

Study Guide For Teachers

Mary Knysh In *The Land of the Leprechaun*

presented by
Young Audiences of New Jersey, Inc.
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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Students will journey to Ireland through a selection of charming folk tales, haunting Irish Airs, melodic ballads, and charming penny whistle tunes.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Explore the ways in which music and story reflect the soul of the Irish.
- Experience folk tales that explore the myth and magic present in every day life.
- Learn about a variety of traditional Irish musical instruments.

This program addresses the following NJ Core Curriculum Content Standard(s):

- 1.1 Aesthetics
- 1.5 History/Culture
- 3.4 Listening

Audience Limit: 250
Intended for Grades

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Irish music continues to maintain many of its traditional aspects and has influenced other genres such as American country and roots music which then influenced rock music.

Folk music is music originating among the common people of a nation or region and spread about or passed down orally, often with considerable variation.

Although solo performance is preferred in the Irish folk tradition, instruments are often used as accompaniment in modern performances, and probably have been for about 200 years.

Folk songs reflect the emotions of the person performing and are meant to inspire similar emotions in the listener.

The celebration of Ireland and everything Irish seems to be embodied in Saint Patrick's Day: anything green and gold, shamrocks and luck. Most importantly, to those who celebrate its intended meaning, St. Patrick's Day is a traditional day for spiritual renewal and offering prayers for missionaries worldwide.

In the United States, big cities and small towns alike celebrate with parades, "wearing of the green," music and songs, Irish food and drink, and activities for kids such as crafts, coloring and games. Some communities even go so far as to dye rivers or streams green!

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

1. Ask your students what they know about Ireland and Irish customs. Locate Ireland in the world map. Discuss its topography and why it's so green. Is anyone in your class of Irish descent? Are there any Irish traditions in their family?
2. Get the music teacher involved! Ask your students if they know the song *Do Re Mi* from *The Sound of Music*. This is an example of a modern song which became a folk song by being passed down as folk songs are, by word of mouth. Almost everyone you know, most likely, knows the words. Enjoy the fun of sharing a song everyone knows, sing it together!
3. Have students listen to various Irish folk songs. Discuss if the music is solely vocal or is there instrumental accompaniment? Learn the names of the instruments, and if possible, have the music teacher demonstrate some of them.
4. Get the visual arts teacher involved! Have students explore visual images related to Ireland. Celtic symbols and shamrocks are a great place to begin. Have students create art to decorate the space in which Mary Knysh will perform.

AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. Have students choose a favorite Irish folk tale, or even better, have them create a tale of their own based on what they learned about Ireland, or traditional Irish characters.
2. Get the music teacher involved! Have students use instruments to help tell the story. Percussion instruments are great, if other instruments are available to the students, terrific! How can these instruments help tell the story? Reflect upon the performance and emphasize how to use instruments to create mood and setting. Is a character frightened, or running? How can you differentiate characters or feelings by using different instruments?
3. Get the visual arts teacher involved! Have students explore Irish visual art. What are the artists conveying? Do any of the images remind them of any songs or stories they heard during the program? Why?
4. Have students create their own images to convey the stories that they are telling through words and music.
5. Give students the opportunity to perform their folk tales for each other including music and visual art.
6. Depending on when St. Patrick's Day occurs, you can plan this activity as pre or post-performance. Have students create and then decorate the classroom with Irish symbols such as shamrocks, rainbows and pots of gold, and Celtic signs. Discuss the meaning and history of all of these. Some Irish soda bread with some green (food colored) cream cheese spread on it might be a fun snack!

VOCABULARY WORDS

LEPRECHAUN
BODRAN
MANDOLIN
IRISH FLUTE
PENNY WHISTLE
FOLK TALE
FOLK SONG
BALLAD
SAINT PATRICK
SHILLELAGH

ARTIST INFORMATION

Mary travels throughout the United States, Caribbean and Europe performing and conducting workshops and artist residencies. She is a master teacher with Music for People, a group that promotes self-expression through music improvisation and she currently coordinates the group's Swiss program. Her focus is on sharing the richness of world music, and encouraging others to find their own inner musician. An Orff Schulwerk clinician, Mary's teaching encapsulates Orff's well-known quote: "Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand."

RESOURCES

<http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/>

<http://www.st-patricks-day.com/>