

## 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.