

Let's Listen 3

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.

Radetzky March

Composer: Johann Strauss the Elder 1804 – 1849, Austria..

Background Information for the Teacher

Johann Strauss Senior was born in Vienna, capital of Austria. (He was the father of Johann Strauss Junior, composer of the famous Blue Danube Waltz – more about him in a future issue of InTouch). Johann learned the violin when young, and wanted to become a musician, but his father did not approve of a musical career. However, he ran away from home to become a musician, and his father finally relented. First he joined an orchestra, but when he was 21, he formed his own orchestra. In 1835 he became responsible for dance music at the Austrian Emperor's court, and composed a large number of waltzes, polkas and marches for the Viennese court. One of his most famous compositions is the Radetzky March.

The piece is named after a famous Austrian soldier, General Radetzky. At this time, Austria was at war with Italy. In 1848, there was a fierce battle, which was won by Austria. When General Radetzky led the victorious army home, he received a hero's welcome in the streets of Vienna. Johann Strauss the Elder composed this march in honour of the victorious general. As would be expected, the march is lively and triumphant. You will hear lots of percussion instruments – snare drums, bass drums and cymbals.

Introducing the music

Talk to the children about march music. Through discussion, elicit from them when it is used. Explain that the **pulse** (the regular beat of the music, rather like a heart beat)

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is very steady and regular, to help the marchers to step in time. There will be 2 main beats in every bar, with the first being the stronger. These correspond with the 'left-right-left-right' of the march. Note that marching always begins with the left foot. The teacher could play a strong march pulse on a tambour or small drum, and the children could march around the room. When the instrument stops, the children freeze. If space is a problem, the children could march their fingers on the desk top.

Listening and Responding to the music

- The Radetzky March is suitable for all classes in the primary school. What will vary according to the class level is the response required of the children, and the amount of background information given to them. Depending on the age of the class, the teacher can tell all, some, or none of the details in the background section, as an introduction to the music.
- After the first playing, the class discusses the music. What instruments did they hear? Did they hear drums? Was the pulse (beat) steady? Is the music happy music or sad?
- Teacher plays the music again, and invites the children to tap the pulse softly with one finger on the palm of the other hand. This is a very useful exercise for helping the children to keep a steady pulse while listening.
- If space permits, children could march around to the music, remembering to keep listening at all times. Actual marching to the music is an essential activity for junior classes.
- Approximately 5-6 children could choose percussion instrument, and tap the pulse while the music is played. Then the instruments are passed to another group of children, so that others get a chance to play, while the class gets another opportunity to listen to the music.
- Composing march music – Class could be divided into groups, with each group choosing some percussion instruments. They compose a piece of march music, about one minute long. One child will be the conductor, and ensure that everybody begins and finishes when they are meant to.
- Older children could listen out for the **form** of the music. The music begins with a short introduction, featuring percussion instruments. Next the main march tune is played, mainly by violins. This can be called Tune A. Next

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woodwind instruments join in, and play Tune B. The introductory passage is heard again, and this is followed by Tune A. So the form is A-B-A. Music written in this form is known as Ternary Music. It is sometimes nicknamed 'sandwich music' as Tune B is 'sandwiched' between the two A tunes!

- Senior classes could compose their own Ternary Music – think of it as sandwich music. Use 4-5 notes on a xylophone, keyboard, tin whistle or recorder. Make up a short tune, and call it Tune A. Next make up another little tune, and call it Tune B. Practice performing your music. Play Tune A, Tune B, and finally Tune A again.

Integration activities

Choose one or more of these activities depending on the age and interests of your class.

- Art – Painting a picture of General Radetzky and his victorious army marching in triumph into Vienna. Choose colours that suggest celebration and triumph.
- SESE / Geography – Find Austria and Vienna on a map.
- SESE / History – Find out more about life in the court at Vienna
- Language – Find words to describe the music. The teacher could write the word RADEZKY on the board, and the children could find adjectives beginning with these letters to describe the music, e.g. R for Radiant, A for Attractive, etc.
- Research skills – use the Internet to find out more about Johann Strauss the Elder.
- Above all, enjoy the music.

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