Jean Sibelius: Music of a Hero, Music of a Nation

Qualities of an Anthem

Skills/Learning Goals:
- Understanding the musical qualities of anthems
- Understanding the social function of anthems

Big Idea:
Anthems of different cultures have similar characteristics and functions.

Preparing for the Video:
Learn to sing the anthem from Finlandia by Jean Sibelius by playing the video “Singing the anthem from Finlandia.”

How to Use this Video:
Teaching Artists Robert Fleitz (piano) plays and explains the historical context and musical qualities of three anthems, giving you an opportunity to compare and contrast them. Look out for pause points to lead discussions of each anthem.

The National Anthem of the United States, The Star Spangled Banner
Historical Context: It was written during War of 1812, express hope that the young country would survive.
Listen for: A rising melodic line…that comes to rest.
Pause Point 1: Now listen to the music with the lyrics. How do the music and words fit together?

This Land is Your Land
Historical Context: It was written by Woodie Guthrie in the 1940s, inspired by his travels throughout the United States during the Great Depression and the people he met who were struggling to meet basic needs.
Listen for: The melody usually ends going up, but there is one spot where it ends going down; at the end it finds a place of stability. It is easy to sing because it has more steps than leaps and is repetitive, and it is easy to remember.
Pause Point 2: How is this music similar to the National Anthem?
Pause Point 3: What words would you use to describe how this music makes you feel in contrast to The National Anthem?

Anthem from Finlandia
Historical Context: Jean Sibelius wrote this anthem to inspire the people of Finland as they were struggling for their independence.
Listen for: A melody line that often rises up in hope, and a moment when the melody descends and comes to rest.
Pause Point 4: What words would you use to describe this melody in contrast to the two American anthems?

Extension: Name more anthems you know, and see whether they have similar musical characteristics: rising melodic line, falling melodic line, coming to stability and rest.