Hungarian Dance No. 5 in G minor
By Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Lesson plan by Blake Siskavitch

Click here to watch the BSO perform this piece.

About the Composer

Johannes Brahms was a German composer, pianist, and conductor of the Romantic period. He is sometimes grouped with Johann Sebastian Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven as one of the "Three Bs" of music, a comment originally made by the nineteenth-century conductor Hans von Bülow. Brahms composed for symphony orchestra, chamber ensembles, piano, organ, and voice and chorus. A virtuoso pianist, he premiered many of his own works. Brahms strongly preferred writing absolute music that does not refer to an explicit scene or narrative, and he never wrote an opera or a symphonic poem. Some of Brahms's most popular compositions during his lifetime were small-scale works that were readily accessible to the contemporary market for domestic music-making. Among these lighter works by Brahms are his sets of popular dances, the Hungarian Dances, the Waltzes for piano duet (Op. 39), and the Liebeslieder Walzer, Op. 52.

About the Composition

The Hungarian Dances by Johannes Brahms are a set of 21 lively dance tunes based mostly on Hungarian themes and completed in 1869. They vary from about a minute to five minutes in length. They are among Brahms's most popular works and were the most profitable for him. Each dance has been arranged for a wide variety of instruments and ensembles.

Lesson Ideas for Younger Students

• Students move with scarves to the music. Give students a different color for each movement.
• Have students brainstorm a list of places that might play this music. Where would it make sense to hear this piece? Play a steady beat on instruments. Give out a different percussion instrument for each section. Have students keep the beat when they hear their section. ABCD
• Play just the first A section for the students. Have them move their bodies when they hear that section of the piece.
Lesson Ideas for Older Students

- Show students the style of 4 hands on the piano. There are several on YouTube.
- What elements of music give this piece its dance qualities? Answers could include upbeat tempo or short quick notes in the strings.
- Have students create a folk dance by diving them into groups to create a movement for each section.

Websites Referenced:
https://www.biography.com/musician/johannes-brahms
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johannes-Brahms