

M. Luisa Cruz

National Endowment for the Humanities—Johann Sebastian Bach: Currents and Cross-Currents in the Baroque Era and in Our Time

Aim:

How can a marching band depict Bach's "Canon in a minor" on the field?

SWBAT:

Understand the properties of a canon

Identify those properties within Bach's Canon in a minor, BWV 1073

Play the Canon in a minor, BWV 1073 individually, as a section, and as a band

Identify imitative polyphony within the marching band charts they will use

March the entire chart

Play Canon in a minor, BWV 1073 while marching the chart

Previously addressed:

The Baroque Era

The life of Bach

The music of Bach

Materials Needed:

Music

Instrument

Chart

Pencil

Notebook

Procedure:

Day 1

- Review of definitions for Texture, Melody, Harmony
- Give them the score (untransposed so that all of the notes are actually the same) and their individual parts for *Frere Jacques*. What do you notice? (everyone plays the same thing but at different times, all at the same time) Play *Frere Jacques* in unison (monophony), then in canon (imitative polyphony). What are the difficulties? Have them play different entrances so that they experience what it is like to play different voices parts.
- Give them the first page of the score arranged for Bach's Canon in a minor, BWV 1073 with the notes transposed to reflect visually what it would look like if everyone is playing in the same key. (arranged by Luisa Cruz using Finale) What do you notice? How is it similar to *Frere Jacques*? How is it different? (they come in at different times, on different pitches, but they have the same shape) Turn to your stand partner, and between the two of you, create a hypothesis as to why they come in at different notes, even though

the shape is the same. Play the recording for them (created in Finale). Was the hypothesis they created borne up? Why or why not? What is a canon?

- Distribute their parts (arranged by Luisa Cruz using Finale) and give them the opportunity to look it over.

Day 2-5

- Learn to play Bach's Canon in a minor, BWV 1073, individually and as an instrumental section.
- Learn what instrument parts go together for the different voices and play as a voice section.
- Create small groups to include 1-2 of each voice part and play the canon as a "unison" (really, it is a non-imitative polyphony), then as a canon. Have them reflect on which sounds better and why.
- Bring the entire band together and play the piece as a canon. Start working on memorization.

Day 6

- How can this piece we have been learning be depicted visually on the field? Play through the piece, record them playing, and then they will listen to their creation, using it as inspiration for the next step, which is have them come up with their own ideas and discuss with their stand partner. At the end of the period they will turn in their ideas in any format they wish (written, pictures, drawings).

Day 7

- Play through the piece to refresh their memories. Then on the overhead, play for them the chart that they will be marching (created by Luisa Cruz using Pyware). Where do you notice imitative polyphony? Have them play along with the overhead (continues with the memorization of the piece). Pass out the charts, and have them analyze what they do. Mark their music with chart indications, and mark the charts with music indications.

Day 8-10

- Put it on the field. First without the instruments, then with the music recordings, then with them singing, and finally when they understand what they are doing, with the instruments. In addition, they will be playing through the piece every day, and watching the chart on the overhead.

Day 11-12

- Clean!
- Present as part of the Long Island City Marching Band halftime show