

## Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, *Dance of the Floreadores*

*Waltz of the Flowers* in the Meter of Duke - Middle School level, grades 6-8

### Objectives:

1. The student will compare two versions of *Waltz of the Flowers*.
2. The student will identify the meter of both versions of *Waltz of the Flowers*.

### Optional Objectives:

1. The student will learn about Tchaikovsky's ballet, *The Nutcracker*.

**Time:** One class period.

### Materials Required for Objectives:

Computer access to Internet recordings and speakers for playback to class (or individual headphones for students to listen on their own). "Comparing Two Songs" worksheet.

### Procedure:

**Activity 1** - "We have learned about Duke Ellington and his interest in using different meters to create more interesting arrangements of music. Do you remember *Take the "A" Train* and the two different meters he used? What meter do you think a waltz might be in? Suppose Duke Ellington wanted to take a famous waltz and make his own version of it. How do you think he might change it?" Encourage students to develop ideas and write them on the board or overhead projector. "Duke Ellington and his composing partner, Billy Strayhorn, decided to create jazz versions of music from the ballet, *The Nutcracker*. Let's listen to *Waltz of the Flowers* by the Russian composer Tchaikovsky; you might recognize this music." Either play a version you have or go to this web site to access a recording of a more traditional version, [http://www.prose-n-poetry.com/christmas\\_song/176](http://www.prose-n-poetry.com/christmas_song/176).

"How do you think Duke Ellington might take that piece and change it to make it his own? Encourage discussion from students and write down their ideas on the board or overhead. Pass out the "Comparing Two Songs" worksheet and play the *Dance of the Floreadores*. Ask students to write down things they heard that are similar and different. "Did it sound the way you expected it to sound? Why or why not?" Encourage students to discuss and talk about the Ellington-Strayhorn version. Play the traditional version again and ask students to finish filling out the diagram. Repeat playing recordings as many times as students need to finish filling out the chart. Ask students to share similarities and differences.

**Activity 2** - "Who remembers how to figure out what meter music is in, that is music you are listening to but not reading? How could we figure out what meter these two versions of *Waltz of the Flowers* are in? I will play some of both recordings. When

you figure out what meter the recording is in, please hold up the number of fingers that the meter is in so I will know your answer.” Play recordings and assess understanding. If students have trouble identifying the meter, the traditional recording is in 3 and the Ellington-Strayhorn version is in 4. Count 1,2,3 over and over or 1,2,3,4 over and over to see which one fits the best.

**Optional Activity:**

**Activity 3** - Go to this web site to learn more about the ballet, *The Nutcracker*. The “listen” buttons won’t work without a recording of *The Nutcracker* but students can still learn the story behind the dance.

<http://courses.wcupa.edu/frichmon/mue332/spring2001/EwingTina/>

**Extension:**

Have students create a dance to go with the Ellington-Strayhorn version that still follows the general story of the traditional version.