

# Let's Listen 5

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.

## The Viennese Musical Clock

*Composer: Zoltán Kodaly 1882-1967 Hungary*

### Background Information for the Teacher

Zoltán Kodaly was born in Hungary in 1882. As a young boy, he loved music, and joined his local church choir. He taught himself to play piano, violin and cello very successfully. At the age of 17, he went to study music in Budapest. Kodaly was very interested in the folk music of his own country, and he wrote down the songs he heard the native people singing. He believed that these should be preserved, and transmitted through the school system. Kodaly was also dedicated to the improvement of music in education, and he worked untiringly to develop his method, which is based on song singing. From the 1920s, Kodaly was one of Hungary's most respected composers. During World War 2, he helped many Hungarian artists to avoid Nazi persecution, as he himself was too well known internationally to be imprisoned. Today, teachers and musicians from all over the world travel to Hungary to study the Kodaly method, and there are Kodaly societies in many countries, including Ireland.

The **Viennese Musical Clock** is taken from Kodaly's opera, *Háry János*. This opera tells of the exploits of a Hungarian soldier named Háry János. At the start of the opera, he is an old man, sitting in the village tavern, and boasting of the exciting adventures he had when he was a brave young soldier. Interestingly, most of the stories are made up! His first tall tale tells how he rescued the Emperor of Austria's daughter, who was being held prisoner by the Russians. Háry brought her home safely to Vienna, where everything was strange and fantastic. All the flowers in the palace garden were made of gold, and each was shaped like a crown. The most

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marvellous thing that he saw there was a huge clock. When it chimed the hour, doors opened and a procession of clockwork soldiers emerged to marvellous marching music.

### **Introducing the music**

Get the class to talk about clocks. The children could describe the ‘tick tock’ sound. They could try to play a clock sound on percussion instruments – wood blocks make very effective ticking sounds. Describe how big clocks chime the hour. Try to make up chiming sounds with percussion instruments. Tell the class that they are going to listen to the ***Viennese Musical Clock***. This is a piece of music, which tells of an imaginary clock in Vienna, which is very special indeed. When it chimes the hour, clockwork soldiers emerge, and begin to march around. After marching around for a while, they will disappear back into the clock to the sound of jolly fanfare music, until it is time to chime the hour again.

### **What to listen for**

- The music begins with whirring and chiming sounds, as the clock begins to strike the hour. We hear drums, gong (tam tam) and tubular bells.
- Then the clockwork soldiers emerge, and begin to march around to a bright march. We can call this Tune A. Listen for the piccolo and the glockenspiel.
- Next we hear a new tune, Tune B played on the trumpet and piccolo.
- Tune A is played again, and we can hear the whirring in the background.
- Next we hear a new tune, Tune C, played by woodwind and percussion.
- Tune A is played again, this time on a flute.
- Tune D is played by oboes, and then trumpets.
- Tune A is played loudly on a trumpet.
- The soldiers march back into the clock to fanfare music, and they disappear until it is time to strike the hour again.

### **Listening and Responding to the music**

- The ***Viennese Musical Clock*** 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.

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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.

- Ask the children to listen for the chiming of the clock, and the marching tune of the soldiers. They could raise their hands every time they hear this march theme. How many times is it played? (Answer = 4 times)
- Older children could follow the story as the music unfolds, as in the listening points above.
- Find the instruments mentioned in an instrument chart.
- Move to the music. The soldiers 'wake up' when they hear the chiming of the clock, and emerge from the clock to march around. They march back into the clock at the final part of the music.

#### **Composition Activity**

Give children the opportunity to compose their own clock music, using classroom percussion instruments. The children could experiment with the instruments to find an instrument that make a whirring or winding sound. The guiro or scraper is suitable. Then they find an instrument that makes a chiming sound – chime bars or triangle would be suitable. Finally they select an instrument/s to make a marching tune. Wood blocks may be suitable. Older classes could divide into groups, and try to put all the above sounds together to make a piece of music lasting one minute. Each group could choose a conductor to conduct the music when they perform it. Encourage the children to talk about their little compositions. The children will also love to record them, using a tape recorder, and then play back their compositions.

### **Integration Activities**

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

- Art – Paint a picture of the Viennese Musical Clock, or the garden full of golden flowers, each shaped like a crown. Construct a model of the garden and/or the clock.
- SESE / Geography – Find Austria and Vienna on a map. Find Hungary where Kodaly was born.
- Language – Find words to describe the fantastical clock. As the children suggest words, write them on the blackboard. Then use these words as a wordbank for creative writing projects, e.g. a poem on The Viennese Musical Clock, or a descriptive paragraph outlining the chiming of the hour. Children could also pretend to be Háy János, and tell the story of the wonderful clock they saw in Vienna.
- Research skills – Find the address of the Kodaly Society in Dublin, and write to them for more information on the Kodaly method of teaching music.
- Above all, enjoy the music.

