Benjamin Britten’s *The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra*
Variations in Music and Character

**Skills/Learning Goals:**
- Understanding and recognizing five methods of varying a theme
- Imagining combinations of variation techniques that could give a theme a different character

**Big Idea:**
Composers use specific techniques to vary a tune, and those variations can change the character or personality of the music.

**Preparing for the Video:**
Learn Henry Purcell’s theme from *The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra* by playing the video “Singing Henry Purcell’s Theme.”

**How to Use this Video:**
After a review of Henry Purcell’s theme, this video presents six different ways to vary a theme. After each part, pause the video to discuss the question on the screen: if you wanted to portray a specific character trait in music, which way would you play it?

1. **Varying Tempo**
   Fast – Presto / Slow – Largo

2. **Varying Volume**
   Soft – Pianissimo / Loud – Fortissimo

3. **Varying Mode**
   Major / Minor

4. **Adding Decoration**
   Pattern Moving Down

5. **Inverting the Theme**
   Turning the Triad Upside-Down

6. **Combining Variations**
   Inversion + Major + Presto; Inversion + Minor + Largo; Inversion + Minor + Decoration + Presto

**Extension:** Choose one of your favorite short songs or melodies and sing it. Next, imagine ways of varying the music in order to change its personality. Sing your variation and discuss whether it sounded like the personality you were hoping for.