

Global Music Lesson Plans

Lesson 3: Low Brass – Tibet, Switzerland and Haiti (Age range 5-7)

Time required: 40 minutes

Activity:

Listening, identifying and comparing low sounds played on similar instrumental types from different regions of the world.

Aims:

To explore how musicians from diverse cultures exploit the acoustic qualities of mountains in similar ways.

To introduce the idea that the size of brass instruments relates to the pitch that they produce.

Pupils will learn:

- About pitch.
- How to describe pitches in terms of low, medium and high.
- How to respond appropriately to changes of pitch.

Web Links you will need:

- Image of a Tibetan dungchen (a ceremonial low-pitched brass instrument). You can find pictures on Google Image Search.
- Audio excerpt of Tibetan dungchen. You can find the track 'Invoking the Spirit of Kindness through Sound' online, including on YouTube.
- Image of Swiss Alpine horns (traditional low pitched brass instrument).
- Video/sound clip of Alpine horns being played. You can find suitable videos on YouTube or Google Video.
- Video clip of Konè carnival band in Haiti (carnival trumpets of different pitch). You may be able to find this video clip by searching online. Unfortunately, we can no longer offer a direct link.
- Web link to the San Francisco Symphony orchestra website to view instruments of the orchestra and hear their sounds:
<http://www.sfskids.org/templates/instorchframe.asp?pageid=3>

Other resources you will need:

- 3 different lengths of hosepipe, each with a funnel inserted in one end.
- A pitched percussion instrument, such as alto xylophone or glockenspiel.

- Recordings of a flute (e.g. '[Badinerie](#)' by Bach – you will need to register with *Royalty Free Classical Music* to download this clip) and cello (e.g. '[The Swan](#)' from '[Carnival of the Animals](#)').

Useful Information

Mountainous regions of the world present a unique acoustic environment that has excited musicians across the ages. The traditional music of Tibet and Switzerland both exploit the acoustics of the mountains using, for example, echo effects to enhance the feeling of the music. In addition, both Swiss and Tibetan cultures have developed low-pitched brass instruments that have a particular resonance and which create the most wonderful atmospheric sounds. The carnival music of Haiti is characterised by *Konè* bands i.e. foot bands made up of crude trumpets of varying lengths, each of which produce a single pitch. Although the context of carnival music is far removed from the ceremonial music of Tibet or the traditional music of Switzerland, the Haiti *Konè* share significant similarities in both design and sound that bind them together.

Lesson Plan	Low Brass –Tibet, Switzerland and Haiti (Age range 5-7)
Starter	Display three lengths of hosepipe, each with a funnel inserted at one end. Ask pupils: “How can I make a sound on this instrument?” Try out suggestions. Point out that, to produce a sound, the player needs to rest his or her lips on the opening of the hose pipe and ‘buzz’ their lips into the tubing (this may take a certain amount of practice!). Demonstrate that the different length instruments produce different pitches i.e. long = low, medium = middle, short = high.
Main	<p>Display the image of the Tibetan dungchen. Ask pupils to describe what they see. Ask questions like “Do you think the instruments produce a high or low sound?” (Answer = low). “Why are the players sitting down?”, “How do you think a sound is produced?” (Answer = by buzzing the lips into a mouthpiece). “On what sort of occasion might you expect to hear these instruments?”, “Why do you think the tubing gets wider along its length?” (Answer = to amplify and ‘shape’ the sound). “Why do you think that they are being played out of doors?” (Answer = because they are loud instruments, and because the sound resonates and echoes from the mountains in which they are played. They also accompany ceremonies that take place outside).</p> <p>Play recordings of music played on a) flute, b) cello and c) Tibetan dungchen (follow instructions in ‘You will need’ section). Which do they think is the sound of the dungchen? Why? How does the sound of the dungchen make them feel?</p> <p>Display an image of Swiss Alpine horns and discuss the similarities in looks between the Alpine horns and Tibetan dungchen. Watch the online video of Alpine horns being played and listen to the Sound clip of Alpine horns being played. Brainstorm words that describe the sound of a) the Alpine horn and b) the dungchen. Point out that both instruments are low in pitch.</p>

	<p>Point out to pupils that both instruments are a feature of two diverse cultures, both from mountainous regions. In Tibet and Switzerland, the mountainous rock faces create echo effects and enable the sound to travel long distances. It is interesting that both cultures have developed similar low-pitched brass instruments that create an eerily beautiful and atmospheric sound when played in this environment.</p> <p>Extension:</p> <p>Reinforce their understanding of the relationship between pitch and the size (or length) of the instrument by playing the video clip of Konè carnival band in Haiti. Notice a) how each ‘trumpet’ (or Konè) is only able to produce a single pitch b) how the Konè band consists of a number of instruments of different length which ‘interlock’ to produce melodies (rather like hand bells or boomwackers!) and c) how the instruments bear a resemblance to dungchen and Alpine horns (and hose pipes with funnels!).</p>
Plenary	<p>To apply their knowledge and understanding in a different context, go to the San Francisco Symphony orchestra’s website to view the instruments of the orchestra, and show pupils images of a selection of western orchestral instruments, including a tuba and trombone. Which do the pupils think have the same timbre and pitch as the dungchen, Alpine horn and Konè? Why? Test out their answers by listening to the sounds provided. Which family of instruments do they relate to? (Answer = brass).</p>