BRANDENBURG CONCERTO No. 3

(3rd movement: “Allegro”)
**J. S. Bach (1718)**

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*3rd movement, “Allegro”*

By Johann Sebastian Bach (Germany)

Baroque (ca. 1718)

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**LESSON INTRODUCTION**

Important Terms and Concepts

- **Concerto grosso**: a type of piece in which multiple soloists perform with an orchestra
- **Major scale**: A scale is an ordered succession of pitches, arranged in a specific pattern of whole (W) or half (H) steps. A major scale follows the pattern WWHWWWH and is often sung as “Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do”
- **Tempo**: the speed of music
  - **Adagio**: slow, stately, leisurely
  - **Allegro**: quickly

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**BEHIND THE MUSIC**

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1782) is widely considered to be one of the most important composers in the history of Western music. His father was a respected violinist and violist, but both his mother and father died when he was around 10 years old. Bach moved in with his brother, who was a professional church organist, and in the

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The Discovery concerts on January 26 - 27, 2017, will feature J. S. Bach’s “Air” from Symphonic Suite No. 3. Register your class for this free concert today!!

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Shreveport Symphony Orchestra

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following years, he studied organ, clavichord, violin, and composition of music. Bach later served for the courts, where he was obligated to compose a great deal of instrumental music: hundreds of pieces for solo keyboard, concertos, orchestral dance suites, and more! In a tribute to the Duke of Brandenburg in 1721, Bach created the “Brandenburg Concertos.” These concertos represent a popular music style of the Baroque era, the concerto grosso, in which a group of soloists play with a small orchestra.

A normal concerto has one player who sits or stands at the front of the stage playing the melody while the rest of the orchestra accompanies them. Typical concertos follow a three-movement format: fast, slow, fast. The Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 also follows the three-movement format, but instead of one soloist, it is written for three violins, three violas, and three cellos, and a continuous bass. The positioning of the parts change frequently, making it sound like there are either no soloists, the players are all soloists, or the violins, violas, and cellos have separate solo groups. Thus as the piece progresses, the spotlight continually spreads throughout the ensemble.

**ACTIVE LISTENING**

1. Play the Youtube recording for students:  
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TX_g1rbAkc

2. Ask students the following questions:
   a. **What did you notice about this song?**
   b. (If using as a follow up to the “Palestrina: Agnus Dei” lesson, ask the following) **What was the texture of the piece like?**  
      Was it monophonic, homophonic, or polyphonic?
   c. **What was the mood of this piece? How did it make you feel?**

3. Say to students, “**This piece is called the Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, and it was written by a composer named J. S. Bach.**”  
   Have students repeat the title of the piece – **Brandenburg Concerto** – and explain what each word means:
   1. **Brandenburg** – a region in Germany. J. S. Bach dedicated a set of six concertos to the Margrave of Brandenburg.
2. **Concerto** – a musical work, usually in three movements, in which a soloist plays along with an orchestra.

4. Explain: “The Brandenburg Concerto is a special kind of concerto, called a concerto grosso, that features more than one soloist.”

5. “How many soloists did you hear in this piece? What instruments did they play?” (If necessary, listen to the first minute of the video again.)

   “There are actually NINE different soloists in this piece -- 3 violins, 3 violas, and 3 cellos – plus a bass line. And instead of having a separate orchestra to accompany the soloists, each musician takes turns playing the melodic lines and the harmonic lines.”

6. “The Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, like most concertos, has three different movements that follow a specific pattern with regard to the tempo, or speed, of each movement. The first movement is Allegro, or fast. The second movement is Adagio, or slow. And the third movement is Allegro again.”

   “What was the tempo of the movement we just heard?”
   “Can you guess which movement we were listening to?” (Have students vote on whether they think it was movement 1, 2, or 3)

7. Play the opening melody of the 3rd movement for the students (see Resources, page 6). Point out that this melody is based on the notes of a G-major scale, and the opening two-beat pattern is passed among all nine soloists in the first two measures.

8. Listen to the Youtube recording again. Each time the students hear another instrument play this melody (the ritornello), have them stand up! Some students, particularly those who can read music, may benefit from following the score and circling the ritornello part whenever it appears.

9. Teach students to sing a major scale: Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do. Have them sing the scale at a fast tempo, then at a slow tempo, and then at a fast tempo again: imitating the tempo pattern of a typical concerto.
With older or more advanced students, you may want to have them practice singing the actual melody using sol-fa syllables.

GO DEEPER

OPTION 1. MUSICAL CONNECTIONS: CONCERTOS
During this activity, students will listen to other examples of concertos. Some examples are listed below. Can they guess which examples are concerti grossi? Which follow the “traditional” concerto form? Which instruments have the solo line?

2. W. A. Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major for viola and violin: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szMu8siYYQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szMu8siYYQ)
3. Francis Poulenc’s Double Concerto for Two Pianos: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8NoFGuWA78](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8NoFGuWA78)
4. George Walker’s Violin Concerto: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjp84IDB0ic&list=PLdKoYBnMbfqiwMV7FqrDgqU-ikUSaYe8b](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjp84IDB0ic&list=PLdKoYBnMbfqiwMV7FqrDgqU-ikUSaYe8b)

OPTION 2. WEBQUEST: EXPLORING STRING INSTRUMENTS
During this activity, students will have the opportunity to explore the string family of instruments. Divide students into five groups, each of which will explore one of the following instruments: violins, violas, cellos, double basses, and harps. (If you’d like, you can also assign groups to research non-traditional instruments like guitars, mandolins, etc.). Have them use the worksheet on page 8 to guide their research, and then present their findings to the class. Some suggested websites are listed under “Resources” (page 7).

OPTION 3. COMPOSE
The opening of the third movement of Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 is based on a G-major scale. In this exercise, students will have the opportunity to compose a short melody based on a major scale of their choice. Their melodic line will likely include both ascending and descending sections, but they may use STEPS, with no LEAPS. After students have finished composing, have them perform their melodies for each other.

The SSO’s season features TWO different double concertos! Come hear Poulenc’s Double Concerto for Two Pianos on October 22; and Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante on March 11!
RESOURCES

YOUTUBE RECORDING: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TX_g1rbAkc
(performance by Voices of Music, an early music ensemble)

SHEET MUSIC: http://imslp.nl/imglnks/usimg/0/03/IMSLP57477-PMLP82079-Full_Score.pdf
(The 3rd movement begins on page 46)

OPENING MELODY (RITORNELLO):
STRING INSTRUMENT WEBQUEST: POSSIBLE RESOURCES:

- BBC Guide to the String Family:
  http://www.bbc.co.uk/orchestras/learn/guidetotheorchestra/
- San Francisco Symphony Orchestra:
- Classics for Kids:
  http://www.classicsforkids.com/music/instruments_list.asp?family=String

LESSON ACTIVITIES WERE ADAPTED FROM:
“Bach to the Future” concert guide from the New Haven Symphony:

“Favorite String Instrument” webquest by Chelsea Schwoyer:
http://zunal.com/webquest.php?w=24951
STRING INSTRUMENT WEBQUEST

Name of instrument: ________________________________

Names of Group Members: ________________________________

Draw a picture of your instrument here.

1. How is your instrument similar to other members of the string family?

2. How is your instrument different from other members of the string family?

3. How is your instrument played?

4. Who are some famous people who play your instrument?

5. What are some famous songs featuring your instrument? Listen to them. Which is your favorite?