La Traviata
The Main Theme of Prelude 1
By Giuseppe Verdi
Arranged by Suzanne George

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for test driving this lesson plan! I’ve included lots of classroom management reminders and I crave your indulgence with this. In the heat of the moment I tend to forget these vital steps and only see their absence after the lesson is a mess. I make it a habit to include them in my plans. I don’t mean to insult your intelligence by including them here.

My goals for the students are

• Introduction to the main theme and mood of the opera
• Introduction for the note “high C” on the soprano recorder
• Practice playing in legato style with feeling
• Practice finding note names on Orff instruments and hearing chord progressions by playing chord roots with melody
• Practice reading repeat signs
• Introduction of “D.C. al Fine”, first and second endings, and “fine” (depending on how the teacher wishes to present the recorder part, please let me know your choice.)
• “ti” practice (should you choose to solfeg the melody line)

Feedback is appreciated, especially the answers to the following questions:
1. Was the music easy for you to read?
2. Do you think that the piano part is easy enough to allow a teacher to keep her/his eyes on the class while still being faithful to the mood of the piece?
3. Was the sequence helpful? Did I leave any holes? Too many steps?
4. Were you able to use the chord roots on the Orff instruments?
5. What was your choice for the recorder part?, with or without numbered endings?
6. Any surprise happy moments?
7. Any student or teacher frustration or mental blocks?
8. Any further information you’d like to add.

Please feel free to answer any of these questions, but don’t feel obligated to answer them all. My email is sgeorge01610@charter.net. My phone is 508-330-9937 (cell with bad voice mail)
La Traviata theme for Recorder and accompaniment (piano, guitar, Orff Instruments)  
Arranged by Suzanne George for the Boston Symphony Department of Education 2007

Grade 3 +

Materials:

1. Soprano Recorders  
2. Piano or Guitar or Orff instruments (preferably Bass Xylophone)  
3. Recorder parts (one for ever 5 pupils)  
4. Staff Paper for each student and pencils with erasers  
5. CD of the Overture to La Traviata  
6. Transparency of the Call sheet and overhead projector  
7. Piano score of the overture  
8. Synopsis of La Traviata

Procedure: You can do all of these, just recorder, just accompaniment, or just listening. Use only what you need and let me know if anything gets in your way.

I. Introducing the Piece
   i. Recorder Technique (one lesson section, 5-10 minutes)  
      i. Echo B, A, G in patterns that appear in the recorder part. Pay particular attention to dotted rhythms.  
      ii. Have students echo you with their eyes closed. Tell them that the first note you play will be B.  
      iii. Have students echo you with their eyes closed. Tell them that the first note you play will be G.  
      iv. Have students open their eyes. Tell them that you will throw in a surprise note and that they should watch your fingers carefully. Throw in C, and have them describe the new fingering.
b. Introducing the Accompaniment
   i. Memorizing the Orff Accompaniment (2 lessons sections of 15+ min. each)
   ii. Refresh the students’ soft grip on the mallets by having them experiment with letting the yarn drop onto the bar
   iii. Have students play straight ti-ti patterns, slightly accenting the first of each pair (demonstrate) on C and G.
   iv. Have students play the with this accented pattern as you call out notes. Can they switch notes together?
   v. After a few lessons, can they remember the pattern that you are calling? When is it difficult? Why?
   vi. After a few more lessons, can they write down bar lines on the board and put the proper notes in the bars i.e. C/ C/ G/ G/ C/ G/ G/ E/ E/ A/ A/ F G/ C/ C/
   vii. Show them that the first 4 chords repeat, delete the extra writing and add the repeat sign if you wish.

c. Introducing the Recording of the music (one lesson section, 10-15 minutes)
   i. Have students work alone or in silent groups. If you choose groups, go over how we communicate without speech. Make a list of these methods on the board (pointing, facial expressions, etc.)
   ii. Instructions: “You will only have one listening. You must answer all the questions with just one listening. A hint for question #2, if you imagine that your eyebrows are playing the music, your face will make the right emotional expression! You may not make any sounds during or after the listening until a raised hand is called upon. Thumbs up if you understand.”
   iii. Have students make a physical signal that they have read through the question sheet and are ready to hear the piece (hand on head, thumbs up, etc.)
   iv. Play the first 16 bars of the recording, then stop.
   v. Debrief the class and remind them that they are responsible for ALL of the information collected.
II. Intermediate steps

i. Learning the Recorder part (one segment, 10-15 minutes)
   i. Repeat the game from section I
   ii. Introduce the segments of melody in chin position, singing the note names
   iii. Have a student volunteer to point to the notes as you play them (perhaps using an overhead or a part written on the board) Go through a few volunteers.
   iv. Invite students to play with you as the volunteer points

ii. Practicing the Orff Accompaniment
   i. Refresh the lessons in section I and work out any problems with individual sections.
   ii. Accompany children on guitar or piano as they play the chord roots
   iii. Invite a child who plays piano to take the part home to learn.

iii. The Call Sheet for the recording of the Prelude (7-10 minutes)
   i. Make a transparency of the call sheet for your overhead projector OR make flash cards with the questions and hold them up as the piece progresses
   ii. Review silent communication and remind the students that when they are making sound, they aren’t listening to it. They only have one listening today and need to make the most of it.
   iii. Go through the call sheet and tell students that after the listening they will be asked how many distinct sections there are in the music.
   iv. Debrief the class and discuss the issue of sections. Deduce the form AB
III. Final Stages of Learning

i. Playing the Recorder part (3-4 sessions of 10 minutes each)
   i. Tape recorder parts to walls around the room.
   ii. Refresh the rote echoing in little chunks.
   iii. Have 4-5 “pointers” go to the recorder parts and see if they can find the measure you are playing over and over, have the other students join in and play with you
   iv. Change pointers
   v. Play the entire piece with pointers and pointers’ helpers
   vi. Have one pointer and 3 players at each piece of music
   vii. Rotate so that all children have a chance to play and most to point
   viii. Try adding the Orff accompaniment (teacher played)

ii. Orff Accompaniment (at your liberty, depending on if you plan a performance)
   i. Once students can follow the acappella line on recorder, play with them on the Orff instrument
   ii. Once the Orff part is memorized and the recorder part is under control, add guitar or piano accompaniment to the mix.

iii. Listening (2 segments of 10 minutes each)
   i. Storytime! Tell the students the story of La Traviata.
   ii. Play the recording in snippets, stopping to ask what elements of the story are foreshadowed in the music.
   iii. Have students concentrate on the ending. This is foreshadowing Violetta’s death. How does she die? Violently? Writhing in pain? Riddled with gunshots?
   iv. Have students play out the three sections of the story in pantomime. 1. They are sad and depressed. 2. They go to a party and talk with friends, perhaps dance, etc. 3. They die at the end, in the same manner as Violetta.
La Traviata
By Giuseppe Verdi

Synopsis by Suzanne George

La Traviata is about Violetta, a woman who chose a life of parties and boyfriends instead of one of children and a husband. In the 19th Century, women who made Violetta’s choice were considered unrespectable and unfit to marry at all!

Violetta has a fancy party at her home in Paris. She has a bit of a cough, but enjoys herself anyway. At this party, she meets Alfredo, a handsome man. They fall in love at first sight. Though she never wanted to commit to any man, Alfredo talks her into their living together. Alfredo moves in with Violetta and they are very happy.

Because Violetta’s lifestyle was only possible because of her rich boyfriends, she develops financial troubles when she lives with Alfredo. She doesn’t tell Alfredo about these troubles. Alfredo finds out about her financial troubles from her friend, Annina. Alfredo decides to go to Paris to ask his father for money. Alfredo leaves.

Alfredo’s father sees Violetta while his son is away. He tells Violetta that she’s not good enough for Alfredo and that if she continues her relationship with him, their family’s reputation will be ruined. Violetta, out of love for Alfredo, breaks up with him by writing a letter. She says that she is going back to her old boyfriend.

A while later, there is another fancy party in Paris. Violetta is there with her old boyfriend, the Baron. Alfredo is there and challenges the Baron to a duel. Alfredo also throws his gambling winnings at Violetta in disgust! He later feels very guilty about this. Alfredo injures the Baron in the duel.

When Alfredo finally visits Violetta again, she is dying. Her cough was actually tuberculosis, a lung disease that was common in places where people lived with poor nutrition and little heat. He tells her how much he loves her and that he now knows that she broke up with him because she loved him. As they reaffirm their love, she slowly dies of her disease.