

The Orchestra Olympics!

Teacher Guide



Johnson City Symphony Orchestra
Dr. Robert Seebacher, music director

Wednesday, September 16, 2015
Seeger Chapel, Milligan College

Our educational concert this season has the theme “The Orchestra Olympics.” For each piece that we play, students will be asked to determine a “winner” based on their understanding of musical elements (tempo, dynamics, etc.) and instruments. As you prepare your students, you might want to focus on these components.

Students from East Tennessee State University’s Department of Music will come to visit your class (based on schedule and availability) to talk about the music and prepare them for the concert. If you would like to have someone come to your school, please contact Dr. Mary Dave Blackman at blackman@etsu.edu.

Each title is linked to a YouTube recording of the piece.

[Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1](#) Edward Elgar (1857-1934)



Edward Elgar was an English composer who wrote music for instruments and for voices. One of the things he is famous for is the fact that he recorded much of his music for the then-new gramophone, or record player. That means that we have recordings of his music being played exactly the way that he intended it. You can show your students a working gramophone at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rz7_UBv9NKo.

Elgar wrote five Pomp and Circumstance marches. The title comes from William Shakespeare’s *Othello*: “Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!” Because they are British military marches, the *tempo* is a bit slower than what you think of when you imagine an American march, like *The Stars and Stripes Forever* (which will be played later in the program).

Students will probably recognize the trio section (begins at 1:58 in the YouTube video) because it is used at many graduation ceremonies in America. In England, it is considered a patriotic piece and people sing along (as you will see in the video). In the original version, there were no words. But King Edward VII thought the trio would make a nice song and asked Elgar to add words. So Elgar asked A.C. Benson to write a poem for the king’s coronation ceremony, and “Land of Hope and Glory” was the result:

Land of Hope and Glory, Mother of the Free,
How shall we extol thee, who are born of thee?
Wider still and wider shall thy bounds be set;
God, who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet,
God, who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet.

Olympic Event: Who can play the fastest?

Curriculum Connections

- V
vocabulary words: extol, thee, bounds, coronation, patriotic, pomp, circumstance
- I
identify an American patriotic song. Find out who wrote the words. Was there a specific event that led to the writing of the song?
- F
find the rhyming words in the poem.

"Hoe-Down" from *Rodeo* Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Most people know this piece of music from the Beef Council commercials: "Beef, it's what's for dinner." What they might not know is that this music was written for a ballet.

Copland was an American composer who wrote lots of different kinds of music. He was one of the first "serious" composers to write music for movies. He studied composition in Paris, France, and wrote some very modern (for the 1930s) music, but when he came back to America he wanted to write music that people would like to listen to. He started writing ballets with American themes, like *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*.

In *Rodeo*, the main characters are the Cowgirl and the Champion Roper. The Cowgirl loves the Roper, but he likes the Rancher's Daughter. The Rancher's Daughter likes the Wrangler, so the Cowgirl gets the Roper at the end of the ballet. The Hoe-Down is the last scene, where there is a big party.

"Hoe-Down" has two main melodies. Both are real American songs. The first is "Bonaparte's Retreat" and the second is "McLeod's Reel." "Bonaparte's Retreat" comes back at the end of the piece. This makes the form of the work ABA, where A represents "Bonaparte's Retreat" and B is "McLeod's Reel." You can hear a 1937 recording of a fiddler playing "[Bonaparte's Retreat](#)" and watch a modern bluegrass group playing "[McLeod's Reel](#)" while someone clogs to it. You might want to have your students listen to these before listening to Copland's version.

Olympic Event: What instrument plays the highest?

Curriculum Connections:

- [Read](#) about the life of Billy the Kid. When he died, how much older was he than you are?
- Use your reading to make a map showing the travels of Billy the Kid.

- Imagine that you could compose your *own* version of “Hoe-Down.” What two songs would you choose? Why?

The Stars and Stripes Forever John Philip Sousa (1854-1932)

Sousa is known as the March King. He wrote 136 marches, including *Semper Fidelis* (the official march of the US Marine Corps). *The Stars and Stripes Forever* is probably the most famous of these. He wrote a lot of his marches for the President’s Own, the Marine Corps band that plays for presidential events.

A typical march has four different sections, each of which is usually repeated. The first two are in the same key and the last two are in a key that has one more flat than the original key. (If your students know anything about key signatures, you can have them figure out what key the second part would be in if the first was in, e.g., F major. That puts the second part in Bb major.) The second part is called the *trio*, even though there are more than three people playing. It does usually have fewer instruments playing, though.

One of the most exciting parts of a march is the section called the *dogfight*. A dogfight is the name for a battle between fighter airplanes and comes from World War I. (Snoopy vs. the Red Baron is full of dogfight references and even makes a sort of pun, since Snoopy IS a dog.) In the dogfight, there are usually two sections of the orchestra competing against one another.

In the YouTube video, the four sections start at these points:

- A
(1:00; repeated at 1:19)
- B
(1:34, repeated at 1:49)
- T
RIO:
- C
(2:05)
- D
(dogfight) (2:37)
- C
repeats at 3:01, this time with the famous piccolo feature
- D
ogfight repeats at 3:33
- C
returns at 4:00, this time with the brass added.

Olympic Event: What instrument family has the most players?

Curriculum Connections:

- L
learn about aerial fighting during World War I. This BBC video recreates a dogfight and talks about the planes and about how aerial warfare developed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f85CDEpiMhQ>
- P
poems are also described using letters. In poetry, we describe the rhyme scheme using the alphabet system. Read a poem and identify the rhyming words at the ends of lines. Assign letters to the words that rhyme. What is the pattern of your poem?

Serenade for Strings: Waltz Peter I. Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (chai-KOV-ski) was a Russian composer who is best known for his ballets (*The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*) and for *1812 Overture*. But he also wrote symphonies, opera, piano music, and songs.

The word *serenade* means music that is performed in the evening, often something that would be played by man outside the window of his loved one. In orchestra music, it is usually written for a smaller ensemble and has several *movements*, or independent sections.

Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings* is for just the string section of the orchestra. Tchaikovsky wrote in the score (the sheet music for the piece) that the more players there were, the better! So any size string orchestra can play it. It has four movements and the *Waltz* is the second of these.

The waltz was a pretty modern dance when Tchaikovsky was alive. It was considered quite daring because the man and woman dance so close together and they whirl around! By the late 1700s in Vienna, Austria, it was the most fashionable dance around, and it quickly spread throughout Europe. Most dance competitions today include a section on the waltz.

A waltz is in triple meter, so students can practice counting 1-2-3, 1-2-3 as it plays. (Listen for the oom-pah-pah rhythm at the beginning of the recording.)

Curriculum Connections:

- L
learn to waltz: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=io3IZOoKoM8>

"Infernal Dance" from *The Firebird* Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Stravinsky was also a Russian composer, but, unlike Tchaikovsky, he was alive during the Russian Revolution (1917). His parents were part of the aristocracy, the upper class in Russia. His family lived in an apartment (almost everyone who lives in a city in Europe lives in an apartment) in St. Petersburg. Right across the street was the Mariinsky Theatre, where Igor's father sang opera. Many of the most famous

musicians of the time visited the apartment, so Igor learned a lot about music. But before he became a famous musician, he went to law school!

In 1909, Serge Diaghilev, a famous impresario (like a modern producer), asked Stravinsky to arrange some of Frederic Chopin's piano music for ballet. People liked the dancing, but thought that Diaghilev should use *original* music, and that it should be more Russian-sounding. So Stravinsky started writing a ballet based on an old Russian story about the Firebird.



In the story, the Firebird steals some golden apples from the Tsar's orchard. The Tsar's three sons travel all over the world looking for the Firebird. The youngest, Ivan, catches her, but she says she will give him one of her magic feathers if he will let her go. The feather can be used to call the Firebird if Ivan is ever in trouble. Ivan does get in trouble and is about to be turned to stone when he uses the feather. The Firebird makes all the Tsar's soldiers dance until they collapse.

Then she tells Ivan to break a magic egg that holds the Tsar's soul, which breaks the magic spell on the castle and sets everyone free.

The orchestra will play the music for the soldiers' dance. Students can try to imagine the kind of dance that would make them all collapse at the end.

Olympic Event: What makes the music scary?

Curriculum Connections:

- During his life, Stravinsky traveled a lot. Use a map to trace his travels through these locations: St. Petersburg, Russia; Ustilug, Ukraine; Heidelberg, Germany; Paris, France; Lausanne, France; Rome, Italy; Smolensk, Russia; Clarens, Switzerland; Bayreuth, Germany; Berlin, Germany; Leysin, Switzerland; Kiev, Ukraine; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Montevideo, Uruguay; Toronto, Canada; New York City; Mexico; Hollywood, California; Chicago, Illinois; Washington, DC.
- Read Russian fairy tales (many are available at <http://russian-crafts.com/russian-folk-tales.html>). Are any of the stories similar to other fairy tales you know? How?
- Learn about the Russian revolution.



Karelia OvertureJean Sibelius (1865)

Jean (pronounced like John) Sibelius (sih-BAY-lee-us) was from Finland and lived during a very important time in Finnish history. In 1835, a gigantic poem (more than 22,000 verses!) called *Kalevala* was published. It included

folk stories and myths from the Karelians and Finns, the two major language groups of Finland. This collection was important because Finland had been losing its heritage over the previous 700 years or so. Since the 1100s, Finland had been part of Sweden. In 1809, it became part of Russia. Not until the Russian Revolution in 1917 did Finland become an independent country. Karelia is on the border between Russia and Finland and is even today an area that the Finns and Russians disagree about (see map).

So composers, artists, and writers of the early 20th century wanted to remind people of their Finnish heritage. They used the *Kalevala* as the source for new music, paintings, plays, and books with Finland as their focus. Sibelius was one of the composers who joined the Karelian movement. He wrote *Karelia* Overture and the pieces in the *Karelia* for a student play that showed different scenes from the Karelia area of Finland. In this play, the actors posed in a scene; no “acting” actually happened and no one spoke. So the music played an important part in setting the mood for the scene.

Curriculum Connections:

- I
Imagine that the United States was suddenly part of another country. What folk stories would you collect to remind you of what it meant to be American? What folk songs would you collect?
- F
Find paintings that tell stories from American folklore. (Just Google a title and you will find them! You might start with the legend of Sleepy Hollow. There is a great painting by John Quidor from 1858 that illustrates the Headless Horseman.) Talk about what part(s) of the story the artist has chosen to painting and think about why they chose that particular part. What part would you have painted?
- T
This year would be the 150th birthday of Sibelius. What other famous people who would be 150 this year? What important event in American history was 150 years ago?

[Funeral March of a Marionette](#) Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

French composer Charles Gounod (goo-noh) was famous during his lifetime for his operas, especially the stories of *Faust* and *Romeo and Juliet*. But he is best known today for this little march that he wrote in 1871-2. The piece was written originally for piano and was meant to be part of a *suite*, or a set of pieces, but this is the only one that was ever published.

The piece is meant to tell the story of a marionette (puppet) who has been killed in a duel. There is a funeral procession and even a section where his friends stop to have refreshments before the procession moves on.

So why is this music famous? In the 1950s, Alfred Hitchcock had a television series called *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. At the beginning of the show, viewers would see a drawing of Hitchcock's outline (he had a very big stomach that was easily recognizable) and this march would play as the *real* Hitchcock walked onto the screen, turned and said "Good evening." Then he would tell the audience a little about the story that was to come.

Olympic Event: Which of the two pieces (*Karelia* or *Funeral March*) is softer?

Curriculum Connections:

- Read the story of "Peter and the Wolf" (available at <http://www.dsokids.com/media/10581/Peter-and-The-Wolf-Story-Sheet.pdf>)
- The Austrian city of Salzburg is famous for its marionette theatre. Watch their interpretation of "[Peter and the Wolf](#)" to see how marionettes work.
- The music for *Peter and the Wolf* is by Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev. Identify the instruments that play. Which instruments represent which characters in the story?

1812 Overture..... Tchaikovsky

Earlier, we talked about Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings. Now we are going to learn about one of his most famous pieces, *1812 Overture*.

Tchaikovsky wrote this piece in six weeks in 1880. There were several important celebrations coming up in Russia, and music was needed. The plan was for the orchestra to play in the square in front of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. Bells from all the churches would ring and cannons would be fired. But one of the events that was to be celebrated, the 25th anniversary of the coronation of Tsar Alexander II, was cancelled because he was assassinated. So the Overture wasn't performed until 1882, and it was indoors instead of in the square.

Because the Overture was celebrating Russian history, specifically their victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Borodino in 1812, it includes several melodies that Russian people of the time would have recognized. Two of those melodies will be heard in the Finale that the orchestra plays. The first is *La Marseillaise*, the French national anthem. It represents the defeat of the French by the Russian armies. Then the national anthem of Russia, "God Save the Tsar" is played (in the YouTube video it is also sung). The excitement of victory is reinforced by the church bells (played by chimes) and cannon fire (we'll be using drums).

Olympic Event: Which instrument is loudest?

Curriculum Connections:

- S
tudents can practice playing the cannons and cymbals in *1812* at this site:
<http://games.usvsth3m.com/dance-dance-revolution-1812-overture-edition/>
- I
n 1812, America was in its own war, known as the War of 1812 (although it actually lasted until 1815). The "enemies" were England, its Canadian colony and Native Americans who sided with England. It is the war that inspired "The Star-Spangled Banner," our national anthem. Learn more about this war.
- I
Imagine that you are composing an overture about the American War of 1812. What pieces of music would you use to represent England, Canada, and the Native Americans? What pieces of music would represent the United States?