

Macbeth
Music
Lesson 1, Act 1: Witches

Key stage 2 National Curriculum Objectives featured:

Pupils will

- *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*
- *develop an understanding of the history of music.*

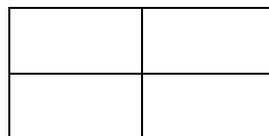
Macbeth begins with three witches gathering during a storm. They plan to meet Macbeth and tell him his future. Many composers have been inspired by witches and witchcraft. This listening task will help your children to understand their music by comparing and contrasting the witches that are being described

For this task you will need:

- Paper and art materials
- Recordings of the following pieces (widely available on YouTube and Spotify, links below)
 - **Dvorak** The Noon Witch
 - **Berlioz** Symphonie Fantastique Mvt 5
 - **Mussorgsky** Baba Yaga from Pictures at an Exhibition
 - **James MacMillan** Confessions of Isobel Gowdie

MAIN TEACHING

1. Fold a sheet of paper into four even sections. Open it out again and place it on your desk with the long side top and bottom (landscape), like this:



Ask your children to copy

2. Listen to this extract from [Dvorak The Noon Witch](#) and ask your class to draw* a picture of the witch being described in one of the boxes on their page. *(If listening to a full performance of Dvorak's piece, scroll to about 5'45 and listen for about 3 minutes)*
3. Listen to this extract from [Berlioz Symphonie Fantastique](#) and draw this witch in the next box.
4. In the third box draw this witch; [Mussorgsky Baba Yaga](#)
5. ...And finally in the last box draw a witch inspired by [James MacMillan's Confessions of Isobel Gowdie](#)
(If listening to a full performance, scroll to about 10'00 and listen for about 3 minutes)
6. Have a class discussion. Who was the scariest witch? Who was the gentlest? What were the witches doing? Encourage the class to refer to their pictures and the music in their answers.

**You might like to do this task with words rather than drawings. Use the following questions to help:*

- *Is this witch loud or quiet?*
- *Is this witch moving quickly or slowly?*
- *Is this witch happy or sad?*
- *What is this witch doing?*

Taking it further

Now you have gathered information about 4 witches, encourage your children to write a story about them.

Macbeth

Music

Lesson 2, Act 2: TROUBLED SLEEP

Lesson 2, Act 2: Disturbed Sleep

Key stage 2 National Curriculum Objectives featured:

Pupils will

- 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 inter-related dimensions of music*
- use and understand staff and other notations*
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory*

Act 2 takes place overnight. A lot happens and many characters suffer from troubled or interrupted sleep. This lesson is a step-by-step recipe for turning this strange night into music. The sleeping music is based on an incredible piece of music by Claude Debussy, but the rest is up to you and your children!

For this task you will need –

- A recording of **Debussy Prélude à l'après-midi d'un Faune** (widely available on YouTube and Spotify, links below)
- Instruments

MAIN TEACHING

The first task is to make a **sleepy tune**.

1. Listen to the beginning of [Debussy l'après midi d'un Faune](#) - just the opening 30 seconds. The flute tune at the beginning describes someone sleeping. It is the sound of their gentle snoring.

2. Explain this to your class and point out that Debussy's tune:
 - moves slowly down and then up again (like breathing out and in)
 - uses next-door notes
 - moves between B (at the top) and F (at the bottom)
3. Using a xylophone, demonstrate your own version of this theme, following these 'rules'. You might play something like this –



4. Ask a volunteer to come forward and play this shape on your xylophone. Ask them to play it twice back to back and then move on to invent something new – they can do anything as long as they stick to the dreamy, sleepy, slow character of Debussy's piece.
5. Split into five small working groups and challenge each team to invent their own tune that follows Debussy's rules but then wanders off somewhere new. Encourage each team to write down what they have invented.
6. Bring the class back together and hear each piece. Did they stick to the rules? Is the music slow and sleepy and the same every time?

Now move on to task two: **The disruption**

Macbeth's troubled night is disturbed by the following things –

- Lady Macbeth saying 'sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more'
 - A bell ringing
 - Someone knocking on the door
 - A storm
 - Guests arriving on horseback
1. Split your class back into the same 5 groups and assign each group one of the above ideas. Their task is to make a short musical sound effect to describe their 'disruption'. They can do this however they like,

using instruments, body percussion, voice or even a combination of all three.

2. When this is done, ask each team to make a piece which starts with their 'sleepy tune' and then is disrupted by their 'sound effect'.
3. Hear each group and give feedback. Ask your children to place their pieces into an order that makes sense to them. They can use the same order of events as Shakespeare or, perhaps better, listen carefully to the music they have created and make musical decisions. I.e., they might like to create a **crescendo** (softest group to loudest) or a **diminuendo** (loudest group to softest).
4. When you have decided on your order, write it on the board and practise playing through it without pausing in between groups. The final structure might be something like this:
 - Sleepy tune disturbed by a bell ringing
 - Sleepy tune disturbed by Lady Macbeth
 - Sleepy tune disturbed by horses *etc...*

Taking it further

The structure above is called **rondo**. It is a shape with one idea (the sleepy tune) that keeps returning. Debussy's piece is also a rondo. Listen to Debussy's full piece and encourage your children to spot the sleepy tune every time it appears. Discuss the music - what is happening in Debussy's dream?

Macbeth

Music

Lesson 3, Act 3: A GHOST AT DINNER

Key stage 2 National Curriculum Objectives featured:

Pupils will

- use and understand staff and other notations
- 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

Act 3 of Macbeth features a banquet scene. As the characters sit down to eat Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo at the table but no one else seems to notice. The ghost appears and disappears several times and only Macbeth can see him.

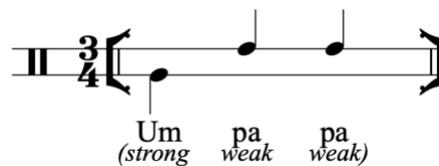
In this lesson you will use a fantastic piece of music to inspire a dance. You will need the following:

- A recording of **Saint-Saens' Danse Macabre** (widely available on YouTube and Spotify and here - [Danse macabre](#))
- A large space such as the school hall or playground

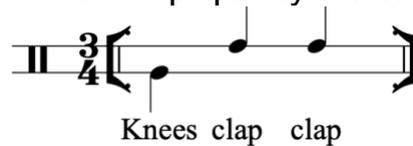
MAIN TEACHING

1. Listen to the opening of Danse Macabre by Saint-Saens (pronounced San-Son). The very beginning is the sound of a clock striking the hour. Ask your children to count how many chimes they hear and work out what time it is (*it is midnight, there are 12 chimes*)
2. Listen on. The next sound is some low notes from the basses and then a jagged sounding solo violin. Ask you class to make worried faces during the bass sounds and then a look of horror when the violin solo starts.
3. Explain that this piece of music tells a story that takes place at midnight. The solo violin represents a ghost who comes to life and dances. It is the perfect music for Act 3 of Macbeth.

- Listen to the first 2 minutes of the piece and ask your children to make a ghost shape with their bodies every time they hear the solo violin. The rest of the time they may sway in time with the music
- Saint-Saens' piece is a waltz with this 'um-pa-pa' pattern all the way through -

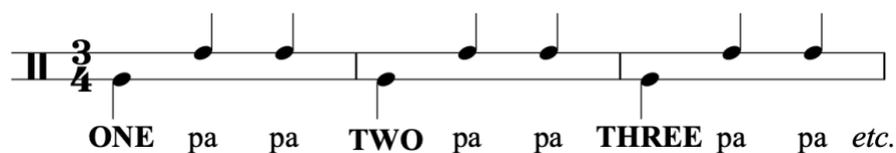


- Teach this pattern to your children. They can tap their knees on the strong 'um' beat and clap quietly on the weaker 'pa' beats.



Encourage them to tap along as you listen to Saint-Saens again. The waltz starts after the jagged violin solo

- Explain that Saint-Saens' um-pa-pa patterns are often grouped together in 8s. Demonstrate how to count the patterns (below) and then practise counting along to the recording.



- Split the class into two groups and challenge each group to count 8 lots of um-pa-pa out loud, starting and stopping together neatly. Try alternating between the groups like this:

Grp 1: 8 patterns - Grp 2: 8 patterns - Grp 1: 8 patterns - Grp 2: 8 patterns

Can you do this without a gap as the groups switch over. Can you do this along with the music?

9. Now, name one group '**the ghost**' and the other group '**the dinner guests**'. The task is to make a short dance that lasts for just 8 counts of um-pa-pa and describes their character. To help, you might want to appoint a leader for each group. This person will count the patterns clearly out loud whilst the others work on the dance. Remind your children that the um-pa-pa pattern is made up of one strong sound and two weaker sounds, can they match this with their dance moves?
10. Watch each group and give feedback.
11. Now it's time to put the dance to the music! The ghost group will only dance when the solo violin is playing, and other group will dance the rest of the time. Remember that the waltz starts after the jagged violin solo and Saint-Saens mostly sticks to his pattern of 8 um-pa-pas. However sometimes he changes the rules. Can your dancers adapt and fit to the music when he does? (*For example, sometimes the solo violin and orchestra have just 4 waltz patterns back and forth rather than 8*).
12. Finally ask your children to dance to the first 2 minutes of Saint-Saens' piece. Can they add movements for the clock striking 12, the spooky bass sounds and the jagged violin solo before the waltz begins?
Stop the music at 2 minutes after the big bang

Taking it further

When you have mastered the first 2 minutes of Danse Macabre, why not try the rest? The full piece is about 7 minutes long and there are some surprises in store! For example, there is a gentle section in the middle - perhaps you could try some partner dancing and pair up the 'ghosts' with the 'dinner guests'? Near the very end there is a very sad section - a solo moment perhaps?

Macbeth
Music
Lesson 4, Act 4: WITCHES SPELL

Key stage 2 National Curriculum Objectives featured:

Pupils will

- 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 inter-related dimensions of music*
- use and understand staff and other notations*
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory*

The famous witches return in Act 4 and cast their very, very famous spell. French composer Hector Berlioz used an ancient Latin hymn tune called the **Dies Irae** (pronounced *dee-ez ear-ray*) for his witches' spell in *Symphonie Fantastique*. We listened to his music in Lesson 1, now it's time to recreate it!

For this task you will need:

- Paper and pens
- Instruments

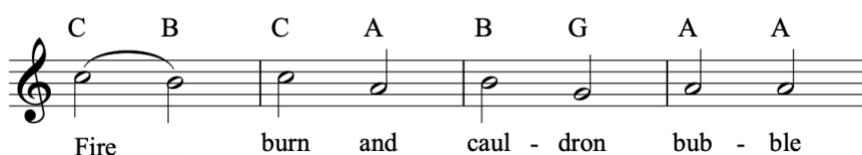
MAIN TEACHING

1. Listen to the [Dies Irae](#) from **Berlioz' Symphonie Fantastique**. Explain that in Berlioz' piece this tune signifies witches casting a spell, just like the witches in *Macbeth*. Listen again and ask your class to describe what happens to the tune. Maybe they will spot that it seems to speed up each time it is heard.
2. Teach them the beginning of the *Dies Irae* tune on a pitched instrument:



Invite members of the class to come forward and have a go at playing it. *Note that this is in a different key to the original. If you play along with a recording, it will sound a bit weird!*

- You can even have a go at singing it using Shakespeare's famous words. Try singing along to the tune using the words below.



- Split the class into groups and challenge each group to make their own version of the tune adding some of these ideas, borrowed from Berlioz -
 - Slow, 'tolling bells' (pitches A & E or C & G)
 - A drone (one long note played throughout)
 - Atmospheric, unpitched percussion (try placing loud 'stabs' in between the notes)
 - Three different speeds
- Encourage each group to add some witchy words. They can borrow from Shakespeare again selecting their own favourite lines and making them fit - more of his spell is below - or perhaps your children would like to write their own words.
- Hear each group individually and then ask the class to join their pieces together to make one big witchy piece. Afterwards, listen to Berlioz again and discuss who did it best!

The Witches' Spell from Macbeth

Double, double toil and trouble
Fire burn and cauldron bubble
Fillet of a fenny snake
In the cauldron boil and bake
Eye of newt and toe of frog
Wool of bat and tongue of dog
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing
For a charm of powerful trouble
Like a hell broth boil and bubble
Double, double toil and trouble
Fire burn and cauldron bubble

Macbeth

Music

Lesson 5, Act 5: A CORONATION

Key stage 2 National Curriculum Objectives featured:

Pupils will

- 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 inter-related dimensions of music
- use and understand staff and other notations
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

At the very end of the play Malcolm is crowned the King of Scotland. This lesson is a step-by-step guide to creating your own coronation anthem based on **Handel's** anthem **Zadok the Priest** which has been played at every English coronation since 1727

For this task you will need:

- Paper and pens
- Instruments

MAIN TEACHING

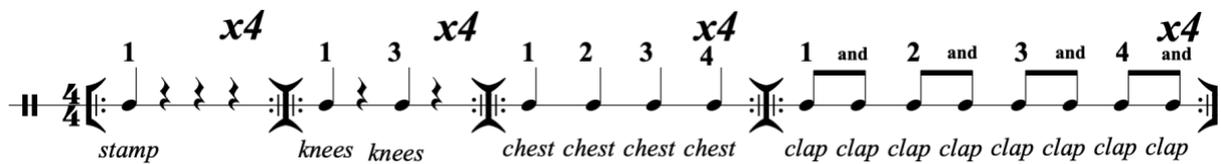
1. Begin with a rhythmic warm-up. Count to 4 over and over and lead the children in clapping on beat 1, then 1 and 3, then 1, 2, 3, 4, then half beats like this -



As you move through this it seems to speed up and the excitement grows, just like the opening of [Zadok the Priest](#)

2. Choose a different body percussion sound for each pattern and practise performing 4 repetitions of each one before moving onto the next. For example, you might begin with a stamped foot on 1, then tap

the knees on 1 and 3. Tap the chest on 1, 2, 3, 4 and finish by clapping the final pattern



3. Move onto instruments. Ask the class to choose which instruments should perform each pattern. This is called **orchestration**. Encourage your children to choose carefully so that the music retains its feeling of increasing excitement

If using pitched percussion, or orchestral instruments, use only the white notes and again, stick to just 4 repeats of each pattern

You have created your **introduction**. Now it's time to move on to the **anthem**

1. Begin by writing lyrics. Ask you children to imagine someone special is visiting school. It might be fun to keep their identity a secret, so that everyone is thinking of someone, but we don't need to agree on who!

Split into four groups and ask each group to write 1 or 2 lines of text to describe –

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Grp 1: Their arrival | Grp 2: What they look like |
| Grp 3: How everyone feels | Grp 4: Amazing, happy words to sum up! |

2. Challenge each group to chant their lyrics to a pulse and then give out chime bars – C, E, G - and ask your composers to create a melody by fitting their chant onto these pitches
3. Hear each group and then put them into an order to create a melody that can be sung by the whole class. You could encourage some children (reluctant singers perhaps) to play an accompaniment to your melody by adding a strong pulse using the chime bars
4. Practise performing your **introduction** and your **anthem** back-to-back without a gap

5. Finally, Zadok the Priest ends with lots of “Alleluias” and “Amens”. Is there one word you can sing over and over on the end of your piece to get that final sense of excitement? A fancy ending such as this is called a **coda**

Taking it further

Now you have a coronation anthem, why not stage a coronation? Place your musicians along two sides of the hall. Choose someone to walk down the middle in time to the music and place a crown on their head at the most exciting point of the anthem.