

Mother Goose Lesson Plans: Guitar Age 5 and up

Lesson 1: "Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty"

Objective:

Introduce basic strumming and fingerpicking techniques while creating a calm, soothing atmosphere through music.

Piano Duet: [▶ Martha Argerich and Lahav Shani - Ravel: Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant](#)

Orchestra: [▶ Marin Alsop -- Ravel: Mother Goose, I. Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant \(Le...](#)

Activities:

- **Listening & Imagery:**

Play *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty* and encourage students to listen closely to the peaceful, slow music. Ask them what they imagine when they hear the music—perhaps a fairy tale or a dream. Discuss the calm, slow, and graceful nature of the piece.

- **Younger: Exploration and Movement Activity**

- Explain what a "pavane" is (a slow, graceful dance from the 16th century). Demonstrate how to move slowly and gently, like a ballerina.
- Watch a segment of dancers performing a pavane. Discuss the dancer's movements, tempo, and mood. Listen to a segment of *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty* again. Discuss similarities/differences - tempo, mood, style.

[▶ Pavane - Renaissance - Dance - Belle qui tiens ma vie -Thoinot Arbeau \(1...](#)

- Ask students to move to the music and stay with the slow tempo. Have students pretend they are Sleeping Beauty, slowly waking up to dance like a ballerina. As they move, encourage them to imagine floating or drifting, which corresponds to the slow, graceful nature of the music.

- **Older: Listening & Analysis:**

Listen to *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty* while following the score. Discuss the structure of the piece (e.g., ABA form) and the contrasts between the soft, dreamy sections and the more expansive middle section. Ask students what emotions or images the music evokes (e.g., sleep, magic, a fairy tale).

- **Discussion of Style:**

Explain what a *pavane* is — a slow, stately dance from the Renaissance era — and how Ravel adapted this style into a dreamy, orchestral piece.

- Watch a segment of dancers performing a pavane.

[▶ Pavane - Renaissance - Dance - Belle qui tiens ma vie -Thoinot Arbeau \(15...](#)

- Discuss the dancer's movements, tempo, and mood. Listen to a segment of *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty* again. Discuss similarities/differences - tempo, mood.

- **Basic Strumming:**
Introduce basic downstrokes and upstrokes. Start with simple strumming on open strings or an easy chord (e.g., C major or G major). Encourage students to strum gently, mimicking the soft, flowing quality of the piece. Focus on relaxed arm movement and smooth strokes.
- **Fingerpicking:**
For more advanced students, introduce basic fingerpicking patterns (thumb for bass notes, index and middle fingers for higher strings). Practice simple patterns that match the soft, flowing nature of the piece. For younger students, practice basic plucking with the thumb and one finger.
- **Expressive Playing:**
Encourage students to play softly and calmly, as if they were serenading someone to sleep. Discuss dynamics, asking them to focus on playing quietly and smoothly.


Listening Assignment:

Ask students to listen to *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty* at home and imagine a peaceful scene, like a dream. Encourage them to try playing along if they can.

Lesson 2: "Tom Thumb"

Objective:

Explore and analyze how Ravel portrays Tom Thumb wandering through the forest. Listen for and identify instruments used for “wandering” and for Tom Thumb’s melody.

Piano Duet:  [Martha Argerich and Pablo Galdo play Ravel Petit Poucet](#)

Orchestra: [Tom Thumb, National Philharmonic Orchestra, Charles Gerhardt](#)

- **Listening and Exploration:** Play *Tom Thumb* for the students (linked above). Ask the student to describe what they hear.
 - Is the music fast, slow, quiet, smooth (legato), choppy (staccato) loud, busy, calm, sad, happy? What do they hear that helps them to know how Tom Thumb is feeling? How does the music create the image of Tom wandering through the forest?
 - **Younger students:**
 - Ask students if they can hear something in the music that depicts Tom wandering through the forest on a winding path (continuous eighth note accompaniment in the secondo of the piano or the strings of the orchestra).

- Ask students to walk to the music and change directions several times, pretending they are Tom Thumb on a winding path, trying to find his way home. They can change directions at will, or you can clap to let them know when to change.
- Listen for the birds in the second section of the orchestra performance (1:46-2:35). Can they hear the bird sounds? Can they name the instruments playing the bird sounds? (piccolo, flute, violin harmonics and trills)
- **Older students:** Listen to the first section orchestra performance linked above.
 - Point out or ask if they can hear the 2 layer texture - wandering, legato, continuous eighth note accompaniment and melody.
 - Ask them to name the instrument family that plays the accompaniment/wandering theme (strings)
 - Listen to the first section (0:00 - 1:45) Focus on the melody and how the melody is passed from one instrument to another.
 - Ask the student to indicate when a new instrument takes over the melody.
 - Ask the student if they can identify the instruments, and help as needed: oboe, English horn, clarinet, flute, strings.
 - If they are not familiar with the English horn, show these videos or assign for them to watch at home:
 - ▶ [What does an English horn sound like? \(Ode to Joy\)](#)
 - ▶ [Oboe vs. English Horn with RPO musicians](#)
- Listen for the birds in the second section of the orchestra performance (1:46-2:35). Can they hear the bird sounds? Can they name the instruments playing the bird sounds? (piccolo, flute, violin harmonics and trills)
- **Listening Assignment:**
Ask students to listen to the piece at home, imagining they are walking through a lush, foreign garden or temple, paying attention to the shimmering, otherworldly sound.

Lesson 3: "Laideronette, Empress of the Pagodas"

Objective:

Explore the delicate, bell-like quality of the piece through fingerpicking and light strumming.

Piano Duet: ▶ [Ravel's "Ma mère l'Oye": Martha Argerich and Daniel Barenboim | Carnegie ...](#)

Orchestra: [Ravel: Mother Goose Suite: III. The Empress of the Pagodas | Fabien Gabel](#)

Activities:

- **Listening & Imagery:**
Play *Laideronette, Empress of the Pagodas* and ask students to imagine a magical, beautiful garden. What do they think of when they hear the music? Explain that the piece uses light, tinkling sounds, much like bells.
- **Listening & Analysis:** Play orchestra video *Laideronette, Empress of the Pagodas* and ask the students to listen for instruments that add to the "foreign" or unusual sounds in the music. See if they can name some instruments by just listening first, without seeing the video. (such as harp, celesta, gong, xylophone, orchestra bells)
- **Exploring the Pentatonic Scale:** Explain the concept of a "pagoda" (a tower-like structure from Asia). Discuss how the piece uses the pentatonic scale, commonly used in Asian music, to immediately bring our imagination to a scene in Asia.
 - Introduce the pentatonic scale and explain its use in the piece to create an exotic sound. Have students play through the pentatonic scale.
 - Compare the major pentascale with the pentatonic scale - have students listen to examples of both, then try to identify examples played by the teacher.
 - Ask students to improvise with the pentatonic scale. They can play solo or improvise over an accompaniment played by the teacher.
 - **Older Students:** Discuss the influence of pentatonic scales and how they create a sense of "foreignness" or mysticism.
 - Explain that the pentatonic scale is commonly used in Asian music, and we often associate music based on this scale with Asian cultures. During Ravel's time people did not travel widely or have the opportunity to experience art and music from distant cultures. Composers responded to non-Western music they heard in Paris at the World Exposition of 1889 - Moorish melodies in Spanish music, Javanese and Chinese orchestras. They embraced the rhythms, scales, and instrumental colors, offering enchanting contrasts to the familiar sounds of Western music.
- **Light Fingerpicking:**
Introduce fingerpicking techniques that focus on light, bell-like sounds. Start by plucking the strings individually with the thumb and index finger, focusing on producing a soft, clear tone. For younger students, use just the thumb to pluck the lower strings and the index finger for higher strings.
- **Soft Strumming:**
For students who are ready, practice light, gentle strumming with a focus on keeping the sound soft and smooth. Use a basic strum pattern, but emphasize that the movement should be relaxed and fluid, with minimal force.
- **Playing with Lightness:**
Encourage students to play with a light touch, focusing on producing soft, delicate sounds. Ask them to imagine the sound of bells or chimes, and to try to mimic that light, twinkling quality with their guitar.

Listening Assignment:

Ask students to listen to *Laideronette* at home and imagine a magical garden with beautiful, soft sounds. Encourage them to practice plucking or strumming lightly, as if they were playing the sounds of bells.

Lesson 4: "The Conversation of Beauty and the Beast"

Objective:

Develop contrasting techniques to reflect the two characters—Beauty's softness and the Beast's strength.

Piano Duet: [▶ Argerich and Galdo play Ma mère l'oye \(IV\) RAVEL](#)

Orchestra: [▶ Live from Royal Festival Hall: RAVEL Mother Goose – Conversations between ...](#)

Activities:

- **Listening & Character Exploration:**
Play *The Conversation of Beauty and the Beast* and ask students to describe the music. How does the music sound for Beauty? How does it sound for the Beast? Discuss how the music changes between soft, calm parts (Beauty) and louder, more intense parts (Beast).
- **Contrasting Strumming:**
Start by practicing light strumming for Beauty's theme (gentle and soft) and then move to heavier, more forceful strumming for the Beast's theme. Explain the contrast between the two and help students understand how to use their strumming to reflect these emotions.
- **Expressive Playing:**
Encourage students to use dynamics to show the difference between Beauty's delicate voice and the Beast's strength. Practice playing quietly and slowly for Beauty, and loudly and with more intensity for the Beast.
- **Switching Techniques:**
Have students switch between soft, light strumming and more aggressive, forceful strumming to match the changes in the music. This helps them practice switching emotional tones and strumming styles.

Listening Assignment:

Ask students to listen to *The Conversation of Beauty and the Beast* at home and pay attention

to how the music changes between Beauty's soft parts and the Beast's louder sections. Have them practice strumming or plucking lightly for Beauty and strongly for the Beast.

Lesson 5: "The Fairy Garden"

Objective:

Create a smooth, flowing sound by practicing legato techniques and gentle strumming.

Piano Duet: [▶ Argerich and Galdo play Ma mère l'oye \(IV\) RAVEL](#)

Orchestra: [▶ Live from Royal Festival Hall: RAVEL Mother Goose – Conversations between ...](#)

Activities:

- **Listening & Imagery:**
Play *The Fairy Garden* and have students describe how the music makes them feel. Is it peaceful? What kind of magical world do they imagine? Discuss the serene, flowing nature of the piece.
- **Smooth Strumming:**
Focus on smooth, connected strumming to create a flowing, calm sound. Have students practice long, sustained downstrokes and upstrokes, ensuring that each strum is connected without breaks in between.
- **Fingerpicking for a Flowing Sound:**
For more advanced students, introduce basic fingerpicking patterns that focus on creating a smooth, continuous sound. Encourage students to pluck the strings lightly and consistently to maintain a fluid sound.
- **Breath and Relaxation:**
Teach students to relax their bodies and focus on smooth, continuous sound. Encourage slow, deliberate strumming to create the peaceful atmosphere of the piece, imagining they are in a fairy garden.

Listening Assignment:

Ask students to listen to *The Fairy Garden* at home and imagine a peaceful, magical setting. Encourage them to practice strumming gently and smoothly, focusing on keeping a continuous, flowing sound.
