

The Firebird, Listen and Draw

Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird* can be used to explore the connection between music and story. Stravinsky knew the traditional Russian folktale, the Firebird, when he wrote the music for the ballet and the subsequent orchestral suite. Each of the 6 sections of the Firebird Suite evokes a radically different mood that illustrates the action of the story. These contrasting sections can be used for a listening and drawing project.

Materials needed:

Biography of Stravinsky, Firebird story in six sections, LISTEN AND DRAW worksheets, Firebird Suite (1919) CD. Optional: pictures of each section.

Process:

1. Briefly discuss the life of Stravinsky.
2. Play 1-2 minutes of each section of the Firebird Suite. As they listen, the students draw whatever characters and actions they imagine in the appropriate section of their LISTEN AND DRAW worksheet. Play each 1-2 minute excerpt twice to give the students time to draw. The sections might connect into a story or each section can stand alone.
3. When finished, let the students tell their stories to one another, 2 by 2.
4. Ask the students to find one word that describes each section and make a list on the board of student words. Discuss similarities and differences in the mood of the words.
5. For another music class, do the following for each of the 6 sections: show the Firebird story picture (if available), listen to the music again, read their one-word descriptions and then read the story. Discuss similarities with the Firebird story and their own stories.
6. Extension: have the students write out the action for each of the sections to create a written version of their story.

Brief biography of IGOR STRAVINSKY 1882-1971

Biographical material mostly from [Stravinsky](#), Mike Venezia, Children's Press.

Igor Stravinsky was born in a seaside town in Russia in 1882. He grew up in a very musical family. His father was an important opera singer with the St. Petersburg opera, and his mother was an excellent pianist. Igor and his brothers often went to the opera while they were growing up. They heard their father's beautiful voice as he performed in the major operas of the day.

Igor Stravinsky loved Russian fairy tales and Russian folk music from the time he was a child. When Stravinsky was a young man most of the concert music heard in Russia was written by composers from other countries like Italy or France. But there was a new feeling in Russia, a feeling of being proud of their own country and wanting to create music and art that told the stories of Russia. Stravinsky was part of this new group of composers that wrote music based on Russian history and Russian stories.

When he was still a young composer he was asked to write ballet music for a well-known Russian folk tale called "The Firebird." Igor loved this story and wrote music to fit the characters: the brave prince, the wicked demons and the magical Firebird. He created sounds and strong rhythms that people hadn't heard before. The Firebird ballet was a great success and turned Stravinsky into a star composer overnight.

In his later life Igor Stravinsky moved to California and later became a U.S. citizen. He composed music until he was 85 and died when he was 88.