

Leisure: Activity 4 - Music

TEACHERS' NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Gain an appreciation of some types of music popular in Victorian times
- Listen to the kind of music a Victorian child would listen to when at home or out
- Sing a Victorian Parlour Song
- Develop children's research skills in using historical sources, in particular photographs, written music and an audio recording of a song, to learn about Victorian music

Cross-curricular Links

- Music

Sources



Source 1. Steyning Town Band after winning a prize at the Redhill Brass Band Contest, 19 July 1893



Source 2. Worthing Borough Band, 1899



Source 3a. 'The Rise of Town Bands'



Source 3b. Audio version of Source 3a.



Source 4. Worthing Pier Band, 1895



Source 5a. Advertisement for the Excelsior Polyphon, 1897



Source 5b. Video of a Polyphon being played at the Mechanical Music & Doll Collection, Chichester



Sources 6a-6c. *Alice, Where Art Thou?*, Victorian parlour song. Vocal and piano score (three pages of music)



Source 6d. Audio version of melody featured in Sources 6a-c, *Alice, Where Art Thou?* Played on an original Victorian Polyphon at the Mechanical Music & Doll Collection, Chichester



Source 7. *Alice, Where Art Thou?* Words by Wellington Guernsey

Leisure: Activity 4 - Victorian Music

TEACHERS' NOTES

Source 1

The Steyning Town Brass Band members are posing after winning a brass band competition. There are 15 players, all in uniform. Instruments seen in the front row, from left to right: bass drum, trombone, 2 cornets, clarinet (woodwind instrument), cornet, trombone, tuba.

Source 2

There are 17 players in the photograph, again all in uniform. They have a wide range of musical instruments including drums, cornets, cymbals, double bass, French horn, trumpet, clarinet, flutes, trombones, and sleigh bells on the ground beside the big drum. The conductor is sitting in the centre of the front row with his baton.

Bands such as these would usually perform in a park, town square, on the seafront, or similar location.

Band competitions were also a regular feature.

Source 3

Town bands grew in popularity in the Victorian period for various reasons:

- The invention of musical instruments such as the saxophone, which were able to play more notes or add a different sound than traditional musical instruments.
- The increasing availability of printed music, and instruments.
- The growth in band contests throughout Britain, which offered good prizes to winners.
- Civic pride: town brass bands became more popular not only as entertainment for the public, but as a type of music that brought pride to the community.

By using popular music which could be played outdoors as well as indoors by their brass band, the Salvation Army used music and lively hymns to attract more members.

Source 4

The first Worthing Pier opened in 1862. In 1888 it was rebuilt and enlarged, with a new Pavilion which could accommodate 600 people. Concerts and plays could then be given indoors and in any weather. A new Pier Band of six musicians, consisting of string, woodwind and brass players, was hired.

The three men in the foreground are holding instruments from the string family - double bass (centre) is the largest string instrument and has the deepest sound; the cello (left) is the medium sized string instrument and sounds quite melancholy, and the smallest string instrument is the violin (right), which has the highest sound.

Excerpts of 'The Carnival of the Animals' (1886) by French composer Camille Saint-Saens (1835-1921) could be played to illustrate the sound of string instruments: 'The Elephant' (double bass with piano), 'The Swan' (cello), or violins imitating the sound of donkeys in 'Animals with long ears'.

Leisure: Activity 4 - Victorian Music

TEACHERS' NOTES

Other popular pieces for orchestra composed in the Victorian period: 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice' (1897) by Paul Dukas, ballets 'Swan Lake' (1876) and 'The Nutcracker' (1892) by Tchaikovsky, 'Ride of the Valkyries' (1856) by Richard Wagner, and 'The Blue Danube Waltz' (1867) by Johann Strauss Jr.

Source 5 and Source 6d

A Polyphon is a large wooden music box that plays large flat metal discs with punched holes which move over 'teeth' connected to musical bells to produce the notes. It sounds like little bells when played.

Children can hear a Polyphon being played on Source 6d.

Sources 6 and 7

A famous Victorian song 'Alice, Where Art Thou?' that a local town band would have played (music on Sources 6a, 6b, 6c and words on Source 7). The sound clip (Source 6d) could be used as an accompaniment.

Note: the words and music can be downloaded directly from:

www.mutopiaproject.org/ftp/AscherJ/alice/alice-a4.pdf

This was a very popular ballad-type song in Victorian Britain and was written by composer JOSEPH ASCHER (1829-69). He was also particularly renowned for his salon pieces for piano - etudes, nocturnes, gallops etc.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Victorian Parlour Songs

The parlour song (or drawing room song) was a popular form of music during the Victorian period. They date from the 1850s and came from ballads or songs that were performed on stage at the Music Hall or the opera. These songs were easy to learn and fun to sing. They were popular with the rich and middle classes.

Parlour songs became more popular in the second half of the Victorian period as pianos and song sheet music became cheaper to buy. Families could then entertain themselves by performing songs in their 'parlour' or sitting room. Usually, all family members joined in, either by playing the songs on the piano, accompanying the tunes on other musical instruments like the violin or flute, or simply singing along. Even melodies from popular French and Italian operas were played at home. Tunes could also be played on music boxes like a polyphon. Sheet music was bought in large amounts towards the end of the Victorian period in the same way that CDs are bought today. Some of these songs can still be heard today in theatres and concert halls as well as on recordings, the television and the radio.

The teaching of music grew in the Victorian period. Many towns and cities advertised their own professors and teachers of music. As recorded in the 1881 Census, Worthing had 16 music teachers.

The tradition of music-making at home declined once inventions like the wireless and the phonograph became cheaper and more widely available.

Sections of a band or orchestra

There are four musical sections in a band or symphony orchestra:

- Brass (trumpet, horn, trombone, tuba, etc)
- Strings (violins, cello, double bass, etc)
- Percussion (drum, cymbals, triangle, piano, etc)
- Woodwind (clarinet, flute, saxophone, etc)