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## Giuseppe Verdi (October 9, 1813 - January 27, 1901)

One of the most popular Italian composer of operas, Giuseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901), was born in a small village in Italy to an inn-keeper. By the time he was seven years old, he was already helping his church organist. Although his family was not rich, they knew it was important to encourage his obvious musical ability at an early age. He went to Milan, Italy to

study music composition.

His first opera, *Oberto*, was accepted in 1839. His success as a composer began with the opera, *Nabucco*, written in 1842 after he recovered from the death of his wife from encephalitis and two children who died from unknown illnesses as babies. Verdi was already famous when he wrote the

opera, *La forza del destino* in 1862. His last opera, *Falstaff*, was completed in 1893.

Verdi was greatly loved and respected. When he died in Milan, Italy at the age of 87, thousands of people came to pay their respects.

## The Story of The Force of Destiny

*La forza del destino* (*The Force of Destiny*) premiered at the Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1862. In this time period, it was usual to set operatic stories in far-off lands. The story of this opera takes place in Italy and Spain in the middle of the 18th century. A common young man (Don Alvaro) is in love with the daughter (Leonora di Vargas) of a

wealthy man. Leonora is also in love with Don Alvaro. One night Don Alvaro is caught trying to kidnap her. When he is caught, he insists that Leonora had nothing to do with it. To prove this, Don Alvaro throws down his gun which accidentally goes off and kills Leonora's father. Before he dies, the father puts a terrible curse on his daughter, which be-

comes her "destiny (fate)." Don Alvaro and Leonora run away. Her brother (Don Carlo) finds out about it and vows to find them and get back at them for the death of his father. The rest of the complicated opera story tells how Don Alvaro and Leonora become separated and then find each other with an unexpected ending.

## The Music of The Force of Destiny

The Overture to *La forza del destino* is a very dramatic beginning to the opera with the "destiny" theme (melody) being important. The overture also includes parts of the themes from the arias (solo voice pieces) which come later in the opera. In this overture, the music has a powerful way of creating pictures in our minds, as well as causing us to feel the suspense of the fate to come. Here is an example of what the "destiny" theme looks like:



## Verdi Activities - Emotions in Music

1. Discuss various events in a person's life. An event may make people sad or happy. Other events that happen may make people feel relaxed or very scared. We call these differences contrasts. In *La Forza del Destino*, Verdi used the instruments of the orchestra to create many musical contrasts and to create many moods.

2. As you play the music, ask the students to draw a facial expression that reflects how the music makes them feel, or have them move to the music to express their feelings.

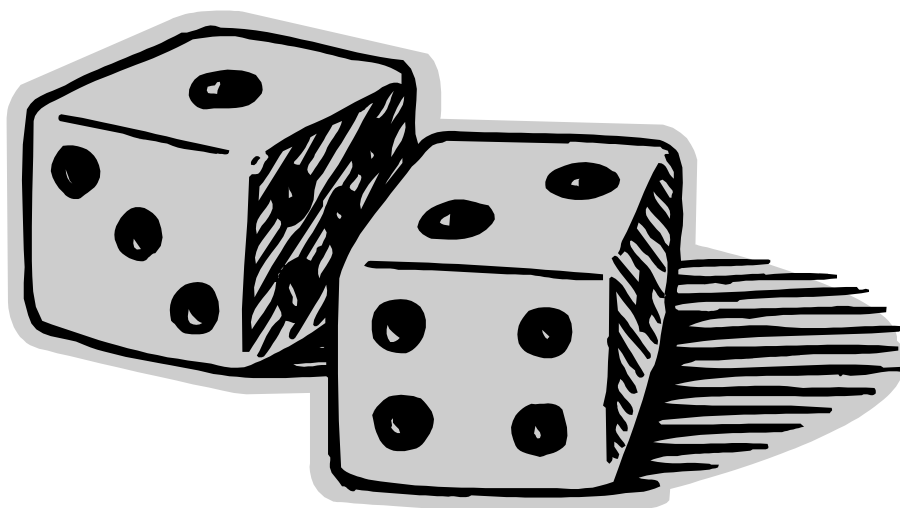
3. Play *La Forza del Destino* (Track

21) for the students. The music has many contrasting sections. (minor).

You may wish to draw and display some basic facial expression as samples for the students.

The student may share their answers with the class. This is a good place to discuss what it was about the music that made them feel that way and relate it back to the elements of music.

Some items to discuss include the speed of the music (tempo), how loud or soft the music was played (dynamics), the instruments used and the harmony used (major or



### 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.

### Ohio Academic Content Standard Benchmarks

#### Music

#### *Analyzing and Responding*

By the end of the K-4 program:

A. Identify and demonstrate elements of music using developmentally appropriate music vocabulary.

#### *Valuing Music/Aesthetic Reflection*

By the end of the K-4 program:

C. Demonstrate how music communicates meaning of text, feelings, moods or images, and influences personal preferences.

### Kentucky Learning Goals and Academic Expectations

1.14 Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with music.

1.15 Students make sense of and communicate ideas with movement.

2.23 Students analyze their own and others' artistic products and performances using accepted standards.

2.24 Students have knowledge of major works of art, music, and literature and appreciate creativity and the contributions of the arts and humanities.