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

Qualities of Heroic Music

Skills/Learning Goals:
- Learning to recognize Jean Sibelius’s musical theme for the hero Lemminkäinen
- Understanding and recognizing what makes a theme sound heroic
- Performing and creating motor rhythms to drive music forward

Big Idea:
Composers use specific techniques to make a musical theme sound heroic.

Preparing for the Video:
Make sure you are ready to listen carefully, discuss what makes music sound heroic, and clap along!

How to Use this Video:
Teaching Artists Laura Weiner (horn) and Paul Murphy (trumpet) discuss heroes, and in particular Lemminkäinen, and musical choices the composer Jean Sibelius makes to ensure Lemminkäinen’s music sounds heroic. When they pose questions about musical characteristics, encourage one-word answers. When they invite you to clap along with a motor rhythm, help students begin together.

Name some heroes: Jean Sibelius is a hero in Finland because his music made people believe in their independence as a nation. Sibelius composed music for a hero named Lemminkäinen, who goes on dangerous quests. Who are some heroes you can name, in your family, your community, or literature or movies?

Is heroic music loud or soft? Lemminkäinen is a big and strong hero, so his music sounds loud.

Is heroic music slow, medium, or fast?: Fast, because Lemminkäinen is always in a hurry to get to his next quest.

What is the energy of the heroic rhythm, or the pattern of the beats? Does it sound springy and jumpy, or straight-forward and smooth? Both, as if the hero jumps on horseback and goes off on a nice long ride.

Motor rhythms are repeating rhythms that make the music sound energetic and push the music forward. Clap along to two motor rhythms, then create your own!

Extension: Create music for your favorite hero. Will the theme be fast or slow? Loud or soft? Smooth or jumpy?