



Hungarian Dance No. 5 in G minor by Johannes Brahms

CLASSROOM RESOURCE FOR KS2

For:

- Key Stage 2 in England and Wales
- Second Level, P5-P7 in Scotland
- Key Stage 1/Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland

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Background

The composer: **Johannes BRAHMS (1833–1897)**

- German composer
- One of the 'three B's' of German music – Beethoven, Bach, Brahms
- Wrote four symphonies and much for smaller chamber groups
- Known as a perfectionist, a traditionalist and an innovator

The music: **Hungarian Dance No. 5 in G minor**

- The most famous dance from a set of 21 originally written for piano (four hands) in 1869
- Brahms became fascinated by Hungarian folk music after meeting and working with violinist Ede Reményi who introduced him to 'gypsy-style' playing
- Brahms thought he was using a traditional Hungarian folk tune but he actually, unknowingly, stole this tune from a composer called Béla Kéler
- The Hungarian Dances are his most popular and lucrative pieces

Trailblazer: Johannes Brahms was fascinated with the sound of the Hungarian Gypsy travelling bands. He took these sounds and super-sized them for the orchestra!

Learning outcomes

Learners will:

- listen and reflect on a piece of orchestral music
- create their own piece of music using instruments and voice
- perform as an ensemble
- learn musical language appropriate to the task

Curriculum checklist:

- play and perform in ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

Glossary of music terms used:

Bar	A very short, countable section of music
Melody	another word for 'tune', like a musical sentence
Off-beat	the 'weak' beats between the strong, 'on-beats' of the pulse
Orchestrate	choose which instruments perform which parts of the music
Ostinato	a repeating (often rhythmic) pattern
Pitched percussion	percussion instruments that can play different pitches – xylophones, glockenspiels, chime bars, etc.
Unpitched percussion	percussion instruments that can only make a limited number of sounds – drums, shakers, woodblocks, tambourines, etc.

Glossary terms can be found underlined throughout.

Resources required:

- classroom percussion instruments
- a large space such as the school hall

This scheme of work is plotted out over six lessons. Feel free to adapt it to suit your children and the resources you have available.

The six lessons at a glance

Lesson 1:

Activities:	Watch the film Create movement inspired by the music
Curriculum link:	Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians Develop an understanding of the history of music

Lesson 2:

Activities:	Learn to play an 'um-pah' pulse
Curriculum link:	Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 3:

Activities:	Learn and perform 'off-beats'
Curriculum link:	Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 4:

Activities:	Learn or invent a melody
Curriculum link:	Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 5:

Activities:	Explore long and short sounds Transfer body percussion patterns onto instruments
Curriculum link:	Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

Lesson 6:

Activities:	Structure ideas into a piece Perform in a concert
Curriculum link:	Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

LESSON 1

Watching and listening and dancing!

1. Prepare your class

Explain to your class that you are going to begin a six-week music project focusing on a fantastic piece of music by a very important German composer called Johannes Brahms. Brahms became fascinated by the sound of Hungarian folk music and 'gypsy-style' violin playing, and so he put both of these ideas into this music.

2. Watch the BBC Ten Pieces Trailblazers film and the full orchestra performance, and have a discussion about both. Ask the children:

- Did you like the music?
- Did it make you want to dance?
- If you could combine two musical styles which two would you choose?

3. Listening/movement task

Move into a large space such as the school hall or, if working the classroom, clear all of the furniture to the sides. Brahms' dance is based on a traditional dance called a csárdás. This is a dance performed in pairs, so ask your children to find a partner to dance with.

4. Listen to the opening tune again and count out loud to eight, like this:



Encourage your children to count with you. You should be able to count to eight, four times before the music changes.

5. **Ask your pairs** to come up with a gesture or movement to perform on each count. They can do the same movement eight times or several different movements, but the challenge is to fit to the eight counts (bars) and be able to repeat the set four times over.
6. **Watch sets of pairs** perform their moves at the same time, perhaps counting rather than using the music, and then ask all the pairs to perform together with the music.
7. **Listen on** – the music changes and becomes more bouncy. You can still count four sets of eight but the 2nd and 4th sets slow down in the middle. Count this out loud with the children and challenge them to make a new set of (up to) eight movements for this part. These new movements should contrast with the previous ones so perhaps encourage each pair to add in a jump or a hop to match the new shape of the music.
8. **Again, watch some of the pairs separately** before watching them perform altogether with the music. The extra challenge here is to avoid bumping into one another!
9. **Listen on** – at about one minute into the dance the music changes again and is made up of very short, fast notes and then some longer, stretched out sounds. Can your pairs come up

with movements to match this bit too? There is one more new rule here – this bit must include some holding hands and turning or spinning around just like in a real csárdás.

10. Put this bit together with the music.

11. FINALLY, your children have now made movements to match the three different types of music in Brahms' piece. His structure is as follows:

A: (8 counts, 8 counts, 8 counts, 8 counts) – just gestures

B: (8 counts, 8 counts slowing down, 8 counts, 8 counts slowing down) – jumps/hops added

C: (fast notes, stretched out notes) – holding hands, turning/ spinning

A: (8 counts, 8 counts)

B: (8 counts, 8 counts slowing down, 8 counts, 8 counts slowing down)

Three loud chords to end

Your children should now have a good understanding of Brahms' piece and have created a Hungarian dance of their own!

LESSON 2

Um-pah pulse

1. **Warm-up** by performing your dance again to Brahms' music or just counting along. It's important that the children remember the counts of eight.
2. **Explain**
This is called counting bars. Bars are very small measures of music. Each of Brahms' bars contains two beats and that gives the dance its 'um-pah' sound.
3. **Select two drums with different sounds** – i.e. a big drum such as Djembe with a low sound and a smaller hand drum with a higher sound. Play a steady pulse with these drums alternating back and forth between the two sounds just like the bassline of Brahms' piece. As you do so, encourage the children to keep counting as follows:



They should count on each 'high' drum and not on the 'low' one. (eight counts = 16 drum hits). You can play this along with Brahms' music too.

4. **Choose a volunteer to take over from you.** The drumming is called an 'um-pah' and children can join in with the drummer by patting opposite knees. They should continue counting out loud too.
5. **Next, get out a xylophone and add in this pattern:**



Choose a child to add this on top of the um-pah patterns.

6. **Split the class into three teams with the following jobs:**
 - Um-pah drumming group
 - Xylophones on G and D as above
 - Beginner musicians also on G and D (you can replace the D with F# or A for extra harmony if you like)

If you have more advanced players, or players on bass instruments you might like to add this 'um-pah bassline' in too:



7. FINALLY, bring the groups back together and make a class version of this. Try performing it along with the orchestral recording – only play during the main theme (A) sections (refer to the structure listed at the end of lesson 1 for more info).

LESSON 3

Off-beats (double 'um-pah')

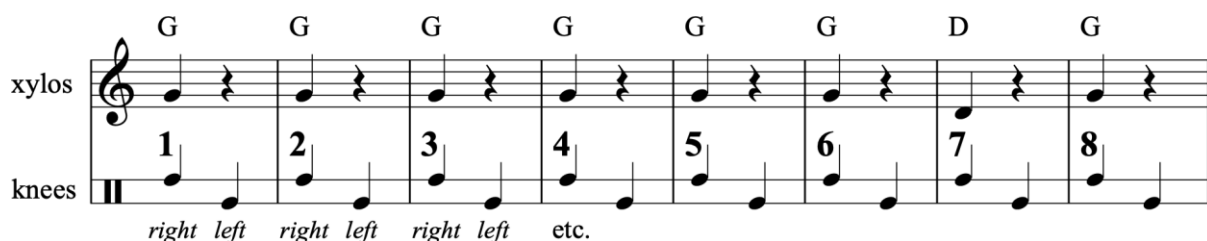
1. Warm-up

Start with your class sitting in a circle and play a quick focussing game such as 'pass the clap'. Start a slow um-pah pulse by tapping your knees like this:



Encourage your children to join in.

Sing the xylophone Gs and Ds on top. Like this:



Again, encourage your children to join in and bring them to a stop after a full set of eight.

- Remind your children** that the pattern you are tapping on your knees is called 'um-pah'. Challenge them to perform it again, still alternating between left and right knee but this time using only one hand. When this is going well use your free hand to add an 'offbeat' – i.e. tap your chest in between each knee tap like this:



Encourage your children to join this too and again, bring them to a neat stop when everyone has got the hang of it.

- Explain that the chest taps are called 'off-beats'.** These are notes placed in between the stronger 'on-beats' of the pulse. The off-beats make their own 'um-pah' with the on-beats thus making a double um-pah with the slower um-pah bassline! Brahms uses them throughout his piece and they are the ingredient that makes the music good to dance to.
- Ask your children** to choose an unpitched instrument to play the off-beats. This should be something capable of making a short, soft and 'crisp' sound (a cabasa, triangle, woodblock for example). Allow the children to try out several options and eliminate anything that doesn't work (cymbals, gongs etc.).

5. **Split your class into four groups.** Mix up your instrumentalists, drummers and xylophonists from last time so that each group can perform all of the elements you have discussed so far. Ask each group to make eight counts as follows:

The musical notation is organized into three staves: xylos (top), unpitched (middle), and drums (bottom). Above the xylos staff, the notes G, G, G, G, G, G, D, and G are written above the first seven measures. The xylos staff uses a treble clef and contains a half note in each measure, corresponding to the notes above. The unpitched staff uses a single vertical line and contains eighth notes in each measure, starting with a rest in the first measure. The drums staff uses a double vertical line and contains half notes in each measure, starting with a rest in the first measure.

As the groups work on this, float between them checking that they are all performing at roughly the same speed and check also that everyone has an instrument and something to do.

6. **Bring the groups back together** and hear them one by one giving a bit of feedback after each. Ask the 'audience' to check that they are sticking to eight counts – no more and no less.
7. **FINALLY**, ask your children to put the groups into an order and try playing in that order moving from group to group without stopping or losing the pulse. So, each team is either playing their eight counts, or counting and waiting. Write down what you have done and who played what.

LESSON 4

Steal a tune!

1. **Warm-up**

Recap the um-pah pulse from last lesson sitting in a circle and performing the body percussion version.

2. **Get the instruments out** and split quickly back into groups to put the eight counts back together.

3. **Remind your children** that Brahms used a melody in his dance that he thought was a traditional folk melody but it actually turned out that he had stolen it from another composer. During this lesson you will create a melody (or tune) to go on top of your um-pah. Here are three options for your melody:

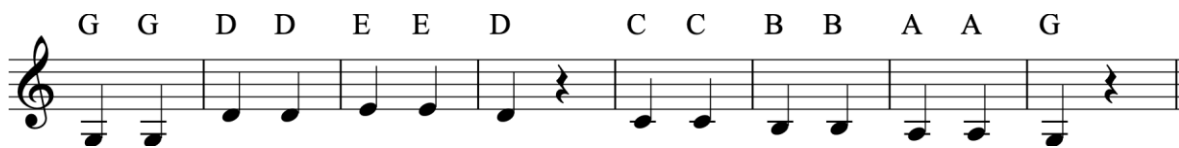
i. **Steal from Brahms** – here's a simplified version of his (stolen) tune:



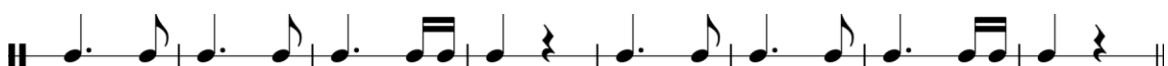
If you don't have these 'black' notes (sharps and flats), just use white ones. It will simply disguise Brahms' tune further!

ii. **Steal from someone else** – perhaps there is a simple tune that your children already know and that can be adapted to fit the um-pah pulse.

iii. **Steal from Mozart!** – he wrote the melody we now know as 'Twinkle, twinkle little star'. This is very easy to play on most instruments. Here it is in the correct key for your um-pah pulse:



iv. **Create a new tune** – use just G, A, B, C, E, keep it short and repetitive and perhaps use a rhythm that contrasts with the um-pah pulse. For example, here's a rhythm 'borrowed' from Brahms:



Whichever method you use, your tune must fit with just eight counts of um-pah.

4. **Decide which method you are going to use** and teach/create the melody with the full class. Then, split back into your four groups. Ask the children with pitched instruments to practise the melody while those with unpitched instruments continue to work on the um-pah.

5. **Bring the class back together** and hear their pieces. Ask them to come up with the structure for their music. They have four groups performing eight counts of um-pah each and now they also have a melody. Can they fit all this together to make one big piece?
6. **FINALLY**, - when your structure is decided on, perhaps you have tried out several options before deciding, write it on the board and practise it until everyone knows what they are doing and the music is neat. Explain that this is just one part of your dance piece and it is called 'The A Section'.

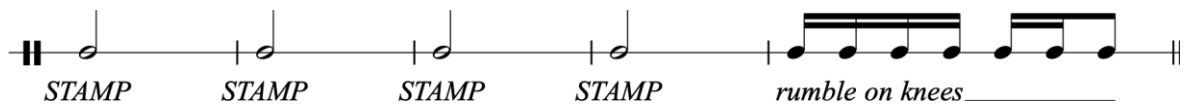
LESSON 5

Long sounds, short sounds

1. **Warm-up**

Begin in a large circle with a quick focusing activity and recap, without instruments, the um-pah pulse and all the rhythms you have worked with so far. It might be fun at this point to recap the dance you made in lesson 1 too.

2. **Remind your class** about the middle of Brahms' piece when the um-pah stops and instead the music is made up of some longer, stretched out sounds and then some very short, fast notes. Teach this body percussion version of the same bit:



3. **Ask your children to get back into their four groups** and, using the same instruments as last lesson, orchestrate this body percussion piece – i.e. decide which instruments should play which parts. They should pay particular attention to which instruments can make long sounds and which can make short sounds.
4. **Hear each group separately** and then challenge the full class to join their ideas together to make one big piece. Again, you might have to try out several until you find the best version.
5. **FINALLY**, end this lesson by playing through your new section. Write down what you have done on the board and name it 'Section B'. If you have time, quickly play through 'Section A' to end the lesson.

LESSON 6

Performance time!

1. **Get the instruments out** and split back into groups. Give the class just five minutes to remember their ideas and put their group sections back together – both the A section (eight counts of um-pah, off-beats and tune) and the B section (the long and short sounds from last lesson).
2. **Bring the class back together** and put Section A and B back together using the structures you came up with in lessons 4 and 5.
3. **Ask the class** to put these sections into an order so that they become one big piece. Practise this order until it is neat and everyone knows what they are doing all the way through. Brahms' order is A – B – A but yours doesn't have to be.

If you refer back to the structure listed in lesson 1, you have actually made Section A and C – we didn't focus on Brahms' original section B.

4. **If you have time**, remind the class about the end of the piece – it is just three big chords played by the whole orchestra. Can your children come up with a similar ending for their piece?
5. **FINALLY**, practise your piece in full and then invite a class in to hear your music. You might also like to show them the dance you made during lesson 1 or encourage members of your audience to dance to your new piece.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Cross-curricular activities

- **MUSIC:** BBC Ten Pieces features other dance pieces you might like to explore: Florence Price's 'Symphony No. 3' is based on the 'juba dance', Tchaikovsky's 'Nutcracker Suite' is made up of dances from his ballet including a lively Russian dance (Trepak) and Anna Meredith's 'Connect It!' features physical gestures and body percussion instead of instruments.
- **RESEARCH:** Brahms was actually one of the finest symphony composers of all time – a symphony is a large piece for orchestra. Find out about his symphonies or research how he felt about his simple 'Hungarian Dances' becoming the pieces for which he was most known, rather than his 'serious' works.
- **UPLOAD:** show us what you've created! Submit your creative responses using our [uploader](#) for a chance to be featured in the Ten Pieces creative showcase.