

In the Hall of the Mountain King by Edvard Grieg

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: Edvard Grieg (1843 - 1907)

- Norwegian composer and pianist
- Wrote folk-inspired Romantic pieces often describing a story or place
- Is still extremely famous and beloved in Norway

The music: ‘In the Hall of the Mountain King’

- Written in 1867 to accompany a play called ‘Peer Gynt’
- The play by Ibsen tells a twisty story of Peer Gynt’s journey through life
- This piece is by far the most famous thing that Grieg wrote

Learning outcomes

Learners will:

- listen and reflect on a piece of orchestral music
- invent their own musical motifs and structure them into a piece
- 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

Accelerando	gradually getting faster
Coda	another word for 'ending'
Crescendo	gradually getting louder
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, tambourine etc.

Resources required

- Paper and pens
- Classroom percussion instruments and any other instruments that your children might be learning
- A recording of Grieg Peer Gynt Suite No 1 (widely available online)

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:	Listen and describe a piece of music Watch the orchestral performance and discuss Use the music as stimulus for artwork
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 how to play a pulse Invent a tune Orchestrate these motifs and use them to create a crescendo Use technical terminology where appropriate
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:	Listen and analyse the end of Grieg's music Notate his coda Perform it on instruments
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: Listen and describe a piece of music
Use the music as stimulus for artwork, discussion

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

Lesson 5:

Activities: Invent music to describe characters and events
Structure all ideas so far into one big piece

Curriculum link: Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 6:

Activities: Create narration for a story
Structure music to fit the narrative
Perform in front of an audience

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 Edvard Grieg and **watch** the introductory film with Dan Starkey from the BBC Ten Pieces website

2. **Discuss** what you have just watched and explain that 'In the Hall of the Mountain King' is about a man called Peer Gynt creeping around in the home of an evil troll called the Mountain King. Ask your class if they think Peer Gynt made it out safely (you may want to watch the end of the film again 2'10 onwards).
3. **Listening task.** Give out paper and pens to your class. As you watch and listen again, this time to the full orchestral performance film rather than the introduction, ask your students to draw one of the following things –
 - a) The Hall of the Mountain King – ie his grand palace
 - b) The Mountain King himself – ie a scary, ugly monster
 - c) Peer Gynt running away down a twisty path
 - d) The full story, featuring all of the above!

As they work on this, play the track or film over and over.

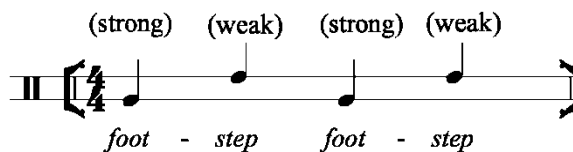
4. **Discuss** the resulting artwork and show some to everyone. Tell your class that all of their efforts are correct because it is simply what they imagined whilst they listened.
5. **Finally**, if you have time you might like to tell your students the story of Peer Gynt. Here's a quick version:

Peer Gynt is the son of a wealthy family. When his father dies he inherits a great fortune but quickly spends it all and finds himself penniless. Instead of being unhappy he chooses to wander the world as a poet. Every time something happens to him he writes home to his mother but often his adventures seem too fantastical to be true!

LESSON 2

In the Hall of the Mountain King

- Warm-up.** Begin with your class standing in a circle. Pass a clap around the circle to get a bit of focus and concentration into the room. Then, after reminding them of the story of the Mountain King, try this simple game –
 - Choose one child to be the Mountain King. S/he must stand in the middle of your circle with their eyes closed
 - You must now pass the clap around as quietly as possible. If the 'mountain king' in the middle hears the clap s/he must open her/ his eyes and point to whoever made the sound that they heard. That person is out! (they could become the next Mountain King in the middle)
- Remind** your children of the artwork they completed last week and explain that they are going to make their own version of Grieg's music on instruments.
- Demonstrate** the following two musical ingredients –
 - Footsteps** – two alternating sounds one strong, one weak. For example –



Demonstrate these as body percussion, by tapping alternate knees or stamping and clapping. Encourage your children to join in and don't worry too much if it speeds up or is messy

- A sneaky tune** using next-door notes that go from low to high and then back down again. For example, here's Grieg's famous tune –



... and here's a simpler version –



Grieg's tune is very tricky, so it might be more fun for your children to invent their own using his rules: next-door notes, moves up then down

4. **Split your class into two groups** and give them each a collection of unpitched instruments for the footsteps and xylophones for the tune. Their job is to create a piece using steady footsteps and a tune that repeats round and around.

To make some contrast give out different notes to each group. The easiest way to do this is to give one group WHITE note xylophones and the other group BLACK notes.

Or you could adapt the xylophones to make two scales. For example –



5. **Bring the class back together**, hear each group and encourage the class to give feedback. Are the pieces following the rules? Are the footsteps even and steady?
6. **Finally**, ask your class to come up with an order for their pieces so that, again, they follow Grieg's rules:
- Grieg's piece switches back and forth between two tunes – can your two teams alternate, but without stopping in between?
 - Grieg's piece gradually gets faster and louder as it progresses. Can your class piece do that too?

This is a perfect opportunity to introduce two great musical terms:

Accelerando – gradually getting faster

Crescendo – gradually getting louder

LESSON 3

The gruesome 'coda'

1. **Warm up.** Begin in a circle again and after passing a clap around or playing your 'Mountain King' game, recap, using just body percussion, what you did in the last lesson. It may help to place the two groups on either side of the circle and then ask them to 'mime' their pieces.
2. **Listen again** to the very end of Grieg's piece, the last 20 seconds or so, and discuss what might be happening between the Mountain King and Peer Gynt. Explain that Grieg uses a '**bang**' sound, a '**crash**' sound, his **tune speeded up** very fast and '**rumble**'. Can they listen again and put these ideas in the right order?
3. **Discuss** their findings jotting ideas onto the board until you have a class diagram of the ending. The real one looks like this –

The diagram consists of three musical staves. The first staff starts with a 4/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a melody with notes and rests. Below the staff are labels 'Bang!' and 'Crash!' repeated twice. A section labeled 'FAST TUNE!' is marked with a double bar line and a 'x2' multiplier. The second staff continues the melody with more notes and rests, labeled with 'Bang! Crash!' and 'Bang! Crash! Crash! Crash!'. The third staff shows a section labeled 'LONG RUMBLE!' with four notes, followed by 'Bang! Crash!' and two rests.

... but if your version is different, use that one instead.

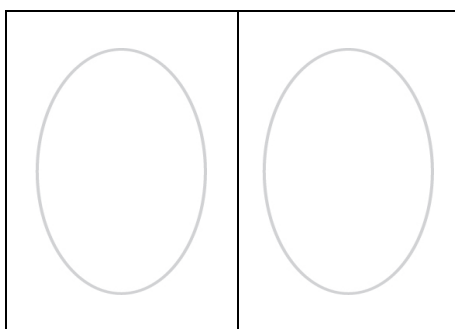
4. **Explain** that the technical term for the ending in music is '**coda**' and challenge your children to perform this 'coda' (theirs or Grieg's) on body percussion after having decided on a body sound to replace 'bang' and 'crash' etc.
5. **Split back into your groups** and give each group a few minutes remember their piece from last lesson using the same instruments they had then. Challenge them further to work out how to perform the 'coda' on their instruments. As before they need a sound for 'bang' and a contrasting sound for 'crash' etc.
6. **Finally**, bring the groups back together, hear each group and then put your full piece back together adding the new 'coda' on the end. Write down what you have done and who played what.

LESSON 4

Peer Gynt's other characters

For this lesson you need a recording of Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite No 1 – this is widely available online

1. **Prepare your class.** Remind them of the work they did last lesson, talk about Peer Gynt and look again at their art-work of the Mountain King.
2. **Explain** that the story of the Mountain King is just one part of a much larger story and remind them of the full story of Peer Gynt (above). Explain further that there are two other important characters in the story – Peer Gynt's mum Ase (pronounced Ace-r) and his girlfriend Anitra.
3. **Listening task.** Give out paper and pens again and ask your children to draw two oval (face) shapes, one on each side of the page like this –



Explain that they are going to hear two short pieces of music by Grieg. One is Ase and the other is Anitra. Their task is to draw their face (and expression) in the oval as they listen. Begin with Ase, and for this play **Peer Gynt Suite No 1, Track 2: The Death of Ase**

Then play **Peer Gynt Suite No 1, Track 3: Anitra's Dance** as they complete the second 'face'

4. **Discuss** their efforts and decide as a full class the following things about each character –
 - a) How old are they?
 - b) What mood are they in?
 - c) Why might they be in that mood?
5. **End your session** by listening to **Peer Gynt Suite No 1, Track 1: Morning**. It might be nice to simply ask your children to close their eyes and listen to this one. Then have a chat about what it was describing, particularly what time of day, and what sort of place etc.

In the play it describes dawn in the Sahara Desert, but people often say it describes Norway because of Grieg's roots there. Either way it is a morning, sunrise scene.

LESSON 5

Storytelling

1. **Begin** by reminding your children of their work so far and the characters/ situations they have encountered, for example –
 - Peer Gynt
 - His mum, Ase
 - His girlfriend, Anitra
 - Sunrise
 - The scary Mountain King in his 'palace'

2. **As a full class** create a story using these elements. Tell your children that they can put the characters and events in whatever order they like but they must include all of the elements above and not add in any new ones.

When this is done, write up the new story as a list of bullet points on the board.

3. **Explain** that you are going to bring this story to life using music and split into groups as follows –
 - Group 1: Ase
 - Group 2: Anitra
 - Group 3: Sunrise
 - Group 4: Peer Gynt

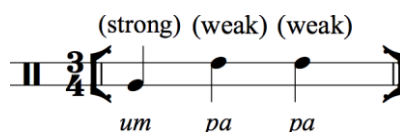
(You have already created the Mountain King)

4. **Challenge** each group to make a short piece of music to describe one character or event. They might like to borrow ideas from Grieg, for example –

- Group 1: Ase
She is sad. Her music uses three note tunes like this –



- Group 2: Anitra
She is dancing. Her music is a waltz with this pattern –



LESSON 6

Tell the whole story!

1. After a quick **warm up**, explain to your children that you are going to put all your ideas together today to tell the full story of Peer Gynt. Remind them of the order of events you made last week and all of the music they have created. Then, split back into groups and give each group a few minutes to get their piece back together before putting the 'Mountain King' piece back together as a full class.
2. **Hear** each element of your story in the correct order and fix any problems that might arise as you move from piece to piece (i.e. any instrument swapping or moving around). Ask each group to write a short sentence or two to introduce their piece and tell the next bit of the story, for example before Anitra's music you need something like: "Peer Gynt had a girlfriend called Anitra. She loved dancing". Each group must also appoint a narrator to say the narration in a clear, loud voice.

Perhaps write all of this on the board like a play script, so you have something like –

Group 4: "Peer Gynt was an adventurous man" – Peer Gynt music

Group 2: "He had a girlfriend called Anitra" – Anitra music

Etc.

3. **Practise** in the correct order until everyone knows what they are doing and it is the same every time and then invite another class in to see your work and experience the story of Peer Gynt!

TAKING IT FURTHER

Cross-curricular activities

- **LISTENING:** Grieg created a 2nd suite of music from Peer Gynt which is also fun to listen to and introduces two new characters. You could repeat the 'face' exercise from lesson 4 to find out about Ingrid (Peer Gynt Suite 2 No 1) and Solveig Peer Gynt Suite 2 No 4)
- **LITERACY:** Peer Gynt wrote fantastical letters back to his mother as he travelled around the world. Many of his adventures were invented to make his life sound more exciting than it was. Ask your children to write their own fantastical letters to their mums filled with made-up stories
- **DRAMA:** Add acting to your musical story from above

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