



Middle School Slideshow - Educator Notes

SLIDE 1:

This is the Full Title of the performance you'll be seeing October 30, 2023. Kate Botello from Interlochen Public Radio and Kids Commute will be narrating the event, which will include an octet (8 musicians) of different instruments plus a pianist for the promenade. As each movement is performed live for you, you'll get to see a projected image of the artwork that inspired Mussorgsky to write the movement!

SLIDE 2:

Mussorgsky wrote *Pictures at an Exhibition* in 1874, and the work was originally composed as 10 movements, for piano only. *Pictures at an Exhibition* was not published until 1881, just after Mussorgsky died at age 42. The French composer Maurice Ravel orchestrated it in the early 1900s.

NOTE: *Pictures at an Exhibition* will begin playing on this slide and will continue until you reach the next audio/visual component; the music will stop automatically on Slide 7.

SLIDE 3:

The sad face is to remind us of the story behind the composition of *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Mussorgsky was very close friends with the architect and artist, Viktor Hartmann. Viktor died young (he was only 39!) and unexpectedly in 1873. Mussorgsky isolated himself in grief. A mutual friend of theirs encouraged Mussorgsky to come to an exhibit (or gallery show!) of 400 of Hartmann's paintings gathered in his honor at the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, Russia. Mussorgsky was moved seeing all his friends' art and wrote *Pictures at an Exhibition* based on his experience walking through the galleries. In total, *Pictures at an Exhibition* featured 10 works of Hartmann's art – 10 musical movements – plus promenades representing the composer's walking from painting to painting, reflecting about what he just saw...

SLIDE 4/5:

This image shows us what a room in the Academy of Fine Arts may have looked like; here we see a gallery with works of art on the wall. Imagine walking through this room, looking at

everything. Have you ever been to an art museum or an art gallery? Mussorgsky looked at Hartmann's art and imagined what they might SOUND like if music could tell the story that Hartmann's paints tried to tell through color and shape...

SLIDE 6:

Among the 400 works of Hartmann's art on display at the Exhibit in 1874, Mussorgsky featured 10, including: Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks; The Hut on Chicken Legs (Baba Yaga); and The Great Gate of Kiev.

What do you think these paintings/drawings looked like? Imagine them in your mind... get a good picture of each...

SLIDE 7:

Teacher: Have students match the image to the title. Notice the chicken legs from Baba Yaga; if interested and if time, share a little about the story of Baba Yaga, which comes from Russian folklore.

Baba Yaga: She is an ogress (that's the female version of an ogre like Shrek!) – kind of like a witch – who lives in the forest in a continually spinning hut built on chicken legs! She guards the fountains of the waters of life (which sounds like a good thing, right?!), but she steals, cooks, and eats children!

SLIDE 8:

"Promenade" meanings "walking about in public." Mussorgsky wrote "Promenades" to represent the time he spent walking between works of art in the Exhibit. Each Promenade is intended to help us move from one work of art (and musical movement) to the next, and so each Promenade reflects a little bit about the emotions and/or feelings that the gallery-goer has after viewing the last work of art or approaching the next work of art.

Here we see a video clip of Helen, an intern from the Great Lakes Center for the Arts and a REALLY good flute player at Michigan State, PROMENADING about in our theater while she plays something from *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

SLIDE 9:

People have imagined what a ballet of unhatched chicks might look like! Here are a couple versions that other people have created. If YOU were to be inspired to choreograph (or create) a dance around the painting, *Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks*, what would YOUR DANCE look like? Try it if you're not chicken! Gug gug!

SLIDE 10:

This is an aerial (from the sky!) picture of the Great Lakes Center for the Arts! It is only 5 years old (that's really young for a building)! The water you see is Lake Michigan, and the Center is located in Bay Harbor, which is a resort community just a few miles west of downtown Petoskey.

SLIDE 11:

This video gives you a little idea of what it will be like when you come visit the Center! (And we hear they LOVE it when you visit!)

SLIDE 12:

You're invited to dress up like someone who lived in the later 1800s (that's in the Victorian Era, in terms of fashion). Anyone who comes dressed up in Victorian fashion will be eligible for one of a few prizes we look forward to giving away!

SLIDE 13:

Staff at the Center are busy getting the theater ready for you! And they said they cannot wait to welcome you to Mussorgsky in Miniature – *Pictures at an Exhibition*: A Masterpiece in Narrative Style!

SLIDE 14:

[[SLIDE 14 begins the POST-PERFORMANCE slides]]

SLIDES 15 – 17 present 4 different activity options to do with your students, based on your time and interests as the teacher.

SLIDE 15:

While Mussorgsky saw art and then used music to convey his feelings and experience, we're going to try to do just the reverse! Let's listen to music (teacher chooses in advance and has ready!) and then draw what we're hearing or what the music makes us think about! Discuss variability in images inspired by the music. Are there common themes inspired by the music?

SLIDE 16

There's a very funny little video that shows some very real differences between Victorian kids' names and what we'd think was acceptable today!

But in the bigger picture, how was life in the Victorian era (late 1800s) different from your life? How is life the same? What about differences and similarities between Russia and the United States in the late 1800s? This is a great challenge for young researchers, readers, and data collectors!

SLIDE 17:

Language is powerful. Sometimes, writing helps us express ourselves in ways that are more challenging when we're in conversation. This activity shares a video about a special writing project where middle schoolers wrote to their future, graduating high school selves.

With letter writing as our tool, what would you say to Modest in a letter, if you were Viktor? Or what might you say as Modest to Viktor in a letter? Explore concepts of self-expression, emotionality, and being "seen" or "unseen" in our care, efforts, or experiences. Put yourself in another's shoes as you write from the perspective of one of the artists in this larger, historical story.

SLIDE 18:

These are pictures of the ACTUAL building in which Mussorgsky walked through the exhibit of his friend's artwork! You can see an older picture of the building (black and white) and two newer pictures – look how it changed! The building is called the Imperial Academy of Arts, and it is in St. Petersburg, Russia.

SLIDE 19:

Conclude with a whole-group or small-groups discussion about how the arts are important to each of us as learners, as members of a community, and as individuals with our own perspectives, experiences, and voices.

[[END OF SLIDESHOW]]

We hope this curriculum (and other educational resource links provided) helped make your experience with Mussorgsky in Miniature deeper, richer, and more relevant to school.

Please be sure to explore the links to IPR's Classical Sprouts podcast, which explored themes related to Mussorgsky and *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and to IPR's Kids Commute (a Classical IPR daily radioshow), which is airing an entire week of episodes related to this program (October 30 - November 3)!

Thanks for joining us on this musical storytelling journey. We hope to see you soon at the Center for another opportunity to educate through the arts!

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