

The Song of the Swan by Reena Esmail

IMPROVISATION

- Use pentatonic scales
- Call & Response teacher leading/pupil leading
- Fast/slow
- Ornamented patterns
- Loud/quiet note patterns

FINGER FACILITY

- Finger Twister exercises will help gain confidence with faster moving note patterns
- A metronome can be used to keep things steady and gradually increase the speed

SINGING LEGATO TONE

- Pentatonic scale exercises
- Improvisation
- Vary dynamics
- Make up own exercises



MUSICAL MOOD & CHARACTER

- What is a Raga?
- How does the music make you feel?
- Do you think the mood/character changes? If so, where and how?

ORNAMENTS

- Initially try without any ornamentation
- Work on ornaments using the given exercises as a starting point
- Make up own exercises

STRUCTURE

- Notice and mark repeating patterns, phrases and sections
- Practise in marked sections to help with familiarity and understanding

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Further Listening
- Raga Project
- Composition Project

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TEACHER NOTES

Encourage students to explore this piece using these ingredients as a starting point, with reference to the related musical resource sheets;

1. UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURE

- Listen together to the piece and think about the structure of the music
- Look for recognisable note patterns and repeated phrases
- Mark the music to map it out and gain better understanding of how the piece works
- Encourage students to practise in sections by setting specific practice goals

2. IMPROVISATION

- Using the pentatonic scale encourage learners to become familiar and comfortable with the notes
- Build confidence using question and answer phrases with teacher leading at first
- Use ideas from the piece to further increase level of challenge and depth of understanding, eg. different dynamics, speeds, note lengths, characters
- Try using the backing track/piano accompaniment to improvise around

3. DEVELOPING SINGING LEGATO TONE

- Playing this piece requires a beautiful singing legato tone and provides a great opportunity to work on developing sound
- Use the tone exercises as a starting point and encourage students to make up their own legato tone exercises
- Go slowly, giving time to really focus on and listen to the quality of the tone, trying to make the best possible sound on each and every note

4. IMPROVING FINGER FACILITY

- There are a few technically tricky corners in the music, which will take time to get to grips with. Firstly, help students to locate these sections and mark them out for extra practising
- Practise these sections slowly at first, using different articulation and rhythm patterns
- Some students might find it helpful to use a metronome to keep playing steady and to gradually increase the tempo
- It may be helpful for students to learn these faster moving patterns from memory

5. ORNAMENTATION

- Have some fun using the pentatonic scale to practise the quick mordents on each note
- Experiment with mordents on the other pentatonic notes

6. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES for students who want extra challenge, further exploration or deeper understanding

- Further Listening - specifically to Ragas, allowing students to gain further insight into this style of music. Ravi Shankar and Anoushka Shankar are a good place to start, with further general information available online. It might also be helpful to listen to some other pieces that evoke swans, birds, animals or nature - thinking about what the composer does to make the music have a particular character
- For those students who enjoy this style of music they might be keen to explore it further by creating a Raga presentation or project
- For students who enjoy composing they might like to take some of their improvisation ideas and use them to create their own piece

Call and Response

Using the piece to stimulate ideas, the teacher can play a 2-bar phrase with the pupil answering with their own 2-bar phrase, and then swap roles.



Pentatonic Scale Patterns



Ensure your pupil has practised this tongued, slurred, fast, slow, loud quiet, with crescendo and diminuendo, in groups of 2 crotchets and 2 slurred crotchets followed by 2 staccato crotchets.

Bridge

Create a feeling of drama, building intensity and excitement. Bars 11 to 14 of Song of the Swan should follow these exercises.

