

20th Century Music

Discovering 20th Century music through Gershwin and Strauss

Teacher Resource Kit



Cross-curricular Lessons and Activities

Grades 2—5

Boston Philharmonic

“Crescendo!” Outreach Program

www.bostonphil.org

Dear Educator,

The Boston Philharmonic believes that classical music can be enjoyed at any age, and it is never too early to begin learning. We are committed to providing opportunities and tools for our community, helping to create a personal connection to classical music. As part of our vision to make music accessible to everyone, we have developed guides and activities that will engage children and provide resources for teachers at a time when many public school districts are forced to cut music programs from the curriculum. Elementary school teachers can click on our study guides for activities to incorporate into their classrooms, or parents can explore the music together with their children. We hope you will enjoy learning more!

Sincerely,

The BPO “Crescendo!” Team

Contributors to this study guide:

Writer/Researcher/Designer:

Alex Ray, Outreach Intern

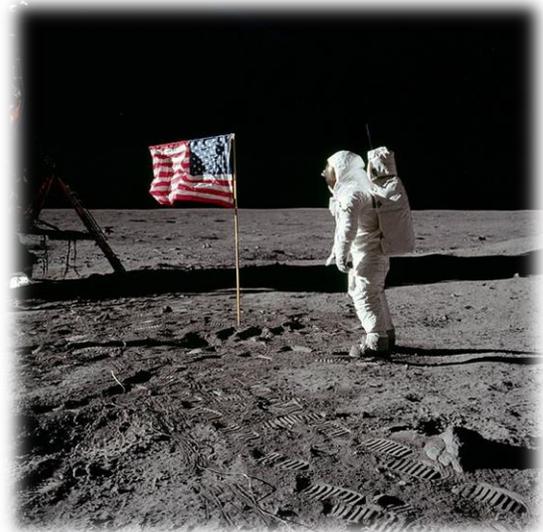
Editor:

Pamela Feo, Outreach & Publications Manager

Instrument Photos:

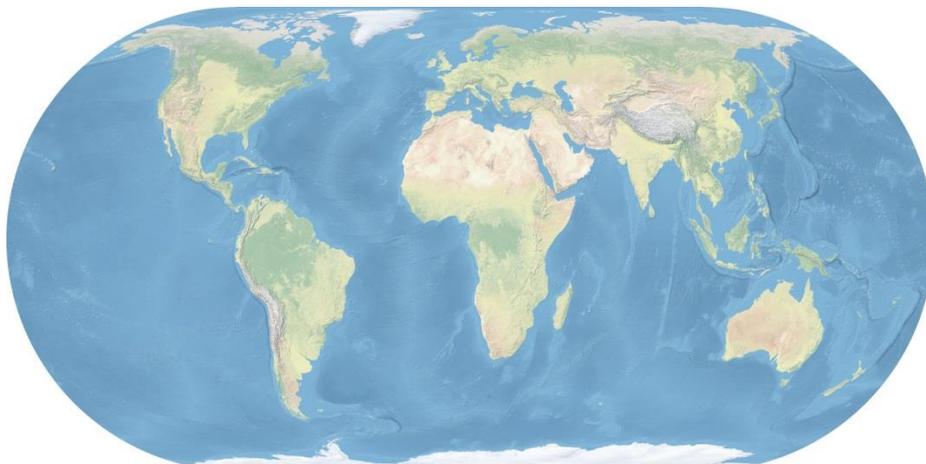
Jeffrey Filiault, Multimedia Manager

What is 20th Century Music?



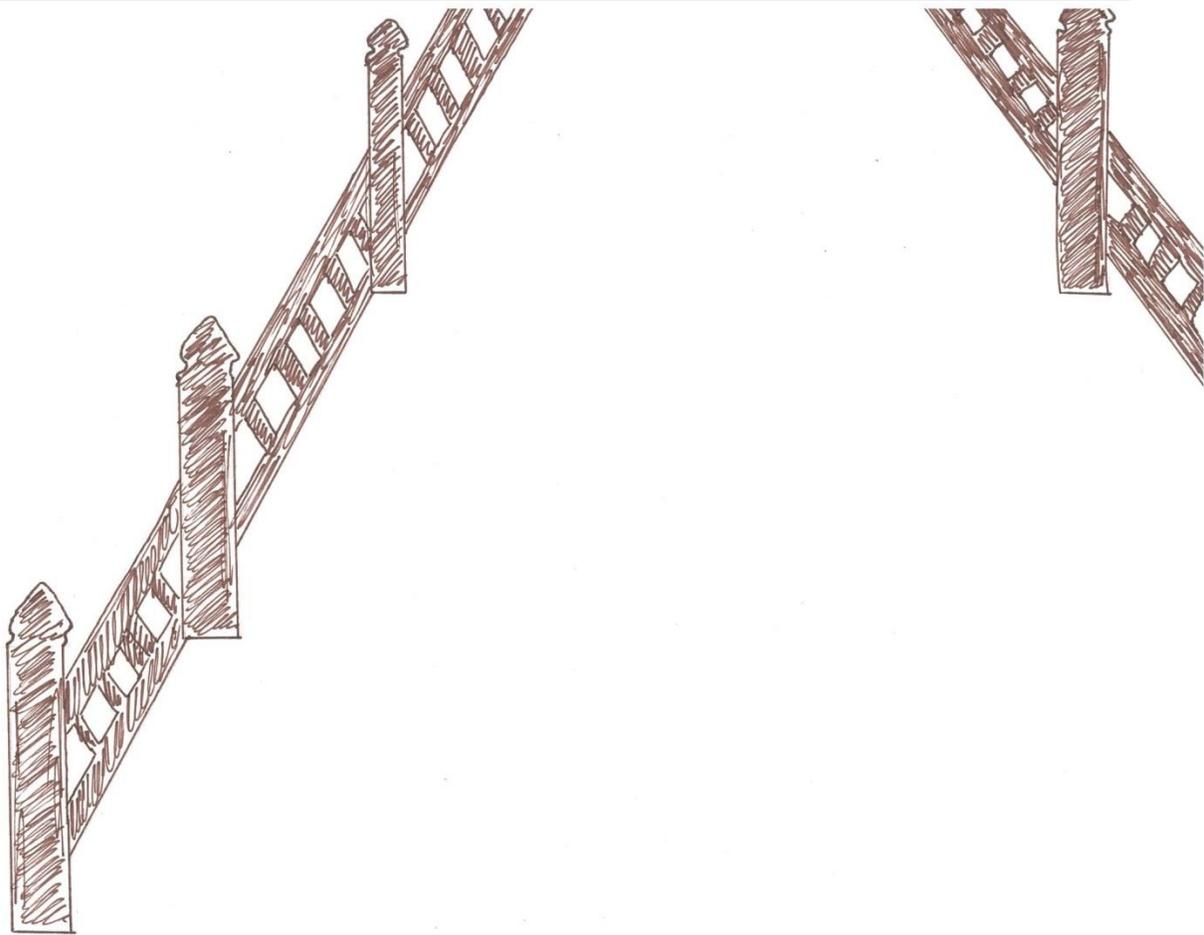
Music in the 1900s didn't follow any one particular style. Composers all over the world began writing music with a variety of purposes. As more and more people were able to communicate with each other across different continents and countries, music became more diverse, and more unique to the person writing it or the people performing it.

By this period, there was a great variety of music being made, and unlike in earlier periods such as Baroque, Classical, and Romantic, so many different people were enjoying music that a style of music could be found to interest anyone.



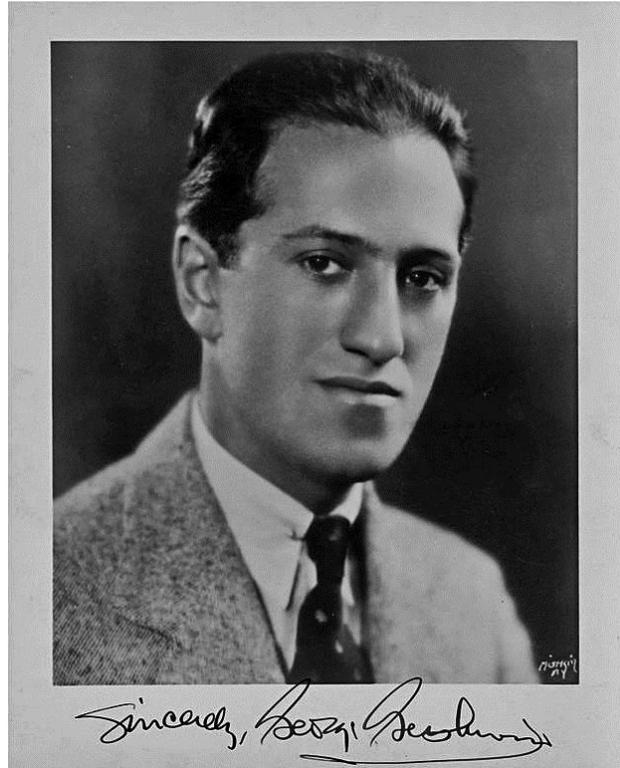
Fill in the area below with images that represent the kind of music you would like to make. Think about what would influence your music: family, experiences, interests, feelings.

Some of the space below is closed off by a fence. Composers of the 20th century didn't like being fenced in or told what kind of music to make. What kinds of things would you draw outside the fence?



Composer Biography

Fun Fact: One of Gershwin's most famous works, *Porgy and Bess*, was first rehearsed in 1935 at the Colonial Theater in Boston before being moved to Broadway. George's brother Ira also worked on the lyrics.



George Gershwin (1898—1937) was an American composer. He wrote a wide range of music, including orchestral pieces, operas, musicals, and film **scores**. A score is a collection of all the written parts of a piece of music. Many of Gershwin's compositions have become important to popular culture and have been recorded by countless musicians. *An American in Paris* was inspired by Gershwin's own experiences living in Paris in the 1920s, where he went to study music. Gershwin was famously refused lessons by famous composers Ravel and Schoenberg, who both insisted that he was already talented enough on his own and didn't need their instruction.

Composer Biography



Fun Fact: Although Strauss did not conduct the performance, a recording of his *An Alpine Symphony* was on the first CD ever to be released.

Richard Strauss (1864—1949) was a German composer and conductor. Among other types of music, Strauss is known for the **tone poems** that he composed. A tone poem is a piece written in one long section, which uses music to describe something specific, such as a landscape or a well-known person, story, or event. Strauss's compositions often required a large number of performers, with some works involving over 100 musicians. Strauss had a long career, and he wrote some of his most important works even after he turned 80 years old.

VOYAGER GOLDEN RECORDS

In 1977, NASA launched two unmanned probes into space, the Voyager 1 and Voyager 2. Both spacecraft are still travelling away from Earth at over 35,000 miles per hour, with no planned destination. In 1990, both Voyager 1 and 2 officially left the solar system. But each is carrying some unique cargo: a set of gold-plated 12-inch **records** known as the Voyager Golden Records.



Front side



Back side with diagrams showing how to play the record

The records were made by NASA as a sort of time capsule of information about planet Earth, and scientists made sure to include a variety of sounds and images.

There are recordings of sounds from nature, such as thunder and whale songs, as well as examples of music, from Mozart to guitarist Chuck Berry. There are also recordings of people speaking over 50 different languages. If life exists on other planets, they would be able to learn a lot about human culture from these records.

The Voyager Golden Records demonstrate an important part of the 20th century: people were testing the boundaries of communication and expression, and trying to define what it means to be human in a limitless universe. In groups, make a list of what would be on a record about you.

Strauss' *An Alpine Symphony*



Strauss wrote *Eine Alpensinfonie* (*An Alpine Symphony*) in 1915, but it was inspired by an experience that Strauss had as a child getting lost on his way up a mountain. A **symphony** is a long piece of music written for an orchestra to perform. The score for this piece requires around 125 musicians in total and calls for some unique instruments that are not often heard in a symphony—including a wind machine.



A wind machine is a **percussion** instrument that is used to imitate the sound of wind. Percussion instruments are played by being hit with the hands or a special tool. A more modern type uses an electric fan that pushes air past wooden boards turned on an angle. The type of wind machine used in Strauss' time would have used a large drum covered in fabric. The hollow drum could be turned with a handle over wooden rods to make the sound of a gust of wind.

An Alpine Symphony describes a journey up and then back down a snowy mountain. The music is meant to develop like a story, telling the listener about the climb up, a forest, a pleasant stream, a waterfall, meadows, the misty summit, and finally the climb back down, ending in nightfall. As you listen to each section, see if you can visualize the scene being described by the music.

Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*



Gershwin's famous *Rhapsody in Blue* was written only nine years after Strauss' *An Alpine Symphony*, but it represents an entirely different style of music and shows us how diverse the music of the 20th century was.

Rhapsody in Blue is known for its unique combination of Classical and Jazz influences: it reminds many people of a *concerto*, a form of Classical music that features one solo instrument along with a full orchestra. But while the structure is orchestral, the melodies and combinations of notes seem to be more like Jazz.



Gershwin found his inspiration for the piece during a train ride to Boston. He said that the rhythms of the train filled his head with all the ideas that he would later put to music. The word “**rhapsody**” from the title refers to a free-flowing piece of music that draws upon a range of different emotions. Due to its open-ended structure, a rhapsody can often involve **improvisation**, which is when a musician is not given a written part to play, and is free to play whatever he or she wants.





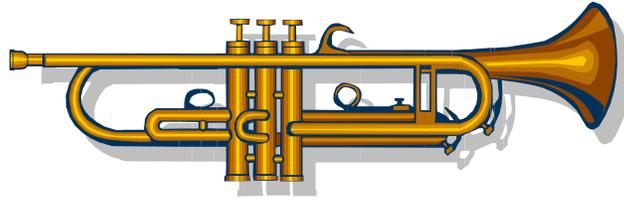
20th Century Music Vocabulary

Unscramble the letters to spell a word and complete each sentence. The words are all featured in **bold** throughout this study guide, so make sure you look over all the pages!

1. Strauss' *An Alpine Symphony* uses 125 musicians, which is a large number, even for a _____ (**HOYSPNMY**).
2. Before CDs were invented, a _____ (**CROERD**) was used to store music for people to listen to at any time, maybe even in outer space.
3. Musicians who are good at _____ (**IPRISMOAVITNO**) are creative and able to come up with new musical ideas that have never been played before.
4. A _____ (**ADRHSOPY**) is an emotional piece of music without a specific structure.
5. A drum is a _____ (**SIERCPUSON**) instrument, because you hit it with your hands, a stick, or a mallet to make the sound.
6. A composer like Gershwin writes the _____ (**ECSOR**) to make sure that when the piece is performed, all of the musicians are playing the right part at the right time.
7. A piece of music written in one section that describes a particular person or event is called a (2 words) _____ (**PEOMNTOE**).

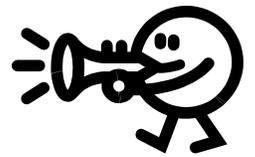
How does it work?

The science behind the trumpet



The trumpet is a wind instrument, which means that the musician creates the sound by blowing air into it. Besides a removable mouthpiece and three valves, the trumpet is actually one long tube that has been curved around in a very specific way. The tube is made out of brass, a soft metal that is popular for making instruments because it is able to be bent and vibrates easily.

To play the trumpet, the musician inserts the mouthpiece into a small opening and blows air through it while vibrating his or her lips in a certain way. The vibration of the lips, combined with the air moving through the trumpet, creates the sound waves that travel to your ears.



The trumpet can be played with just one hand, because every note is played with a combination of only three valves. The valves are pressed down at different times to play different notes. When the valve is pressed down, it changes the flow of air through the trumpet, and changes the sound being made. The musician also adjusts the position of the lips on the mouthpiece to further control the sound.

MA Learning Standards (Grades 2—5) Covered in this Study Guide:

ELA/Literacy, Speaking and Listening Standards

2. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

Foreign Languages Cultures Strand

4.4 Identify distinctive cultural products from the target culture such as toys, clothes, foods, currencies, games, traditional crafts, and musical instruments

Science and Technology/Engineering

(Physical Sciences, Chemistry and Physics, Forms of Energy)

4. Identify the basic forms of energy (light, sound, heat, electrical, and magnetic). Recognize that energy is the ability to cause motion or create change.

4.11 Recognize that sound is produced by vibrating objects and requires a medium through which to travel. Relate the rate of vibration to the pitch of the sound.

Technology/Engineering

1. Materials and Tools

Central Concept: Appropriate materials, tools, and machines extend our ability to solve problems and invent.

1.1 Identify materials used to accomplish a design task based on a specific property, e.g., strength, hardness, and flexibility.

Arts

Critical Response

5.1 Perceive, describe, and respond to basic elements of music, including beat, tempo, rhythm, meter, pitch, melody, texture, dynamics, harmony, and form

5.2 Listen to and describe aural examples of music of various styles, genres, cultural and historical periods, identifying expressive qualities, instrumentation, and cultural and or/geographic context

5.3 Use appropriate terminology in describing music, musical notation, music instruments and voices, and music performances

5.4 Identify the sounds of a variety of instruments, including many orchestra and band instruments, and instruments from various cultures, as well as children's voices and male and female adult voices

5.6 Describe and demonstrate audience skills of listening attentively and responding appropriately in classroom, rehearsal, and performance settings

Observation, Abstraction, Invention, and Expression

3.2 Create 2D and 3D expressive artwork that explores abstraction

3.3 Create 2D and 3D artwork from memory or imagination to tell a story or embody an idea or fantasy

Purposes and Meanings in the Arts

6.1 When viewing or listening to examples of visual arts, architecture, music, dance, storytelling, and theatre, ask and answer questions such as, “*What is the artist trying to say?*” “*Who made this, and why?*” “*How does this work make me feel?*”

6.2 Investigate uses and meanings of examples of the arts in children’s daily lives, homes, and communities

Roles of Artists in Communities

7.1 Investigate how artists create their work; read about, view films about, or interview artists such as choreographers, dancers, composers, singers, instrumentalists, actors, storytellers, playwrights, illustrators, painters, sculptors, craftspeople, or architects

Inventions, Technologies, and the Arts

9.1 When using art materials or handling and viewing artifacts or musical instruments, ask and answer questions such as

- “What is this made of?”
- “How does this instrument produce sound?”
- “Would I design this differently?”
- “Who first thought of making something like this?”

Interdisciplinary Connections

10.1 Integrate knowledge of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts and apply the arts to learning other disciplines



Suggested CDs:

Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue; Concerto in F; An American in Paris; Variations on "I Got Rhythm," Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by Arthur Fiedler (1997)

Strauss: Eine Alpensinfonie (An Alpine Symphony), London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bernard Haitink (2010)

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