Marche Joyeuse

By

Emmanuel Chabrier (1841 – 1894)

Click here to watch the BSO perform this piece.

Lesson by Jacqueline Carvey

About the Composer

Chabrier was born Alexis-Emmanuel on January 18, 1841, in central France. He began playing piano at age six and writing music around age eight. Despite his musical abilities, his father insisted that he study law. In the mid 1850s Chabrier’s family relocated to Paris. He passed the French equivalent of the bar exam and began a career at the French Ministry of the Interior. Chabrier, still passionate about music, wrote works for piano while maintaining a high-profile job. Throughout his life, he was very much influenced by the music of Richard Wagner. He befriended others who were passionate about music, poetry, and visual art. Some famous friends in his social circle included fellow composers Gabriel Fauré and Henri Duparc and artist Edgar Degas. A collector of impressionist art, he was even featured in some famous artworks himself! His orchestral pieces Marche Joyeuse and España are two of his best-known works. Marche Joyeuse was well-received by the public at its premiere in 1890 and experienced a resurgence in popularity in the mid-1940s in versions for orchestra and for piano duet.
LESSON

In this lesson, students will discuss their appreciation of Marche Joyeuse and impressionist art while building vocabulary.

1. Play excerpts of Marche Joyeuse. Ask the students if there are instruments that stand out to them and have them try to describe the sounds.

2. Ask the students to create a list of words they would use to describe the piece. Basic adjectives are sufficient; encourage 3-5 words to be written down. Share out the words as a class and create a class list.

3. Share examples of Impressionist artwork with the students and have them write down what kinds of everyday ideas the artist might be trying to convey.

4. Ask them to write down or discuss things that they like and dislike about each painting.

5. After the students have examined the different paintings around the room, have the groups create a list of songs that might match the mood, feeling, or idea depicted in each of the impressionist paintings. For the next class, have the groups prepare to share their song selections and explain the reasoning for their choices.