

Mini-Lesson #16: Music: For the Birds?

Overview of Outcomes

For centuries, people have found musical inspiration in the songs and vocalizations of birds. The naturally melodic sounds of birds paired with their aesthetic beauty have immortalized certain species within popular culture, synonymizing their names with specific emotions or sonic qualities. The goals of this lesson are to provide students with background knowledge of musical works that have incorporated or been inspired by birdsongs and to communicate the power of the arts in shaping societal perceptions of nature. It is important for students to understand that the Hawaiian forest bird symphony performance represents a continuation of this musical tradition of inspiration derived from the natural world. Teachers may find an opportunity in this lesson to talk about the motivations behind the symphony's creation and its unique focus on promoting conservation goals.

Materials

Teacher's computer (internet access to open links on project website)

Activity Directions

- 1) Teachers will begin class with a general summary of the material they have covered so far (natural history of the Hawaiian Islands, the Hawaiian forest bird species, the extinction crisis, and conservation strategies). This lesson brings the focus back to the upcoming symphony performance. Teachers should look to their students for the answer to this question: "why are we going to the symphony?" Why is this an important topic to educate the public on? (10 minutes)
- 2) Teachers should take ~10 minutes to ask their students to think of songs about birds, and prompt them further to think about what those birds represent in those songs. This part of the lesson serves to encourage students to think critically about the cultural significance of birds, and the emotional reactions elicited by them in music and the arts. (Below is a selection of classical and modern pop songs that teachers may play in class to encourage discussion)

Nightingale

- Beethoven's *Third Symphony*
- Igor Stravinsky's *Le chant du rossignol*
- Handel's *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso ed Il Moderato*
- Ottorino Respighi's *The Birds and Pines of Rome, The Pines of the Janiculum* ending)
- Andre Rieu's *Nightingale Serenade* (Toselli Serenade)

Cuckoo

- Saint-Saëns' *The Carnival of the Animals*
- Louis-Claude Daquin's *Le Coucou*
- Frederick Delius' *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*

Lark

- Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*

Miscellaneous Classical Music Pieces

- Einojuhani Rautavaara's *Cantus Arcticus*
- Olivier Messiaen's *Oiseaux Exotiques*
- Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*
- Antonio Vivaldi's *Flute Concerto in D, Op. 10/3, RV428 "The Goldfinch"*
- *Kookaburra* (Australian traditional song)

Modern Pop Music Inspired by Birds

- The Beatles - "Blackbird", "Free as a Bird"
- Kalapana - "Nightbird"
- Olomana - "Seabird"
- George Keahi - "Ulili E"
- Bob Marley - "Three Little Birds"
- Michael Jackson - "Rockin' Robin"
- Lynyrd Skynyrd - "Free Bird"