



EDVARD GRIEG (1843 - 1907)

In The Hall Of The Mountain King

Focus of Lesson

- Introduction to the piece
- Identification of musical genre
- Context and understanding of instruments
- Creation of new work based on incidental music
- Active feedback on pupils' work

Key Vocabulary

- *Tempo*: the speed at which a piece of music is played
- *Dynamics*: the volume of the sound or of a note
- *Incidental music*: background music to a story or a play
- *Soundtrack*: a recording of the music to accompany a film (or similar)

Try to introduce the above terms and their meanings to pupils during the lesson.

LESSON

Introduction

'In The Hall of the Mountain King' is from a bigger piece of music called 'Peer Gynt Suite', which is about a young boy called Peer Gynt, who falls in love with a girl called Solveig (sool-vay), but he is not allowed to marry her. With a broken heart, he runs away into the mountains so that he can be alone. However, he is not alone..... when he arrives at the mountain, he is captured by ugly trolls and taken to the troll king.

In the middle of the night, he tries to escape from the underground kingdom of the trolls while it is still dark. He tiptoes as quietly as he possibly can, but the trolls hear him, and chase him through the mountain corridors. Eventually he runs into the king, but he manages to escape by the skin of his teeth.

Listen to the piece of music and ask pupils to close their eyes while doing so. Ask them how the music sounds like Peer is being chased by trolls? Is the music fast or slow, and does it change speed? Why? Which instruments can pupils hear being played in the orchestra? Help pupils to identify the difference between quiet music (*piano*) and loud music (*fortissimo*). What do these changes in volume represent?

Listen to the first few bars of the piece of music, where Peer is tiptoeing through the mountain to try and escape. See if pupils can recognise the instruments being played as string instruments. In this section, the stringed instruments aren't being played with a bow, but are being plucked by the fingers. This technique is called pizzicato (*pit-zic-car-toe*). Playing pizzicato helps to make the notes very short, which sounds like tiptoe. If the notes were big, long, loud notes, what would Peer Gynt be doing?

Explain that this type of music is called 'incidental music'. Incidental music is used as background music to a story or a play. By using different instruments, different techniques, different tempo and different dynamics, the composer can create a soundtrack to the story.



Talk to the pupils about characters that they know from books, from the television or from computer games, and what type of music they might use as background music for that character. Are they *scary* (cymbal?), *funny* (bassoon?), *angry* (trumpet?), *sad* (flute or violin?)? If pupils are unfamiliar with the sound that different instruments make, play them some examples first.

Create a short piece of music, in small groups, based on a story with which everyone is familiar. You may want to choose the same story for everyone, and listen to the different pieces of music that are created for that same story. Encourage pupils to think about what type of story it is, who are the characters involved, does it have a happy or a sad ending?

Perform these compositions to the rest of the group. If you have all written music to the same story, then discuss how each piece of music is different. Which piece of music is the best soundtrack to the story, and why?

Extension work

The work above can be combined with some drama work, acting out the story as well as creating and performing music to go with it. Slightly bigger groups could be formed, so that there is a group of musical performers, and two or three pupils to act out the story/play. You could ask the pupils to first act out their story *without* the musical accompaniment to demonstrate how important the music is in making the story come alive.

Learning Outcomes

- Understanding the role of individual instruments within an orchestral setting
- Understanding how these instruments are used to illustrate characters or settings
- Understanding the role of incidental music within a visual context
- Understanding the connection between music and drama, and how one is used to illustrate the other