

“Playful Pizzicato” from Simple Symphony

Benjamin Britten
Born: November 22, 1913
Died: December 4, 1976

Benjamin Britten was an expert in three different musical fields—conducting, composing and playing piano. Britten was born in Lowestoft, a town on the English seacoast. (His birthday, November 22nd, happens to be the feast day of the patron saint of music, St. Cecilia.) Benjamin’s father was a dentist; his mother loved to sing, and regularly held concerts in their home.

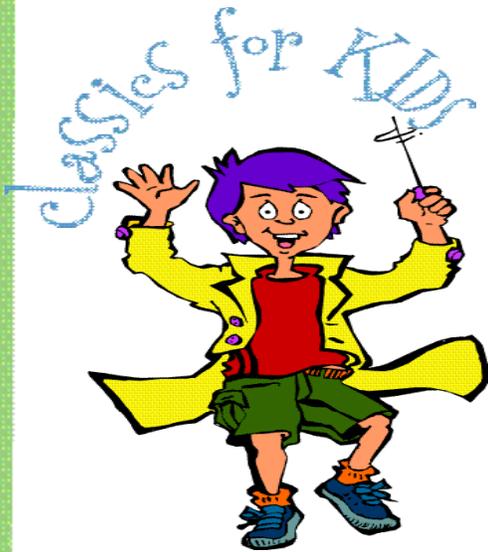
From the moment he started playing piano, Britten knew he wanted to earn his living as a composer. His first paying job was writing music for films.

Britten was a pacifist and didn’t believe in fighting wars, so when it became obvious that England would go to war with Germany in 1939, he left for America. However, it was impossible to take the “Brit” out of Britten. In the middle of World War II, he sailed back to his native country.

When the war was over, the biggest opera company in England held a gala reopening and commissioned Britten to write a new opera for the occasion. Britten was also asked to compose an opera when Elizabeth II was crowned Queen of England.

The *Simple Symphony* was written when Britten was 20 years old. After graduating from the Royal Conservatory of Music, he spent his Christmas vacation looking through pieces of music he had composed years before. Some were written when he was just 10 years old. Britten thought that with a little work he could turn this early music into something that would be fun for school orchestras to perform.

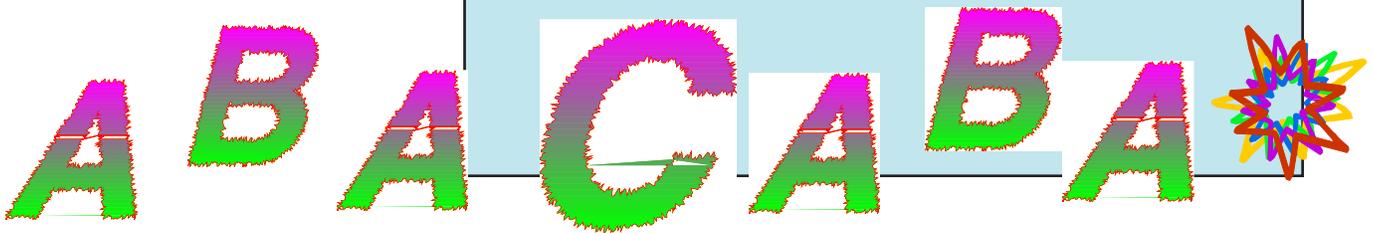
“Playful Pizzicato” is the second movement from Britten’s *Simple Symphony*. He instructed his players to play as fast as possible and always *pizzicato*. *Pizzicato* means to pluck the strings of the instrument with your finger instead of using the bow.



Benjamin Britten

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- Below you will find a listening map for the “Playful Pizzicato.”
- The first section has two themes. Let’s call them A and B. After B is played, the A music returns. Then comes a middle section (C), which sounds quite different, almost march-like. Can you hear the strumming sounds the strings are making? The first section is now repeated, and the whole piece ends with a CODA (meaning “tail” in Italian), which is similar to the C music and has a surprise ending.



1. What are the first instruments you hear? _____
2. What does “pizzicato” mean? _____
3. How does Britten make the instruments “playful?” _____

Games We Play







"Music soothes the savage beast"



Sometimes we play games together on teams. When one team plays against another team, we call the game a sport. Can you name the sports that each of these children are playing?





Write your answer on the line below each picture.



We hear music everyday, in many different places. List 6 different places and times you hear music

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____



Happy Birthday Lord Benjamin Britten November 22, 1913

Other events during his lifetime (1913-1976)

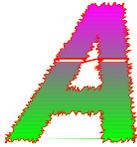
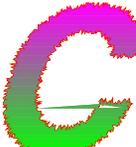
1914-1918 World War I
1920: Woman's suffrage

1925 TV was invented
1929 Stock market crash

1939-1945 World War II
1969 First man on the moon

Create your own Composition

Using the cards below, create your own piece. Cut the letters out and group them in various ways. You can follow Britten's form, or make up your own.

 4 Claps	 4 Claps	 4 Claps	 4 Claps
 4 Stomps	 4 Stomps	 4 Snaps	 4 Anything