

Composer Study

# Music

Bartok, Villa Lobos, Menotti, jazz, Whitacre





## About the Course

*"Music is no isolated thing. Its forms, colors, and expressive qualities do not spring from nowhere; they come out of life itself. Often, of course, they are to be enjoyed for themselves alone, in the concert hall or in one's armchair. But music also reflects human experiences, hopes, and struggles. It may give an insight into the individual and society, into the lives of those far removed from our own in time and place—an insight no other art can provide in this exact way." ~Elie Sigemeister*

The amount of teacher attention required for these lessons varies according to the student's reading abilities, self-motivation, and degree of responsibility. Music courses are fun for families or classes to do together. You may substitute a different version of any of the pieces, but be aware that lyrics and tunes sometimes differ.

Students are encouraged to listen in the afternoons to all the pieces they are learning. This may be in the car, while playing or driving, or as a fun class or family activity. We have included some dates of composition to be used as a quick reference when students are working on their history charts and books of centuries. It is not necessary to include them all; allow students to choose according to interest. Also, encourage students to teach the songs or share other pieces they're learning with others.

### COMPOSER STUDY

These lessons expose students to a number of significant 20th-century composers and compositions, giving them a sense of the sounds of the time period studied throughout the program and introducing them to beautiful and inspiring pieces from a variety of musical genres and traditions.

Charlotte Mason often included more music in the program than could be covered in the lesson time. While we have selected pieces that fit the length of the lesson, students will develop a relationship with the term's music insofar as it is a part of their daily atmosphere. Use the year's playlist to listen to previous and current pieces in the afternoons, and explore the Extra Helpings as interested. Grade 5+ extensions are also usually appropriate as Extra Helpings for interested younger students. The YouTube playlist contains the whole year's music, though lessons will occasionally have extra links to historical or musical information. Feel free to create your own playlist if you prefer other platforms to YouTube; though videos were often chosen for visual and sometimes historical interest, the crucial element is the music itself.



## Placement & Combining Tips

Students in Grades 2–3 with no classical music background may choose to take Intro to Music Appreciation.

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## How To Teach



### Recap

Specific recap questions are often suggested in the day's plans; ask students what they remember from the last lesson. For composer study, recap might look like a brief discussion about the name or sound of the piece you listened to previously. If nothing comes to mind at first, tell them to give themselves another minute or two and to keep thinking. Our brains are amazing and can usually recall the previous lesson with a minute of effort. Refrain from doing the work of remembering yourself if you are leading the lessons.



### Introduce

Prepare to listen to the day's musical selection by inviting students to consider an interesting musical or historical idea in the lesson. Perhaps it's a unique word, rhythm, instrument, or piece of historical background. You might introduce it by the way or read a selection of a composer's bio or a brief article to students.



### Listen & Sing

Listen to the day's musical selection. Composer study lessons will usually have you listen to a piece of music for 3–8 minutes. Hymn, folk song, or sol-fa lessons will sometimes have you listen to a part of the song and then practice echoing back the melody and/or words.



### Discuss

Talk about the musical selection you heard. What stood out to you? What did you notice? What did it make you wonder? Did it remind you of anything? Discuss the tempo, the sound of the music, the instruments used, the volume, and the mood. Why do you think the composer wrote it the way he did?



### Connect

At the end of the lesson, think about how the day's musical selection connects to other books, subjects, characters in history, etc. You might copy down a stanza of a hymn in your Commonplace or Copywork book, read a bit more about the history behind a piece of music, jot down a noteworthy date in your Book of Centuries, or discuss a broader question raised in the lesson.

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## Term 1 - Bartók & Villa-Lobos

### WEEK 1 Lesson 01

#### □ 01 Bartók's Romanian Folk Dances

##### → INTRO

Welcome to Composer Study lessons! We are studying two composers this term, very different from and yet also similar to each other to start exploring great music from the last 120 years. Born in 1881 in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary (now called Sânnicolau Mare and technically located on the Romanian border – look it up on the map!), Bela Bartók was a prolific and influential composer, famous for the way he brought folk music (specifically from Eastern European countries like Hungary and Romania) into his compositions. This first piece was influenced by the dances and tunes he heard during travels in Romania.

##### → LISTEN & DISCUSS

There are six dances in this piece. Can you hear where the music changes from one to the next? What are your first impressions of Bartók and this piece?

∞ Video Link: Romanian Folk Dances

##### → READ, NARRATE, & DISCUSS

Read or share a bit from Bartók for Kids

∞ Article Link: Bartók for Kids

##### → (Grade 7+) READ & NARRATE

∞ PDF Link: New Music Lover's Handbook  
Table of Contents, "Prelude No. 1" and "Prelude No. 2" p.1-3

### ★ TEACHER NOTES

Musical terms are defined throughout the lessons, but an appendix with all the terms and definitions for the year is also provided for your convenience. Reference as desired.

Dates for key people and events are provided for History Charts or Book of Centuries. It is not necessary to include them all; allow students to follow interest.

Assigned selections fit in the lesson, but students will develop a relationship with the term's music insofar as it is a part of their daily atmosphere. Use the year's playlist to listen to previous and current pieces in the afternoons.

Need a bit of help with pronunciation?

∞ Article Link: How to Pronounce Bela Bartók

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## Term 1 - Bartók & Villa-Lobos

### WEEK 1 Lesson 02

□ O2 Romanian Folk Dances cont.

#### → RECAP

Tell what you remember about our composer.

#### → LISTEN & DISCUSS

Read the program notes on Bartók's Romanian dances and then listen again. Do you think the names and descriptions of the dances match the music? Why or why not? If you had to pick one word to describe each dance, what would it be? (List them in your music journal).

∞ Program Notes

∞ Video Link: Romanian Folk Dances

- I. Joc cu băță (Stick Dance) 00:16
- II. Brâul (Sash Dance) 01:37
- III. Pê-loc (In One Spot) 02:06
- IV. Buciumeana (Horn Dance) 03:14
- V. Poargă românească (Romanian Polka) 04:39
- VI. Măruntel (Fast Dance) 05:10

#### → LISTEN

Listen to Dance No. 1 again from Bartók's dances. Do you notice how the violinist plucks the strings with her fingers at about 1:04? This is called "Pizzicato."

#### → (Grades 5+) LISTEN & DISCUSS

Listen to Dance No. 3 again. Do you notice how the violinist uses two fingers to play those high, ethereal-sounding notes? She is able to make these unique-sounding notes by pressing the string lightly with one finger and changing how much of the string vibrates by pressing it tightly with a second finger. This changes the length of the sound waves created and makes the higher-sounding notes. The study of sound in music and the way math explains it is called harmonics. You are or will learn more about sound waves in science, and you can explore more about harmonics in Extra Helpings if interested.

#### • HISTORY CHARTS

Bela Bartók (Hungary, 1881–1945 AD)

#### • AFTERNOON LISTENING

Listen to Bartók's dances in the afternoons as much as possible. Listen to other performers such as the Norwegian Orchestra and Augustin Hadelich (accompanying himself!) perform the same piece. Which version do you like best?

∞ Video Link: Norwegian Chamber Orchestra

∞ Video Link: Augustin Hadelich

#### • EXTRA HELPINGS

Although it's uncommon, there are some pieces that feature pizzicato on a piano!

∞ Video Link: Piano Guys – Pizzicato Example

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## Term 2 - Jazz

### WEEK 1 Lesson 13

□ 13 Amahl & the Night Visitors

#### → INTRO

We'll focus mainly on jazz music this term, but first a series of "Christmas special" lessons about a Christmas special that first aired on TV on December 24, 1951. It was the first opera composed for television, and the composer, Gian Carlo Menotti, introduced the broadcast himself. Menotti wrote over 25 operas, but this one is the most famous.

#### → LISTEN & DISCUSS

Read a bit more about Amahl & the Night Visitors and then watch for the rest of the lesson, leaving a minute or two to narrate and discuss.

∞ Video Link: About Amahl & The Night Visitors

∞ Video Link: Amahl & The Night Visitors (B&W OR Remastered version)

#### ★ TEACHER TIPS

Amahl is a Christmas piece. If desired, feel free to move composer study lessons 51, 55, and 59 so that they fall closest to Christmas in your schedule.

A remastered version of the opera is included in the year's playlist and can be substituted for the original B&W version.

See Extra Helpings for a picture book version of the opera.

### WEEK 2 Lesson 14

□ 14 Amahl & the Night Visitors cont.

#### → RECAP

Where did you leave off watching Amahl & the Night Visitors?

#### → LISTEN & DISCUSS

Opera is made up of two different kinds of music: aria and recitative. Arias sound more like songs, with melodies that recur, whereas recitatives sound like ordinary speech set to music. The natural rhythm of sentences is used, so that it really sounds like regular talking, but using different pitches (musical notes). Continue watching Amahl and listen for examples of arias and recitatives. Here are some examples to get you started:

Aria: "Don't cry, mother dear" (7:12)

Trio aria: arrival of the three kings (11:57)

Recitative (13:10): "Mother, mother! Mother, come with me! I want to be sure that you see what I see."

∞ Video Link: Amahl & the Night Visitors

### WEEK 3 Lesson 15

□ 15 Amahl & the Night Visitors

#### → RECAP

What instruments have you mainly heard in Amahl & the Night Visitors?  
What is an aria and/or what is recitative?

#### → LISTEN & DISCUSS

Continue watching the opera; if time allows, go ahead and finish it now; otherwise, finish the last few minutes on your own time. Take a few minutes at the end to narrate. Did you hear any more arias or recitatives?

∞ Video Link: Amahl & the Night Visitors

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## Term 3 - Whitacre

### WEEK 10 Lesson 34

☐ 34 More to Explore

#### → RECAP

Can you remember the names of all the pieces by Eric Whitacre you've studied this term?

#### → LISTEN & DISCUSS

In the Bible, God asks Job if he was there when the world was created and the "morning stars sang together" for joy (Job 38). Then, at the end of His story, God's people are singing his praises together (Rev 14). Music bookends life in God's grand story of redemption. So although we often focus (for good reasons) on the great and beautiful music from the past, it is also good to look to the future. New generations of musicians are always arriving; new musical styles are being tried; there are new songs to learn and new ways to share musical truth with others. No one century or musical style has a corner on the best music because God is still at work in the world, creating image-bearers who can reflect through music both the sin and brokenness as well as the beauty still present in ourselves and the world because of Him. For the last two weeks, explore more from recent musicians and composers (you can start with the links below or find others)! And enjoy the angelic piece, "Alleluia" by Eric Whitacre while you do.

∞ Article Link: New Musicians Playing Old Music  
ALERT: Preview for Sensitive Content

∞ Article Link: New Composers Making New Music  
ALERT: Preview for Sensitive Content

∞ Video Link: Alleluia by Eric Whitacre

### WEEK 11 Lesson 35

☐ 35 Continue Exploring

#### → RECAP

What composers or pieces did you explore in your last composer study lesson?

#### → LISTEN & DISCUSS

Continue exploring new music/musicians.

∞ Article Link: New Musicians Playing Old Music  
ALERT: Preview for Sensitive Content

∞ Article Link: New Musicians Making New Music  
ALERT: Preview for Sensitive Content

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## Appendix

### Musical Vocabulary

Use this appendix as a reference when looking at a musical score, reading and/or recapping a lesson, and whenever strikes your fancy. Terms included here are used in this year's lessons. Refer to the Classics for Kids music dictionary for additional terms not included here.

[Extra resource: Classics for Kids musical dictionary](#)

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Anthem</b>	A stirring song often composed for or associated with a particular cause or celebration (such as a national anthem).
<b>Bush Ballad</b>	Type of ballad (usually turned song) with the story set in the Australian Bush. A ballad is action/adventure story poem written with an ABAB rhyme scheme, often with 3-4 stresses in each line.
<b>Violoncello</b>	Commonly just called "cello" for short. It is larger and sounds deeper and lower than its cousins the violin and viola.
<b>Pizzicato</b>	Translation "pinched" – when a musician plucks the strings of a stringed instrument such as a violin or cello with their fingers (instead of using a bow).
<b>Score</b>	The printed manuscript with the musical notation for each instrument of the orchestra.
<b>Movement</b>	A shorter section of a larger work such as a symphony, sonata, or concerto.
<b>Aria</b>	A stand-alone musical piece for a solo voice, usually accompanied and often part of a larger work such as an opera or oratorio.
<b>Recitative</b>	Opera is made up of two different kinds of music: aria and recitative. Arias sound more like songs, with melodies that recur, whereas recitative sound like ordinary speech set to music. The natural rhythm of sentences is used, so that it really sounds like regular talking, but using different pitches (musical notes). Recitatives usually occur just before arias.
<b>glissando</b>	A glissando happens when an instrument slides or moves quickly from one note to another in one sweep of sound.
<b>Cadenza</b>	Generally occurring at the end of the 1st movement of a concerto, an improvised or written-out ornamental passage played or sung by a soloist, usually in a "free" rhythmic style, and often allowing virtuosic display.
<b>Arpeggio</b>	An arpeggio is a broken chord where notes of a particular chord are played one at a time after each other in order instead of all together at once.
<b>Transpose</b>	To "transpose" a piece of music means to change the key of the music while keeping the same tune. For instance, you could start on one note and sing "row, row, row your boat" and then start on a different note and sing the same tune. When you do, you are transposing the song from one key to another.
<b>Improvise</b>	To play or sing a solo during a piece of music that you composed yourself (often on the spot in real time).
<b>Opera</b>	A story set to music, typically fairly long.



# Composer Study

## Examination

### Term 1 – Bartók & Villa-Lobos

- GRADE 2–4** • Composer Study: Name your favorite piece from the term and describe it.
- GRADE 5–6** • Composer Study: Name your favorite piece from the term and describe it (orally or in writing) as if introducing it to a friend who had never heard it before. Optional: Write a short poem about your piece.
- GRADE 7–9** • Composer Study: Name your favorite piece from the term and write a short poem describing it.
- GRADE 10–12** • Composer Study: In his introduction to the *Music Lover's Handbook*, American composer Elie Siegmeister writes, "In recent years, the growth of FM radio and recordings has brought us a vastly wider range of music: Indian ragas, the sounds of the Javanese gamelan, Renaissance madrigals, and the words of Stockhausen, Berio, and Penderecki. A twist of the dial can bring forth Japanese music, songs of the Watusi, the Beatles, the Play of Daniel, a freshly discovered Haydn Mass, or a new American opera. The present generation has access to the almost limitless varieties of music made by man. But this diversity brings with it new problems. Among so many conflicting styles the old concepts of "good" and "bad" music, formerly held with such confidence, have lost their meaning. One cannot listen for the same thing in Bach, Bartók, and Balinese music!"
- Discuss this quote in a few paragraphs. In what ways do you think the continued technological changes of the past few decades (radio, internet, CDs, MP3s, streaming, etc.) have continued to change how we experience music today? How can we evaluate music in light of such diversity of styles?

### Term 2 – Jazz

- GRADE 2–4** • Composer Study: Choose **one**:
- Tell the story of Amahl & the Night Visitors
  - In what way is Jazz music like a conversation?
  - What are some common instruments in Jazz music?
  - Name two (or more) famous jazz musicians
- GRADE 5–6** • Composer Study: Choose **two**:
- Tell the story of Amahl & the Night Visitors
  - In what way is Jazz music like a conversation?
  - What are some common instruments in Jazz music?
  - Name two (or more) famous jazz musicians