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# MUSICAL WORLD:

## Exploring Music for Primary School Children - European Classical Music

At Home Resource and  
Activity Pack

[nch.ie](http://nch.ie)





# WELCOME

Welcome to this edition of *Musical World*, a guide for primary school children to explore music from a variety of cultures and traditions!

In this packet we travel around Europe, where we focus on the sounds and rhythms of classical music.

We hope that you enjoy the activities, links and images, and hope you get inspired to make some music of your own!

***NCH Learning & Participation Team***



## 1. Frère Jacques: Rounds and Canons

Frère Jacques is a popular nursery rhyme and song, known throughout the world and translated into many languages! Here are the lyrics and music in French, click the music to sing along:

 <https://youtu.be/BC6rvbxdywg>

*Frère Jacques, frère Jacques,  
Dormez-vous? Dormez-vous?  
Sonnez les matines! Sonnez les matines!  
Ding, dang, dong. Ding, dang, dong.*



Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques, dormez-vous? Dormez-vous?  
Sonnez les matines! Sonnez les matines! Ding, dang, dong. Ding, dang, dong.

The song is traditionally translated into English as:

*Are you sleeping? Are you sleeping?  
Brother John, Brother John,  
Morning bells are ringing! Morning bells are ringing!  
Ding, dang, dong. Ding, dang, dong.*

The song is about a monk, whose duty is to ring the bell for *matines* (morning prayers), not “morning bells”. Frère Jacques apparently overslept, it is time to ring the bell for *matines*, and someone wakes him up with this song.

So who wrote Frère Jacques? We aren't really sure! Most likely the tune was passed down through the generations, with its earliest known publications written in France in the late 1700s/early 1800s.

### Suggested Activity

Ask two (or more) of your family members to try singing Frère Jacques with you as a round, with each person starting when the previous person has come to the \* marked on the music. Take turns going first, second, or third!

Here's an example video:

 <https://youtu.be/kZPqYuKwiag>

If your family can't join you, try singing along with one of the students featured in the video.

When sung in **rounds**, you could sing Frère Jacques over and over and over, and never end! A **round** is a simple example of a **canon**.

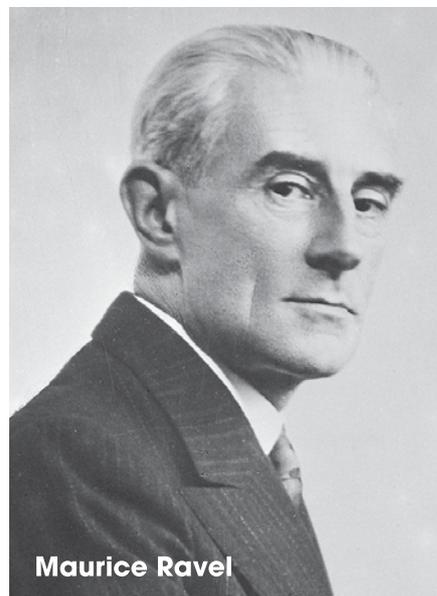
Not all canons start over and over again like a round. Many famous pieces of classical music include a canon that continues on to new melodies. **Pachelbel's Canon in D** is a famous example (you've probably heard it at a wedding). In this link you can hear and see where each instrument joins the canon 8 beats after the previous instrument. Can you find more canon sections later in the piece, too?

 <https://youtu.be/gDnmYWzXQA>



## 2. Rhythm Exercises

**Boléro** is a one-movement orchestral piece by the French composer **Maurice Ravel** (1875–1937). Originally composed as a ballet commissioned by Russian actress and dancer Ida Rubinstein, the piece, which premiered in 1928, is Ravel’s most famous musical composition. It was also one of the last pieces he composed before illness forced him into retirement. Throughout the piece, the familiar theme is repeated 18 times.

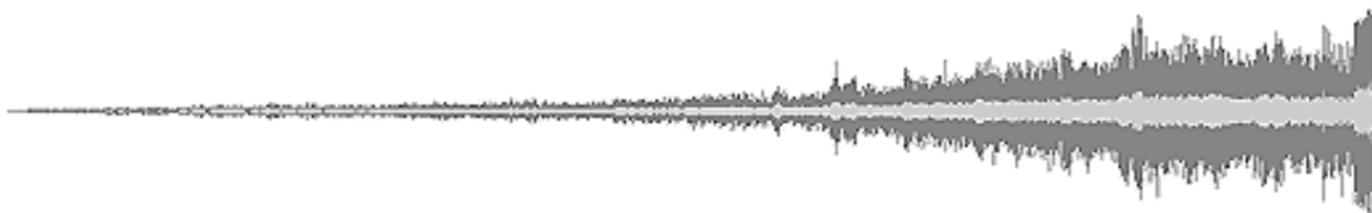


### Suggested Activity

Try different clapping rhythms to fit with the music (there are 3 beats in the bar). Clap along to this recording of Boléro—can you hear the 1-2-3 rhythm?:

 <https://youtu.be/dZDiaRZy0Ak>

Starting quietly (*piano*) and building up (*crescendo*) to very loud (*fortissimo*)!



## Question:

What instruments do you hear playing the main theme?

## Answer:

Flute, clarinet, bassoon, E-flat clarinet, oboe d'amore (between the oboe and the English horn in pitch and tone), trumpet, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, French horn, celeste, trombone

## Marches

A march, as a musical genre, is a piece of music with a strong regular rhythm which was expressly written for marching to and most frequently performed by a military band. In mood, marches range from the moving death marches to the brisk military marches. Examples of the varied use of the march can be found in **Beethoven's** *Eroica Symphony*, in the *Marches Militaires* of **Franz Schubert**, in the *Marche funèbre* in **Chopin's** *Sonata in B flat minor*, and in the *Dead March* in **Handel's** *Saul*. A march has either 2 or 4 beats in a bar of music.

## Suggested Activity

March around the room to these examples—is it a slow or fast march, light or heavy? Or watch the orchestra conductors and try to mimic their movements—can you see them conducting in either 2s or 4s?



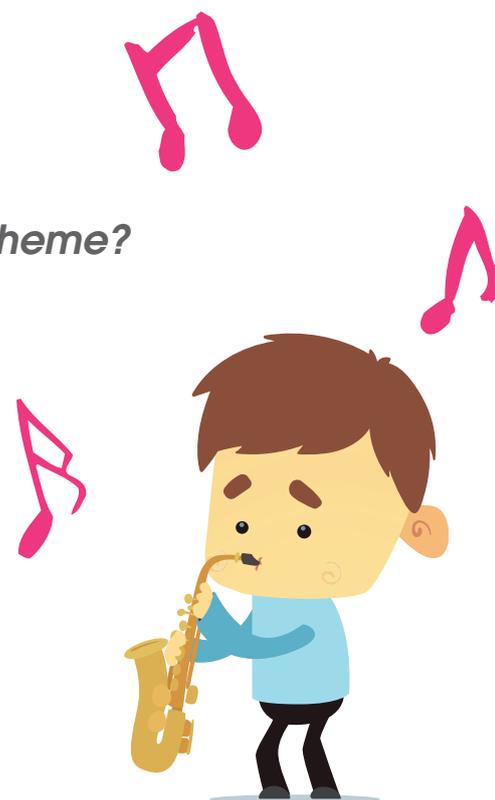
Franz Schubert – Marches Militaires:

<https://youtu.be/FD6Q2jcUDb4>



Chopin – Marche funèbre:

<https://youtu.be/7-9wXQpzESo>



 Handel – Dead March from the oratorio “Saul”:  
<https://youtu.be/cGbDY2O6qJM>

 Wagner – Grand March from the opera “Tannhäuser”:  
<https://youtu.be/Q-Kx6oR48u8>

In this video, the conductor leads the audience to clap the march at different **dynamics**—soft (*piano*) and loud (*forte*), which certainly lifts the spirits!

 Strauss – Radetzky March:  
<https://youtu.be/jCILGz9The8?t=66>

## Waltzes

A Waltz is dance music in triple meter, 3 beats in a bar.

**Johann Strauss II** (1825 –1899) was an Austrian composer of light music, particularly dance music and operettas. He composed over 500 waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and other types of dance music, as well as several operettas and a ballet. In his lifetime, he was known as “The Waltz King”, and was largely then responsible for the popularity of the waltz in Vienna during the 19th century.



**Johann Strauss II**

## Suggested Activity

Dance a waltz around the room counting 1, 2, 3 out loud!

 Johann Strauss II, Viennese Waltz:  
[https://youtu.be/U4J0MKsG\\_is](https://youtu.be/U4J0MKsG_is)

Do a bit of research: can you find out about other composers who wrote waltzes?

## Suggested Activity

**Classroom Rhythm Session:** Here's a rhythm game you can try either with your family members, or your classmates when you're back in school.

Have everyone sit in a single line circle.

Divide into three groups while seated.

Group one: Chant in a strict rhythm -  
*Can I Have Some More, Please?*

Group one continues to repeat this over and over.

Group two: Respond to their rhythm with - *No You Can't*

Groups one and two keep repeating their phrases.

Group three: Fit a new phrase into the beat, chanting -  
*Of Course You Can*

All three groups keep repeating their phrases.



Listen to the cross-rhythms that occur while the 3 groups say their phrases at the same time.

Pick a “conductor” to raise their hand high in the air, and use their fingers to count: 4, 3, 2, 1.... STOP

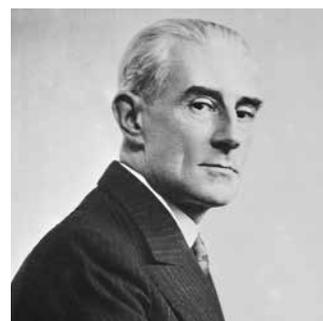
To start them all again raise your hand high in the air and using your fingers, count: 1, 2, 3, 4....START

### 3. The Great Composers of Europe

The following composers are regarded to be some of the most influential figures in the canon of music. Their musical output has been influenced by their own countries’ musical traditions. The use of folk melodies and rhythms which are embedded in their music has contributed to the music of Europe. Their compositions and contributions to the classical genre are still celebrated today.

#### FRANCE

**Maurice Ravel** (1875-1937) was a French composer of Swiss-Basque descent. He wrote some of the most intensely beautiful and perfectly-crafted impressionist music of the 20th century. He was a master orchestrator – his orchestral works have lavish and complex instrumentation, full of bursting colours and vivid images. Ravel had a huge range of influences. He liked traditional 18th century French music, but also started to add some elements of jazz in his later compositions.



#### Suggested Listening



Piano Concerto in G Major

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5b4-rXhKpMM>

**Georges Bizet** (1838-1875) is best known for his operatic masterpiece, *Carmen* (1875), a work that established itself as the model of opera comique. Not so well known is the fact that he died from a heart attack only a few months after its first performance at the age of 36. Although he didn't stray from the French music traditions, he incorporated Spanish rhythms in the music to set the stage for the story. Bizet's operas tended to stand out as highly dramatic. His realistic approach influenced the verismo school of opera at the end of the 19th century.



### Suggested Listening



Carmen, Suite No. 2

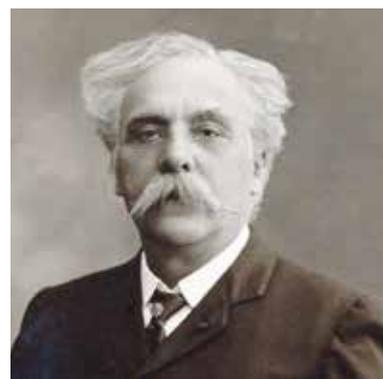
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rwcRQvAiTg>



The Pearl Fishers Duet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PYt2HIBuyI>

**Gabriel Faure** (1845-1924) was one of the foremost French composers of his generation. Although his best-known and most accessible compositions are generally his earlier ones, Fauré composed many of his most highly regarded works in his later years, in a more harmonically and melodically complex style. His refined and gentle music influenced the course of modern French music.



### Suggested Listening



Requiem, Pie Jesu & Agnus Dei

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWMmolrId\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWMmolrId_4)



Clair de Lune

<https://youtu.be/EKVQZsVN6b8>

## SPAIN

**Manuel de Falla** (1876-1946) was regarded as the greatest Spanish composer of the 20th century. Falla developed an interest in native Spanish music, in particular Andalusian flamenco. His works such as the ballet *El amor brujo* and the one-act opera *La vida breve* are notably nationalistic in character.



### Suggested Listening



'El amor brujo' (Danza ritual del fuego)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auRUxPPqDcQ>

## RUSSIA

**Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (1840-1893) is regarded as being the most popular Russian composer of all time. His music has always had great appeal for the general public in virtue of its tuneful, open-hearted melodies, impressive harmonies and colourful orchestration, all of which evoke a profound emotional response. He wrote six symphonies, a handful of operas and three ballets, the latter of which, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker* and *Sleeping Beauty* are his most famous works.



## Suggested Listening



Swan Lake Waltz

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CShopT9QUzw>



Sleeping Beauty Waltz

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Sb8WCPjPDs>

**Sergey Prokofiev** (1891-1953) the 20th century Russian (and Soviet) composer wrote in a wide range of musical genres, including symphonies, concerti, film music, operas, ballets, and programme pieces. His compositions proved to be new and different in style, as he brought to the concert hall strange new harmonies, dynamic rhythms and lots of humour. Prokofiev was a master at using music to tell a story. One of his most famous musical stories is *Peter and the Wolf*, which was written for Russia's Central Children's Theatre.



## Suggested Listening



Peter and the Wolf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ueGfjBKbiE>

## HUNGARY

**Béla Bartók** (1881-1945) is remembered as one of the two great Hungarian composers, along with Franz Liszt. He combined traditional folk melodies and experimental harmonies to create modern, Hungarian music. In 1904, Bartók overheard a young girl singing a Hungarian peasant song. He immediately



realised that Hungarian folk songs could provide wonderful material for classical music. In 1905, he contacted Zoltán Kodály and the two-composers began travelling around Hungary collecting and publishing folksongs. Soon, Bartók began travelling around other countries looking for folk music as well. He developed a scientific system for collecting and analysing folk music around the world. This is often considered the beginning of ethnomusicology.

### **Suggested Listening**



15 Hungarian Peasant Songs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RDHoGBhSYA>

### **CZECH REPUBLIC**

At the time when Czech composer **Antonin Dvorák** (1841-1904) was born, the Czech people had no country of their own. (The regions where they lived – Bohemia and Moravia – were part of the Austrian Empire.) Although Dvorák was influenced entirely by Czech folk music, he hardly ever used any actual folk melodies in his music.



### **Suggested Listening**



Song to the Moon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anQIB3-PQZ4>

## IRELAND

**Sean O’Riada** (1931-1971) was an Irish composer and arranger of Irish traditional music. He is considered to be the greatest Irish Composer of the 20th Century. Although best known for his pioneering work in Irish traditional music, Ó Riada wrote a number of original compositions which incorporated modern compositional techniques. His influence was and is profound, and his pioneering work includes: the formation of the ground-breaking traditional Irish group, *Ceoltóirí Chualainn*; the composition of Irish musical film scores; the weaving of Irish and classical European idioms for the Concert Theatre; the development of Irish Liturgical Music; work for Irish Literature; and support and promotion of the Irish Language.



### Suggested Listening



Mise Eire

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGPe9qeN\\_VY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGPe9qeN_VY)

