

Minnesota Sinfonia Music in the Schools 2016 -2017
Water – One of Our Most Precious Resource

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The Program:

George Frederic Handel (1685-1759): *Hornpipe* from the Water Music

- German composer who lived and composed mostly in England.
- lived during the what is called the high baroque – a time when the music was generally complicated - contrapuntal (2-3 tunes going on at the same time – think of Row, Row, Row Your Boat with 2 or 3 tunes instead of 1, all played at the same time).
- most famous pieces are the *Water Music* and *the Messiah*

About the music:

- the *Water Music* is really 3 suites of several pieces each, many of which are dances.
- the music was first played on a barge floating on the River Thames River (hence the name).
- because England is an island surrounded by the sea, water themes were/are very important in everyday life.
- many of the dances are water related – for instance the hornpipe is a sailor’s dance.

Suggestions for listening: The music is bouncy and uplifting. Ask the students to imagine sailors dancing to it - perhaps after six weeks at sea and finally spotting land off in the horizon. Talk about the importance of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers to the Twin Cities (shipping, recreation, travel, waste disposal, irrigation, etc.). How should we care for the river? Are we abusing it?

Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827): Symphony No. 6, Pastorale, Gewitter, Sturm (“Lightening and Thunder Storm”)

- became deaf in middle age, but still created some of the most famous and popular of the entire symphonic repertoire.
- his 5th symphony (the most famous 4 notes in music), 9th symphony (*Ode to Joy*) and 6th symphony (made famous by Walt Disney’s *Fantasia*) are amongst his most often performed.
- his music bridges the classical (music of Haydn and Mozart that was written during the time of the American revolution) and romantic eras in music history.

About the music:

- the symphony is called “pastorale” because it describes in musical terms scenes of nature.
- although Beethoven’s music does not actually tell a story, he uses musical devices (accents, loud trembling sounds and unexpected but dramatic dynamic changes) to create the impressions of storms, lightening, etc.
- at the end of the scene, Beethoven uses the clarinet to play some slower arpeggios (single note chords that sound like a bird chirping and the sun breaking through the clouds) to signify the end of the storm.

Suggestions for listening:

Ask the students to identify the different aspects of the storm as portrayed in the music. Where is the rolling thunder, the cloudbursts, the torrents of rain, the calm after the storm, etc. Let this lead to a discussion on what causes storms, what is and what causes thunder and lightening.

Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904): *The Water Goblin*

- Czech romantic/nationalist composer, who used his native harmonies, rhythms and folk stories to inspire his music, and in so doing helped to create a Czech nationalist music style.
- a romantic composer, who wrote tone poems (music that told a story), symphonies, concertos and chamber music.
- lived in the United States for a few years, where he helped to establish a major music conservatory in New York, and also spent time in Spillville, Iowa, which had a significant Czech community, and during that time composed his most famous symphony, *From the New World*.

About the music:

- *The Water Goblin* is a tone poem – a story described through the music, and is based on Czech folklore.
- It is a dreary story, and one that must be dealt with carefully with your students. Perhaps paraphrasing the story (sanitizing it for the younger children) would be appropriate. However, it does (again with a stretch), allow for discussions about the danger of water (drowning and injury), and how everyone must treat water with respect and care. You may also want to have a discussion on folklore, and how it was developed to explain difficult situations (death, etc.), which were unexplainable at the time. Following is a synopsis of the story.

The story begins at dusk, with the Water Goblin sitting on a poplar branch, and making a new coat and pair of shoes. He is happy and sings to himself, because on the next day, he will chose a young girl from the village to become his wife. On the next morning, a pretty girl rises early, and goes to the lake to wash her clothes. In desperation, the mother tries to stop her, telling of an evil dream she had in the night. Her daughter does not pay attention, and goaded on by an irresistible impulse, she hurries to the water.

As she takes her first steps into the water, the ground gives way, and she falters. The Water Goblin claps his hands for joy, as he sees his victim sink into the depths.

The girl becomes his wife, and they live in the bottom of the lake. Her new home is dreary and lonely, because this is also a place where the Water Goblin holds prisoners - the souls of the drowned. The poor girl sings a sad lullaby to her baby, bemoaning her own unhappy fate. She is homesick and wants to see her mother.

The song infuriates the Water Goblin and in his anger he threatens to turn her into a fish. Undeterred, she tells him that she would rather be turned to stone, then not be allowed to see her mother at least once again. Finally tiring of the endless complaints, the Goblin gives in, and sets his wife free for one day to revisit the world above. To make certain that she returns, the Goblin keeps her baby as a hostage. In a tearful meeting, the mother and daughter are reunited. As the evening comes, a furious knocking is heard at the door. The Water Goblin has come to reclaim his wife. The mother scornfully turns him away. A horrific storm comes from the lake, followed by a loud crash against the door of the cottage. The mother opens the door and finds the headless body of her daughter's child.

Suggestions for listening:

Try to identify the various sections of the music to the story. Also, hold discussions on the dangers of water, and the care when one is in and near the water.

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Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849): Prelude in D Flat Major, opus 28 # 15, *Rain Drop*

- was one of the greatest composers for piano in the Romantic Era.
- similar to Dvorak, Tchaikowsky (the *Nutcracker*) and other composers of his time, he used his native Polish culture, in this case, dance forms (polonaises, mazurkas, etc.) as frameworks for his compositions.
- although most of his works were straightforward in design (melodies and accompaniments), his creative use of harmonies and the intricacies of the melodies resulted in a very distinct and brilliant style, that have made him one of the most popular of all composers for the piano.

About the music:

- Chopin had tuberculosis and as part of the cure, his doctor suggested going to a warm and dry climate.
- He went to Majorca, an island in the Mediterranean Sea, and contrary to expectations, the weather was very damp, and his condition worsened.
- the story goes that in frustration, he composed this prelude, which has a consistent repeated note pattern, signifying the constant rain, and hence the name “raindrop.” Even if the story is not true, it is a good one....

Suggestions for listening: Ask the students to identify the repeated note pattern. Do they think it could represent raindrops? Then talk about the effect rain and humidity on our health? How do we feel when it rains? How do the rain and or snow affect our activities?

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847): *Fingal’s Cave (Overture for the Hebrides)*

- early Romantic German composer who was one of the greatest composers of his generation, and composed symphonies, concertos and chamber music.
- was also a music historian who helped revive the music of J.S. Bach (who was considered to old fashioned - already almost forgotten).
- conductor who led one of the most important orchestras of his time – the Leipzig Gewandhaus, which is still in existence today [the orchestra is named for the hall in which in performs].
- his violin concerto, *Fingal’s Cave* and music for the Shakespearean play, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are three of his most popular works, the latter which includes one of the most popular of all of the wedding marches.

About the music:

- Mendelssohn took a boat (steamer ship) to the Hebrides Islands, just off of the coast of Scotland, where he saw Fingal’s Cave.
- the cave inspired him to compose what became one of his most famous and popular pieces.
- the overture captures a very real sense of the countryside and the tumultuous disposition of the surrounding waters, including some storms.

Suggestions for listening: Listen to and then describe the moods and feelings the different sections of the music. What does the opening suggest? What about the fast, loud and tumultuous sections in the middle? And what about the ending? Also, see the standards for grade V and the related activities.

William Grant Still (1895-1978) *Mejorana y Socavon* from the Danzas de Panama (Panamanian Dances)

- one of the America’s most important composers from the 20th century.

- lived during the time of segregation and Jim Crow.
- first African American composer to have his works performed by major American orchestras.
- first African American composer to conduct major American orchestras.
- broke the color line in classical music (similar to what Jackie Robinson did for baseball).
- composed in many different musical styles, and therefore should not be typecast as an African-American composer.

About the music:

- the music is an arrangement of Panamanian dance melodies, and imitates sounds of the native instruments.
- the music is of Spanish and native Indian origin.
- the music was originally performed by guitars and a three stringed violin.
- the connection to our program on water is the Panama Canal – one of the most important water related projects in all human history.

Suggestions for listening: As the students listen to the music, ask them to compare this it to the music on the rest of our program. What are the differences? Are the rhythms different or the same? If different, how? What about the melodies? Does this music sound familiar? Does it sound like the traditional Mexican music that you have heard? Why or why not?

Race is a touchy subject, but in the case of William Grant Still, it can and should generate discussion about prejudice.

Jay (b. 1947) and Bernard Fishman (b.1982): *The Ugly Duckling*

Jay Fishman composer and conductor of the Minnesota Sinfonia was born in North Minneapolis Bernard Fishman is the oldest son of Jay Fishman, and is a DJ (turntablist) and published author of children's stories.

About the Music:

- *The Ugly Duckling* is a children's story by Hans Christian Anderson.
- Bernard updated the story, to make it more appealing to today's school children, and Jay composed the music.
- Bernard created two versions to the story's ending. The traditional ending has the ugly duckling turning into a beautiful swan. The second has the ugly duckling finding inner peace, after which he lives his life with happiness after realizing that self-awareness and confidence are more important than physical beauty. We chose this second version, because we thought it might be a good lesson to the students about self-esteem and confidence.
- the story shows the importance of water for the sustainability of life for all living creatures.

Once Upon a Time, in a pond just over the horizon, lived a mother duck. She had been sitting on her eggs for ages, and was getting pretty sick of it. She dreamed of the day when she could swim in the pond, eat whatever she wanted, and fly up into the sky without worrying about her babies being eaten. You know, the normal things mothers worry about. One day, almost in desperation, she thought to herself, "I hope these ducklings make it out before nighttime, I want them to come out sunny side up,"

Suddenly, she heard an egg crack. And then another, and another, until all but one of the eggs had hatched. Staring at the last egg, mother duck froze in disbelief. "Horn toad over easy!" she

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bellowed. “This egg looks just like a potato. I’ve been bamboozled! [Sigh] But I have waited this long for it to hatch, so maybe I’ll sit a little longer.”

So while the baby ducklings splashed in the pond. Mother duck sat on the last egg. Finally, she felt a wiggle, and then another, and a few more, until BBWWAAHHH?!?!?! What on earth? This is the ugliest and most revolting poor excuse for a duckling I have ever seen! The other ducklings also thought their new brother was ugly. In fact, they found him so ugly that they named him Grezango, after the hideous ogre in their favorite storybook. Day after day, they bullied and teased him. First, they pecked him with their small beaks. Then they flapped him with their wings, flipping him upside down, so just his little flippers were left poking up out of the water while he desperately tried to turn back over.

All these things were bad, but they were nothing compared to what the meanest duckling did. His real name was Ferdinand, but everyone called him Quack Nasty, because he was the biggest and nastiest duckling in the pond. When Quack Nasty was around, he would pick Grezango up like he was only a feather, twirl him on his beak, pound him like a freshly made pizza dough, and then throw him to the ground with a thud. After being treated so badly for so long, Grezango sometimes wished that his egg had been scrambled. Things got so bad that eventually he had had enough.

Early one morning he packed a few things, and waddled off into the woods. After what seemed like days, but really was only a few hours, he found a new pond with two ducks (and no Quack Nasty) playing in the water. “What’s up doc?” said the first duck. “Whoeee, you sure are an ugly one,” said the other. But they both agreed that Grezango could play with them. While swimming with the ducks, Grezango gazed across the lake and noticed two geese. They looked a little different, and so he decided to go check them out. “You can play with us,” the biggest goose said. “Yea, as long as you don’t squawk at my sister,” said the skinnier one.

All seemed to go along swimmingly, but in the distance, trouble loomed. The faint sounds of a hunting party were in the air...And as they advanced, Grezango could hear their guns a-blasting. Scared quackless, Grezango hid in the reeds by the edge of the water. After hours and hours of trembling with fear, waiting for the hunters to leave... Grezango finally picked himself up and started off on his away.

Over the next few days, he had many more adventures, first meeting a cat, a hen, and even an old woman who jabbered on and on about this and that, and that and this. The cat and the hen both thought themselves the smartest and craftiest creatures this side of Timbuktu. And they kept telling Grezango how pretty they were, and how ugly he was. They even told him that he should get plastic surgery to look better, but Grezango did not want to be mistaken for a plastic duck in a shooting gallery, so he respectfully declined. They kept clucking so much that Grezango soon grew sick of them, and decided to move on.

With a spring in his waddle (he still couldn’t fly), he marched along until he found another pond, and quickly dove into its cool waters. When he came up he saw... Holy duck feathers! ...Two swans, two of the most beautiful creatures ever to live, were swimming nearby. They had pearly white feathers, and moved with such grace and gentleness that Grezango was in awe. Embarrassed by his ugliness, this was the first time he considered the plastic surgery. Days

turned into weeks, and soon the great winds blew in from the north. The swans flew south for the winter, and Grezango, who still could not fly, was left alone in the icy pond.

It was a cold and very difficult winter. Grezango had no friends to play with, and became lonely and despondent. He did have one more adventure, which all but sealed his fate. Early one morning, when the temperature was at its coldest, and Grezango was shivering in the freezing pond, he was seen by a woodsman. Drooling with delight, the woodsman thought that Grezango would make an excellent Sunday dinner. With lightening speed, he caught Grezango, threw him in a sack, and marched home to show off his prize to his wife and children. The woodsman's children were excitable little demons, and as soon as they saw Grezango, they chased him all over the house, and had a grand old time with him. Grezango on the other wing, was scared for his life, and fluttered all over the house. The woodsman's wife soon had enough, grabbed a broom, and with a shriek, chased him out of her house. "This is reduckless," Grezango muttered to himself as he scurried into the meadow. With a quack skidaddle, he dove into another new pond, hoping above hopes for a ray of sunshine in his otherwise bleak existence.

After looking across the way, he saw a group of swans. "They are beautiful, no doubt, Grezango thought, but that won't stop the hunter from shooting them. They can be eaten just as easily as me." He waddled over to the water, gazed down at his reflections, and now saw himself in a new light. And that's when it hit him. He realized that his true strength and beauty came from within. He didn't need plastic surgery and he didn't need other ducks helping him, because he could help himself. He realized that others had viewed him as ugly because he viewed himself that way. With this newfound confidence, he ceased to care what other animals thought of him. He swam over to the swans, and when they saw how confident he was, they all stroked their beaks on his feathers, welcoming him into their clan. Grezango found a happiness he never imagined possible, and he lived to be a wise old bird, one of the most exquisite creatures ever to float upon this earth.

Traditional ending:

After looking across the way, he saw a group of swans. Thoroughly demoralized, he thought it would be better to be pecked and pecked by the beaks of such beautiful creatures than to continue on as an ugly duck. Approaching the swans with his head bowed, he noticed his reflection in the water. He saw that he was no longer the ugly creature that was scorned by so many. He was in fact a swan; equally beautiful to the birds he once envied. Grezango felt a new sense of pride, and decided he must live. He joined the other swans, and they all stroked their beaks on his feathers, welcoming him into their clan. Grezango found a happiness he never imagined possible, and he lived to be a wise old swan, one of the most exquisite creatures ever to float upon this earth.