

Habanera and Toreador Song from Carmen by Georges Bizet

PRIMARY CLASSROOM LESSON PLAN

For:

- Key Stage 2 in England and Wales
- Second Level, P5-P7 in Scotland
- Key Stage 1/Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland

Written by Rachel Leach

Background

The composer: Georges Bizet (1838 - 1875)

- French composer
- Extremely popular now but struggled to find fame during his short lifetime
- Most famous for the opera Carmen which contains some of the best Spanish sounding music ever written and some of the most famous melodies ever

The music: ‘Habanera’ and ‘Toreador Song’ from Carmen

- Carmen is an opera from 1875
- It tells the story of a young factory worker called Carmen, her boyfriend Don Jose and a famous bullfighter called Escamillo
- Habanera is the first song Carmen sings. The music perfectly describes her character
- Toreador Song is the first song Escamillo sings, it shows of his swagger and confidence

Learning outcomes

Learners will:

- listen and reflect on a piece of orchestral music
- invent their own musical motifs and structure them into a piece
- invent lyrics for a song
- perform as an ensemble
- learn musical language appropriate to the task

Curriculum checklist

- play and perform in ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

Glossary of music terms used

Bar	a small fragment of music that is used to help counting
Habanera	a dance form originally from Cuba but now thought very Spanish sounding
Opera	a story told through singing, acting, music and movement
Pitched percussion	percussion instruments that can play different pitches – xylophones, glockenspiels, chime bars etc.
Tune	another word for melody. A linear line of notes that makes a satisfying musical shape
Unpitched percussion	percussion instruments that can only make a limited number of sounds – drums, shakers woodblocks, tambourine etc.

Resources required

- Paper and pens
- Classroom percussion instruments and any other instruments that your children might be learning
- OPTIONAL – a recording of **Bizet: Carmen Suite No 1, Les Dragons d'Alcala**

This scheme of work is plotted out over six lessons. Feel free to adapt it to suit your children and the resources you have available.

The six lessons at a glance

Lesson 1:

Activities:	Listen and describe a piece of music Watch the orchestral performance and discuss Use the music as stimulus for artwork
Curriculum link:	Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians

Lesson 2:

Activities:	Learn how to play the habanera rhythm, learn how to count bars Orchestrate the rhythm Use technical terminology where appropriate
Curriculum link:	Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 3:

Activities:	Invent a melody using rules Perform it on instruments
Curriculum link:	Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 4:

Activities:	Learn about percussion punctuation Structure all ideas so far into a piece
Curriculum link:	Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 5:

Activities: Learn to play rhythms from Bizet's music
Create a short movement piece
Invent lyrics for a tune
Structure all ideas into one piece

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 6:

Activities: Structure music to fit a narrative
Perform in front of an audience

Curriculum link: Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

LESSON 1

Watching and listening

1. Prepare your class

Explain to your class that you are going to begin a 6-week music project focusing on fantastic music by a composer called Georges Bizet and **watch** the introductory film with Bobby Lockwood and Naomi Wilkinson from the BBC Ten Pieces website

2. Discuss what you have just watched and tell your class of the story of Carmen as follows –

- Carmen is a young gypsy woman who works in a factory.
- Her boyfriend is Jose, a soldier.
- A hugely famous bullfighter called Escamillo (The Toreador) arrives and Carmen flirts with him.
- Jose and Escamillo fight, someone dies.

You could leave the ending up to your children's imagination. There are many different interpretations of the ending of Carmen anyway with different combinations of deaths at the end or no deaths. In the original Carmen is stabbed by Jose

3. Listening task

Give out A4 sheets of paper to everyone and ask them to place them landscape on their desks. Ask them to gently fold the paper to create three roughly even columns and write 1, 2, 3 at the top of each column. Like this –

1	2	3

To save time, you might want to prepare this ahead of the lesson!

4. Watch the full orchestral performance of **Habanera** and explain that it describes the character of Carmen. Discuss what you have seen and ask the following questions –

- a) From the style of the music, what is Carmen like?
- b) Is she young or old?
- c) What mood is she in?
- d) What is she doing?

5. **Listen** to Habanera again and as you listen ask your class to draw Carmen in the middle column of their page. Tell them that they only have the time it takes for the music to play (3 minutes) to do this so they must work fast!

6. **Repeat this activity** for Escamillo, the Toreador (or bullfighter). Explain first that bullfighters in Spain are as famous as pop stars or football players here. Use the full orchestral performance of **Toreador Song** for this activity and ask your children to draw in column 3

7. **OPTIONAL – repeat this activity** for Jose using a recording of Les Dragons d’Alcala from Carmen Suite No 1. This piece is widely available online but if you can’t find it, simply omit this bit of the task. The music describes Jose and his soldier colleagues marching into town. Your children should use column 1 for this one

8. **Discuss** the resulting artwork. Ask your class to link the three characters with simple symbols and slogans to help to tell the story. For example they could draw an arrow from Jose to Escamillo and write ‘rivals’ over it, or link Carmen and Jose by a line of love hearts.

You can now use this as the basis for storytelling or further exploration of the plot.

9. **Finally**, if you have time play the two (or three) pieces again, or just the beginning of them, and ask the children to stand, pose or move around the room as if they are the character the music is describing.

LESSON 2

Habanera!

A Habanera was originally a dance from Cuba which made its way over to Spain and is now thought of as very 'Spanish' sounding. It is very easy to recreate in the classroom.

1. Warm-up. Begin with your class sitting in a large circle and play a simple game of opposites as follows –

- Ask your children to copy you as you make the following sounds/ gestures:
 - Say 'Hola' and wave
 - Shout 'Olé!' and fling your hand up into the air

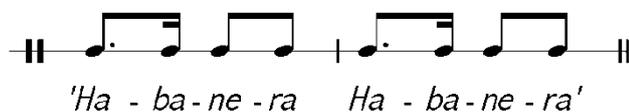
 - Strike a pose like Carmen and say her name
 - Strike a pose like Escamillo and say his name

 - Salute and say 'atención!'
 - Nod and say 'Don Jose'

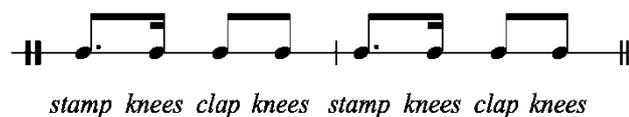
 - Clap once and say 'clap'
 - Click your fingers once and say 'click'

 - Make a loud wobbly sound and wobble your body
 - Make a quiet 'shh' whilst being very still
- Explain that these are opposites and now you are going to say one from each pair. The class's task is to respond with the opposite. For example, you say 'clap', they say 'click'
- Speed up as you do this and try to catch the group out. Ask one of the children to lead and see if they can catch you out!

2. Remind your students of Carmen's 'signature song' - the habanera and **teach** the following habanera rhythm to your class. Start by simply saying 'habanera' over and over like the bassline of the piece –

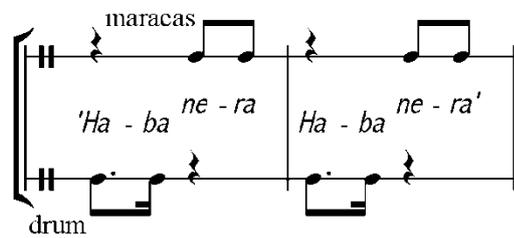


Try it on body percussion, like this –

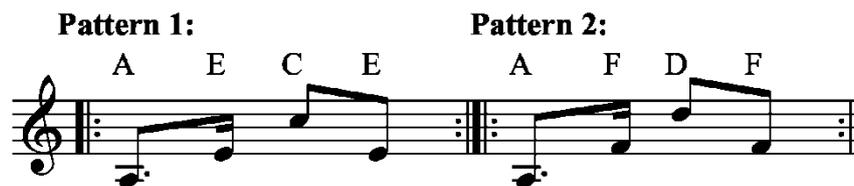


By splitting the pattern on different body parts, you are mimicking its up and down shape and this should help when using different pitches

3. When this can be performed confidently, ask your children to select which instruments should play it. It can be split between different instruments. For example:



If you decide to use pitched percussion, use these notes:



4. **Split** into small working groups and ask each group to choose their instruments carefully and practice performing 8 lots of habanera and then stopping. If using pitched percussion make sure each group sticks to just one pattern of notes, i.e. group 1 uses just pattern 1, group 2 uses just pattern 2 etc.

A good way to count habaneras is like this 'one-ba-ne-ra, two-ba-ne-ra' or appoint a 'counter' to show the counts on their fingers

5. **Finally**, bring the class back together and listen to each piece. Check that they are playing just 8 'habaneras'. Give the groups an order and challenge each group to play in turn starting exactly when the previous group stops so that you have a continuous piece. This is a great activity because children are either playing their piece or counting habaneras whilst they wait to play.

Each habanera lasts for one 'bar'. A bar is just a small measure of music that we use to count. This is an opportunity to learn about this oft-used technical term. If the children understand that one habanera is one bar they can say they are counting 'bars'

LESSON 3

Hot Spanish Sunshine!

1. **Warm up.** Begin in a circle and either play the opposites game again or, in quick teams around the circle practise performing 8 habaneras on body percussion
2. **Explain** that Carmen sings a very simple tune on top of the habanera rhythm that falls down slowly in pitch. It features a very simple rhythmic pattern and is made up of next-door notes
3. **Teach** the following rhythm using the same method as in the last lesson. I.e. start by just saying the words, then move onto body percussion, this time just clapping unless your children can figure out a better way to do it!



4. **Demonstrate** how this rhythm can become a melody by using the following 'rules'
 - It begins by moving downwards
 - It always moves to next-door notes (never skips around)
 - It only uses white notes (C, D, E, F, G, A, B)

Here's a simple version of it for example –



5. **Split** your class back into their working groups and challenge each group to make their own 'Hot Spanish Sunshine' tune. Eventually they will have 8 bars (habaneras) to play with but the tune doesn't have to last that long. It might be more effective to have a short tune lasting maybe 2 bars (habaneras) that repeats around.

It would be particularly impressive if each group can create a tune that is the same every time and can be played by everyone in the group at the same time.

It will be helpful here to give paper and pens to each group so they can write down the notes they use

6. **Finally**, bring the groups back together and like last lesson, hear each group separately and give some feedback. You might want to choose the best one or two tunes and teach them to everyone rather than having 4 or more to remember.

LESSON 4

Olé! (or Olay!)

1. **Warm up.** Begin in a circle again. This time split the circle into two halves and remind one side of the habanera rhythm on body percussion and the other side of the 'hot Spanish sunshine' rhythm either clapped or spoken. Now, practice performing both rhythms at the same time and challenge the group to stop after 8 repetitions. You might like to appoint a 'counter' who stands in the middle, counts and then bangs a drum or gong after 8

They fit together like this –

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melody with a triplet of eighth notes followed by a quarter note, then another triplet of eighth notes followed by a quarter note. The lyrics are "'Hot Span-ish sun-shine'" and "'Hot Span-ish sun-shine' etc...". The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with a half note, a quarter note, and a half note. The lyrics are "'Ha - ba - ne - ra'" and "'Ha - ba - ne - ra'".

2. **Remind** your children that the story of Carmen is set in Spain and that you are making Spanish sounding music. To make their music sound even more Spanish, composers like Bizet often add exciting moments of percussion punctuation. For example, a crash of cymbals, a rhythm on castanets, a roll on a tambourine. Demonstrate some of these ideas, get children to have a go or play the habanera recording again and ask your class to raise their hand when they hear these percussion moments.

Bizet's favourite punctuation is below. Its rather like a full stop and could work well at the very end of the 8 habaneras thus signalling that it's time for the next group to play

The image shows a musical score for a single staff in treble clef. Above the staff are the letters 'A E E A'. The staff contains a half note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a half note. The lyrics are "'Tis ve - ry hot!'".

3. **Split back into your working groups** and challenge each group to make a piece that features:
 - 8 habaneras (from lesson 2)
 - The 'hot Spanish sunshine' tune (from lesson 3)
 - One or two moments of percussion punctuation (these ideas are only effective if they are used sparingly and come as a surprise.)

This obviously means that some children will have to switch roles or instruments to make this work. Again if you don't have enough instruments encourage some children to sing, use body percussion or conduct.

4. **Bring the groups back together** and hear each group separately before having a go at performing back-to-back with no gaps (like you did in lesson 2). Ask the children to come up with the most effective order for their pieces. Is there a moment when everyone can play together?

If you are still using the note patterns from lesson 2 and the children want to play both patterns together, don't worry about the clashing notes - played confidently it will actually sound even more Spanish!

5. **Finally**, add a musical 'Olé' onto the end of your piece using the notes below. This should be played by everyone, loud and proud – they could even shout 'Ole' at the same time!

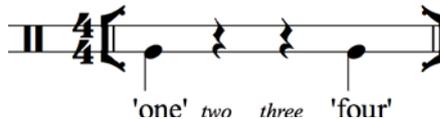


LESSON 5

Toreador's Song

- Warm-up.** Begin in a circle again with a short focusing exercise such as passing the clap, and other sounds, around the circle. Explain that you are going to look at the other main character from Carmen, the Toreador called Escamillo.

Teach your class the following, simple rhythm –



As before, start by just saying the words, then try on body percussion.

- Explain** that the 'one' is strong and the 'four' is less strong. Can your children choose two unpitched instruments to play on these beats, one weak and one strong? When this is decided choose two children to play whilst everyone else continues on body percussion. Practise performing the pattern four times and then stopping
- Dance!** To really get this pattern into their bodies, ask your children to invent four strong poses to strike on each 'one' beat. These poses should be inspired by the character of Escamillo – i.e. how does he stand, gesture, move? They can then strike these poses as your percussionists play or even try them out as the opening of the recording plays
- Next, teach** this rhythm, using the same method (words, body percussion, instruments) –



Ask your children to find an unpitched percussion instrument to play this. It must be able to play short, 'dry' sounds (not long 'splashy' sounds like a cymbal). A woodblock or guiro would be perfect as would Bizet's choice of tambourine and castanets

- Choose** a small group of children to add this rhythm to the 'four, one' and encourage the rest of the class to perform their Escamillo poses at the same time. You can keep rotating the roles so that everyone gets to have a go at playing the instruments and dancing

Here's how they fit together –



6. **Melody.** Explain that the Toreador's Song is usually sung! In the version you've been listening to there has been no singing and therefore no words. It's time to write some! Bizet's melody is below.

'To - re - a - dor'

If you can't read music don't worry, just use the online orchestral performance. Start at 1'20. (The version below is the same key so you could even play along!)

Challenge your children, perhaps working in teams, to create new words for this melody. Here are some helpful rules –

- Think carefully about syllables. Ideally you need one syllable for each note so count the notes and syllables for each line as you work through
- Stress – make sure your words are aligned correctly so that the strong bit of each word is on a strong note.

Bizet demonstrates these rules for us; the first four notes of his tune perfectly match the stresses and syllables of 'Tor-e-a-dor' (above)

If you have children who are learning instruments, encourage them to play the tune. Here's a slightly simplified version (which will work on pitched percussion too) –

C A A A A A B^b A F C G A

E A A E D G A B^b A C C B^b A G F

7. **Orchestrate.** As you sing your new words, and perhaps some children play the tune, choose a small group of children to provide a soft pulse underneath, just as Bizet does. This will keep everyone together.

8. **Finally** put your Toreador piece together. Just like in the real piece you should have two sections –
- a) The ‘four-one’ rhythm and the ‘I’m the best there is’ rhythm with four dance moves
 - b) The ‘chorus’ – sung to the real tune with a pulse

All of this task will fit with the orchestral version

LESSON 6

Performance time

- 1. Warm up.** Sitting in a circle again, remind your children of everything they have worked on so far. Here's a list –
 - **Carmen's Habanera** made from –
 - The habanera rhythm
 - The 'hot Spanish sunshine tune
 - The musical punctuation and Olé!
 - **Escamillo's Song** made from
 - The rhythms and poses
 - The sung melody and pulse
- 2. Recap** all of these ideas on body percussion and voices. Talk through all of the structures and decide what should go first, Carmen or Escamillo
- 3. Get out the instruments** split back into groups and slowly put everything back together. This might be a bit chaotic – it's been two lessons since you did the habanera - but don't worry, the children will remember.
- 4. Practise** until everything is performed confidently. If you have time, quickly invent a short sound effect for Jose. This could be as simple as a drum roll or a spiky fanfare rhythm on a xylophone. You could then ask the children to invent short narration for between your music pieces and therefore tell the story in full
- 5. FINALLY** – invite another class to come and watch your performance of everything you have made and share the story and music of Carmen with an audience

TAKING IT FURTHER

Cross-curricular activities

- **LISTENING:** The best bits of Bizet's opera were transformed into two suites, both feature fantastic music and there's much more to listen to, use as a basis for dance, drama, art and further exploration
- **LITERACY:** Write the story as a play, a novel or a newspaper report but challenge your children to come up with their own ending that differs from the tragedy of the original
- **RESEARCH:** Bizet was hugely inspired by Spain. He read a lot of books about Spain, ate Spanish food and totally immersed himself in all things Spanish. What countries inspire your children? Encourage them to become totally immersed in another country via books, music (and the internet!) just like Bizet.

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