

Promenade from *Pictures at an Exhibition* – Meter and Rhythm

National Music Standards (rev. 2014)

Performing – *Analyze*: Analyze the structure and context of varied musical works and their implications for performance.

Learning Target

The student can show meter using body percussion. The student can notate the rhythm of a melody.

Lesson Plan

Materials:

Chicago Symphony Orchestra / cso.org video (SEE Resources list)
Colorado Symphony video (SEE Resources list)
Free downloaded score of Promenade (SEE Resources list)
Whiteboards, markers and erasers for each student OR 4"x5" note cards and pencils for each student

10-minute plan

Warmup:

Modest Mussorgsky was a Russian composer who wrote *Pictures at an Exhibition* in 1874. He worked quickly on this music, writing ten pieces for solo piano in only six weeks' time. This music was based on artwork by Mussorgsky's friend, Victor Hartmann. Hartmann died suddenly leaving many friends surprised and sad so they planned an exhibition of Hartmann's works to honor his memory. Mussorgsky even loaned some of his own personal artwork by Hartmann for the exhibition.

To honor his friend, Mussorgsky wrote music to represent ten art works from the exhibition. He wrote a work called "Promenade" which provided the music for walking from one painting to the next. "Promenade" begins the entire work and is heard again two more times before the piece ends.

From the Chicago Symphony Orchestra YouTube video, *Mussorgsky Pictures at an Exhibition: Pictures of What?*, show the students a clip from 3 min, 3 sec to 4 min, 28 sec (or, if you are able, play from the free downloaded piano score). "This is Mussorgsky's original music, written for piano.

Show students a clip from the same video at 5 min, 20 sec to 6 min, 18 sec. "Forty years after *Pictures at an Exhibition* was written, a composer named Maurice Ravel from France took Mussorgsky's piano music and wrote it for orchestra. This version became famous and is now one of Mussorgsky's best-known and most-loved compositions."

30-minute plan

Direct Instruction:

Promenade is a word that means *to take a leisurely walk in public*. Mussorgsky wrote this piece in the meters of 5/4 and 6/4. Some people believe this was because the composer himself had a noticeable limp and the uneven feeling of the meters that this reflects.

Lead the students in learning body percussion to demonstrate the meters of 5/4 and 6/4.

Body percussion pattern for 5/4: pat hands alternately on lap (beats 1, 2)
Clap (beat 3)

Snap once with each hand (beats 4, 5)

Body percussion pattern for 6/4 is the same as 5/4 pattern except add tap head on beat 6.

Have students count out loud as they perform each pattern. Practice until they can perform the patterns one after the other smoothly without stopping. Add the music (first 8 measures) and perform the patterns. (You can play the piano or use the YouTube clips.)

Guided practice:

Distribute either whiteboards/markers/erasers or note cards and pencils to students. On an Elmo or class whiteboard, teacher writes 5/4 time signature and then five beat lines; add 6/4 time signature and six beat lines, all in one line. Students copy on their boards or note cards.

Ex. 5/4 _ _ _ _ _ | 6/4 _ _ _ _ _

Because there is a 4 on the bottom of the time signatures, we know that the notes with which Mussorgsky used to write his music will be quarter notes and eighth notes (or tas and ta-dis or tas and ti-tis, whatever syllables you use to denote rhythms). Let's find the eighth notes/ta-dis/ti-tis first.

For the 5/4 measure, play or sing the melody only while tapping each beat line. Students tell where the eighth notes fall and both teacher and students write them on the line. Fill in all the rest of the beat lines with quarter notes.

Use the same process for the 6/4 measure.

Do you think the next phrase will be the same rhythm or different?" Play or sing the second phrase (2 measures long) as teacher and students check the rhythm of the first phrase. Students will determine that the rhythm is the same.

Independent practice: Have students write another line of 5/4 and 6/4 measures with beat lines. This time you will decide on your own what the rhythm of the next phrase is. Let's start with eighth notes.

Assessment

Once the students have written the rhythm for the third phrase, collect the cards or have them hold up their white boards to check for accuracy.

Ask two volunteers to come to the class white board and write in the rhythm.

Have students determine that the only difference in rhythm for the third phrase is in the 6/4 measure. Listen to the fourth phrase and determine that it is the same as the third phrase.

Have the students read the rhythm for all four phrases (8 measures) as the music plays. They can show either beat or rhythm as they read the notation by patting their lap or tapping their fingers in their palm.

Extension

Other versions of Promenade (for comparison or just for fun):

"I Like Art" from *Beethoven's Wig*

Jon Faddis

The Piano Guys

Resources

Definition of “promenade” www.bing.com

Free downloadable piano score

<https://musopen.org/sheetmusic/4736/modest-mussorgsky/pictures-at-an-exhibition/>

INSIDE Mussorgsky’s Pictures at an Exhibition

Colorado Symphony Orchestra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2nihz2NKi8>

Mussorgsky Pictures at an Exhibition: Pictures of What?

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

<http://csosoundsandstories.org/video/mussorgsky-pictures-from-an-exhibition-pictures-of-what/>

Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra

http://www.rpo.org/s/4/s/28/s/30/p/432/Intermediate_Level_Listening_Lessons_-_Sorted_by_Composer/