



SERGEI
Prokofiev

Peter and the Wolf



NORTH CAROLINA
SYMPHONY

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NC

SERGEI Prokofiev

BORN: April 23, 1891 **DIED:** March 5, 1953

Biography

Sergei Prokofiev was an incredibly accomplished composer from the 20th century, writing music for a wide variety of genres including symphonies, concertos, film music, operas, ballets, and program pieces. Born in Ukraine, Prokofiev's family was in the agriculture business in their village. His mother was an accomplished pianist and became Prokofiev's musical mentor at an early age. Prokofiev moved to Russia with his mother to pursue his music studies at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. Although this provided him with a great background to begin his musical journey, Prokofiev was always looking for ways to introduce more innovation into his art.

After making a name for himself at home, Prokofiev spent more than a decade touring the world. While he was away, his homeland was undergoing a revolution which kept him from being able to return. Eventually, he was able to return to his homeland, where he sharpened his patriotic feelings and spent much of his time writing more complex music. Less than a decade after the war, Prokofiev passed suddenly, leaving behind a handful of pieces unfinished on his worktable.

Fun Facts:

- Prokofiev wrote his first composition at the age of five and his first opera at the age of nine.
- Not all his early pieces were received well! After a 1913 premiere, the audience reportedly left exclaiming, "The cats on the roof make better music!"
- Prokofiev was a master chess player and became friends with some of the best players in the world at the time.
- Early on in his career, he was heavily influenced by theater, poetry, and painting.

About the Composer:

- Prokofiev was posthumously given the Lenin Prize in 1957, the highest honor in the Soviet Union, for his Symphony No. 7.
- Prokofiev's introduction to music was through his mother's playing of Chopin and Beethoven on the family's piano in the evenings.
- In his early school years, Prokofiev was often noted as being arrogant, saying that his schoolwork was boring.
- Prokofiev wrote his first symphony based on the style he believed Joseph Haydn would have used if he had still been alive.
- Prokofiev was often seen as a master storyteller through his music and was able to do so in a variety of genres such as ballet, opera, and film music.
- Prokofiev's piece *Peter and the Wolf* was written in the span of two weeks for a children's theatre in Moscow.

Featured Work: *Peter and the Wolf*

Peter and the Wolf is a piece for orchestra and narrator centered around a Russian folk tale. The piece premiered on May 2, 1936, in Moscow. It is often used to introduce young listeners to classical music and help train their ears to listen for specific sounds within the orchestra. In the story, Peter and his friends, a bird and a duck, are playing in a meadow. Peter's grandfather warns him of a nearby wolf and locks Peter safely in his home. Meanwhile, the wolf swallows Peter's friend, the duck, and Peter escapes from his home to help his other friend, the bird, capture the wolf. They eventually capture the wolf and send him to a new home at the zoo. In the orchestra, Prokofiev assigned each character their own instrument or instrument group. The bird is identified with a flute, the cat with a clarinet, the duck with an oboe, Peter's grandfather with a bassoon, the wolf with horns, and the hunters with percussion. Peter is given the entire string section and his very own melody.

Classroom activities provided by Zadda Bazy, Queens Creek Elementary, Onslow County

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY #1: Predictions for *Peter and the Wolf*

NORTH CAROLINA ESSENTIAL STANDARDS IN MUSIC:

K.MR.1.2 – Recognize contrasts in music, such as high/low pitch, loud/soft dynamics, fast/slow tempo, and same/different sections of music.

1.MR.1.2 – Recognize melodic patterns, rhythmic patterns, dynamics, and forms when presented aurally.

2.MR.1.1 – Illustrate prominent musical characteristics or specific musical events while listening to and/or singing music.

OBJECTIVE: Students will make predictions about *Peter and the Wolf* and listen to excerpts to discover if their predictions were correct.

MATERIALS: North Carolina Symphony video for *Peter and the Wolf*, script with prediction questions

PROCESS:

1. Ask students for ideas on how music can tell a story.
2. Introduce Prokofiev and *Peter and the Wolf*. Prokofiev wrote a story about a boy named Peter and composed music to tell the story. Prokofiev chose different instruments to represent each character in the story.
3. State, "Today you will make predictions about what will happen next in the story. Then we will listen to the music and find out which guess was correct. I will read the story then give you two predictions. If you think the first prediction is correct, stand on *this* side of the room (gesture to one side). If you think the second prediction is correct, stand on *that* side of the room (gesture to the other side)."
4. Read the story and predictions. Students move to the side of the room that matches their guess. Once everyone had chosen a side, play the audio so students hear what happens next. Pause at appropriate times to discuss what the students hear. How does Prokofiev's music tell the story? Discuss tempo, dynamics, timbre, pitch, etc.
5. At the end of class, have student pairs review/discuss how music can tell a story.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY #2: Selecting Instruments for Characters in *Peter and the Wolf*

NORTH CAROLINA ESSENTIAL STANDARDS IN MUSIC:

K.ML.3.2 – Select vocal and/or instrumental sounds to accompany readings, stories, or dramatizations.

1.ML.3.2 – Select a variety of traditional and non-traditional sound sources to accompany readings, stories, or dramatizations.

2.MR.1.4 – Differentiate various instruments based on how their sounds are produced.

2.ML.1.4 – Apply changes in music to the elements of dynamics, tempo, melody, and form.

OBJECTIVE: Students will select and play appropriate classroom instruments to represent the characters in *Peter and the Wolf*.

MATERIALS: [North Carolina Symphony video for *Peter and the Wolf*](#), variety of classroom instruments (8-12 different timbres and enough total instruments for each student to have their own)

PROCESS:

1. Introduce Prokofiev and *Peter and the Wolf*. Prokofiev wrote a story about a boy named Peter and composed music to tell the story. Prokofiev chose different instruments to represent each character in the story.
2. Display the character names on the board:
 - Bird
 - Duck
 - Cat
 - Grandfather
 - Wolf
 - Peter
 - Hunters
3. State, "Today we will listen to the instruments that Prokofiev chose to represent each of the characters in the story. Then, you will decide which instruments from our classroom would make a good match for these characters. Finally, I will tell you the story and you will play the instruments for each of the characters."



4. Display the classroom instruments which are options for today's lesson. Make sure there are at least eight choices, if not 10-12. There are seven characters in the story, and the students need to have more options than that. It's okay if there is only one of certain instruments, such as a thunder tube, but be sure to include multiple instruments if possible. Later in this lesson—once an instrument is selected for each character—you will pass out instruments to students and will need one instrument per student.
5. Play each of the classroom instruments as a brief reminder of how to hold and play them. This will also remind students what each instrument sounds like.
6. Play the [audio for the bird's theme](#)
7. Discuss what the students heard. Why did Prokofiev select a flute? Why does the music sound high and fast?
8. Play the [audio for the bird's theme again](#). This time, have students stand and move around the room like a bird while they listen.
9. Facilitate a class discussion of which classroom instrument could be used to represent the bird. Allow the students to make the decision, not the teacher. Write the name of the selected instrument next to "Bird" on the board. This instrument cannot be assigned to another character.
10. Complete steps 6-9 for each of the other characters in the story. The audio and video excerpts for the remaining characters are this order:
 - [Duck](#)
 - [Cat](#)
 - [Grandfather](#)
 - [Wolf](#)
 - [Peter](#)
 - [Hunters](#)
11. Once all of the characters have been assigned instruments, ask the class if they would like to make any changes. Make revisions if desired.
12. Choose students one at a time to get an instrument.
13. *OPTIONAL*: Invite students to sit near other students with the same instrument so they are in timbre groups.
14. [Tell the story of Peter and the Wolf](#). Students play their instruments whenever they hear their character's name in the story.
15. At the end of class, have student pairs review and discuss how music can tell a story.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY #3: Responding to the North Carolina Symphony's Video of *Peter and the Wolf*

NORTH CAROLINA ESSENTIAL STANDARDS IN MUSIC:

K.MR.1.1 – Use singing, playing, and/or moving to respond to a variety of musical ideas.

1.MR.1.2 – Recognize melodic patterns, rhythmic patterns, dynamics, and forms when presented aurally.

1.MR.1.1 – Use corresponding movements or actions to respond to prominent music characteristics (such as patterns in rhythm, melodic contour, dynamics, and form) while listening to and/or singing music.

2.MR.1.1 – Illustrate prominent musical characteristics or specific musical events while listening to and/or singing music.

OBJECTIVE: Students will actively listen and respond to the North Carolina Symphony's video performance of *Peter and the Wolf*.

MATERIALS: Link to the [North Carolina Symphony's video performance of *Peter and the Wolf*](#)

PROCESS:

1. Introduce Prokofiev and *Peter and the Wolf*. Prokofiev wrote a story about a boy named Peter, and he composed music to tell the story. Prokofiev chose different instruments to represent each character in the story.
2. State, "Today we will watch a video of the North Carolina Symphony playing instruments to tell the story of *Peter and the Wolf*. We will perform movements for each of the characters in the story. Whenever you hear the character's music, you get to move like that character."
3. Model the movements for each of the characters as follows. Note: These movements are intended to be performed while seated and watching the North Carolina Symphony performance. [Teachers may click here to watch a video that shows these movements.](#)
 - Bird – link your two thumbs and flap your fingers like bird wings
 - Duck – with bent elbows and fists near the armpits, flap your arms like wings
 - Cat – spread your fingers like cat claws and alternate extending one arm forward at a time, as though sneaking or stalking prey
 - Grandfather – shake a finger disapprovingly as though scolding someone
 - Wolf – hold scary claw-like hands on either side of the face and sway back and forth while gnashing your teeth
 - Peter – with bent elbows, alternate swinging arms at your sides as though skipping or marching (but performed seated)
 - Hunters –
 - When the bass drum and timpani are played – perform a soft drumroll by patting the legs quickly with alternating hands
 - When the theme for the hunters is played – pat a steady beat on the legs with alternating hands

4. Show the North Carolina Symphony's video performance of *Peter and the Wolf*. Students will have an opportunity to practice these movements at the beginning of the video, starting at 1:11. Once the full performance begins, students should perform the appropriate movements for each character. Sometimes more than one character can be heard simultaneously. At those times students may choose which movement to perform.
5. By 25:24, students will be ready for locomotor movement. From this timing until the end of the story there is a procession featuring each of the characters in the story. At this time the teacher may say, "We are going to act out the procession that happens on the way to the zoo. A procession is similar to a parade. I am going to walk around the room. When I touch you on the shoulder, you may stand up and join the end of our procession. As we parade around the room, keep listening to the music and moving like the characters you hear."
6. Walk around the room, gradually cueing students to join at the end of the procession you are leading. There is plenty of music—almost four and a half minutes—so there is no rush. As students move, encourage them to continue to listen to the music and perform the movements of the characters they hear. The characters' themes are played in this order:
 - Peter
 - Hunters
 - Wolf
 - Hunters (again)
 - Grandfather and Cat (their themes overlap)
 - Peter (again)
 - Bird (overlapping with the Hunters theme)
 - Duck
7. It may be difficult for young students to pay attention for the entire concert, even with the movement activities. If the students begin to lose interest, below are several strategies you could try:
 - Allow students to perform the movements for the cat and the wolf lying on their bellies
 - Have students perform the movements standing in place rather than sitting
 - Pause the video and ask students a question or model a "think aloud"
 - Pause the video and have students turn and talk with a partner. Students can predict what happens next, or they can respond to a question provided by the teacher.
 - Show a portion of the video during one class and finish the viewing the next time the class has music. One option would be to stop the video at 16:12 and continue it next time.
8. At the end of class, have student pairs review/discuss how music can tell a story.

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