

Mendelssohn Symphony No.3 Vivace

Teacher Resources

Activities in this pack:



Information



Activity 3 **Perform**



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Introduction

Title of Work: Symphony No.3 in A minor, Op 56

Composer: Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Focus Concepts:

- Pentatonic scale, Scottish snap
- Features of Romantic Music

Genre: Symphony

Introduction

In July 1829, during his first trip to Britain, the 20-year-old Felix Mendelssohn embarked on a walking tour of Scotland with his friend. During this visit he started the sketches for his third symphony, now known as the 'Scottish'.

The second movement, a sparkling scherzo, is a boisterous, jubilant dance, infused with the “Scotch snap” rhythm. Based on the pentatonic scale, the melody contains echoes of Scottish folk music.





What can you hear?

1. Describe the mood of this music.
2. What is the wind instrument featured with the melody?
3. Describe the melody.
4. Describe the accompaniment. Which instruments play the accompaniment?
5. The tempo is marked *vivace*. What does this mean?
6. How many beats are there in a bar? 2, 3 or 6?
7. How would you describe the tone colour and mood of the music?
8. Music historians suggest that the ideas for this piece came from snatches of music heard by Mendelssohn while walking around the countryside. What sort of activities might this sort of music have been played at?



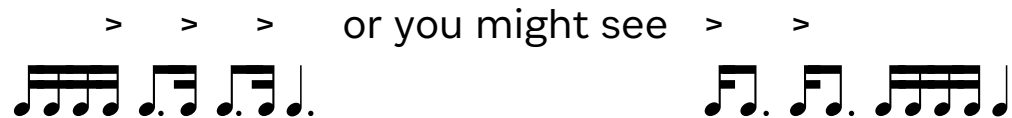


Scottish Snap

The Scotch snap, as suggested by its name, originates from Scotland and thus is a unique rhythmic characteristic of Scottish music. It is a short-long rhythmic structure, or in other words the preceding note should be of a shorter note value. In Scottish dances, the Scotch snap is a prominent feature and the dotted rhythms create a 'snapping' effect.

While it is notated like a normal dotted rhythm pattern the general stylistic rule for performance is to play the short note before the dotted note with an accent.

Practice a Scottish snap using these rhythms, noting the accented short notes.



In a pattern like this the quaver is played short and accented:



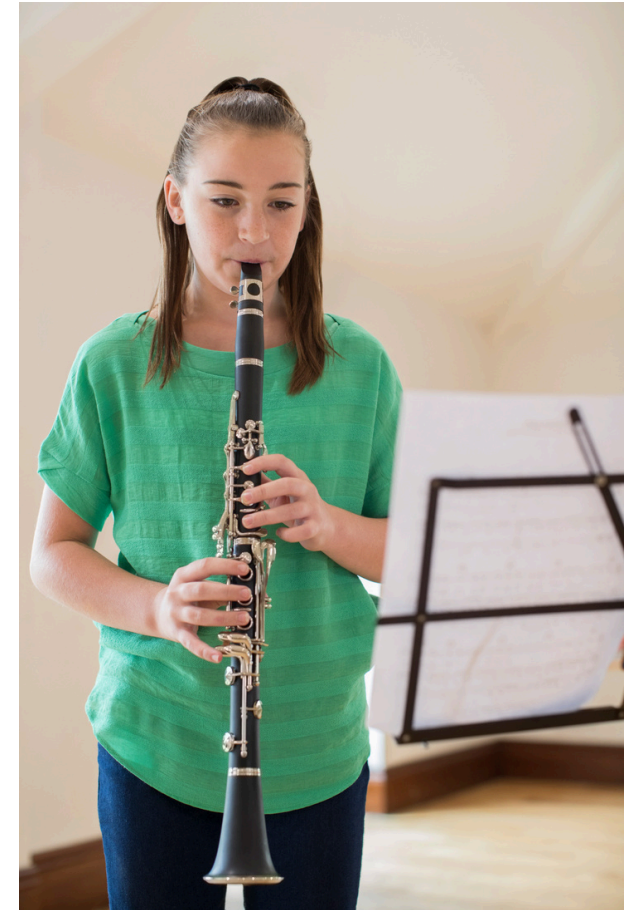


Learn the main theme

The Clarinets open melody has many features 2 important features of Scottish folk music:

1. The pentatonic scale
2. The use of the Scottish snap (a heavily dotted quaver-semiquaver pattern).

Vivace non troppo $\text{♩} = 126$



- a) Listen to the opening of this movement while following the clarinet part.
- b) Where are the Scottish snap sections?
- c) Make a list of all the notes played by the clarinet in the first 4 bars. What scale is this?
- d) Learn to play this movement using a slow tempo.

Note the difference between slurred legato notes and the detached notes.

Make sure you double dot the dotted quaver semiquaver patterns to get the Scotch Snap.



Composing

Write a 16 bar melody for your instrument using the musical features that Mendelssohn's opening tune contains:

- Pentatonic scale (you can make it major or minor pentatonic)
- Explore the Scottish snap
- Use the folk music structure A, A (modulating to the dominant), B, A.





Putting it in context

Mendelsohn was composing early in the 19th century but had many characteristics of Romanticism in this symphony. Watch the short documentary below and make a list of the features which can be found in this piece.

[WATCH HERE](#)



Wanderer Above the sea of fog, 1818 Friedrich



Cross Curricular Activity

- Like all European young men of means in the 19th century, Felix Mendelssohn set off on a Grand Tour of Europe at the age of 20. Unusually, however, Mendelssohn started in Scotland because he was influenced by the writings of Sir Walter Scot and the bloody history of Mary Queen of Scots.
- Numerous composers of the time were influenced by Sir Walter Scot. Research some of his writing online and see if you can discover why.
- Holhyrood house was in ruins during Mendelssohn's visit but has since been restored. Research its history from its origins in the 12th century to now.
- Scotland is renowned for its glorious natural environment. Create poster outlining the route Mendelssohn took as he traveled through Scotland with images of the things he would have seen.

