Quintroversy
Woodwind Quintet

Presents

Peter and the Wolf

Study Guide
Background information and Activities

PROLOGUE
to the Performing Arts
- aux arts de la scène -
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Pre-performance Questions

1. Tell us about a time when you ever been to a live music performance.

2. Would you like to learn to play an instrument? Which one? If you’re learning one why did you choose it?

3. Name an instrument that you’ve heard being played that reminds you of an animal. What about it reminds you of that animal?

4. Think about your favorite movie. Now describe your favorite part of the movie. What are the characters doing? What does the background music sound like?

5. What ideas, feelings, or thoughts come to mind when you think of classical music?

During the Performance

As you listen to the performance, think about how the music creates:

- mood,
- the characters,
- emotions,
- portray events/actions,

all in order to help move the story along.
An Overture is an instrumental introduction to an opera. Overtures are used to get your ears and imagination fired up; they have musical tidbits that give you a taste of what is in store. The overture that we are playing is one taken from *The Magic Flute* by one of the most famous classical composers of all time: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

**The Story**

The Magic Flute is the story about a young prince, Tamino, who goes on a quest with his best friend, Papageno the bird catcher, to find the Princess Pamina. Tamino is told by the Queen of the Night that Princess Pamina is being held captive by the evil sorcerer Sarastro.

To aid in the journey, the Queen of the Night gives the prince a magic flute with the power to change sadness to happiness. His friend Papageno is given magic bells with the power of protection.

When Tamino and Papageno finally reach Sarastro’s palace, they are surprised to find that the evil sorcerer Sarastro is not evil at all, but was a wise and kind man. Sarastro has been protecting Princess Pamina from the Queen of the Night, who has plans to take over the world. Tamino and Pamina meet, fall in love, and wish to marry.

Sarastro puts Tamino and Papageno through three tests to prove themselves. They pass the tests with the powers of the magic flute and magic bells. The Queen of the Night, furious about what has happened, tries to break into Sarastro’s palace, but is sent away with magic. Tamino and Pamina are able to live happily ever after in a peaceful land.
Born in Krasne, Ukraine in 1891, Sergei Prokofiev is considered to be one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century. His musical compositions cover the genres of ballet, opera, symphonic, film scores, and children's music. Amongst his best-known works are the ballets *Romeo & Juliet* and *Cinderella*, the *Lieutenant Kije Suite*, and *Peter and the Wolf*. 
The Characters

Sonya

Ivan

Peter

The Wolf

Grandfather

Sasha
Peter is a young boy who lives with his grandfather in the Russian countryside. Grandfather’s cottage is surrounded by meadows with a pond that is close to the edge of the woods.

Like most children around eight years old, Peter is clever and likes to solve problems by himself whenever he can. Peter loves to go out into the meadow to visit with his animal friends.

One day he goes into the meadow to see his friend Sasha the Bird. In his hurry, Peter forgets to shut the gate, and Sonya the Duck decides to waddle over to the pond to have a swim.

Sasha sees the duck and, thinking it funny that a bird should swim, starts teasing Sonya. While the two birds argue, Peter’s cat, Ivan, starts sneaking up to catch the bird. Peter notices this and warns Sasha, who then flies to safety in a nearby tree.

At this time Grandfather notices that Peter has left the yard... something Peter is not allowed to do on his own, because there are wolves in the woods around the cottage! “What if one were to find you out here?!” Grandfather says while bringing Peter back into the yard and shutting the gate.

As soon as the gate is locked, then who should appear....but the wolf! Ivan escapes by climbing up the tree but poor Sonya is so startled that she flops right out of the pond. The wolf swallows her in one gulp.

Peter, being very brave, concocts a plan with Sasha to catch the wolf and tie him to the tree. After successfully capturing the wolf and hanging him up by the tail, some hunters appear. Peter announces to them that they should take the wolf to the zoo.

They all take the wolf there in a grand procession... and if you listen very carefully you can hear the duck quacking inside the belly of the big, bad wolf.
A musical theme is a recognizable melody. In Peter and the Wolf, Prokofiev pairs each of the characters with an instrument. The music played by each instrument has been composed to sound like the character it represents.

Character & Instrument Pairs

- Duck & Oboe
- Wolf & French Horn
- Grandfather & Bassoon
- Cat & Clarinet
- Bird & Flute
In the full orchestral rendition of *Peter and the Wolf*, Peter’s theme is played by the violins. Since there are no violins in a woodwind quintet, Peter’s theme is played by the whole quintet.

Prokofiev also uses the whole woodwind quintet to play music that sets and portrays the scenes and events in the story.
Woodwind instruments make sound when musicians blow air into them. For the flute, air is blown over a hole in the headpiece. The air splits into two different streams; about half of it goes out and half goes into the flute, causing vibrations. In the case of the French horn, a musician buzzes their lips in the mouthpiece making the air vibrate. The other woodwinds have a reed or a double reed attached to the mouthpiece, which vibrate when air is blown past them. These vibrations set the air inside all the instruments in motion, creating sound.

Did you Know?!
The French Horn is a brass instrument! It plays in a woodwind quintet because it can play just as soft and delicately as a woodwind.

Fun Facts!
- the flute takes the most air to play... more than any of the other woodwind and brass instruments
- 13 of the keys on the bassoon are played only by the thumbs
- the French horn got its name from the hunting horn that appeared in France around 1650
- the clarinet is called a “licorice stick” in jazz music
- oboists spend hours whittling their own reeds from a cane plant called arundo donax... it looks a lot like bamboo
The **BASSOON** is the biggest instrument in the woodwind family, and therefore it is also the lowest wind instrument. It is made of wood and played with a reed, and while it does play a lot of low notes, it has a very large range and can play very high as well. The bassoon looks large as it is, but if you were to straighten out all the bends inside it, it would be almost twice as long - 8 feet long in total. Because an 8 foot long instrument would be difficult to hold and play, bassoon makers fold the tube in two.

Although the bassoon can play beautiful melodies and fast passages, its large size can make such playing quite awkward so it often plays low, long notes. Composers tend to use the bassoon to create a funny or interesting characters, like Peter's cranky old grandpa in Prokofiev's *Peter & the Wolf*. The Grandfather is old, slow, and thoughtful but when he gets mad he raises his voice. In this piece, the bassoon makes a great grumpy old man sound!

The **FLUTE** is both the smallest and the oldest instrument in the woodwind family. Now made out of precious metals like gold and silver, it used to be made out of wood. Before that, flutes were made from animal bones and tusks. These flutes were used for hunting and magical rituals. The oldest flute ever found was made from a cave bear’s thigh bone about 43 000 years ago!

The flute is often used to depict birds in music because of its singing sound and its ability to trill and play very fast. This is the case in Prokofiev’s *Peter & the Wolf*. Birds are quick as a whip and soar way up in the sky. The flute can soar way up high, too... way higher than the other woodwinds!
The **CLARINET** is one of the youngest instruments of the woodwind family. It was first invented around 1700 but did not become a regular part of the orchestra until the latter part of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s life. That’s nearly 50 years after it was invented! It is made out of wood and its sound is produced with a mouthpiece and reed. The clarinet is black because it is made out of special wood, such as *mpingo* and *grenadilla*.

Prokofiev chose to have the clarinet represent the character of the cat in the story, *Peter and the Wolf*. Cats can be very sneaky when they walk on their velvet paws. The clarinet can be very sneaky, too, because it can play so quietly. Cats also like to climb up high, and the clarinet has a range of over three octaves: that’s high enough to go up a tree!

The **OBOE** is one of the double reed instruments in the woodwind family. That means that the mouthpiece is made up of two small reeds tied together. When air is blown into the oboe, the two reeds vibrate to make the characteristic reedy sound. The oboe has the smallest range of all of the instruments, but don’t worry: what the oboe lacks in range it makes up for with power. It can be heard above the entire orchestra. This is why the oboe has the job of giving the tuning note to the orchestra before a concert.

An oboist can play for a really long time without breathing because the opening of the reed is so small. That is one of the reasons why many composers write long beautiful melodies for the oboist to play. The oboe portrays many different characters and emotions in music because it can make lots of different sounds. Sometimes an oboe can sound dark and smooth and sometimes an oboe can sound bright and shrill. Some people would even describe an oboe as sounding honky - just like a duck! Perhaps that is why Prokofiev chose the sound of the oboe to play the duck in *Peter and the Wolf*. 
The **French Horn** is a brass instrument that was originally used by hunters, who often played while riding on a horse. It was first used in an orchestra in the 1600s, and was eventually added to all kinds of ensembles. The player buzzes their lips and blows through the tubing, which, if unravelled, would be over 12 feet long! Before the invention of valves in the 1800s, the player had only a limited number of notes they could play, and so used their right hand inside the bell to change the notes. Since the invention of valves, the hand is still placed in the bell and used for special effects, such as making the sound very loud, very soft, harsh & blaring, or mellow & smooth.

In *Peter and the Wolf*, the horn plays the role of the wolf. Prokofiev has used notes in the lower range of the horn to sound darker and more menacing, like a hungry wolf. The sound starts quietly, and gets louder and louder as the wolf comes out of the woods and into Peter’s full view. It can be little scary! In the orchestra, there are three horns that play the wolf theme together. Since there is only one horn in a woodwind quintet, the bassoon and the clarinet play low notes along with the horn.
1. In today’s performance, Peter’s musical theme is played by the whole woodwind quintet. If you had to pick only one instrument to portray Peter, which would you choose and why? *It can be any musical instrument you know of!*

2. Which characters melody was your favourite? What does the melody for that character tell you about their personality?

3. If you were Peter, would you go into the meadow? Why or why not?

4. Choose two musical instruments you heard at the concert and compare their appearance and their sound to each other.

5. Unfortunately, in the story the duck gets swallowed by the wolf. Do you think all of the animals could work together to capture the wolf and keep everyone safe without Peter? How?

6. The bassoon played Peter’s grandfathers theme because of its low, gruff, and slow moving sound. What other musical instrument do you think could be used to play the theme for Peter’s grandfather?

7. Is there a song or piece of music that you would choose to be your own theme song?
Our part of the musical story ends with the parade on the way to the zoo... but what happens on the way? Prokofiev leaves the story open ended, which gives an excellent opportunity to imagine what will happen next. Particularly interesting is the situation between the wolf and the duck. Will the duck escape from inside the wolf’s stomach? If so, how? Will something happen to our characters on the way to the zoo?

**Activity**

Create a story map/sequence of *Peter and the Wolf* as a class. Have the students individually write their own ending to *Peter and the Wolf* and then share their endings with the class.
Brass Family
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5YqXjsJAI0

Cello
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4q5j8KLOvo

Clarinet
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHipTX8y12Y

Violin
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtAu7xkwNjQ

Double Bass
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLvC1046t7w

Piano
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44YyT1IkkL4

Guitar
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyTqu3lnFAk

Xylophone
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd9xha3vk58

The original Flight of the Bumblebee by Russian composer Rimsky-Korsakov and was written for the whole orchestra! Each instrument family gets to have a BUZZ!
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYAJopwEYv8

• You’ve now learned why Mr. Prokofiev picked each instrument for its character. Now it’s your turn! Which instrument would you pick to portray a bumblebee?
• Listen to the different instruments auditioning to be the bumblebee.
• Discuss as a class each instruments qualities for being a great bumblebee and have a vote to determine the best instrument bumblebee!
• Then listen to the composer’s original Flight of the Bumblebee. Discuss what you you like and dislike about this rendition.
Carnival of the Animals
Guess the Animal’s Song Game

As a class, listen to each Mystery Animal’s song from *The Carnival of the Animals* by French composer, Camille Saint Saëns. For each song, write down different adjectives, such as peaceful, regal, ponderous, or whatever the music reminds you of! Then use the adjectives to help you decide which animal each song represents! Music is subjective so it is alright if you decided on a different animal than what the composer had in mind.

Once your class has matched an animal to each song, listen to them again. This time, have the students move around or pantomime actions like the animal whose song is playing.

Animals
1. Royal March of the Lion
2. Hens & Cockerels
3. The Cuckoo in the Depths of the Woods
4. Elephants
5. The Swan
6. Aquarium
7. The Aviary

Mystery Animal’s Song

Animal A
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jUsX9JwoI0

Animal B.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCBDIc0N8Rc

Animal C.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F93GtiYmWlw

Animal D.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ug8hCAYBaqq

Animal E.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1PQRu_C5fQ

Animal F.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahbaqg7qK10

Animal G.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ed7Ovt4cWE

Here’s Mr. Saint Saëns’ *Finale* for his *Carnival of the Animals*. Watch and see what some Disney animators thought the music reminded them of!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poz9nZCFmb0

Composers Answers
Curriculum Connections

**Music:** C1.2, C2.1, C2.2
**Dance:** A 1.2
**Drama:** B2.1