Felix Mendelssohn’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream: Music of Two Worlds

The Two Worlds of A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Skills/Learning Goals:
- Identifying character traits in a musical work
- Relating character traits to musical traits

Big Idea:
Felix Mendelssohn composed music to portray Shakespeare’s contrasting worlds of Fairies and Humans.

Preparing for the Video:
Discuss how you would describe Fairies and Humans. Compared to Humans, are Fairies light or heavy, big or small? Create a T-chart that captures descriptive words under “Fairy” and “Human.”

How to Use this Video:
Pause at the six opportunities to discuss what you heard in Fairy or Human worlds.

Pause 1: Which melody sounds more like Fairies? Humans?
Think of words that describe the melodies played by the cello and violin.
[Hint: Reference your T-chart of descriptive words for Humans and Fairies.]

Pause 2 & 3: Is the full orchestra passage from the Fairy world or the Human world?
Think of words that describe the different worlds as portrayed by the music.
[Hint: Use the words on the screen, reference the T-chart, or come up with your own words.]

Pause 4, 5, & 6: Do these clips represent the Fairy world or the Human world?
Talk about each using the words you’ve developed.

Extension: Think of a character from your favorite book. What are some ways you can use musical traits you heard in the video to represent their character traits? Write a paragraph or draw a picture to describe the musical traits you would use and why you selected them.