

STRAUSS POLKAS: THUNDER AND LIGHTNING – PIZZICATO - CUCKOO

Context

Johann Strauss Junior is famous for his waltzes. Many of them are performed at the annual New Year's Eve gala in Vienna. Polkas are dances, too, but they are in 2-time.

Teaching and Learning: In Thunder and Lightning Polka

- *Unter Donner and Blitz* is the German title of this piece and refers to two of Santa's reindeer.
- The main musical feature is the drum rolls on the timpani and the cymbal crashes, simulating thunder and lightning. The structure is ABA.
- Words that could be used when describing the music: noisy, fast, drum rolls, crash.
- There are two main tunes here:

Thunder and Lightning Polka Tune 1



Thunder and Lightning Polka Tune 2



Activities for Children

- Show the children images of a sunny day, a storm and snow. Ask them to decide which picture suits the music – and to say why. What do the following sound like - sun, snow, fog, wind, rain, hailstones, thunder and lightning?
- Re-create the sound of a storm by using body percussion. Click your fingers, rub your palms together, then slap each thigh alternately. Make whooshing sound with your mouths. Clap your hands once to make a thunder sound. The teacher can turn the lights on and off quickly to get the lightning effect.
- The note 'D' appears in the offbeat of the accompaniment to Tune 1. Some of the children can play D on the second and fourth beats of each bar.
- Can the children hear when Tune 2 begins? Change the accompanying note to a 'G'.



Teaching and Learning: Cuckoo Polka

- *Im Krapfenwald* is the formal title of this polka. Krapfenwald is an area in Vienna Woods.
- The main musical feature is the cuckoo call that appears throughout.
- Words for describing the music could include cuckoo, funny, birdsong, dainty, happy.
- The opening tune is

Cuckoo Polka



Activities for Children

- Can the children name different types of birds? What do they know about the cuckoo? When does the cuckoo come to Ireland? Does he build his own nest? What does a cuckoo call sound like?
- The cuckoo sings the notes 'soh-me'. *Soh* is higher than *me*. Use these hand signs:



- Practise different rhythmic combinations of *soh-me* e.g. two short *sohs* and one long *me*; three short *mes* and one short *soh*. The children do the hand signs as they sing these notes.
- Eventually they will do the hand signs and sing *soh-me* each time that they hear the cuckoo call during this polka.
- As they complete and colour in a picture of this cuckoo on a branch, tell them that the music notes coming out of the cuckoo's beak represent the cuckoo singing two notes.

