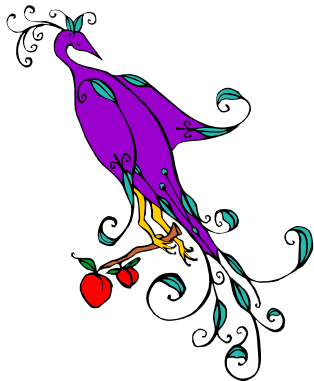




Kentucky Learning Goals and Academic Expectations

1.4 Students make sense of the various messages to which they listen.

1.13 Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with the visual arts.



Igor Stravinsky (June 17, 1882 - April 6, 1971)

Stravinsky was born in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1882. His father was an opera singer, so Igor was exposed to music at an early age. He began formal piano lessons at

the age of nine, and by the time he was sixteen was composing great music. Stravinsky studied composition with another famous Russian composer, Nikolai Rim-

sky-Korsakov, while a law and philosophy student at St. Petersburg University. Additional biographical information is contained on the enclosed CD ROM.

The Story of the Firebird

In the Russian tale of *the Firebird*, there is an evil demon named Kashchei, whom no one could destroy. He had an enchanted garden that contained a tree with golden apples, the favorite food of the magical Firebird. One day, Prince Ivan wandered into the garden looking for the Firebird. He was able to capture the magical bird, but lets it go in return for one of its feathers. Immediately,

thirteen enchanted princesses appeared and danced around Prince Ivan. The prince falls in love with one of the princesses, Tsarevna. Because they are under Kashchei's magic spell, the princesses must return to his castle at sunrise. Ivan followed them and is captured by Kashchei's evil guardians. He is about to be turned to stone when he remembered the Firebird's magic feather and waves

it in the air. The Firebird returned and leads Kashchei and his monsters in a wild dance—the *Infernal Dance*. The dance is so exhausting that Kashchei and his followers fall fast asleep. The Firebird then tells Ivan that Kashchei's soul is in a huge egg. Ivan breaks the egg, destroys Kashchei and frees his kingdom. Prince Ivan marries Tsarevna and Firebird flies away, never to be seen again.

The Music of The Infernal Dance

The *Infernal Dance* by Igor Stravinsky was composed for a ballet called *The Firebird*, which was first performed in June, 1910.

As you listen to this music you may not think of it as a ballet. However, ballet is the special art form of telling a story through exciting dance, music and costumes.

Ballet has been enjoyed for many centuries, but in the early 1900s it was a particularly popular form of entertainment, just like movies and rock concerts are today. Stravinsky's music brings the tale of *the Firebird* to life. The rhythms and use of instruments were so unusual for its time that dancers missed their entrances at first, and the composer had to explain the music to the orchestra members.

At the point where the *Infernal Dance* appears, Prince Ivan, the hero, has been trapped in the woods outside the castle by the evil demon's subjects and the magical Firebird is leading these

monsters in a wild dance. The music is fast and syncopated and is in ABA form.

The A section is driving and percussive. It is in 3/4 time. The movement opens with a loud chord played by the whole orchestra, and then the melody heard throughout the A section is introduced by the bassoons and French horn. This melody is energetic and dissonant, representing the evil monsters trying to attack Ivan.

The term 'dissonant' is when two or more notes are played together to create sounds of unrest. The melody is then passed between the different instrument groups. First, the bassoons and French horns repeat the melody. Then the trumpets and trombones play the melody in a bold fanfare. Next, the woodwinds and piano enter as the melody becomes crisp and percussive. After that, the melody slowly changes, becoming more snakelike and slithery as gradually all of the woodwinds enter. The melody builds in excitement as the whole

orchestra enters.

Then, there is a section that features the xylophone with brief interruptions from the rest of the orchestra. This leads into the B section of the *Infernal Dance*. Throughout the A section of the *Infernal Dance*, the music is driven forward by the syncopated rhythms. Syncopation is where one of the weak beats of the measure is accented.

The B section is in 2/4 time. The melody is played by the strings and is long and sweeping. The graceful melody represents the beautiful firebird, princess Tsarevna and the other princesses dancing around the evil monsters.

The dreamy melody gradually gets more and more excited, as if the firebird is casting an even more powerful spell over the monster.

continued next section...

The Music of The Infernal Dance (continued)

Then the A section returns as the melody builds to a fortissimo, or as loud as the orchestra can play, and is once more in 3/4. The melody from the A section returns in the bassoons. Then the brass explosively picks up the melody.

After that, the brass, the percussion and the piano enter lightly.

Next the woodwinds enter. This is followed by a gradual accelerando which builds both in excitement and in dynamics to fortissimo.

Accelerando means getting faster and faster. The music abruptly drops back to piano, or as softly as the orchestra can play, as only the strings play before building dra-

matically to the end.

Stravinsky Activities - The Elements of the Piece

1. Before listening to the music (Track 24), discuss the characteristics of the piece as described in the section above. Ask the students if the music is fast or slow? (quite fast overall) Is it loud or soft? (the music has many sections, some are loud, some are soft, others get gradually louder, or softer). Did the melody sound high or low? (It has many high and low sounds). Point out that a lot of music has many different sections and can show many differences of tempo, expression, or pitch/melody – and tone colors of instruments.

2. At this point, you may wish to point out that the music was originally from a ballet and that dancers told the story of *the Firebird* on

stage. How would you dance to this music? Tell the class that they will be performing their own ballet to this music.

3. Divide the class into 3 groups. Have each group move for a section of the work. Ask the groups to move in a way that reflects the dynamics, tempo and pitch/melody that they hear. They may also move like the characters that each section represents. Have the students come up with movements to represent Ivan, the monsters, Kashchei, the Firebird, the Princess Tsarevna and the other princesses.

You may wish to have the students use colorful scarves or streamers. Strike a triangle to signal to cue to

change groups. Everyone could dance as the music builds at the end.

Now Choose the Character

Play the music (Track 24) and ask the students to point to the character they think they hear. You may wish to enlarge the enclosed character sheet (provided on page 21), use it on an overhead projector or make individual copies for the students.

Stravinsky Activities—Sequencing the Story

Listening map

If you wish to add more detail for older students, display the enclosed listening map (page 22) for *Infernal Dance* on an overhead projector or make individual copies for the students. Guide them through the sections of the music as it plays.

Sequencing the Story

Review the story of *the Firebird*. Using the provided sequencing chart (page 20), have the students draw pictures to tell what is happening in the story. Students may share their pictures with the rest of the class.

West Virginia Content Standards and Objectives

Music

Standard 2: Exploring (MU.S.2)

Students will: read and notate music; listen to, analyze, and describe music; and evaluate music and music performances.

Standard 4: Relating (MU.S.4)

Students will: understand relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts; and understand music in relation to history and culture.

Ohio Academic Content Standard Benchmarks

Music: *Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts*

By the end of the K-4 program: A. Identify and demonstrate basic music forms.

Analyzing and Responding

By the end of the K-4 program: A. Identify and demonstrate elements of music using developmentally appropriate music vocabulary. B. Identify the sounds of a variety of instruments including orchestra, band and classroom instruments. C. Discuss and evaluate individual and group music performance.

Valuing Music/Aesthetic Reflection

By the end of the K-4 program: A. Reflect on their own performances and the performances of others. C. Demonstrate how music communicates meaning of text, feelings, moods or images, and influences personal preferences.

Connection, Relationships and Applications

By the end of the K-4 program: A. Explain ways that music interrelates with other arts disciplines and with various disciplines outside the arts.

Stravinsky Sequencing Chart

What happens in the beginning of the story?

What happens in the middle of the story?

What happens at the end of the story?

Stravinsky Choose the Character Sheet

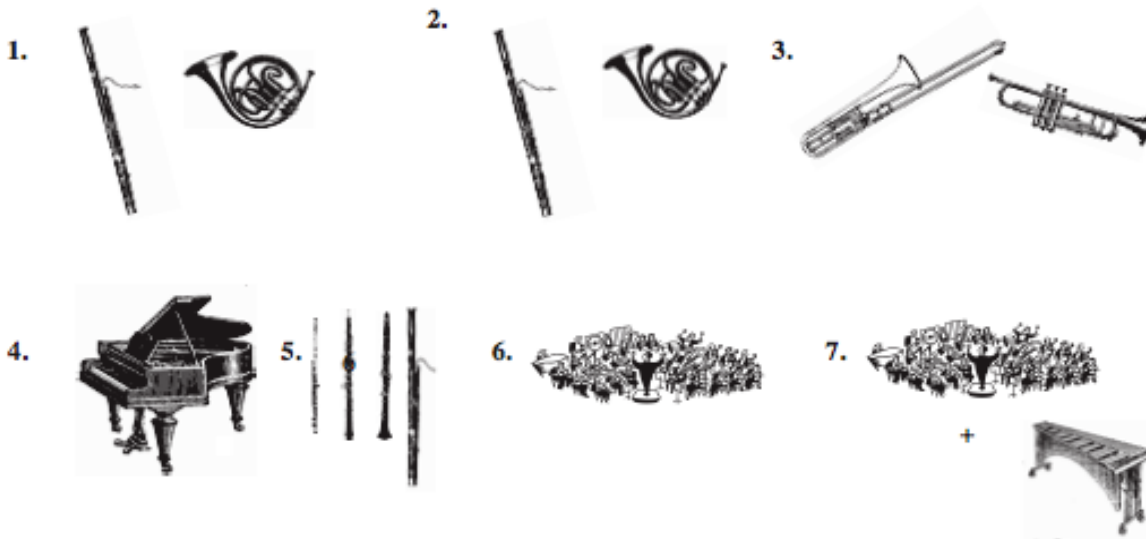
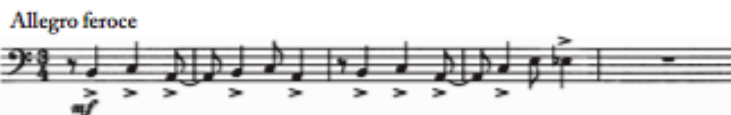


Stravinsky Listening Map

Listening Map for "Infernal Dance" from *The Firebird* by Stravinsky

Instructions: The form is ABA. The Theme for Section A is repeated several times. Follow the instruments on the map as you listen so you don't get lost before Section B.

Section A Melody:
A driving, syncopated, rhythmic melody



Section B: Theme A is sweeping and dreamy as if a firebird sweeps over evil monsters below.



Section A: Theme A returns after Section B ends in a dramatic crescendo.

