Age of Gold: Dance
(1930)

Dimitri Shostakovich

Duration 2:21 minutes

Orchestration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woodwind</th>
<th>Brass</th>
<th>Percussion</th>
<th>Strings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piccolo</td>
<td>4 Horns</td>
<td>Timpani</td>
<td>Violin I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flute</td>
<td>3 Trumpets</td>
<td>Harmonium</td>
<td>Violin II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboe</td>
<td>2 Trombones</td>
<td>Xylophone</td>
<td>Viola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cor Anglais</td>
<td>Bass Trombone</td>
<td>Triangle</td>
<td>Cello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinet in E♭</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tambourine</td>
<td>Double Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinet in B♭</td>
<td>Tuba</td>
<td>Snare Drum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Clarinet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cymbals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxophone</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wood block</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassoon</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tam tam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrabassoon</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bass Drum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A series of music activities for Primary aged students

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Background

Dimitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)

Shostakovich was born in St Petersburg. He studied piano with his mother, a professional pianist, until he entered the Petrograd Conservatory in 1919 where he studied piano and composition. His graduation piece, Symphony No.1, was first performed to great acclaim in 1926.

Shostakovich’s career was affected by the political climate of his time. The Soviet government had a policy of ‘socialist realism’ which required art to depict the triumph of the political regime and the optimism of Soviet life. His second opera, Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District, was initially received with acclaim in Russia, Western Europe and the USA. However, it was later denounced in Pravda (the state newspaper) as demonstrating Western decadence and causing offence to the Soviet people.

He was returned to favour with his Symphony No.5 (1937) which was subtitled ‘A Soviet artist’s creative reply to just criticism’. He received official recognition and commendation from his fellow composers in 1940 when he won the Stalin prize for his Piano Quintet. Unfortunately this official recognition was short-lived and he fell from favour again in 1948, accused of writing music that could not be enjoyed by the masses. After Stalin’s death in 1953 cultural restraints were relaxed and this is the period in which Symphony No.10 was completed.

Shostakovich is a significant 20th Century composer whose works are constantly performed. His output includes fifteen symphonies; concertos for violin, piano and for cello; two operas; three ballets; fifteen string quartets; many vocal works; as well as works for solo piano.

Age of Gold: Dance

Shostakovich extracted a Suite of four pieces from his unsuccessful ballet, Age of Gold. It was first performed in Leningrad in March, 1930. The four pieces are: Introduction, Adagio, Polka, and Dance.

In Russia, Stalin took control of all music and art and used it to support the rise of communism. Shostakovich felt a constant struggle to maintain his favour with the politicians and his desire to express his own opinions. His ballet The Age of Gold is an example of political propaganda. It is an allegory for communism’s defeat of capitalism as depicted through a soccer game. It is one of the few ballets to concentrate its attention on a Soviet football team, here competing at the Golden Age Industrial Exhibition in some Western capitalist city.

The Suite includes satirical elements from the original score. The last Movement is a loud, boisterous Russian Dance. Its music is associated with the soccer team in the ballet and clearly exhibits the influence of Stravinsky’s ballet Petrushka.
Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- play music using percussion instruments and other sound sources to explore and demonstrate the concepts of duration, tone colour, pitch, dynamics and structure in groups and individually.
- explore basic aspects of musical concepts in their singing, playing and moving activities.
- improvise and explore musical ideas based on rhythmic or melodic patterns and incorporates these into own compositions.
- explore ways of varying musical material.
- Organise their own musical ideas into simple compositions.
- devise symbols to represent sounds for use in graphic notation and perform from their own scores.
- identify basic musical features of music that is performed and listened to.
- discuss the composer’s use of these aspects in contrasting sections of the music.
## Listening Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bar</th>
<th>CD Cues</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1-28 | 0:00-0:26 | • Allegro, very fast and lively.  
• Syncopated introduction by harmonium and strings.  
• Theme 1 in high register played by upper woodwinds.  
• Wood block and tambourine join accompaniment. |
| 29-52 | 0:27-0:49 | • The rest of the orchestra enters.  
• Theme 2. The first part of the theme is played by upper woodwinds, trumpets, harmonium and upper strings, the second part by lower woodwinds, bass trombone and tuba. |
| 53-75 | 0:50-1:10 | • Quieter Theme 3 in high register played by piccolo, flute, piccolo clarinet and harmonium.  
• Reduced accompaniment in horn and strings. |
| 76-108 | 1:11-1:41 | • Theme 4 played by lower strings, bassoons and contrabassoon.  
• Violins play a countermelody above.  
• Accompanied by woodwinds and harmonium.  
• Section continues with alternating passages between brass and woodwinds/strings. |
| 109-116 | 1:42-1:49 | • Short Theme 5 in upper woodwinds with syncopated accompaniment in strings and harmonium. |
| 117-136 | 1:50-2:09 | • Whole orchestra plays.  
• Low Theme 6 played by lower woodwinds, trombones, tuba, cellos and double basses.  
• Builds to the closing section. |
| 137-149 | 2:10-2:21 | • Coda. Closing section played by whole orchestra.  
• Rapid scale passages in woodwinds and upper strings and melody in bass trombone and tuba lead to one last trill and the final chords of the Dance. |
Listening

Listen to the CD recording of Dance from Age of Gold.

1. This piece is called Dance and is from a ballet by the Russian composer Dimitri Shostakovich.
   (a) Clap the beat and describe the tempo.
   (b) How fast would the dancers need to dance to fit the tempo?

2. (a) What is the mood of the piece?
   (b) Is it serious? Why/why not? (It is not perceived as serious. The composer’s intention was to make a satirical comment on communism.)
   (c) What type of dance actions does the music suggest and why?
   (d) Discuss the subject of the ballet. (It is about a soccer game).

3. (a) Identify the instruments that play and list them in families of instruments.
   (b) Compare your answer with the instrument list at the start of the activity.

4. In the piece there are several short themes.
   (a) Identify the themes that are played in a high register and those played in a low register. (See Listening Guide on Page 60.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>High and low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4</td>
<td>Low (with high countermelody)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   (b) Are there any differences in the rhythms of the high and low themes? (Higher themes have more notes, many semiquavers; lower themes have less notes (quavers and crotchets).)
   (c) Discuss possible reasons for this. (eg, it is too hard to play rapid passages on lower instruments, especially trombones and tuba.)
Performing/Organising Sound

1. The rhythm below is used to accompany Theme 1 of Dance. It is played by the wood block and tambourine.

![Wood block rhythm](image1)

(a) Learn to play the rhythms separately using body percussion. Begin with the tambourine rhythm.

(b) Perform the rhythms together.

(c) Transfer the rhythms to non-melodic percussion instruments (wood blocks and tambourines if available).

(d) Select students to perform the rhythms with the CD recording, **CD cue 0:00-0:26**. (Percussion instruments enter after four bars with the melody.)

2. Students improvise 4 bar melodies in 2/4 time above the accompaniment on melodic instruments set up in C major (C D E F G A B C).

3. (a) Learn to play the melody below on available instruments. This is the first part of the low Theme 6.

![Melody](image2)

(b) Listen to the CD recording of this section, **CD cue 1:50-2:09**, and identify the theme as it is played.

(c) In pairs, one student plays the first part of the theme; the second student improvises a new second part of the theme on a melodic instrument set up in C major.

(d) Students swap roles.
4. (a) Working in pairs, students notate a new ending of the theme using traditional or non-traditional notation.

(b) Practise and perform the piece for the class.

5. Accompany the students’ compositions with the tambourine and wood block rhythms (or students devise new accompaniment patterns of their own.)

6. Once you can perform these compositions create a dance that reflects in movement the shape of your tune and structure of your piece.