



200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons

VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12

Lesson 2



Note to Teachers: The programs viewed in conjunction with these lesson plans may include references, consistent with the eras portrayed, to substance abuse, violent acts, and topics of a sexual and/or political nature. Because this may be considered inappropriate for classroom use in some communities, you are encouraged to review the programs before presenting them to your students, and if necessary, choose those sections that enhance your lesson and are acceptable for use in your classroom.

Objective

- Students will discuss the role of classical music in Bugs Bunny cartoons.
- Students will create musical parodies.
- Students will discuss Bugs Bunny as a Pop Icon.

National Standards for Music Education

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- Audio playback equipment
- VH1's *200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons*
- Web-based lesson materials
- Pencils/Pens and paper (students)
- Teacher selected recordings of *Overture to the Barber of Seville* by Rossini and/or *Ride of the Valkyries* by Wagner
- Video of Bugs Bunny cartoon, "Rabbit of Seville," from the video "Bugs Bunny's Overtures to Disaster"
- Teacher selected scenes from several well-known operas (i.e. *Carmen*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Porgy and Bess*, *The Magic Flute*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Madama Butterfly*, etc.)

Prior Knowledge:

- Students have completed Lesson 1 of this series of the Pop Icons lessons (Charlie Brown and Vince Guaraldi's "Linus and Lucy").

Procedures

1. As students enter the classroom, have a teacher selected recording of Rossini's *Overture to the Barber of Seville* or Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* playing in the background. Once students are settled, ask if they can identify which cartoon character has had this music as a part of their cartoons.
2. Show VH1's *200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons: Bugs Bunny, #77, Episode 4*.
3. Lead students in a discussion comparing Bugs Bunny and Charlie Brown as pop icons. Are they considered pop icons for the same reasons? Can people relate to Bugs Bunny the same way they do to Charlie Brown, or does Bugs get away with things people wish they could do?
4. Ask students why the classical piece they heard at the beginning of class has become associated with the character of Bugs Bunny. (Most students will likely be familiar with the Bugs Bunny episodes "Rabbit of Seville" and "What's Opera Doc?") Remind them that these cartoons were based on two well-known operas, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Wagner's *Ring Cycle*.
5. Provide students with a short synopsis of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. Students may wish to jot down a few key points on their own paper for later use. Use the following as needed:

Figaro, the Barber of Seville, assists Count Almaviva in his quest for Rosina. They must figure out a way for the Count to get past Rosina's guardian, Dr. Bartolo, and so Figaro decides to disguise the Count as a soldier. Rosina declares her love for the Count and writes a letter for Figaro to take to him. In the meantime, Basilio starts a terrible rumor about the Count in order to help Dr. Bartolo win Rosina's affections. Count Almaviva enters the doctor's house as a drunken soldier and gets arrested; however the police release him when they realize who he really is. The Count returns to Bartolo's house, this time disguised

as a music teacher. Bartolo convinces Rosina that the Count is going to leave her and she agrees to marry Bartolo; however, she quickly realizes that the Count loves her and marries him instead after giving Dr. Bartolo her dowry, which is what he really wanted all along.

6. Share with students that from the time of its debut, some people felt *The Barber of Seville* was cursed. During the first performance of the opera in 1816, many of the singers and instrumentalists performed out of tune, a black cat scampered across the stage, and one of the singers fell over a trap door and had to finish the opera with a bloody nose.
7. Explain to students that they are going to watch the Bugs Bunny cartoon, “Rabbit of Seville,” which is based on the Rossini opera they just discussed. Have them list on their own paper any similarities they notice between the cartoon and the original opera story (students may use their notes from earlier in the lesson). Suggest they specifically look for things that happen in the cartoon that remind them of the “curse” on the original opera.
8. Show the video “Rabbit of Seville.”
9. Lead students in a discussion about the similarities and differences between the cartoon and the opera. How closely does the cartoon follow the storyline? Ask them to identify happenings in the cartoon that would have been considered a part of the “curse” attached to the original opera.
10. Introduce the idea of a musical parody. Webster’s Dictionary defines a parody as “a musical or literary composition imitating the style of some other work or of a writer or composer, but treating a serious subject in a nonsensical or humorous manner.” Lead students in discussing how the “Rabbit of Seville” is a parody of Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*.
11. Divide students into groups of four or five, and provide them with a list of several scenes from well-known operas (some suggestions listed in Materials section). Have each group select a scene on which they would like to write a parody using Looney Tunes characters of their choice. Provide the lyrics and music in their original form so students can fully understand the scene before beginning to make changes. (Audio and/or video recordings of the scenes would be helpful as well.) Have groups share the details of the original scene with the class, and then read their parody.

Depending on the age and skill level of the students, consider having them give an explanation of the scene as it was originally written, and then perform (with piano accompaniment, if possible) their parody as the Looney Tunes characters they have chosen.

Extensions:

1. Compare the parody “What’s Opera Doc?” with the original *Ring Cycle* by Richard Wagner.
2. Have students complete a research project on Carl Stalling, who composed and arranged most of the music for the Looney Tunes cartoons.

National Standards for Music Education

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.



These standards-based materials are provided through a partnership with MENC: The National Association for Music Education. This lesson plan was created by MENC member Michelle Barnes, General Music and World Drumming, Fall Creek Valley Middle School, Indianapolis, IN.