

# The Story of Boya and Zhong Zi Qi

## Story Telling through music

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### Organizing Questions

- 1) How does one use movement and music to tell a story?
- 2) How can students use their knowledge of solfege and eurhythmics to interpret a song from a different culture?
- 3) How does the story of Boya and Zhong Zi Qi illustrate the importance of music in China in both the past and present?

### Introduction

This lesson is intended to be a Grade 3 activity, with students who have previous solfege and Dalcroze experience. The main goal is to spark student interest on this topic, and introduce the idea of music as means to tell stories. By the end of the lesson, students will have started acquiring the tools to describe how specific musical elements communicate particular ideas or moods in music. The content is all related to the story of Boya and Zhong Zi Qi. Students will look at artwork depicting the story, solfege and listen to *High Mountain Flowing Water*, and listen to the story.

### Objectives

1. Students will describe how specific musical elements communicate particular ideas or moods (stories) in music.
2. Students will examine the picture *Boya Plays the Qin*, and come up with ideas as to what's happening in the picture.
3. Students will aurally and visually identify solfege patterns in *High Mountain Flowing Water*.
4. Students will learn about Boya and Zhong Zi Qi.
5. Students will begin to appreciate the differences and commonalities in music from various cultures.

### Materials

1. Guqin Instrument (bring one in or have a photo)
2. Powerpoint (attached)
3. Image of *Boya Plays the Qin* by Wang Zhenpeng (included in PowerPoint)
4. Solfege handouts and pencils (class set – 25 copies per class) (Handout attached)
  - a. Teacher version also attached

5. Music of *High Mountain Flowing Water*

. I used the version from Treasure of Chinese Instrumental Music: Guzheng, performed by Hon Seewah - downloaded from iTunes.

a. You can also find on youtube – this one shows a person playing the song)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffCKlqWOewo>

6. Story of Boya and Zhong Zi Qi. (below)

## Equipment

Computer with internet access

TV or projector that connects with computer,

Sound system to play music

Guqin (optional)

## Teacher Preparation

1. Familiarize yourself with the story of Boya
2. Prepare PowerPoint presentation
3. Research information about the Guqin/qin and how to play and read the music.
4. Isolate solfege excerpts and know the time they play on the recording
5. Make class set of solfege handouts
6. Test classroom sound system
7. Optional: Find an expert on the guqin within school community or geographic region
8. Optional: Bring in a Guqin

## Student Preparation

**Melodic:** pentatonic scale with low la and low so. Note: She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain is a great way to reinforce low la and low so.

**Rhythmic:** whole, half, quarter, eighth, dotted quarter-eighth, syncopa.

**Movement:** familiar with Dalcroze style movement. This activity should *not* be the first time students are moving to music in class.

## Time

One 45-minute class

## Procedures

1. Warm-up: As students come in, have *Boya Plays the Qin* up on the board with instructions.

- a. Instructions: Consider the picture on the board. List 2 things you notice about the picture. Describe in ONE sentence what is happening in the picture. Write at least 1 question you have about the picture.
- b. Share out 3-5 responses.
2. Show the *guqin* instrument and what the music looks like (if you don't have a *guqin* on hand, a picture of one will suffice.)
  - . What kind of instrument do you think it is? What family?
  - a. What do you think it would sound like?
3. Isolate 2 sections from *High Mountain and Flowing Water*, and solfege them with hand signs. NOTE: Do not tell students the title of the song. Students will be sharing and discussing what they heard and felt in **Step 6**
  - . Handouts – complete Sample 1 together on the board, and students complete Sample 2 on their own, or with a partner.
  - a. Students should write in the solfege. Advanced students can challenge themselves by not writing in every solfege syllable.
  - b. After students write in the solfege, they should sing it on their own or with a partner while using hand signs at least 3 times. Practice is doing something more than once!
4. Pre-listen to *High Mountain and Flowing Water* (3 sections)
  - . Each student sits or lays on the floor in their own space, eyes closed.
  - a. Students listen for...
    - i. images that come to mind
    - ii. think, “how will I move to this music?”
5. Listen to *High Mountain and Flowing Water* (*Gao Shan Liu Shui* (高山流水))
  - . Dalcroze inspired – move to the music.
    - . What is the music telling your body to do?
      - i. Expectations: No speaking or making noise (students AND teacher). Students bodies should be in their own personal space. Students should be aware of the music and their bodies. Be mindful of interactions with other students. Sometimes interactions will be organic and beautiful, and other times distracting.
      - ii. If a student struggles with movement, they have the option to either sit and visualize the music, or sit and conduct/move their arms only
  - a. Students listen for...
    - . The solfege patterns we sang – students raise their hands when they hear them
    - i. Pictures and images that come to mind
      - b. Set a timer count down on the screen for (5 minutes 44 seconds – length of the song)
      - . Start the timer at the same time as the song. Students should be seated in a circle by the time the clock hits zero. Note: If the countdown is too distracting to be shown the whole time, only reveal the countdown for the last minute or so. **Do not** announce the time with your voice. Teachers should follow the same expectation as your students.
6. Seated in a circle, students respond to the song.
  - . What did you hear?
  - a. What did you feel?
  - b. How did your body movements change as the song change?
7. Tell students the title. (Did anyone see mountains or water?)
8. Read/Tell the story of Boya and Zhong Zi Qi.

- . How does the interpretation change knowing the story?
- a. Do the movement activity again, this time incorporating the story telling in your movement.
- 9. Wrap-Up: Referring to their warm-up in **step 1**, Students record one thing they learned, something they want to know more about, and up 1-2 questions they still have.

## Assessment

1. Warm-up (step 1)
2. Knowledge of instrument families (step 2)
3. Solfege activity (step 3)
- a. Auditory and Visual assessments
- b. Written assessment (Handout)
4. Movement assessment (step 5)
- . Visual assessments: Could students pick out the solfege patters? Did students recognize a change in the movement and show it in their bodies?
5. Informal Assessment based on discussion content (step 6)
6. Visual Assessment: Does their interpretation of the usic change now knowing the story? (Step 8)
7. Wrap-Up (step 9)

Material # 6 - Story of Boya and Zhong Zi Qi

Transcript (edited)  
June 28, 2018  
Tang Bo Museum, Xian  
Docent

Boya was a man who played the qin (zither). Zhong Zi Qi, his friend, would listen to Boya play the qin. No matter what Boya played, Qi never failed to understand. Boya played about the mountains, Qi could see how high the mountains were. Boya played the flowing water, Qi could see how vast the ocean is. Boya said, “Your thought is exactly the same as my thought.”

One day, Zhong Zi Qi got ill and died. Boya broke the strings of his qin and vowed to never play the instrument anymore. He thought no one would be able to understand his music.

This is where the phrase **zhī yīn**(知音) comes from. It means, to “know as music.” If you are **zhī yīn**, you are a soulmate or bosom buddy.

The famous melody in China, *Gao Shan Liu Shui* (高山流水), High Mountain and Flowing Water, is related to this story.