

## **Pedagogical Information, by Sara Barton**

### **6°**

We worked on understanding the fundamentals of sound in our first chapter of study : pitch, tempo, dynamics, and timbre.

Students explored each of these elements when learning 'Chœur des gamins'.

Students then created their own text, reflecting the changes in pitch in their choice of words, to allow this piece to fit the story of the Nutcracker.

In our 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter – 6° students have been exploring how to stage a piece of music as part of a show. Students have learned the famous 'Couplets des Rois' and have, once again, adapted the joyous melody to fit the story of the Nutcracker while endeavoring to stage their performance as a 'Greek chorus'.

### **5°**

Students began the year by studying music and dance, and so we have created and learned a delightful line dance from the American country tradition to represent the party scene in the Nutcracker.

Students continued the year with a study of opera : specifically Mozart's 'Marriage of Figaro'. They have enjoyed learning Cherubino's aria 'Voi che sapete', a song about love, and will depict the love between Clara and the Nutcracker/Prince in the Winter Concert.

### **4°**

This year, students started their music classes with an exploration of Dialogue in Music : the interaction of different voices and instruments from 2 part call-and-response to polyphony as found in fugue.

To represent the bell tolling midnight, the time at which the story of the Nutcracker becomes a fantasy/dream and the magical elements appear, the 4° have learned a polyphonic piece 'Hark, how the bells' in which you can hear 3 different vocal lines.

The 4° have created a very special version of the famous Ray Charles song 'Hit the Road, Jack' to fit the fight scene between the Nutcracker and the Rat King. Listen for the funny dialogue that they will sing in 'Scurry home, rat !'

### **3°**

Students have been working on the use of music in film this year, with specific reference to the use of leitmotif (commonly known as 'theme music') by such composers as Wagner and John Williams (e.g. 'Star Wars' : 'Imperial March' of Darth Vader/Dark Vador). A leitmotif can, for example, create a character through use of a

strong rhythmic pattern, a certain melodic line, particular instrumentation, dynamics, tempo etc.

Students explored different themes found in the Nutcracker which reflect this notion of a leitmotif , and worked on representations of these themes.

Students bring the 'Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy' to life on the chimes. Another group of students demonstrate that some themes are so strong that they can be reflected solely through the rhythmic pattern. The body percussion group has created a rhythmic rendition of the famous 'Trépak' Russian dance.

Several students even tried to create their own leitmotif of snowflakes as part of a composition project entitled 'Dance of the snowflakes'- in homage to the original dance found in the ballet.

Students also discussed how music can set the scene, and for this have learned 'O Christmas Tree' on the chimes to create the magical element in the Nutcracker story when the Christmas tree rises on the stage.

Sara Barton