



sydney symphony orchestra

David Robertson Chief Conductor and Artistic Director

Bite-Sized Music Lessons

**A series of F-10 music lessons for
implementation in the classroom**

Conditions of use

These Materials are freely available for download and educational use.

These resources were developed by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra with funding and support from the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and Education.



Education
Services
Australia

The Nutcracker Suite – March and Trépak (1892)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Duration: approximately 2:27 and 1:02 minutes

Year levels: Elective

Written in the language of the Australian Curriculum in the Arts these resources include activities in each of the music learning areas: performing, composing and listening and identify the key competencies reinforced in each activity.

Lesson	Page	Focus Activity
1	6	Performing and listening
2	8	Listening and composing
3	10	Listening and score reading
4	11	Performing and composing
5	12	Listening and moving

Lesson Index

- Lesson 1:** In these activities the students become familiar with Tchaikovsky's use of question and answer as a composition technique and his use of the triplet and dotted quaver – semiquaver rhythm patterns.
- Lesson 2:** Focuses on recognising particular instrumental timbres and the parts that they play from within the denser fabric of the music through aural tasks.
- Lesson 3:** Encourages students to interpret a score to answer questions about Tchaikovsky's approach to instrumentation and orchestration in the March.
- Lesson 4:** By performing a percussion score based upon rhythmic gestures from the Trépak, students develop an understanding of Tchaikovsky's use of form. They then demonstrate this understanding by composing and performing their own percussion score reflecting the structure of the piece.
- Lesson 5:** Begins with some score reading and general observation of how the concepts of music are used in the Trépak and ends with a boisterous Dance, again structured by the form and character of this piece.

Composer biography: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Tchaikovsky was born in and lived his life in Russia. He studied piano as a child. In 1863, Tchaikovsky pursued his interest in music by entering the St Petersburg Conservatory studying flute and organ. Three years later he moved to Moscow to take up a professorship of harmony at the new conservatory. He is best known for his use of colourful orchestral instruments including music for the ballets *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*, six symphonies and music inspired by the tale of *Romeo and Juliet* and the *1812 Overture*. He died in St Petersburg in 1893.

March and Trépak from the Nutcracker Suite

In 1891 Tchaikovsky was asked to compose music for the ballet, *The Nutcracker*. Tchaikovsky was not enthusiastic about the music he had written for this ballet as he had been given such a specific scenario that he felt restricted and dispirited, almost abandoning the project completely. He persevered and composed some of his most delicate and enchanting music, incorporating not only characteristically Russian dances but also those of other countries.

In a visit to Paris, Tchaikovsky had discovered a new instrument called the celeste that was perfect for the delicate effect of water droplets that had been requested for the music to *The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*. Highlights of the ballet music were compiled to form *The Nutcracker Suite*. The story of the ballet takes place at Christmas as a young girl's presents come to life, leading her into a series of adventures. The second act involves vivid character dances, culminating in the *Waltz of the Flowers*. Here we study two of these, the *March* and the Russian dance – *Trépak*.

Score and audio resources

Full score: [http://imslp.org/wiki/The_Nutcracker_\(suite\),_Op.71a_\(Tchaikovsky,_Pyotr\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/The_Nutcracker_(suite),_Op.71a_(Tchaikovsky,_Pyotr))

From the album *Ballet Highlights*

Berliner Philharmoniker, conducted by Herbert von Karajan

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/album/4OlaXexWOfirCq7u5nQKtR>

Instrumentation

Woodwind

3 Flutes
2 Oboes
Cor Anglais*
2 Clarinets in A
Bass Clarinet*
2 Bassoons

Brass

4 Horns
2 Trumpets in A
2 Trombones
Bass Trombone
Tuba

Percussion

Cymbals^
Timpani*
Tambourine*

Strings

Violins 1
Violins 2
Violas
Cellos
Double Basses

*Trépak only

^ March only

Key musical concepts contained in this work

- Ballet music and musical characteristics of a March and Ballet.
- Question and answer; Structure.
- Tone colour and techniques of orchestration.
- Repetition in musical ideas and use of rhythmic motive.

At the conclusion of the activities your students should be able to:

- discuss the musical features which indicate the character of each dance.
- be able to perform material from the Suite.
- improvise a 'question and answer' style composition.
- explore sound sources and use these to evoke the moods of specific character dances.

Related listening and resources

- View *Trépak*: <https://safeshare.tv/submit?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DNzSGBGW03r4>
- View *March*: <https://safeshare.tv/submit?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3Di2PQ8LWXZD8>
- Listen to other famous marches: *Radetsky March* by Johann Strauss I, *Marche Militaire* by Schubert, *The Stars and Stripes Forever* by Souza, *Triumphal March* from *Aida* by Verdi.

Listening Guide

a. *Marche* (March) *Tempo di Marcia vivo*, G Major, simple quadruple time, ternary form.

See the [resources page](#) for a recording of the work.

Bar	Audio Cue	Features
1-4	0:00–0:08	<p>Section A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme 1(a) is a two-bar idea containing a characteristic triplet played by clarinets, horns and trumpets. Even though the march is written in four, the detached quavers and the minim in bar 2 provide the feel of two in a bar. This 2-bar question is repeated immediately. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Tempo di marcia vivo</i></p> 
5-8	0:09–0:14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme 1(b) doubled by Violin 1 and 2 “answers” with a new rhythmic idea:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is accompanied by pizzicato in the lower strings.
9-16	0:14–0:27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A surprise <i>f</i> chord at the end of bar 8 announces a repeat of bars 1-8 with the bassoons replacing clarinets as accompaniment to Theme 1(b).
17-20	0:28–0:33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trumpets and trombones play Theme 2(a) which is a modification of the pitch, dynamics and articulation of Theme 1(a). A new “answer”, Theme 2(b) is heard at bars 18-20 in the flutes and clarinets, accompanied by pizzicato strings.
21-24	0:34–0:39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme 2(a) is repeated. The answer, Theme 2(b) is developed through inversion of its melodic contour and exchange of material between woodwinds and strings.
25-40	0:40–1:04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat of bars 1-16, but ending in G Major.
41-48	1:05-1:17	<p>Section B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodwinds play new material, very rapid staccato semiquavers, answered by strings at bar 43. The material is repeated immediately.
48-64	1:18-1:43	<p>Section A¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This section is the same as Section A, but Themes 1(a) and 1(b) receive a dramatic and full new orchestration with swirling string passages and a countermelody in the bassoon.
65-72	1:44-1:55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Themes 2(a) and 2(b), same as bars 17-24.
73-88	1:56-end	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme 1 with full orchestration (as at bars 48-64).

b. Danse Russe Trépak (Russian Dance) *Tempo di Trépak molto vivace*, G Major, simple duple time, ternary form.

See the [resources page](#) for a recording of the work.

Bar	Audio Cue	Features
1-16	0:00–0:12	<p>Section A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 in violin I is played twice. This is accompanied by woodwinds, horns and strings, <i>f</i>. • The rhythm of bar 1 is the source of all musical material in this movement.  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Tempo di trepak, molto vivace</i></p>
17-32	0:13–0:23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 repeated twice. • Flute I and clarinet I double an octave higher. • Timpani, tambourine and lower brass added <i>ff</i>.
33-48	0:24–0:35	<p>Section B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 2 uses the rhythm of bar 1 and adds two accented crotchets. This is played strongly by violas, cellos and double basses, bassoons and bass clarinet. • Theme 2 is immediately chased canonically at the half bar by oboes, cor anglais and clarinet.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bars 41-48 are a repeat of bars 33-40.
49-56	0:36–0:41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge section. The rhythm of the first half of bar 1 is again developed through repetition in violins and clarinet 1.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are brief two-note interjections across the barlines from the woodwinds and brass between statements of the Bridge theme. • Texture thickens and the tension builds ready for a return to Section A.
57-72	0:42–0:50	<p>Section A¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 is heard twice reinforced by flutes 1 and 2, clarinet 1 and violin 1 in their high registers.
72-84	0:51–1:02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coda – this is in exhilarating tutti marked <i>sempre fff</i>. The rhythm of the first half of bar 1 is used incessantly over a G tonic pedal and an increasing tempo through to the end.

Sequential Classroom Activities

Lesson 1: *March*: Performing and listening

Performing activities

1. One of the most important rhythmic cells in the *March* is the triplet.
 - a) Explain how a triplet of quavers is played.
 - b) List several three-syllable words that verbally use the rhythm of a triplet, e.g.
Pine-ap-ple Straw-ber-ry Nut-crack-er
2. Listen to the opening theme of the *March* and ask students to write the rhythm of the first 2 bars from dictation onto manuscript. NB. Some students may use longer note values and not include rests.

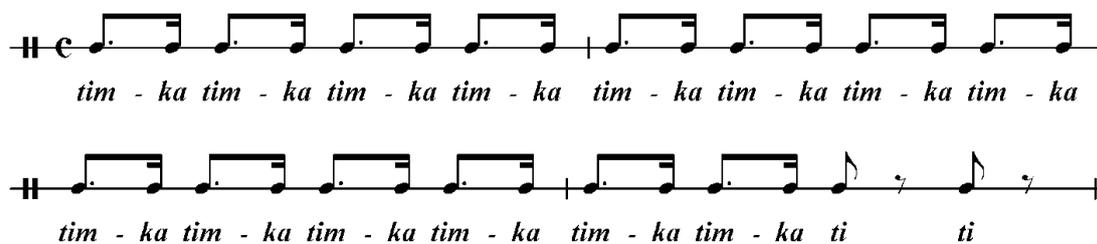
- a) Clap the rhythm of the question (notated below) as a class.



- b) Add pitch to the rhythm. Sing it. Play it on a tuned percussion instrument. Sing it using solfa.



- c) This theme is played twice then answered. Notate the rhythm of the four bar answer. The Kodaly time names are shown underneath.



- d) In pairs students use a question/answer technique to complete the following:
 - Question: play either the rhythm or the melody.
 - Answer: play an improvised four bar rhythmic pattern that complements the character of the original march pattern.
- e) After rehearsing the question/answer several times students swap roles.
- f) Perform the question/answer pieces for the class. Discuss the variety of 'answers' that were improvised. Which ones worked most effectively? Why?

3. Perform the rhythms below in pairs.
 - a) Play each bar four times.
 - b) Use different body percussion or un-tuned percussion instruments.
 - c) Add dynamics and articulation to make it more interesting.

PLAY 4 x

4

7

10

Listening activities

- 1) Listen to the middle section of the *March* (1:05-1:17).
 - a) Which instrument is playing the main melody? (*Flute*).
 - b) Describe how the woodwind are playing. (*Fast, descending running passages*).
- 2) When the music comes back ABA form how is the music different? (*Most obvious is the strings fast running semiquaver scale passages now accompanying the original March 'question' rhythm*).
- 3) The score of this movement can be found in the Petrucci online score library (see [resources page](#)). Follow the piece through and mark the changes that occur on the score.
- 4) Compare and contrast the *March* from the *Nutcracker Suite* with another march, such as *Triumphal March* from Verdi's *Aida* (this march also uses triplets).
- 5) Watch the *March* section from a version of the *Nutcracker* ballet and discuss the combination of the art forms music and dance. Does the dance reflect the music in terms of its structure, dynamics (quality) and style?

Lesson 2: *March*: Listening and composing

1. Complete the rhythm and melody of Theme 1 played by the clarinets.

Tempo di marcia vivo

2. Listen to 1:31-1:43 (bars 57-64) and identify the instruments that play the rhythmic patterns below.

3. In groups of four study the score extract above and clap the parts as an ensemble.
 - a) Discuss how Tchaikovsky used these rhythmic patterns.
 - b) Compose a piece that uses the rhythmic patterns.

- c) Assign one or two patterns to each player who is then responsible for performing these using either speech patterns (e.g. below) or percussion instruments.

57 3 58

Brave Nut-crack-er march- es bold- ly past

- d) Find ways of achieving a variety of textures by layering parts, and pay particular attention to the dynamics and articulation.
- e) Make sure you have an interesting and convincing beginning and end.
- f) Perform it for the class.

Lesson 3: *March*: Listening and score reading

1. Follow the score excerpt of the *March* (Figure E to Figure F) while listening to the audio. If students are finding this is a difficult task, encourage them to keep the two-beat pulse in each staff while listening to the piece.

After following the score a couple of times ask for general observations and then answer the following questions:

- a) Identify all the instruments by their English name down the side of the page. (*The instrument six lines from the bottom is the crash cymbal*).
- b) Which instruments are playing the melody at Figure E?
- c) Which chord are the strings playing on the first beat of Figure E?
- d) Why do the 6th and 7th lines have a different key signature to the other lines?
- e) Which clefs are used in this excerpt?
- f) Figure E to Figure F make up the entire B section of this short march. Describe the structure of the B section.
- g) Describe the texture of the music from Figure F.
- h) Discuss the string writing at Figure F.
- i) Looking at the brass instruments that play at Figure F, list the instruments identified below as they sound in the bar at Figure F from highest to lowest.

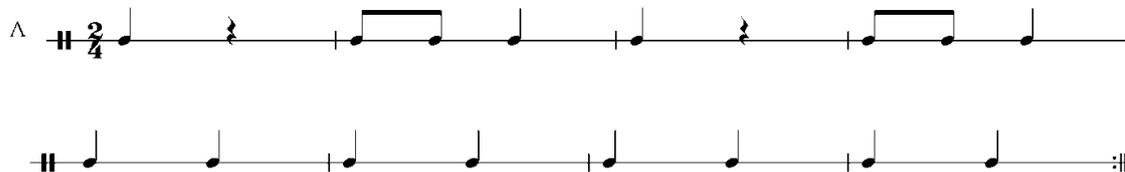
Tuba Trumpet 1 Trombone 1 Trombone 2 Horn 1

- j) What does *marcato* instruct the bassoons and horns to do three bars after Figure E?

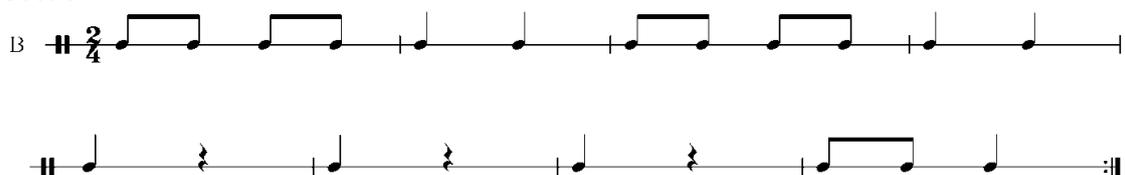
Lesson 4: *Trépak*: Performing and composing

- Learn this simple percussion score and perform it with the recording. It may look simple but the tempo is very brisk. Use the structure **A A A A-B B-Bridge-A A-Coda**.

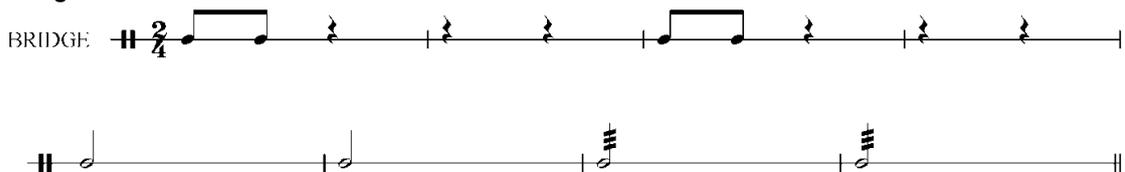
Section A

△ 

Section B

♮ 

Bridge

BRIDGE 

Coda: Make up your own rhythm to accompany the Coda section (8 bars/16 beats).

- Perform the rhythms from bar 1 of *Trépak* below. These may be given as a rhythmic dictation in two lots of three bar patterns.



- Work with a partner to compose a 24 bar piece based on the recurring rhythms found in *Trépak*.
 - Build the composition in four bar phrases comprising a two bar question (first student plays either the rhythm of the first two bars of Theme 1, Theme 2 or the Bridge Theme), and an improvised two bar answer which closely refers to rhythms from *Trépak* (second student).
 - Use un-tuned or tuned percussion instruments. If using pitched instruments select from a small range of notes that are related to the key of G Major.
 - Using the given structure create a percussion arrangement for a group of Year 8 students based upon your ideas.

Lesson 5: *Trépak*: Listening and moving

Aural only – no score

Tchaikovsky called this dance *Trépak*. This is an animated Russian dance of Cossack origin in simple duple time performed exclusively by men, and features deep squats and split leaps.

1. Notate the theme in bars 1-8.



2. Which family of instruments is most prominent in the opening bars?
3. How is the rhythm pattern in bar 1 used in the theme?
4. Comment on the relationship of the rhythmic ideas from bar 1 of Theme 1 in Theme 2 and the Bridge. Theme 2 is below.

Theme 2



Bridge Theme



5. Listen to the entire excerpt and write out a structure of *Trépak* identifying the main musical features of each section. What then is the overall form of this piece?

6. On the worksheet provided:
- Write the English name for the instruments used in *Trépak*
 - Name the clef each instrument usually uses.

Instrument	English translation	Clef
<i>Corno inglese</i>		
<i>Fagotti</i>		
<i>Tromboni tenori</i>		
<i>Viola</i>		
<i>Timpani in G, D</i>		
<i>Clarineti in A</i>		
<i>Corni in F</i>		
<i>Violino I</i>		
<i>Flauti</i>		
<i>Tamburino</i>		
<i>Trombone basso e Tuba</i>		
<i>Contrabasso</i>		
<i>Clarinetto basso in B</i>		
<i>Trombe in A</i>		
<i>Oboi</i>		
<i>Violino II</i>		
<i>Violoncello</i>		

Refer to the score and continue answering (opening to C).

- Which instruments have an accompanying role in the A section of the theme?
- Comment about the contrast of articulation in the accompaniment between bars 1-4 and bars 5-8.
- What is the opening chord played by the orchestra and how does it relate to the key of the movement?
- How does Tchaikovsky use dynamics and expression to enhance the energy of the piece?
- How does Tchaikovsky create contrast between the A and B sections of the music?
- What do you notice about the violin 1 and 2 parts at letter B? Why do you think the composer divides the material in this way?
- How is a musical climax achieved at the end?

Movement

Listen to *Trépak* from *The Nutcracker Suite*. What sort of dance movements do you think are suggested by the music?

1. Learn a dance to go with this piece of music. Form a circle, holding hands.

Theme 1:

- a) Step clockwise for 8 beats in time with the music.
- b) Face the centre, step 4 to the centre, raising hands up and 4 back dropping hands slowly.
- c) Repeat a) and b) three times.

Theme 2:

- d) One at a time, 6 students try Cossack-style movements into the centre of the circle for 8 beats. This link shows some Cossack dancing to give students some ideas for this section:
<https://safeshare.tv/submit?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DjU9n80nkErw>
- e) Repeat a) and b) again.
- f) Repeat b) three times, finishing with right hand in the air, left hand on the waist, click heels together in Cossack style.
- g) Now consider the dance from the *Nutcracker* ballet and discuss how the movement mirrors the music.

View the *Trépak* here:

<https://safeshare.tv/submit?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DNzSGBGW03r4>

Answers

Lesson 3

- Flutes 1,2+3, Oboes, Cor Anglais, Clarinet 1, Clarinet 2, Bassoons 1+2, Bassoon 3+4, 2 lines of horns, Trumpet, Trombones, Tuba.
- Flutes and Clarinets.
- E minor.
- They are transposing instruments. Clarinets in A.
- Treble, alto, tenor and bass.
- The music is grouped into 2 bar phrases which are first stated by woodwind and then repeated by strings and brass. Then these repeat so it is 4 x 2bars.
- The texture is homophonic with the brass playing the march in unison rhythm in a dense chord. The strings are also added playing scales but these are only for added texture, not acting as a counter melody.
- The strings play an ascending scale divided into 5 pitch groups but with the last note and first notes overlapping and making a clash. It is interesting that the violas play a higher scale run than that of the violin 1.
- Trumpet 1, Horn 1, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, Tuba.
- Tells the musicians to play the crotchets in a marked or slightly emphasised manner.

Lesson 5

- Notate the Theme in bars 1-8.

Tempo di trepak, molto vivace

The musical notation shows a melody in 2/4 time, G major, and treble clef. The melody consists of eight bars. The dynamics are marked as follows: *f p* (first bar), *p* (second bar), *sf* (third bar), *f p* (fourth bar), and *mf* (fifth bar). The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

- Strings.
- Theme 2 is based upon the rhythm of the opening bars of the *Trépak*.

The musical notation shows a melody in 2/4 time, G major, and bass clef. The melody consists of four bars. The dynamic is marked as *f*. The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

- The Bridge passage uses only the first part of the bar as the basis for the theme. The motif is therefore an important unifying device in this work.
- The structure is ternary form – see listening guide for full breakdown.

6. See below:

Instrument	English translation	Clef
<i>Corno inglese</i>	English Horn	Treble
<i>Fagotti</i>	Bassoon	Bass
<i>Tromboni tenori</i>	Tenor Trombone	Bass and tenor
<i>Viola</i>	Viola	Alto
<i>Timpani in G, D</i>	Timpani	Bass
<i>Clarinetti in A</i>	Clarinet in A	Treble
<i>Corni in F</i>	Horn in F	Treble
<i>Violino I</i>	Violin 1 (plural)	Treble
<i>Flauti</i>	Flutes	Treble
<i>Tamburino</i>	Tambourine	None
<i>Trombone basso e Tuba</i>	Bass Trombone & Tuba	Bass
<i>Contrabasso</i>	Double Basses	Bass
<i>Clarinetto basso in B</i>	Bass Clarinet in B flat	Treble
<i>Trombe in A</i>	Trumpet in A	Treble
<i>Oboi</i>	Oboes	Treble
<i>Violino II</i>	Violin 2	Treble
<i>Violoncello</i>	Cello (violon cello)	Bass and tenor

7. Wind and brass.

8. Bars 1-4 has short accented staccato notes whiles bars 5-8 are smoother and marked legato (slurred).

9. G major – the tonic.

10. By constantly changing dynamics he builds energy and by doing a gradual crescendo builds gradually to the end of the work.

11. The melody moves from the higher instruments into the lower instruments, longer note values and the accompaniment becomes a series of repeating quavers.

12. They are alternating the plucked chords to make it easier to play in this fast tempo.

13. A climax is achieved by increasing the dynamics, tempo, pitch and having all the instruments (including the percussion) playing *fff*.