Antonín Dvořák’s New World Symphony: In Search of An American Voice

Variation Playground

Skills/Learning Goals:
- Understanding how musical themes can be combined and sequenced to create “journeys”
- Hearing transformations of musical themes in background and foreground layers

Big Idea:
Musical themes can be transformed to convey different emotions, and can be combined to suggest a story.

Preparing for the Game:
Assure that computers have strong internet connections and good sound quality. Try the game yourself ahead of time, so that you can help guide students. The Variation Playground is designed to be intuitive, but specific instructions are always available by clicking the (?) button at the top of the screen, and then the (...) icon to the right.

How to Use this Video:
Students may play the game individually, in pairs, or in small groups at their desks or in a computer lab. Or, a whole class can play in front of a large monitor: call on individual students to complete specific tasks as you build up a group composition. Listen to the work in progress at frequent intervals, using the playback controls in the tray at the bottom of the screen. Discuss outcomes and how to refine the work.

An almost infinite number of compositions are possible in this Variation Playground. Options to begin include partially completed pieces to help you get started, and a blank slate. Be sure to explore different harmonic templates available when you click the (+) sign in the tray at the bottom of the screen, to initiate a new composition.

When a session is complete, it can be shared with anyone via a unique URL, by clicking the 🗳 button at the top of the screen. In order to protect children’s privacy, links should be shared only with trusted family and friends, or else anonymously.