



Lesson Plan – Uranus

Learning Objectives

Pupils will -

- Identify and copy motifs
- Compose a short, structured piece

Key Vocabulary

Motif: small musical idea

Rhythm: a collection of notes of different duration forming a pattern

Ostinato: a repeating pattern

Resources

- Uranus LSO performance clip
- Uranus resource clip
- Instruments (classroom percussion, pitched and/or unpitched)

Lesson Outline

1. Introduction

Discuss magic and spells

2. Task 1: The Magician!

Learn ‘The Magician’ motif, make your own version of it with dramatic gestures
Invent a new version of this on instruments.

3. Task 2: Dancing spell

Create a quirky dance to represent the magician’s spell. Use Holst’s rhythm for this or invent your own (see below)

Add on a magical sound effect to represent the spell working and a sound for the magic fading away

4. Conclusion

Put all of these elements together to make your own version of Holst’s Uranus

Assessment

- Can pupils repeat and then invent motifs?
- Can they work as a group to create new music?

Extension

Listen to the full piece and try to identify all of these elements. 'The Magician' motif returns a lot, can your pupils identify it every time?

Task 1: The Magician!

1. At the beginning of Uranus we hear one motif played three times. It sounds like the orchestra is saying 'The Magician', slowly, faster and then very fast.



2. Play this to your children and ask them to copy it. Split into three groups and challenge them to match the speed of Holst's motif – slow, faster, very fast.
3. Ask each group to add a dramatic gesture as they say 'The Magician!'
4. Staying in these three groups, challenge each team to invent their own 4-note motif for the magician using whatever instruments you have available.
5. Hear each group separately and then put them into an order like Holst's – slow, faster, fastest.

Task 2: Dancing spell

1. Holst's magician dances as he casts his spell. The music features this very tricky rhythm:



2. Teach this rhythm to your children and ask them to use it to make dance music. They can simplify it by splitting it over several instruments and several players. It might help to keep the words audible and add a steady pulse
3. Or, if it's too tricky, use the method below to create your own dancing rhythm:
 - Ask a simple question such as 'What are the magician's magic words?'
 - Gather several answers and decide on the best one (i.e. 'Abracadabra, hocus pocus!')
 - Ask your children to think this answer as you play a steady pulse
 - Now ask them to speak it over and over to the pulse
 - Finally, ask them to clap the answer (clapping each syllable), round and round. By doing this they have created an ostinato
 - Then, transfer this idea onto instruments.
4. Challenge your children to make one big sound as the spell does its magic. This could be a crash of cymbals, a big bang, everyone clapping at the same time etc.
5. At the end of Uranus, Holst's music simply fades away, as if the magician has mysteriously disappeared. Can your children come up with a spooky sound for this too?
6. Finally, put all of your ideas together to make one big piece. Holst's uses this order:

The Magician motif – Dance – Spell sound – Spooky sounds

... but your version could do something different if that's what the children decide!