

LESSON 1, ACT 1: THE TWO FAMILIES

Key stage 2 National Curriculum Objectives featured:

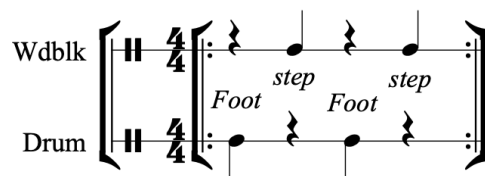
Pupils will

- 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
- 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.

Romeo and Juliet is all about the Montagues and Capulets – two families at war. Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev gave us the best musical description of them in his 1938 piece ‘The Dance of the Knights’ also known as ‘March of the Montagues and Capulets’ which portrays them walking into the ball in Act I of his ballet. Here’s how to make your own version, borrowing from the best...

1. THE MONTAGUES

In Prokofiev’s piece, the Montagues sound like bullies. They swagger into the room looking and sounding threatening to anyone who gets in their way. Prokofiev gives them loud, heavy footsteps like this:



These sound best if split between two players on contrasting instruments. You can also perform them sitting in a circle and tapping alternate knees

They also have this distinctive jerky rhythm:



This can be heard at the very beginning of this track:

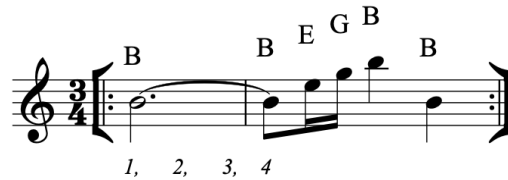
[Prokofiev: Montagues](#)

Have a go at performing these two rhythms. Can your children march along with the footsteps and clap the jerky rhythm on top? Or try splitting the patterns between partners or two groups.

2. THE CAPULETS

This family is much more sneaky and sly. In Prokofiev's piece they are portrayed as the kind of people who are nice to your face but then stab you in the back! Their tune is slippery and sweet and goes like this:

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This tune is made up of a long, still note that swoops up and down after a count of four. Can your children replicate it using their voices and perhaps tap out the counts in between?

It can be heard 3 minutes into this version of the piece, here:

[Prokofiev: Capulets](#)

3. Split your class into two teams and call them Montagues and Capulets. Each team will make one short piece to represent their family and using the ideas above, borrowed from Prokofiev. You can stick with just body percussion and voices or you might like to transfer your ideas onto any instruments you have available. For example, the Montagues would work well on drums and other unpitched instruments but you'll need pitches for the Capulets - maybe a swoop up and down a xylophone, the keys of a keyboard or one string of a violin with a shimmering cymbal underneath.
4. When this is achieved, bring the groups back together and decide on an order for your pieces. Who arrives at the ball first, who arrives second? Do the pieces fit together? Perhaps a few children could move around the room to the music pretending to be the Montagues and Capulets as the others play