

THE BALL - BIZET

Context

Le Bal (French for 'The Ball') and is the final movement of twelve short pieces in *Jeux d'Enfants* (*Children's Games*) by Bizet. The others are called *The Swing*, *The Top*, *The Doll*, *The Hobby-Horses*, *The Shuttlecock*, *Trumpet and Drum*, *Soap Bubbles*, *Cat in the Corner*, *Blind-Man's Bluff*, *Leap-Frog*, *Little Husband*, *Little Wife*.

Teaching and Learning

- This movement is a 'Galop' (with one L), a dance in 2-time played 'presto' (very fast).
- The Galop was an energetic Hungarian country dance which became popular in European cities in the 19th century. It contrasted with sedate minuets, gavottes, mazurkas and gigue and was usually the last dance at masked balls. The steps were easy to learn provided the dancers managed to stay on their feet!
- The instruments in this movement come from the string, woodwind, brass family and percussion families.
- Words that could be used when describing the music include bubbly, excited, happy, hoppy, running, getting louder, getting softer, lively, energetic, great fun.
- The main tune is



Activities for Children

- This piece is too quick for marching and miming. Don't tell the children the name of the piece at first. Instead call out the names of some of the other movements in the work and ask them to say which one they think best suits the music (and why). Using corresponding images will make it easier to stimulate the children's imagination. Accept all answers where the children make a valid point.
- Alternatively pick four pictures (e.g. a horse galloping) and ask them to choose the picture that matches the music. Obviously, some of the pictures should represent slow-moving objects (e.g. a snail or a turtle). The children will learn to associate the tempo (speed) with the mood (positive, happy).
- A picture of a ball gown and mask will also reinforce the children's ideas about a ball – the dancing kind, not the sports kind! Smaller children might like to colour it in, as well as the picture of a dancing couple in 19th century dress, while the music is playing. Why did dancers wear masks? Would their sisters and brothers wear clothes like this to their debs dance?

