

# LITTLE FLYERS

## BREAKING THE RULES OF CLASSICAL MUSIC

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TEACHER'S GUIDE  
GRADES 4-8



ICARUS QUARTET

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# C O N T E N T S

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"Music making of the highest order"  
-Paul Lansky  
Composer

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## DEAR TEACHERS

Welcome to icarus Quartet's virtual field trip! "Breaking the Rules of Classical Music" is the first offering in our new educational series, Little Flyers. This educational experience will explore what music means to listeners in the 21st century.

The intent of this virtual field trip is to engage and guide students' listening toward specific elements in contemporary classical music and to open their ears to the possibilities of this "classical" genre.

In this Teacher's Guide, you will find a lesson plan that can be easily executed by either a classroom or music teacher as well as optional extended learning activities that give students the opportunity to use the target words and definitions during interesting, engaging, and contextualized activities after the virtual field trip.

Please look through this document and consider how and when you will use this lesson plan. Some activities do require materials.

For additional support, please contact the icarus Quartet at [icarusquartet@gmail.com](mailto:icarusquartet@gmail.com)

We hope you enjoy this excellent educational experience.

Sincerely,

icarus Quartet

# BREAKING THE RULES OF CLASSICAL MUSIC

GRADES 4-8

## FEATURED REPERTOIRE

**THOMAS KOTCHEFF** and more and more and more and this

**MICHAEL LAURELLO** Churches Made Out Of Shipwrecks

**STEVE REICH** Quartet

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do different instruments collaborate to create a cohesive piece of music?
- What are elements that go into a contemporary classical music concert?
- How do performers and composers work together to create a piece of music?

## OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Identify classical and contemporary elements in contemporary music.
- identify sound sources and their expressive effects.
- Experiment with styles, techniques, and instruments in creating, making, and presenting music.

## EVALUATION

Successful achievement of all activities includes: students comparing and contrasting classical and contemporary music, classifying percussion instruments, and describing extended techniques as a contemporary music element.

## KEY VOCABULARY

- **Chamber Music:** music played by a small ensemble
- **Composer:** person who writes music
- **Contemporary Classical Music:** classical music composed close to the present day
- **Extended Technique:** non-traditional methods of singing or of playing musical instruments employed to obtain unusual sounds or timbres
- **Percussion:** musical instruments played by striking, scraping, or shaking

## MATERIALS

- iQ Instructional Video
- Sound system (e.g., laptop with speakers, projector)
- Viewing/Projection Device (e.g., SmartBoard, projector)
- Worksheets (pg. 6-8)
- Pencil
- Found Sounds (to be found during lesson)
- Optional: Whiteboard or large paper to collect ideas

## INTRODUCTION

1. **Hook** the students by asking "What does it mean to play music that is described as cutting-edge? What risks are being taken?"
2. **Tell** students that they will be breaking some rules today as they learn about new classical music.
3. **Explain** who the icarus Quartet is and what they will be experiencing in the lesson.

## TEACHING STEPS AND ACTIVITIES

### Part I - Contemporary Chamber Music and the icarus Quartet

1. **Start** Instructional Video
2. **Pause** at 6:44 to tell the students to complete the worksheet (*Old and New, pg.6*) as they listen to *Churches Made Out of Shipwrecks* by Laurello.
3. **Continue** Instructional Video
4. **Pause** after musical performance at 8:06
5. **Ask** "What do you hear and see that seems contemporary and what do you hear and see that seems classical?"
6. **Discuss** the students' findings (Possible methods for discussion: students share with the class, the class collectively writes down their discoveries on a whiteboard or large paper, students turn and talk with a neighbor)

### Part II - Percussion Instruments

1. **Continue** Instructional Video
2. **Pause** at 9:43 to tell the students to complete the worksheet (*Percussion Search, pg.7*) as they listen to *and more and more and more and this* by Kotcheff
3. **Continue** Instructional Video
4. **Pause** after musical performance at 10:09
5. **Ask** "How many percussion instruments did you see or hear?"
6. **Discuss** the students' findings (Possible methods for discussion: students share with the class, the class collectively writes down their discoveries on a whiteboard or large paper, students turn and talk with a neighbor)

## LIST OF SOUNDS

- Snare Drum
- Tom-toms
- Pieces of Wood
- Frying Pan
- Thai Gong
- Bass Drum
- Bongos
- Dog Bowl
- Wood Blocks
- Vibraphone
- Glass Bottles

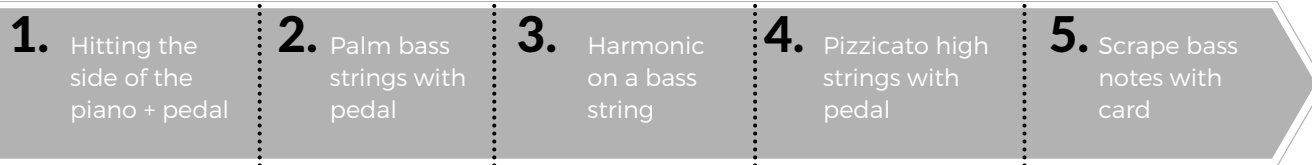
### Part III - Found Sounds

1. **Continue** Instructional Video
2. **Pause** at 17:28 to allow students to find a found sound near them and to present the sound to their neighbor
3. **Continue** Instructional Video, and organize the class into three groups along with the video's instructions.
4. **Pause** after activity so students can put their found sounds away.

## Part IV - The Piano

1. **Continue** Instructional Video
2. **Pause** after each extended techniques example, allowing for students to write on their worksheet (*Extended Techniques*, pg. 8) then discuss how they think the sound was created before playing the video to reveal the answer.

## EXTENDED TECHNIQUES



## Part V - Conclusion

1. **Consider** engaging the learners with the discussion questions once the educational video has finished:
  - What other activities can you think of that mix contemporary (new) and classical (old) ideas?
  - Can you think of found sounds that you hear every day that can be considered part of percussion?
  - What do extended techniques add to the music?
  - What have you learned today that will change the way you hear or perform music?

## NCCAS STANDARDS

### **Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation.**

#### **MU:Pr4.1.4a - MU:Pr4.1.8a**

Demonstrate and explain how the selection of music to perform is influenced by personal interest, knowledge, context, and technical skill.

### **Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.**

#### **MU:Re7.1.4a - MU:Re7.1.8a**

Demonstrate and explain how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.

### **Anchor Standard 8: Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work**

#### **MU:Re8.1.4a - MU:Re8.1.7a**

Demonstrate and explain how the expressive qualities are used in performers' and personal interpretations to reflect expressive intent.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# OLD and NEW

**Directions:** Listen and watch the performance. Using the boxes below, write words in each box to describe the sections of the music that seem old or new.

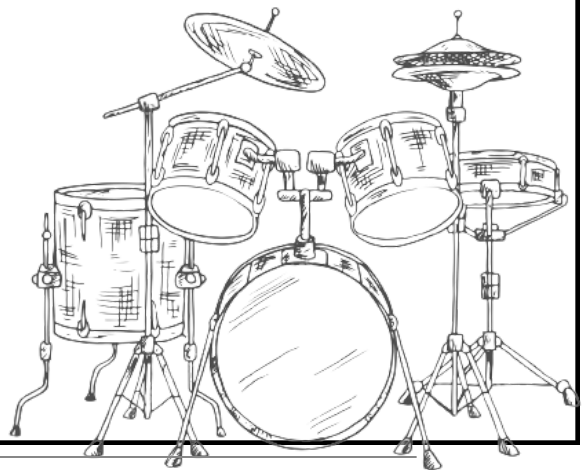
OLD

NEW

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# PERCUSSION SEARCH

**Directions:** Listen and watch the performance. Using the box below, list all the percussion instruments you see.





# EXTENDED TECHNIQUES

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Listen to each sound and in the box, describe how you think the pianist played that sound!



1.

2.

4.

3.

5.

# EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITY

## GETTING TO KNOW JOHN CAGE

### FEATURED REPERTOIRE

CAGE [4'33"](#)

CAGE [Living Room Music](#)

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do different instruments collaborate to create a cohesive piece of music?
- What are elements that go into a contemporary classical music concert?
- How do performers and composers work together to create a piece of music?

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Develop a broader understanding of the elements of contemporary music.
- Identify the difference between organized and unorganized sounds.
- Explore how unorganized sounds and non-traditional instruments make music.
- Compose a piece of music using found sounds.

### EVALUATION

Successful achievement of all activities includes: students perform a piece of music using found sounds and evaluating their own musical performance.

### KEY VOCABULARY

- **Music:** is the art of arranging sounds in time to produce a composition through the elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre.
- **Composer:** person who writes music
- **Contemporary Classical Music:** classical music composed close to the present day
- **Found Sounds:** term that generally refers to sounds drawn from common objects that are not normally considered particularly "musical."
- **Ostinato:** a continually repeated musical phrase or rhythm.

### MATERIALS

- [John Cage, 4'33"](#)
- [John Cage, Living Room Music](#)
- Sound system (e.g., laptop with speakers, projector)
- Viewing/Projection Device (e.g., SmartBoard, projector)
- [About 4' 33" by John Cage](#)
- Worksheets (pg. 12-13)
- Pencil
- Found Sounds (to be found during lesson)
- Optional: Whiteboard or large paper to collect ideas

## INTRODUCTION

1. **Hook** the students by asking them to close their eyes and silently concentrate on the sounds of the classroom for 30 seconds. Then record their examples on the board (e.g., footsteps in the hall, buzz of the lights, tap of a pencil).
2. **Ask** "What is music?" Then, ask them if they think the sounds they just heard are music. Have them explain why or why not.
3. **Tell** students that music is often defined as organized sound. Organized sound is sound that reflects a sense of pitch, rhythm, or harmony.
4. **Explain** to students that some people believe unorganized sound is music. John Cage, a contemporary composer of the 20th century, was one of the first people to question the definition of music. Cage thought music encompassed all sounds, and he stated that even silence can be sound.

## TEACHING STEPS AND ACTIVITIES

### Part I - "Four Minutes and Thirty-Three Seconds"

1. **Tell** students a bit of background information on 4'33." Tap link under **MATERIALS**.
2. **Start** John Cage, 4'33". Tap link under **MATERIALS**.
3. **Ask** When the video ends, divide students into groups of 3-4. Ask them to discuss whether or not they think 4'33" is a piece of music. Why or why not? There is no wrong answer.
4. **Discuss** the students' findings (Possible methods for discussion: groups share with the class, the class collectively writes down their discoveries on a whiteboard or large paper, groups turn and talk with a neighbor)

### Part II - Found Sounds

1. **Explain** that John Cage demonstrated that the most ordinary sounds of everyday life can be music through a piece called Living Room Music, a piece of music for speech and percussion. Cage instructs the performers to use any household objects, and gives examples: magazines, cardboard, "largish books", floor, wooden frame of window, etc.
2. **Start** John Cage Living Room Music video (link under **MATERIALS**) and tell the students to complete the worksheet (*Sound Search, pg. 12*) as they listen.
3. **Ask** "What found sounds did you see or hear?"
4. **Discuss** the students' findings (Possible methods for discussion: students share with the class, the class collectively writes down their discoveries on a whiteboard or large paper, students turn and talk with a neighbor)

### Part III - Composing With Found Sounds

1. **Tell** students that they are going to compose their own found sound piece of music labeled "Classroom Music." They will create the piece and then will perform for the class at the end of the composition time.
2. **Review** the composition worksheet (*Found Sound Composition, pg. 13*) with students. Read through the directions and go over the rubric (*below*) with the group expectations.
3. **Divide** students into groups of 3-4. Give them an appropriate amount of time to compose their piece.
4. **Have** the students perform their compositions for their peers. Review the concept of balance and listening in an ensemble, then have the students put their rhythms together to make a large classroom piece. Record a video of the final performance with all of the students to share with the school community!

OUTCOMES	1	2	3	4
Group Participation	Rarely contributed to the group's composition	Contributed to the group's composition while being helpful and cooperative	Contributed great effort to the group's composition and did a good job of organizing group efforts	Contributed exceptional effort to the group's composition and went above and beyond to further group's work
Rhythmic Notation	Notates musical composition with many major errors	Notates musical composition with several errors	Notates musical composition with only a few errors	Notates musical composition with no errors
Performance	Lacked consistent tempo and performance had many errors	Tempo difficulties throughout the performance and several errors causing a disruption to the rhythmic flow	Slight tempo imbalance in the performance and very few rhythmic inaccuracies; mistakes were not distracting to the overall composition	Steady tempo throughout the performance. Rhythm patterns were played without mistake and with confidence

Name \_\_\_\_\_






# SOUND SEARCH

**Directions:** Listen and watch the performance. Using the box below, list all the found sounds you see or hear.

# FOUND SOUND COMPOSITION

1. Choose different objects from around the classroom.
2. Write the name of the objects or draw a picture in the object column.
3. Compose a 4-beat rhythm for your instrument.
4. Perform the patterns as an ostinato with your group members.

## OBJECT



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## About icarus Quartet

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Like the mythological figure from which it draws its name, the half piano/half percussion icarus Quartet dares to fly towards the sun, aspiring to new heights of artistry. Following their Carnegie Hall debut, composer Paul Lansky simply remarked, “This is music making of the highest order.”

Winner of the 2019 Chamber Music Yellow Springs Competition, icarus has given new life to old masterpieces as well as the future of their instrumentation. What started as a graduate school project that Martin Bresnick regarded as “one of the best student performances of any work I have ever heard” has now toured professionally throughout the United States.

Their 2020-21 season includes performances at Princeton Sound Kitchen, Music at the Forefront, Delaware County Community College’s New Music Concert Series, and more. Fostering the development of new works through commissioning and collaborating with composers is at the core of the iQ mission, and this season will see the culmination of some of these endeavors with world premieres by Liliya Ugay, Natalie Dietterich, David Crowell, Douglas Knehans, Ruby Fulton, and the two winners of the inaugural iQ Tests program. The Quartet will further serve as the first ever ensemble to hold the Klingler Electroacoustic Residency at Bowling Green State University.

Larry Weng, Yevgeny Yontov, Matt Keown, and Jeff Stern are all celebrated soloists in their own rights, and together they have found a special chemistry and inimitable joy playing chamber music. They are dedicated to the discovery, creation, and performance of new music, but what distinguishes their approach to contemporary music is a strong training and background in the classical genre. icarus Quartet is committed to performing new works with a studied and convincing interpretation that mirrors the validity of works with performance practices developed over centuries.