

# Flight of the Bumble-Bee

Teacher Resources

Activities in this pack:



Information



Activity 3 Perform



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Activity 5 Learn

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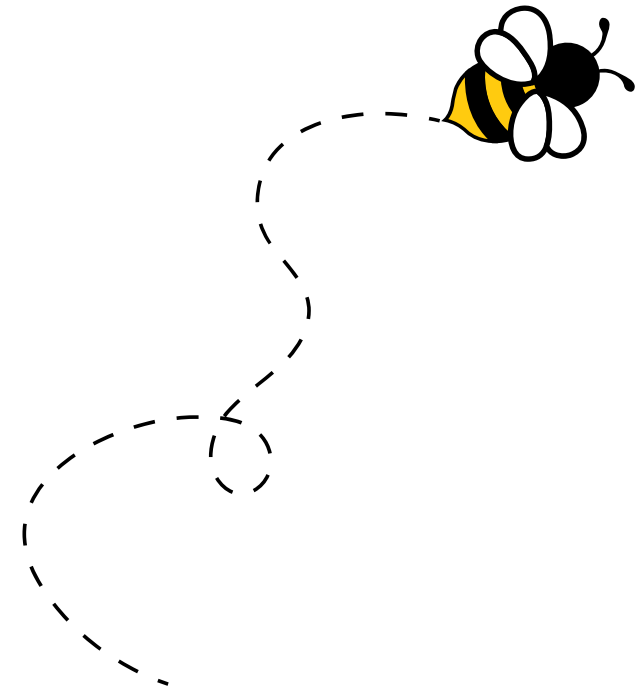
## Flight of the Bumble-Bee

Composer: Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

Genre: Program Music

Rimsky-Korsakov's 'Flight of the Bumblebee' is a captivating orchestral interlude, originally part of his opera 'The Tale of Tsar Saltan.' Composed in 1899–1900, it showcases virtuosity and agility, mirroring the flight of a bee with its rapid, buzzing motifs. This miniature masterpiece, known for its technical demands, challenges performers with its swift tempo and intricate passages. Despite its brevity, it remains a beloved showcase for soloists and orchestras alike, captivating audiences with its energy and charm.

Meet the busy bee in Rimsky-Korsakov's musical tale! In 'Flight of the Bumblebee,' the tiny bee buzzes through the air, darting and dancing with its delicate wings. Imagine zooming through gardens and fields, chasing flowers and spreading joy! With lively tunes, this piece fills our hearts with excitement and makes us feel like we're flying alongside the bumblebee. So, listen closely and let your imagination take flight with this delightful melody.



**[Use this link to listen to the TSO play Flight of the Bumble-Bee](#)**



## Listen and describe

Play the music without telling students anything about it.

- Ask them to describe aspects of the music – instruments they can identify, tempo (speed) of the music, rhythm, character (mood).
- Tell students its name and lead a discussion about what characteristics of a bee the music might be describing.
- Compile a list of adjectives that describe the music.
- Listen again to the music. Is it a good description of what a bee does? What aspects of the music help to achieve this?



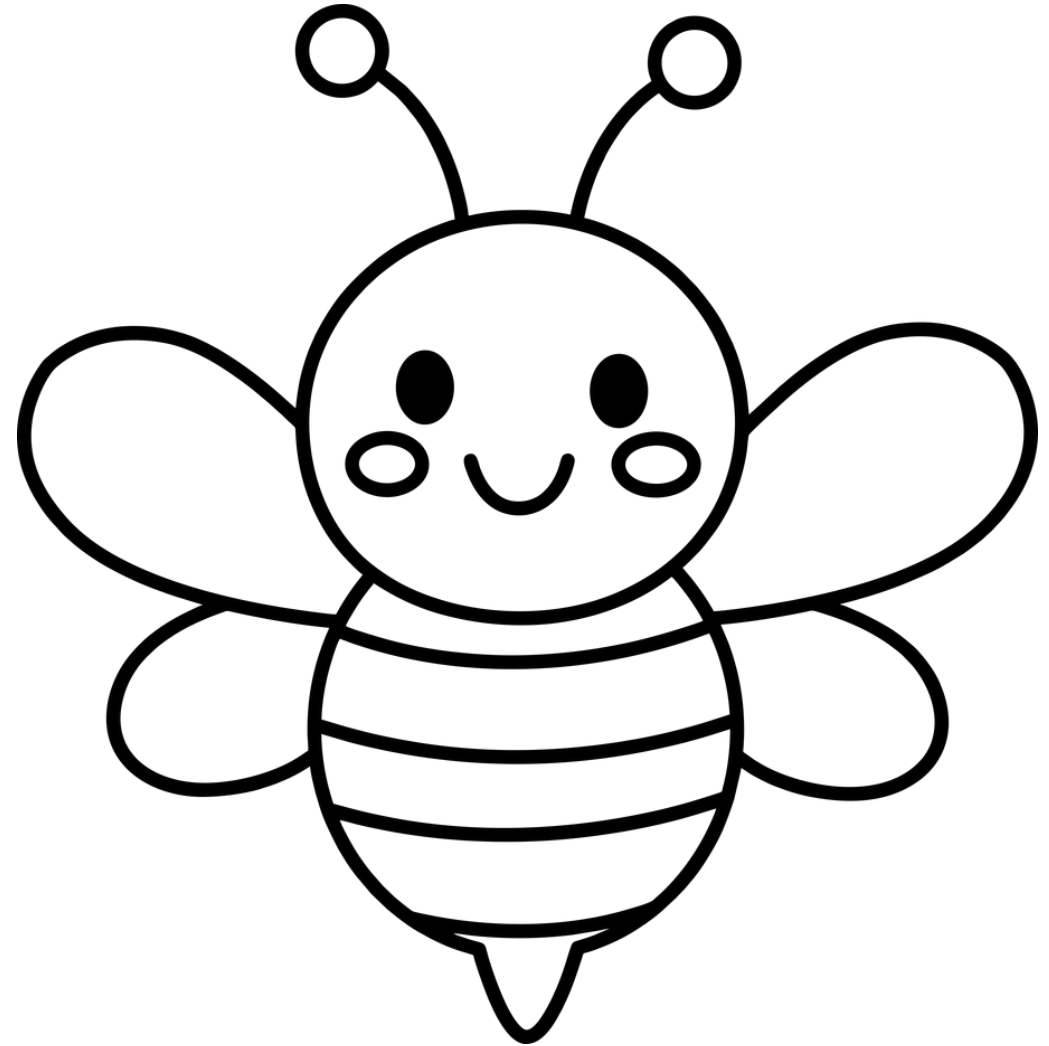


## Move with the Bee

Follow the pitch of the music (melodic contour) with hand movements.

Notice that sometimes the music hovers around just a few notes, but at other times it swoops up high or down low. Why might this be?

Provide children with a copy of a line drawing of a bee. They could colour it in, then cut it out and attach it to a chopstick. Repeat the melodic contour exercise, using the bees-on-sticks. After completing this activity draw the 5 lines of music on a large piece of butcher's paper with the heading Flight of the Bumble Bee and stick the bees onto the paper in a way that shows the busy-ness of the tune.





### Accompany the Bee

Play the music and have the children keep the beat on their knees. Start simply, 1-in-a-bar. Notice whether the music get faster, slower, or stays at the same speed. Why might this be so?

Try sub-dividing the beat, 1-2 in a bar, using L-R knees alternately.

Extend this with further subdivision, 1+2+ in a bar, with a soft handclap (it's very fast, so keep the hand movements very small and soft).

Divide the class into 3 groups, with each one responsible for 1 of the 3 patterns. Use a variety of body percussion patterns; it helps to keep the different rhythmic patterns very clear.

The tune of the flying bumblebee is very active, and it is accompanied by a much less active rhythm, firstly played pizzicato (plucking) by the lower strings.





## Compose a Critter

This could be an individual, pairs, or small-group activity. Use whatever sound sources you can access, which could be instruments, body percussion, found sounds, voices. Encourage students to plan their work to reflect the activity of their chosen insect, thinking about tempo, pitch, dynamics and expression in particular.

Choose a non-flying insect and find out about its habits. Develop a sound story about its main activity, like *Flight of the Bumblebee* describes its subject.

Ask them to consider:

- What sound or instrument will best represent the insect/animal musically?
- Should the music be high or low? Soft or loud? Or changing as it moves around?
- Does the tempo need to be fast or slow? Will the sounds/notes be short or long?
- Share your work with the class.





### Cross-Curricular Activities

- What words do you think of when you think of a bee?
- How would you describe a bee to someone who had never seen one?
- Worksheet for labelling: [Bee Science! | Worksheet | Education.com](#)
- How do bees help us? Investigate how they make honey
- Make a craft bee and hive. Look online for patterns to make bees from paper or papier mâché and build a hive from clay or cardboard. The bees can be buzzing around the hive.
- Do a science experiment to understand how bees pollinate by using your craft bee, mounting it on a stick and sticking double sided tape to its wings. The dip the bee in some jelly crystals and have the bee visit paper cups or cupcake patties which act as flowers. Observe how bits of pollen fall from the bee.



### Years 4-6

- Find out about the differences and similarities between bumblebees and honey bees; what they look like, their activities, habitat and social structures.
- Bees are endangered in Australia – why?
- Do some research to find out how to make a bee-house – a habitat for bees. Put some in a quiet corner of the playground and see if the bees come.
- Complete the worksheet requiring students to add punctuation to a story about a bee [Bumble Bee: Punctuate the Story | Worksheet | Education.com](#)