the collection **100 Popular Classics**, a set of 5 CDs, issued by Castle Communication, Catalogue number MBS CD 517, available from HMV. However, the pieces featured are also available on many other recordings, and may already be in your school.

Flight of the Bumble Bee

Nikolai Rimsky Korsakov 1844-1908 Russia

Background for the teacher

This piece is taken from the opera *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*. The composer Rimsky Korsakov was a contemporary of Tchaikovsky, and was in fact one of the composers from whom Tchaikovsky tried to conceal the celeste, so that he would be the first to introduce the new instrument to the Russian public (ref. last month's InTouch). The opera tells how Tsar Saltan married a beautiful girl named Miltirissa. Her two sisters came to the palace as her ladies in waiting, but they were jealous of her. When the Tsar was away, Miltirissa gave birth to a son. The jealous sisters sent a message to the Tsar, telling that she had given birth to a monster. The Tsar commanded that mother and child should be thrown out to sea in a barrel! However, they were safely washed ashore on a far off island of Bujan. The prince grew up and fell in love with a Swan Princess who had magical powers. He became ruler of the island. He decided to visit his father in secret, and the Swan Princess changed him into a bumble bee. When he got to his father's court, by a strange co-incidence, the Tsar was planning a visit to the island of Bujan, but the wicked aunts were trying to dissuade him! In his disguise as a bumble bee, the prince buzzed furiously around his wicked aunts, and stung each sister in turn. He chased them from the room. This is the part of the opera which is depicted by the piece *The Flight of the Bumble Bee*. The Tsar made his plans in peace. The bumble bee flew home, and was there to receive the royal party, together with his mother. Guess what happened – the Tsar was reunited with Miltirissa, and the Prince married the Swan princess, and they all lived happily ever after!

Flight of the Bumble Bee

This article is one of a series that first appeared in INTO InTouch magazine in 2002-2003 written by Mary Ryng

This music is quick and energetic. At times you will hear the angry buzzing of the bee as it tries to sting the wicked aunts. Children enjoy it very much.

Introduction

Tell the class that they are going to listen to a piece of music, which is played on the piano. You want them to decide if the music is fast or slow. Is it graceful and magical, or busy and full of energy? Play the music, and then ask the children for their responses.

If you have already presented *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* (featured on last month's InTouch) they will be able to discuss the difference between the two pieces. Tell the children that this piece of music depicts a tiny angry creature – you will play it again, while they try to guess what it is. If they don't guess, you can help them, by telling them it's either an angry bumble bee, or a graceful butterfly!

Play again, and allow the children to move to the music if they wish.

Extensions

- This recording is played on the piano. Discuss the piano. If there is a piano in school, invite any children who may be learning to practice and perform a piece for the class.
- Older children could research the piano on the internet.
- This piece is often played on the flute accompanied by the orchestra. James Galway has made a recording of it. If you can borrow it from a pupil or from a local music library, let the class hear what it sounds like when played on the flute.
- Paint a picture of the flying bumble bee
- You may like to tell the story of *Tsar Saltan* to the class. The class could make a picture or model of the beautiful island of Bujan.
- Senior classes may like to find out a little more about the composer Rimsky-Korsakov on the internet
- This is an ideal piece to use for oral language development with senior classes. Tell the children to listen to the music, and to make a list of 10 words that describe the music. Encourage the children to share their lists, and to use

Flight of the Bumble Bee

This article is one of a series that first appeared in INTO InTouch magazine in 2002-2003 written by Mary Ryng

any new words in their writings. Words such as angry, buzzing, threatening, attacking, energetic, vengeful, are all very appropriate, but of course there are no right and wrong answers. This activity could also be applied to *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*, which by contrast is graceful, magical, appealing, delightful, dancelike

- Write a story or poem entitled 'The Angry Bumble Bee'. Use words from the word banks assembled in the last activity
- Above all, enjoy the music!