

Artsource

*The Music Center's Study Guide
to the Performing Arts*

TRADITIONAL

CLASSICAL

CONTEMPORARY

EXPERIMENTAL

MULTI-MEDIA

ARTISTIC PROCESSES

1. CREATING (Cr)

2. PERFORMING, PRESENTING, PRODUCING (Pr)

3. RESPONDING (Re)

4. CONNECTING (Cn)

TRANSFORMATION

ENDURING
VALUESFREEDOM &
OPPRESSIONTHE POWER
OF NATURETHE HUMAN
FAMILY

Title of Work:

That Ole' House is Ha'nted

Creators:

Composer, conductor, narrator:
Dr. Jester Hairston 1901 - 2000

Background Information:

Television audiences knew him as Rolly Forbes on NBC's *Amen*. Some remember him as Leroy and Henry van Porter in the radio and TV productions of *Amos 'n' Andy* from the 40s and 50s. Scholars and musicians recognized and respected him as a composer, arranger, conductor, lecturer and choral clinician. Hairston was a member of ASCAP for over fifty years. For nearly thirty years Hairston served the United States as one of its official goodwill ambassadors, lecturing and conducting choirs around the world, teaching them to appreciate the folk music of African Americans. He consistently motivated singers to perform with feeling by regaling them with stories of the African American experience. Choirs and their audiences were held spellbound by his storytelling skills, and the resulting performances beautifully conveyed the message of the music. In 1956 Hairston wrote "Mary's Boy Child," the only popular Christmas song written by an African American. He also wrote the song "Amen," which he dubbed for the Sidney Poitier film *Lilies of the Field* (1963). Hairston celebrated his 90th birthday by conducting an international choir of 25,000 voices in Estonia during the summer of 1991. Hairston died in 2000, and was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for his contributions to television.

About the Artwork:

That Ole' House is Ha'nted is an original work by Jester Hairston. A grandson of slaves, Hairston recalled with

great relish the evenings in his Pennsylvania hometown when his relatives would spin tales, especially ghost stories. Remembering those evenings, Hairston wrote and arranged vocal compositions based on some of the tales he heard as a child. *That Ole' House Is Ha'nted* was composed in remembrance of those days. It is an interesting combination of narration and vocal chorus with piano accompaniment, and is more humorous than frightening.

Creative Process of the Artist or Culture:

After graduating from Tufts University in 1929 with a degree in music, Hairston worked as an assistant supervisor of a Harlem music conservatory in New York. He joined the Hall Johnson Choir in the early 1930s, and soon became its assistant conductor. The choir was noted for its renditions of African American folk music, especially spirituals. Through Johnson's influence, Hairston became deeply involved in the music of his people, eventually turning it into a lifelong pursuit. With Johnson he unearthed music that had previously only been preserved by being handed down from generation to generation.



"As I began to take stock of myself and find out where I was and where I wanted to go, I became more interested in the songs of my ancestors."

Jester Hairston



Discussion Questions:

- *That Ole' House Is Haunted* incorporates acting, singing and narrating with piano accompaniment. Each of the following performance modes interact to create the finished work of art: a) **verse** - melody and rhythm, b) **refrain** - vocal accompaniment and narration, basic rhythm and narration.
- Ask students to use their own ideas regarding the story line: Deacon Brown volunteered to stay in a haunted house. Why did he volunteer? Describe what you think could have happened the first night the deacon stayed in the house. What might have happened during the second night? Why do you suppose the deacon decided to leave? Can you guess what he thought might happen?

Multidisciplinary Options:

- As the culmination of a language arts, drama and music activity, plan to present a performance of your own haunted house story, song, or poem. The performance should include choral speaking, singing and pantomiming. Use appropriate sound effects.
- As part of a science lesson on sound, explore the relationship between length or size and sound. (Many science textbooks offer a chapter on sound.) Use findings as a guide to creating sound effects for a performance of a selected song or poem.

Audio-Visual Materials:

- For video clips of Jester Hairston, perform a video web search for 'Jester Hairston' and *That Ole' House Is Haunted*.
- Photo: courtesy of Jester Hairston.

Additional References:

- African Diaspora of Sacred Music and Musicians (www.adsm.org) has a Jester Hairston collection.

Sample Experiences

LEVEL I

- * • Read a story about a haunted house. Retell the story in segments, interspersing it with the refrain: *That Ole' House Is Haunted*.

- Read a ghost story from another culture or another time. Look for clues that reveal the historical/cultural context. Create an original musical refrain to accompany the retelling of the selected story.
- Use the verse-refrain form as a guideline for creating an original instrumental version of a ghost story using classroom percussion and 'found' instruments.

LEVEL II

- Perform a selected poem employing narration and singing. Add appropriate sound effects, but confine the sounds to those produced vocally. Enhance with pantomime.
- Divide the class into groups and select a story or poem. Ask each group to devise a score for classroom percussion and 'found' instruments based on the story. Create a line that will act as the refrain. A *refrain* is a stanza that keeps on repeating after some lines in a poem. It is usually 1-2 lines and captures the big idea of the poem. Also, the refrain might contrast with each verse melodically, rhythmically, and harmonically. Often, sounds or additional instruments are added to strengthen the dynamics of the refrain or chorus. The groups will create their own symbols for the score. Ask them to design the scores so that there is a definite contrast between the verses and the refrain. Allow ample time for rehearsals. Record each performance. Discuss each composition.
- * • Be musical storytellers. Select a poem or write and original class story with a refrain. Assign parts as individuals and as a group.

LEVEL III

- * • Have students listen to a composition such as: *Banshee* by Henry Cowell, *The Erl-King* by Franz Schubert, or *Night on Bald Mountain* by Modest Moussorgsky. Prior to listening, describe the story or scene the music depicts. Ask the students to listen for the many musical clues that represent the ideas. Identify and discuss the musical clues.
- Divide the class into groups. Ask the students to compose original compositions with a focus on mystery and surprise. The works may be a combination of vocal and instrumental sounds. The groups may devise original symbolization or use standard notation. Record and discuss each.

* Indicates sample lessons

STORIES IN MUSIC, AN ANCIENT ART

ENDURING VALUES

LEVEL I Sample Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

Just as Dr. Hairston's family honored the age-old custom of storytelling, so have families in cultures around the world. Because of this, countless tales have endured over the centuries and have found outlets not only in the art of storytelling, but in films, books, plays, dances, songs and instrumental music.

OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes)

Students will be able to:

- Identify the difference between verse and refrain in music. (**Responding**)
- Create original verse/refrain compositions based on existing stories. (**Creating & Performing**)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to *Assessment* at the end of this lesson. (**Responding & Connecting**)



MATERIALS:

- Photos of house that could be haunted.

PROGRESSION:

- Learn to say the refrain:

“That ole’ house is haunted. (repeated twice)
And I ain’t goin’ there no more.”

- Ask the students to take turns making up something that could be scary in the house. Introduce and end this activity by singing or speaking the refrain just learned, or intersperse each story segment (verse) with the song refrain.
- Read a ghost story to the students. Ask them to take turns re-telling this story.
- Guide the students in changing the lyrics to the refrain of *That Ole’ House Is Ha’nted* to fit the new ghost story. This will serve as a musical introduction and coda (ending) for re-telling the story.

Examples:

“That little ghost is scary, (repeat twice)
And he makes me run, run, run.”

“Scary witch is flying, (repeat twice)
‘Cross the big, bright moon.”

EXTENSION:

•Ask the students to draw their own versions of the haunted house and the characters in the Hairston composition. Create an original ghost story and set it to music.

VOCABULARY: refrain, lyrics, verse

ASSESSMENT: (Responding & Connecting)

DESCRIBE: Think of how a haunted house and surrounding might look and describe it as you see it in your imagination.

DISCUSS: Discuss the ideas that must be in a story such as Who, What, Where, Why and When. Decide whether or not all of these ideas were in the song story you worked with.

ANALYZE: Talk about what things make a story scary. Discuss the differences between a story that is really scary and one that is fun and scary.

CONNECT: Think about other scary stories you have heard and list them on the board. What do all of these stories have in common?

Emphasis on: Common Core - CA State Standards for Language - Reading; Writing; Listening; Speaking



MUSICAL STORYTELLERS

ENDURING VALUES

LEVEL II Sample Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

Storytellers of old were often accompanied by musicians. In other instances, stories have provided the texts for songs, musicals, operas and program music. A familiar African American folk tale was used as a basis for *That Ole' House Is Ha'nted*. In his arrangement, Dr. Jester Hairston cleverly incorporated dramatic narration, choral singing and vocal effects, as well as piano accompaniment.

OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes)

Students will be able to:

- Perceive and identify the relationship between the rhythm of the music and the rhythm of the text. (Responding)
- Draw pictures of the parts of the story within the song, then arrange them in sequence and use them to retell the story. (Creating & Presenting)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to *Assessment* at the end of this lesson. (Responding & Connecting)

MATERIALS:

- Do a video web search to see either Jester Hairston leading a performance or a group performing one of his works such as *That Ole' House Is Ha'nted*.
- Drawing paper, crayons, markers, masking tape or push-pins.

PROGRESSION:

- View the video. Focus upon the narrated portion of the performance. Listen for the rhythm of the words and the rhythm of the accompaniment (voices and piano). Discuss findings.
- Use the storyboard steps listed below for recreating and extending the story.

Storyboarding:

Step 1: Think of the pictures created in your mind's eye as you listened to *That Ole' House Is Ha'nted*. Divide the class into group #1 and group #2. Ask each student to draw a moment from the song-story which was memorable or had great impact on the group. Give them 15 minutes to draw their pictures using their imaginative recollection of the tale. When they have finished, have each student title his/her drawing.

Step 2: Clear two large areas on your classroom blackboard or bulletin board, one area for each group. Have the students post their pictures in the designated area. Select three students to arrange the pictures in sequence following the events of the story. The other members of the group can help coach the process along, directing the rearrangement.

Step 3: Look at the assemblage. Determine what scenes might be missing to successfully tell the story. Collaborate to assign group members to draw the necessary pictures. Post the new drawings on the board. Arrive at a final order.

Step 4: Choose a team of three storytellers to “retell” the story for their group. Have them divide the pictures into three groups, the beginning, middle, and end. Let each storyteller stand by the artwork and use it to narrate a section of the story. When each finishes, have them pass the story on to the next teller until the complete story has been told.

Questions:

- Did the story differ from the song version?
 - What was added or expanded upon?
 - Did the characters use different language or expressions?
 - Did the artwork inspire new moments of humor or poignancy?
 - What did you learn about the concept of oral tradition from this exercise?
- View the videotape again. This time note the length of each verse and the style in which it is performed.
 - Using the storyboards as reference, ask each group to convert its story segments into verse form, similar to the recorded version. Allow sufficient time for planning and writing.
 - Each group will then assemble and rehearse its complete story with refrain, and vocal and rhythmic accompaniment. (Accompaniment might include body percussion, vocal sound effects, homemade instruments and classroom rhythm instruments.)
 - Invite another class to enjoy the final product.

EXTENSION:

- Select individuals to pantomime the story action.

VOCABULARY: accompaniment, narration, refrain, rhythm, storyboard, body percussion, verse

ASSESSMENT: (Responding & Connecting)

DESCRIBE: Describe in detail your favorite part of the story, using your own picture. Share with a partner.

DISCUSS: Discuss the differences between telling a story in the ordinary way and telling a story through verse.

Emphasis on: Common Core - CA State Standards for Language - Reading; Writing; Listening; Speaking

THE ART SONG

ENDURING VALUES

LEVEL III Sample Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

Franz Peter Schubert (1797-1828) was one of the most gifted and prolific composers of his time. His lyrical art songs reveal his brilliance. Schubert was inspired, at a very young age, to set Goethe's compelling ballad, *The Erl-King* (*Der Erlkönig*) to music. He was so inspired by the poetry that he could not place the notes on paper fast enough. A friend who observed him declared that he composed so rapidly that he was literally "hurling" the notes onto the staff.

The Erl-King demonstrates another form of storytelling in music. The story reflects one of the frequent tragedies of that period, the loss of a young child. Children often fell victim to fevers and unnamed illnesses which took their lives. The "Erlking" is depicted in many German poems and stories as a dark creature who haunts forests and carries travelers to their deaths.

The Story: The text of *The Erl-King* describes a father frantically riding his horse through the night, carrying his sick son with him. He is literally racing against death. Death rides alongside them, luring the child from his father. Alas, the father loses the race. When they arrive home his child lies lifeless in his arms.

OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes) *Best for grades 5-12.

Students will be able to:

- Perceive and discuss the drama that can be attained in a musical composition through the interplay of music elements. (**Responding**)
- Identify and discuss the significance of the various music elements as they are employed in a particular composition. (**Responding & Connecting**)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to *Assessment* at the end of this lesson. (**Responding & Connecting**)

MATERIALS:

- Perform a video web search for a performance of Schubert's *The Erl-King*.
- A recording of Schubert's *The Erl-King*

PROGRESSION:

- Prepare the students for listening to *The Erl-King*. Explain to the students that the art song attained a very highly respected place in the music world during Schubert's lifetime. German composers, in particular, gained fame in developing this form to a very high degree during the nineteenth century. Schubert was a prodigious young composer; he composed *The Erl-King* at age 18.



Franz Schubert

- Have the students view a performance of *The Erl-King*. Call attention to the verse-refrain form and the text.

- Describe the story of *The Erl-King*. Have the students listen to a recording of the composition. If possible, provide them with the words so that they can easily follow the text as it is performed. Ask them to listen for the narration and characterizations. Explain that the composition is a vocal challenge for a solo performer because each character must be successfully portrayed.



ERLKÖNIG

THE ERL-KING

Who rides so late through night and wind?
It is the father with his child;
He holds the boy safe in his arms,
He holds him tightly, he keeps him warm.

“My son, why do you hide your face in fear?”
“Father, do you not see the Erl-King?
The Erl-King with his crown and robe?”
“My son, it is only a cloud of mist.”

“My dear child, come, go with me!
Delightful games I will play with you.
Many bright flowers grow by the shore;
And my mother has many golden robes.”

“My father, my father, and do you not hear
What the Erl-King softly promises me?”
“Be calm, stay calm, my child;
It is only the wind rustling the dry leaves.”

“My fine lad, will you go with me?
My daughters will wait upon you,
My daughters lead the nightly revels.
They'll rock you and dance and sing you to sleep.”

“My father, my father, and do you not see
The Erl-King's daughters in that dark place?”
“My son, my son, I see it clearly:
It is only the old willows gleaming gray.”

“I love you, your beautiful form inflames me,
And if you do not come willingly, then must I use force.”
“My father, my father, now he grasps hold of me,
The Erl-King has hurt me!”

The father shudders, he rides like the wind,
He holds the moaning child in his arms;
With toil and trouble he reaches home;
In his arms the child was dead.

Poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“Wer reiter so spät durch Nacht und Wind?
Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;
Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm,
Er faßt ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.”

“Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht?”
“Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig
Mit Kron und Schweif?”
“Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif.”

“Du liebes Kind, komm geh mit mir!
Gar schöne Spiele spiel ich mit dir;
Manch bunte Blumen sind an dem Strand,
Meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand.”

“Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörest du nicht,
Was Erlkönig mir leise verspricht?”
“Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein Kind:
In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind.”

“Willst, feiner Knabe, du mit mir gehn?
Meine Töchter sollen dich warten schön:
Meine Töchter führen den nächtlichen Reihn
Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein.”

“Mein Vater, mein Vater und siehst du nicht dort
Erlkönig Töchter am düstern Ort?”
“Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau:
Es scheinen die alten weiden so grau.”

“Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt;
Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch ich Gewalt.”
“Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt faßt er mich an!
Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan!”

Dem Vater grauset, er reitet geschwind,
Er hält in den Armen das ächzende Kind,
Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not:
In seinen Armen das Kind war tot.”

- Discuss how the form in *The Erl King* differs from the verse-refrain form in *That Ole' House Is Ha'nted*. (*The Erl-King* is through-composed, i.e., new music is provided for each stanza. *That Ole' House...* is a 'strophic song,' with every stanza sung to the same melody.) Also, there is no refrain in *The Erl-King*.
- Listen again, if necessary, in order to discuss how the singer differentiated between each character in the story, and also the narrative portions (tone color).
- In an art song the accompaniment is considered a very important and integral part of the composition. View and listen, once again, to determine how the accompaniment: a) supports the mood of the piece, b) enhances each characterization, and c) adds additional dimensions by providing harmonic, rhythmic and melodic support.

VOCABULARY: art song, harmony, Lieder singer, melody, refrain, rhythm, syncopation, strophic song, text, through-composed, tone color, verse-refrain form

ASSESSMENT: (Responding & Connecting)

DESCRIBE: Describe your impressions of the Erl-King's character. What adjectives can you think of? What does the Erl-King represent? What does the father represent?

DISCUSS: Discuss the desperate act of courage shown by the father and the emotions that motivated him.

ANALYZE: Discuss the three characters in the poem (father, son, Erl-King) and the conflict each of them faced.

CONNECT: Who do you know that has shown extraordinary strength and courage to overcome, or try to overcome, a difficult challenge?

Emphasis on: Common Core - CA State Standards for Language - Reading; Writing; Listening; Speaking

