

# Let's Listen 7

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.

## Morning (from Peer Gynt Suite Number 1)

*Composer: Edvard Grieg, Norway, 1843 - 1907*

### Background Information for the Teacher

Edvard Grieg inherited his musical skills from his mother, who was also very musical, and who first taught him to play the piano. In his teens, his parents sent him to the Leipzig Conservatoire in Germany to study music. He became a skilled concert pianist and composer. When his studies were finished, he returned to his beloved Norway, and spent the spring and summer writing music in the countryside in Norway. In the autumn and winter, he travelled widely, playing and conducting his own music. He married his cousin, Nina, who was a famous singer, and he wrote many songs for her. Grieg became recognised as the first world famous Scandinavian composer, an honour that he still holds today. Much of his music is inspired by Norway's legends and folk tunes.

*Morning* is taken from a collection of pieces based on the adventures of a Norwegian legendary character, a handsome rogue named Peer Gynt. Peer Gynt is forced to leave his home when he abducts a bride because he wasn't invited to her wedding! Because of his actions, he has to flee his home, and has many adventures all over the world, before finally returning to Norway in his old age. The piece *Morning* depicts a beautiful morning in Egypt, where Peer Gynt visits on his travels.

### Introducing the music

Get the class talking fine mornings. What are they like? Describe what a really nice morning is like, and what it makes the child feel like. Encourage the children to use

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imaginative words, and write a list of these on the blackboard. Explain that the piece they are about to listen to describes a wonderful morning in Egypt, with the sun rising over the desert. The day is tranquil and calm, and there is a marvellous promise in the air.

### **What to listen for**

**Morning** has a gentle lyrical theme (tune), which is well known, as it has frequently been used in advertising.

The music opens with this theme played by the flute, accompanied by chords from the other wind instruments. The oboe then repeats the theme. The two instruments alternate with each other, and after 58 seconds of playing time, the strings join in to enrich and swell the sound.

After 1 minute and 25 seconds, we hear the low deep sound of the cello with a new melody, which is rather plaintive. Perhaps this suggests Peer Gynt's longing for his own homeland. There are big contrasts between loud and soft music (dynamics) in this section.

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

- **Morning** 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 children, the teacher can tell all, some, or none of the details in the background section, as an introduction to the music.
- This is a good piece of music to introduce the flute and the oboe. Use an instrument chart, or photocopy pictures
- The children could compose their own Morning Music, using classroom percussion instruments and/or recorders or tin whistles. Before they begin, they could list the sounds commonly heard in the morning, e.g. bird song, alarm clocks, milk man on his rounds, cars commencing their journeys. They could then divide in groups and make a little soundscape entitled morning, which will include at least three of the morning sounds they have named.
- As a contrast, they could compose some Night Music. Again, they could list some sounds associated with night, e.g. owl hooting, midnight chiming, cats howling. Divide the class in groups of 5 or 6. Each group could compose a

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one-minute soundscape, which would include some of the sounds the children have listed.

- Listen also to **Anitra's Dance**, on Volume 1 of the same compilation, which is also from Peer Gynt Suite. In this piece, Peer Gynt is captivated by the beautiful Arabic dancer, Anitra, whom he meets in North Africa. This slow dance uses string sounds and a triangle to evoke an oriental atmosphere.

### **Integration Activities**

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

- Art – paint a picture of a beautiful morning. Talk about the colours the children could use.
- SESE / Geography – Find Norway on the map. Also locate Egypt, where Peer Gynt visited on his travels.
- Language – Find words to describe a beautiful morning. List them on the blackboard, and then use them to write a descriptive paragraph entitled Morning. They could also be used to write a poem entitled Morning.
- Research skills – use the Internet to find out more about Norway and Edvard Grieg.
- Above all, enjoy the music.