

## Symphony No. 9 in E minor, 'From the New World' – Largo (2nd mvt) by Dvořák

### PRIMARY CLASSROOM LESSON PLAN

For:

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

*Written by Rachel Leach*

### *Background*

**The composer:** **Antonín DVOŘÁK (1841 - 1904)**

- Czech composer
- Wrote Romantic music often featuring folk songs from his homeland

**Pronunciation:** **AN-tuh-noon DVOR-zhaak**

- ee as in street
- zh as 's' in measure
- aa as in father
- note first syllable stress
- family name is sometimes further anglicised as: DVOR-zhak (-a as in hat) in British English

**The music:** **'Largo' from Symphony No 9 'From the New World'**

- Written in 1893 whilst in America
- Dvořák had secured the opportunity of a lifetime to head a music school in New York City but he was terribly homesick
- This extract is an extremely famous solo for cor anglais (the bigger, deeper sounding oboe)

## *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 their 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
- use and understand staff and other musical notations

## *Glossary of music terms used*

<b>Accompaniment</b>	the music that supports and runs alongside the main melody
<b>Cor anglais</b>	the bigger, deeper oboe: part of the woodwind family
<b>Dynamics</b>	the term used for louds and softs/volume
<b>Graphic score</b>	A visual (often diagrammatic) representation of music. There are no rules for graphic scores, the composer (i.e. you!) invents them
<b>Largo</b>	slowly
<b>Melody</b>	another word for 'tune': a sequence of notes that makes a satisfying shape
<b>Phrase</b>	a short musical sentence
<b>Pitched percussion</b>	percussion instruments that can play different pitches (or 'notes') – xylophones, glockenspiels, chime bars etc.
<b>Unpitched percussion</b>	percussion instruments that make sounds that don't have a specific pitch (or 'note') – drums, shakers, woodblocks, tambourine etc.
<b>Symphony</b>	a large piece of music for orchestra, usually in 4 sections called 'movements'

## *Resources required*

- Art materials such as big paper (wallpaper!) and pens
- Diatonic (white note) xylophones

*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 and discuss  
Write a letter

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: Listen and create a graphic score of a melody

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

#### **Lesson 3**

Activities: Invent a melody and notate it

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

#### **Lesson 4**

Activities: Create specific sounds  
Invent an accompaniment

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory  
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their 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 5***

Activities: Structure all ideas into a piece  
Notate and perform dynamics  
Perform the piece to an audience  
Use technical terminology where appropriate

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory  
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their 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: Learn, orchestrate and perform a melody

Curriculum link: Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their 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

### 1. Prepare your class

Explain to your class that you are going to begin a 6-week music project focusing on a fantastic piece of music by a composer called Dvořák

Explain further that Dvořák was from the Czech Republic but he wrote his piece whilst feeling very homesick in New York City. Dvořák's famous melody is played on an instrument called the cor anglais. It is a small part of his 9<sup>th</sup> **symphony** which is called 'From the New World' (i.e. 'from America') and this section is called 'largo' which means slow

### 2. Watch the film & discuss

Watch the [Dvořák Ten Pieces film](#) and afterwards have a class discussion about what you have just seen. Ask the following questions –

- Did you like the film?
- What was your favourite part?
- Have you ever felt homesick?

### 3. Listening task

Listen to Dvořák's piece again. You can either watch the [video clip of the full performance](#) of the piece or listen to the [audio by downloading the mp3](#). As you listen ask the children to imagine they are far away from home. Ask them to imagine that they're in a place very different to their home and they are feeling homesick. Let the music play as the children imagine the different things they might encounter in this new place and what they might be missing at home.

Give out paper and pens and ask your children to write a letter back home from this imaginary place. They should include the following –

- The name of the person they are writing to (*Dear mum...*)
- Descriptions of the place they are visiting and the things they have seen
- A list of things they miss about home and why
- How they are feeling
- A proper goodbye (*'lots of love from...'*)

As your children write, keep Dvořák's music playing the background for extra inspiration

### 4. **FINALLY** - ask for volunteers to read out their ideas and have a quick discussion about similarities and differences between the letters

## LESSON 2

### Draw the melody

*For this task you will need some art materials – big paper, coloured pens or crayons, or perhaps paint!*

#### 1. Prepare your class.

Give out paper and art materials to everyone and make sure you have lots of space to work in.

#### 2. Remind them about Dvořák's piece and the story behind it.

#### 3. Play the opening of Dvořák's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, Largo (2<sup>nd</sup> movement) to your class (for about three minutes). Ask them to listen carefully to the cor anglais\* solo. After they have listened, have a short discussion about the piece. Ask them the following questions –

- What is the mood?
- How did it make you feel?

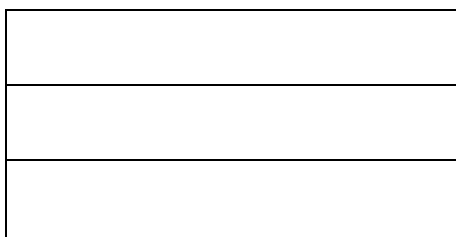
*\*You might want to explore this instrument a little further. Return to the 10 Pieces film or simply google 'cor anglais' or its American name 'English Horn'*

**They might remember** from last lesson that this piece is actually about homesickness. Its composer, Dvořák, was away from his homeland of Bohemia working in New York, a place he found strange and difficult to adapt to.

#### 4. Explain that the cor anglais tune is made up of three very similar **phrases** (or musical sentences). They come after a warm (gloomy) introduction from the strings and brass and are roughly as follows -

<b>0'00 – 0'45</b>	<b>0'45-1'15</b>	<b>1'15-1'45</b>	<b>1'45-2'20</b>
intro	phrase 1	phrase 2	phrase 3

5. **Ask** your children to place their paper landscape and divide it into three horizontal columns like this –



**Ask them to** select three different coloured pens.

6. As you play **phrase 1** again from your recording (0'45 – 1'15), ask them to draw a steady horizontal line across their page in the top column that follows the shape of the phrase they are listening to. So, if the tune goes up in pitch they travel up the page and vice versa. You might want to demonstrate by drawing your own version on the board first. It will really help them to see how slow you must go – the phrase lasts for 30 seconds!

One other important rule: they must not take their pen off the page until the music stops!

*If you have the space and want to make this extra fun, give out long rolls of paper such as lining paper or the back of wallpaper so that the children can really take their time without fear of running out of space*

7. When this is done **repeat the activity** with **phrase 2** (1'15 – 1'45), the middle column of the page and a different coloured pen. **And finally**, play **phrase 3** (1'45 – 2'20) for the bottom column and a third colour.
8. **Have a look at the drawings** – hopefully you will find that they are all similar and also that all three lines on each page are similar. Discuss why this might be – it is because the musical phrases are all similar and based on each other.
9. These drawings are **graphic scores**. If you have time make a massive class version of this score on the board or on a huge roll of paper. Choose three colours that match the mood of Dvořák's piece
10. **FINALLY** – finish the session by swapping the artwork around and listening one more time as the children follow along to the music.

# LESSON 3

## Melody

For this session, you will need at least 1 white-note (diatonic) xylophone. If you split into groups, each group will need a xylophone. If your children are learning orchestral instruments, encourage them to use those also.

1. **Warm-up.** Clear your classroom and ask the children to sit on the floor in a big circle. Begin your session with a quick focusing activity: pass a clap and other quiet sounds, such as 'shh' around the circle.
2. **Place your big graphic score** (or the children's little scores) in the middle of the circle. **Remind** your children about Dvořák and the work they did last lesson. **Explain** that you are going to create your own 'homesick' tune today using the same shape and ingredients as Dvořák.
3. **Referring to the score/s** point out again that Dvořák's melody is made up of three very similar **phrases**. A phrase is a short **musical sentence**.

Dvořák's phrases look like this - (it might be helpful to draw this on the board)

phrase a	phrase b	phrase c
(sticks to notes: C, D, E, F, G)	based on <b>phrase a</b> (new notes: G, A, B, C)	is repeat of <b>phrase a</b> with different ending

Each phrase uses just a handful of notes and starts in the same way with a little idea called a 'hook' -



4. **Teach** this 'hook' to the class by demonstrating it on a xylophone and encouraging volunteers to come forward and copy. The rest of the children can quietly sing along



5. **Next**, improvise a short phrase. Begin with the 'hook' and use just five pitches C, D, E, F, G



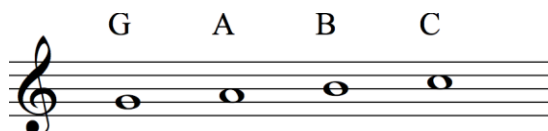
- you don't have to use all of these, just don't use any extra!

Again, encourage a volunteer to come up and have a go at their own phrase

6. **Split the class into small groups**. Each group should have at least one xylophone to work with (or an orchestral instrument, if your children are learning to play). Challenge each group to create a short music sentence, using the 'hook' and only notes C, D, E, F, G

Give them only a short amount of time to do this to avoid too much fuss. It will help also if every group has a big sheet of paper to keep track of which notes they are using

7. **Move onto to phrase b**. Phrase b should be similar to phrase a but use different notes – G, A, B, C



**Bring the class back together** and demonstrate this on a xylophone and then give the children a short amount of time to create their own version

8. **When this is achieved**, explain phrase c – this is a repeat of phrase a perhaps with a different ending.

**Ask the groups to create their own phrase c**

9. **FINALLY – end the session** by bringing the groups back together and hearing some of their phrases. Make sure they are writing things down clearly so that they will remember next time. You might want to record their work in progress to help

# LESSON 4

## Melody and accompaniment

1. **Begin with a gentle warm-up** and a reminder of last week.
2. **Split your class back into their working groups** and ask them to pick up where they left off last week. Give them about 10 minutes to finish off their three phrases and before sharing their ideas with the class
3. **Bring the groups back together** and hear each piece. Give some feedback – did they follow the rules?

Now it's time to create an accompaniment –

4. **Listen to the recording of Dvořák again.** Ask your children to focus on the accompaniment – i.e. the music that goes alongside and 'underneath' the melody. Can they describe it? Return to the composing groups for this and ask each group to write down three or four descriptive words

Perhaps they will say words like – 'gloomy', 'sad', 'warm', 'thick'

5. **Choose one of these words**, e.g. 'warm'. Looking at your class's **unpitched** percussion instruments, invite a volunteer to come forward and find a 'warm' sound. Debate if they have made a good choice. Nothing is wrong here but it's useful to get everyone's opinion - some of your children might have completely contrasting ideas to what is expected!

*If you think this is too difficult for your children, demonstrate a couple of ideas first. For example, the ting of a triangle or the shake of a cabasa could be thought of as a 'cold' sound. A soft rumble on a djembe or a low xylophone note with a soft beater is maybe 'warm'*

6. **Splitting back into groups**, challenge each group to create an accompaniment to their melody using just unpitched instruments and words from their list of adjectives. Encourage them to think carefully about when these sounds are played, their volume and when they change.
7. **FINALLY** – finish this session by hearing each group's work in progress. Again, make sure they are keeping a good record of what happens and who plays what

# LESSON 5

## Structure and volume

1. **Warm-up** – as usual, begin in a large circle with a quick focusing activity and reminder of what happened during the last session.
2. **Split** back into groups and get the instruments out. Allow the children to have a few minutes remembering their piece so far.

The final task is about structure and volume

3. **Listen to the recording one last time.** Ask your children to pay attention to the volume of the music and its structure. You might like to ask them to make a simple list of what happens, like this –

- |      |                            |                                   |
|------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| i.   | 'warm' chords              | soft, gets louder                 |
| ii.  | 'warm' chords              | very soft                         |
| iii. | cor anglia's tune & chords | soft, gets louder towards the end |
| iv.  | end of tune echo           | soft                              |

4. **Back into groups**, ask your children to finish off their piece by plotting out its structure and volume. (the musical term for volume is **dynamics**) and adding them to the performance of their piece

*This is a good opportunity to introduce some musical terminology. Instead of writing 'soft' and 'loud' on their structure encourage the use of some of the common technical terms below -*

<b>pp</b>	<i>pianissimo</i>	<i>very soft</i>
<b>p</b>	<i>piano</i>	<i>soft</i>
<b>mf</b>	<i>mezzo forte</i>	<i>medium loud</i>
<b>f</b>	<i>forte</i>	<i>loud</i>
<b>ff</b>	<i>fortissimo</i>	<i>very loud</i>
<b>cresc</b>	<i>crescendo</i>	<i>getting louder</i>
<b>dim</b>	<i>diminuendo</i>	<i>getting softer</i>

5. **FINALLY** – end this session with a performance from all of the groups of their finished pieces. You might want to make one big piece by linking them all together.

# LESSON 6

## Dvořák's real tune

*By this stage in the project, your children have heard Dvořák's tune many times. They may also have become quite good at playing the xylophones. Dvořák's real tune isn't too difficult, here's how to teach and learn it*

1. **Prepare your class.** Sit the children in a circle with the instruments out. You need as many pitched instruments as possible for this task. Arrange xylophones and glocks evenly around the circle and supplement these with 'warm' sounding unpitched percussion (you could ask the children to decide on which instruments should create this sound)

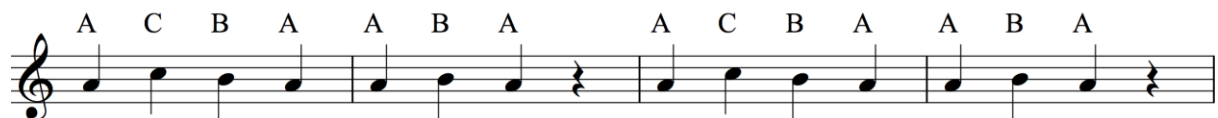
*If you are lacking in pitched instruments, encourage children to join in using their voices and keep moving the instruments around the circle so that everyone gets to have a turn*

2. Here is a skeleton version of Dvořák's tune with most of the rhythm taken away -

Phrase 'a'



Phrase 'b'



Phrase 'c'



Play these pitches at a steady pace. (You could also add a group of children on **unpitched** instruments, playing half speed.) If this is challenging, split it up into sections and divide these amongst your children

3. Here is Dvořák's **melody** in full. As children grow more confident with the skeleton version, start adding the extra notes in. Keep a group on the pulse, and add others on 'warm sounds' as accompaniment.

Phrase 'a'

E G G E D C D E G E D E G G E D C D E D C C

Phrase 'b'

A C C B G A A C B G A A C C B G A A C B G A

Phrase 'c'

E G G E D C D E G E D E G G C D E D C D A C

*Note that these versions are in a different key to the original so if you try to play along with the recording, it will sound pretty weird!*

4. If both of the above are proving too difficult for some of your class, here's an even simpler version which could be added on bass instruments –

Phrase 'a'

C C G G C C G C

Phrase 'b'

F F F F F F F F

Phrase 'c'

C C G G C A F G C

5. **FINALLY** – If you listen to the full largo movement from Dvořák's symphony (it lasts about 13 minutes), you'll hear his tune several times over with other gorgeous tunes in between. Why not try putting all your group pieces together with this one to make one huge piece?

## TAKING IT FURTHER

### Cross-curricular activities

- **MUSIC/LITERACY:** write lyrics to Dvořák's tune. Begin with 'far away...'
- **MUSIC:** Much of Dvořák's music features hidden folk tunes. Hide your favourite folk tune or nursery rhyme inside another composition
- **POETRY:** use the letters home and the adjectives to create poems
- **ART:** create postcards of the imaginary places you visited in the 'letters home' task
- **RESEARCH:** what was the New York City of 1893 like and why did Dvořák prefer the Czech Republic? Do some research into what each country was like back then and find out!

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