

# TRANSITION ACTIVITIES FOR MUSIC A-LEVEL

## TASK 1

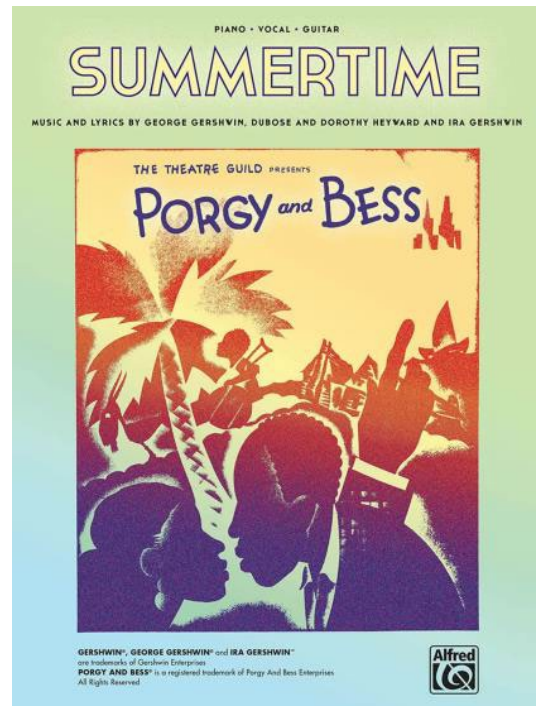
Complete an interpretation of the song 'Summertime' (originally written by George Gershwin for the musical Porgy and Bess in 1935) it has been performed and recorded thousands of times in a multitude of different styles.

This performance should be personal to you and does not need to be radically strange or unusual, but I would like it to be authentic.

You can choose to perform to a backing track (please bring or email me an mp3 unless you can access it online ie YouTube) **or** you can perform solo. Instrumentalists (non-singers) might find it easier learn the song in the key of Em. Drummers can use backing tracks with drums if a non-drum track backing can't be found.

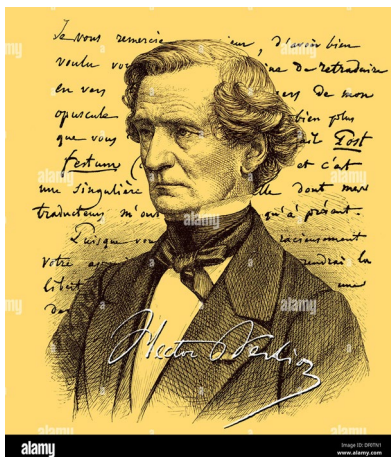
Any questions please ask!

You will perform the interpretation in the classroom.



## TASK 2

**A** Listen to Berlioz 'Symphonie Fantastique' an important romantic symphony from the Western Classical tradition first performed in 1830.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sK4dz6Gbcdk>

Now watch and listen to the Aurora Orchestra and Nicolas Collon do their fantastic interpretation and breakdown of the symphony

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqTU8m8BJwQ&t=1s>

Write a 1000 word essay on the use of instrumentation in the symphony (include all 5 movements)

See worksheet for more information on how to write the essay

Your essay may include pictures/diagrams. Use a bibliography/reference list to show your research please (do not copy and paste)

Due first week in college

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## **Task: Essay on Instrumentation in Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique***

**Final Goal:** Write a 1000-word essay analysing the use of instrumentation in all 5 movements of the symphony.

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### ◆ **Step 1: Initial Listening**

**Objective:** Get a general understanding of the entire symphony.

- **Action:**  
Click and listen to the full symphony here:  
 [Berlioz – \*Symphonie Fantastique\* \(full performance\)](#)
  - **While listening, take notes on:**
    - Instruments you hear (strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion, etc.)
    - Moments that stand out in terms of volume, texture, or mood
    - Differences in instrumentation from one movement to another
  - **Pro Tip:**  
Don't worry about analysing yet—just listen and observe how the music *feels* and *sounds*. Jot down what catches your ear.
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### ◆ **Step 2: Watch the Interpretation & Breakdown**

**Objective:** Understand Berlioz's intentions, orchestration choices, and narrative.

- **Action:**  
Watch the interpretation and explanation by Aurora Orchestra & Nicolas Collon:  
 [Aurora Orchestra Breakdown of \*Symphonie Fantastique\*](#)
  - **While watching, note:**
    - How Berlioz uses specific instruments to represent characters, emotions, or scenes
    - Any unusual or innovative instrumentation (e.g., use of bells, offstage instruments)
    - How the orchestra visually and aurally demonstrates key moments
  - **Helpful Tip:**  
Pause the video when needed and write down specific examples that you might want to include in your essay.
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### ◆ Step 3: Understand Each Movement's Character

**Objective:** Break the symphony into 5 parts and understand the story and sound of each.

- **Movements Overview:**
    1. **Rêveries – Passions:** Daydreams and emotional turmoil
    2. **Un bal:** A waltz at a ball
    3. **Scène aux champs:** A pastoral countryside scene
    4. **Marche au supplice:** A march to the scaffold
    5. **Songe d'une nuit du sabbat:** A witches' Sabbath dream
  - **For each movement, ask yourself:**
    - Which instruments are most prominent?
    - How does instrumentation reflect the story/mood?
    - Are there any notable solos or special effects?
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### ◆ Step 4: Plan Your Essay

**Objective:** Organize your thoughts into a clear structure.

- **Suggested Structure:**

**Introduction (100–150 words):**

  - Brief background on *Symphonie Fantastique*
  - Explain your focus: instrumentation and how Berlioz uses it expressively

**Body (700–800 words total):**

- **Movement 1: Rêveries – Passions**
  - Intro of idée fixe (recurring melody)
  - Strings and woodwinds' emotional shading
- **Movement 2: Un bal**
  - Use of harp and waltz rhythms
  - Light, elegant orchestration
- **Movement 3: Scène aux champs**
  - Cor anglais and oboe duet
  - Nature sounds, use of muted strings
- **Movement 4: Marche au supplice**
  - Heavy brass, timpani, dramatic dynamics
  - Sudden stops and the guillotine moment
- **Movement 5: Songe d'une nuit du sabbat**
  - Use of church bells, col legno strings
  - Parody of Dies Irae with brass and bassoons

**Conclusion (100–150 words):**

- Sum up how Berlioz's use of instrumentation paints the narrative

- Reflect on why it was groundbreaking for Romantic music
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### ◆ Step 5: Write the Essay

**Objective:** Write clearly and analytically, using examples.

- **Tips while writing:**
    - Be specific: Name instruments and moments in the piece
    - Use musical vocabulary: timbre, dynamics, texture, orchestration, etc.
    - Link sound to story: how instrumentation helps convey emotion or action
    - Use quotes or ideas from the Aurora Orchestra video to support your points
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### ◆ Step 6: Revise and Finalize

**Objective:** Make sure your essay is polished and meets the requirements.

- **Checklist:**
    - ✓ Is it around 1000 words?
    - ✓ Does it mention all 5 movements?
    - ✓ Does it focus on instrumentation?
    - ✓ Are examples clear and detailed?
    - ✓ Is your writing clear, formal, and well-structured?
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Let me know if you want help drafting part of the essay or need a sample paragraph!