

# Lyra Baroque Orchestra

## Orpheus Lesson Plans

### Lesson 1: Orpheus was from Thrace...

#### Opening Activity – Discuss and share:

If you could have a superpower what would it be? Maybe explain why you want to have that superpower? {Aim: think about what makes a superpower a superpower, and why we like superpowers.}

**Orpheus Intro:** So many comic books, and movies, and TV shows feature superheroes with powers like flying, or invisibility, supers-peed, super-strength, even super-smarts.

But I want to ask, could music be a superpower? What do you think? Music can be exciting, it can make us calm, it can make us laugh or cry. Have you ever heard some music that made you want to dance? Music with words is a powerful way to share ideas. And in another way music is like a superpower: because we dream about it, we imagine what it would be like to perform on stage in front a huge audience listening intently to your songs. So what do you think, is music a superpower?

While you think about that let me tell you about one person at least who had musical superpowers: Orpheus of Thrace

#### Orpheus Video 1:

"Orpheus was from Thrace, a land of wars and warriors, but Orpheus had a different talent, Music. Kalliope his mother used to sing to the gods on Mt. Olympus; her voice beautiful like sunshine and as sweet as honey. That's how she got her name, Kalliope, it means: "the most beautiful voice". Kalliope taught Orpheus to sing, and Orpheus was given another musical gift, a magical instrument called the Lyre. It was made from a turtle shell, with 9 strings that rang like bells. The animals and trees of the wild forest loved Orpheus's music and became his friends, they'd dance and play when Orpheus sang. With his Lyre Orpheus could even tame ferocious ones, roaring lions and angry bears, with lullabies to peaceful sleep. As Orpheus grew and practiced, his special powers of music grew too. People came from far and wide to hear his songs, to be moved to laugh or cry, and to dance, always to dance!"

#### ACTIVITY :

How can music make you feel and move?

- Listen to 3 short contrasting musical excerpts:
  - Here are three from Vivaldi's La Folia
- move/dance along to each (or write description)
- discuss as a group: How are they different? what is the feeling of each?
- write down a list of words to describe music. For example: fast/slow, major/minor, dissonant/consonant... etc.
- Which piece or mood do you like most? Does this depend on your mood?

#### REVIEW:

- Orpheus mother was named Kalliope. What does her name mean?
- What was Orpheus' Lyre? What was it made from? How many strings did it have?
- Why did everyone like to listen to Orpheus' music?
- How do you feel when you move to music?

**VOCAB:**

Orpheus

Kalliope

Lyre

Thrace

**OBJECTIVES – I can...**

1. move to the music and change my movements as the music changes
2. talk about how I feel as I listen to music
3. tell you a little about Orpheus and his music

**TLDR Thoughts for teachers:**

We mortals have been thinking about superhumans for millenia, maybe for as long as we've been telling stories. The stories that get told, and the superpowers that get remembered say something about the cultures who tell those stories. They give insights into what we think is ordinary, what is extra-ordinary, and even what kinds of challenges a society faces.

The story of Orpheus and his music emphasizes some of the seemingly magical, or at least culturally powerful nature of music. The aim of these lessons is to help students see how they can begin to use music to express their ideas and feelings.

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### Lesson 2: Orpheus and the Argonauts...

#### Opening Activity:

Write down and/or share with the class about music you really like:

- Describe one of your favorite songs.
- When or where do you listen to music? (car, school, shower...?)
- Maybe have some students prepare in advance and sing or play (live or recorded) for the class.
- add to the class list of words that describe music

#### Orpheus Reminder:

Review with students about Orpheus and his magical musical instrument the Lyre.

#### Orpheus Video 2:

STORY II: Orpheus and the Argonauts

"Because of his musical powers Orpheus was asked to join a group of heroes, the Argonauts. Led by Jason they sailed the seas searching for a magical golden fleece. Hercules was there, with his super strength, and the Boreads who could fly. So you might wonder, "why Orpheus? he's not strong, or fast, or cunning?" But Jason knew, his teacher told him, without Orpheus and his music the Argonauts would never succeed, they might not survive.

And true enough, it was Orpheus' music that calmed stormy seas. It was Orpheus who charmed fish to jump into their boat for food. Only Orpheus could have saved them from the Sirens; musical monsters with deadly songs of their own. And the dragon guarding the golden fleece, who's music put the dragon to sleep? Yes that was Orpheus too. So it was Orpheus they needed most. And anyway what good is any adventure without some music to cheer you on."

#### ACTIVITY :

Try using musical inflection to add meaning to words: [Teacher intro: when we talk we can use musical ideas to express different meanings. For example, if I say "spaghetti with cheese" I can say it sound excited to eat, or I can sound bored with spaghetti and wishing I could eat something else, or that I don't like cheese...etc. ]

- Everyone write down a two foods: one you like and one you don't like.
- Say the foods musically to show your feeling about the food.
- See if your classmates can tell which food you like and which one you don't.

#### VOCAB:

Argonauts  
Jason  
Sirens  
Hercules  
The Boreads  
The Golden Fleece

#### REVIEW:

- Who were some of the heroes of the Argonauts?
- How did Orpheus and his music help the Argonauts?
- How can music help you and when can it distract you (like the Sirens)?

**OBJECTIVES – I can...**

1. Use words that help describe music: beat, melody ...
2. Describe and share music that I enjoy
3. Think about how music helps me

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### Lesson 3: Orpheus and Eurydice...

#### Opening Activity – Discuss and Share

- If you could make a song for someone who would it be for?
- What would it be about?
- Start writing your song by writing the feelings you have about the person, and what you'd like to say to them.

#### Orpheus Reminder:

Review with students about Orpheus and his magical musical instrument the Lyre.

#### Orpheus Video 3:

STORY III: Orpheus and Eurydice

Orpheus' greatest friend was a tree, or rather she used to be a tree spirit, anyway. Her name was Eurydice. Orpheus and Eurydice grew to know and love each other deeply. But one day while Eurydice was visiting her family the forest, a snake bit her ankle and she died. Orpheus' heart was broken to lose his dear friend. His terrible tears made the trees weep too. But what could he do? Even his music couldn't help now... could it? No one had ever come back from the underworld alive, but he... he'd been on impossible quests before and succeeded thanks to his Lyre. He must try! So he decided to travel to the world of the dead and write a song to try to bring back Eurydice.

#### ACTIVITY

Plan out the song you would write for someone.

- Use the words and feelings you've written down to plan out how you want your song to sound
- Think about what sounds you might like to use: what instruments? would it be soft or loud? fast or slow?
- Try saying some of the words of your song with musical inflection. For Example:
  - "I'm happy!"
  - "I'm sad because I don't get broccoli for lunch."
  - "So, sooo sleepy"
  - "Thank you for your hug."

#### VOCAB:

Eurydice

Underworld

#### REVIEW:

- Who was Eurydice?
- What made Orpheus so sad? Did he find a way to express his feelings?
- How have you felt when you are separated from friends for family?

#### OBJECTIVES – I can...

1. Write down or express ideas and/or feelings that music could help me share
2. Use descriptive language to plan how the song will sound. (e.g. what instruments? will it be slow or fast? etc.