

ACTIVITY EIGHT: A MUSICAL COMPARISON

LINK TO POINT 7 IN MUSIC ACTIVITY I.

Learning Objectives

- To listen to a piece of music analytically;
- To interpret the music thinking specifically about the moods.

Resources

- Listening equipment. Please use the YouTube examples given in [Historical Context 21. Creative Responses to the War](#)
- Paper and green, red and black pencils.

Prior learning

Music Activity I. If you haven't completed the whole of Music Activity I, make sure that you have looked at the section entitled Music after the War.

Introduction

This task focuses on listening to a range of pieces written before, during and after the First World War and comparing them. It can be done in one lesson or broken up.

MAIN TASKS

Before the war:

1. Listen to Butterworth's *On the Banks of the Green Willow* composed in 1913. Don't mention the name of the piece!
 - a. What is the general mood of the piece?
 - b. What instrument starts off the piece? (Clarinet)
 - c. What is the atmosphere that it gives?
 - d. What instruments join this melody (Strings)
 - e. Is the melody passed around the different instruments of the orchestra or played by all of them at the same time?
 - f. What elements make it sound very jolly? (Dotted, lighthearted, bouncy rhythms against the legato (smooth) phrases).
 - g. At 4.00 what two instruments are being played (Harp and flute).
 - h. What do you think that this piece is describing? Could it be described as programme music?
 - i. EXTENSION: Draw a picture describing the piece.

During the War

2. Edward Elgar's oratorio *The Spirit of England* was composed during the war between 1914 – 17. It takes the form of three sections.
 - a. SECTION I (Listen to 0.00 - 6.00)
 - i. What is the opening mood of the piece?
 - ii. Is it purely instrumental? (If not, what voices can be heard – is it all choral or are there solo sections?)

- iii. Even if you can't make out the words, what do you think that they are saying?
- b. SECTION 2 (15.34 – 20.00)
 - i. What instruments are playing at the start?
 - ii. What mood do you think the composer is trying to put across?
 - iii. What are the dynamics at this point?
 - iv. Is it reflective at all of *On the Banks of the Green Willow*?
 - v. What do you think is similar (think about the instrumentation).
 - vi. The voices join in at 17.33 – does this alter the mood at all?
 - vii. Does the mood change at all throughout the section? How?
- c. SECTION 3 (listen to 22.00 – 30.00)
 - i. This section goes through many emotions – can you describe the journey?
 - ii. How does it finish?
 - iii. Is it quiet (piano) or does it finish with a flourish in a triumphant fortissimo?

After the War

- 3. Listen to Holst's *Ode to Death* (between 0.00 and 8.00)
 - a. What emotions do you think that this piece is representing? Do they change as the piece progresses?
 - i. Whilst you are listening to the piece use a green pencil to represent calm, reflective moments; red for angry moments and black for despair. See if you can map the emotions this piece takes you through.
- 4. Vaughan William's *Symphony no 3 (Pastoral Symphony)* was also composed after the war and was inspired by his experiences.
 - a. Are there any similarities with the other pieces you have heard today? (Listen to 2.00 – 3.00) (Can you hear the lush English countryside that was depicted in *On the Banks of the Green Willow*?)
 - b. Listen to 17.09 – 18.00
 - i. What is the main instrument here? Why do you think Vaughan Williams chose that instrument for the melody? (Think about the role of the bugle in war).
 - c. Listen to 18.50 – 20.25
 - i. Describe this section. How does it leave you feeling?
 - ii. How does the instrumentation change?
 - d. The conclusion: 30.00 – 35.00
 - i. What mood is Vaughan Williams trying to encapsulate in this final section?
 - ii. Who has the final say? (Soprano)
 - iii. Why do you think he might have done this?

Review

How did the music change as the war progressed? Can you see any similarities between the pieces?

Note

An Oratorio, like a requiem is traditionally a musical setting of a sacred text.