

Meridian Music of the Week!

Issue No. 24

Even though Meridian is currently closed for most children – our music newsletter will STILL come out each week! Just as before, there will be a new piece of music to listen to. But this time, there will also be some **ideas for activities** which children might want to try if they're at home – connected to the music in some way.

As always, all the music is available **free** on YouTube as well as paid services such as iTunes and Spotify.

This week's music...



'Air on a G string' (2nd movement of Suite No.3) by Johann Sebastian Bach (1730)

LOTS of versions on YouTube – but a pretty good one can be found [HERE](#).

I can't believe that this is the 24th edition of this music newsletter and I haven't introduced you to any music by J S Bach! He is thought to be one of the greatest composers of all time by musicians – and this piece of music is certainly one of his most famous. Ask your parents or grandparents if they remember a well-known TV advert for cigars many years ago, then play them this tune. They'll remember!

Johann Sebastian Bach was a pretty amazing guy – but more about him in a minute...

This piece is the second section of a **suite** (a collection of different smaller pieces). Most of the suite is played by 3 **trumpets**, **timpani** (drums), 2 **oboes**, strings (2 **violin** and 1 **viola**), **double bass** and a **harpsichord** (a kind of early piano). But in this section, only the strings and the harpsichord play.

Why was it called '**Air on a G String**'? Well, it wasn't! Bach certainly never called it that. It didn't get this name until the late 1800s when someone wrote a different arrangement of the tune. In this new version, the music was changed so that the violin could play the whole of the **melody** (tune) on just one string – the lowest string of the violin (called the 'G string'). These days we think of a G-string as a very tiny pair of pants someone might wear on the beach!

The music has a very slow tempo, with the harpsichord and bass playing notes which are **descending** (going down) while the violins play the melody. The music sounds very simple, but underneath it's actually quite complicated. I find it very relaxing to listen to and I also like to pretend to conduct it when I'm listening!

I thought about this music recently because I was playing a famous pop record from the 1960s (something else your parents or grandparents might know). The song was called '**A Whiter Shade of Pale**' by the group **Procol Harum**. This was a number one smash hit in the Summer of 1967. It was the 'swinging sixties' and everyone thought the record was really 'groovy' and modern. But guess what? They basically stole the introduction from Bach's tune! If you want to compare the two – have a listen to **their** version [HERE](#).

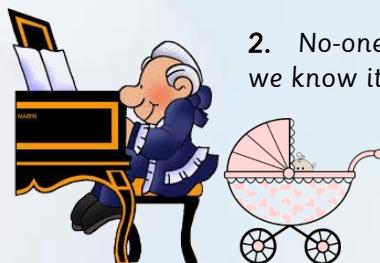


I don't care – because I like the record – AND the Bach original from 230 years earlier!

Anyway – before I finish, I'll tell you a couple of fun facts about Johann Sebastian Bach...



1. He once told one of his own music students that his **bassoon** playing sounded like a '**farty goat**'! The student was really annoyed and tried to get his revenge by getting another five of Bach's students to attack him with sticks when he was on his way home from the pub – and Bach had to fight his own music students off with a sword!



2. No-one knows exactly how many children Bach had – but we know it was at least **twenty** – and possibly **twenty-one**! Can you imagine trying to write music with all those kids about? It must have been really noisy!

Listen, enjoy and get **stay safe**!

Mr. Mole

Music Teacher



Task and activity on the next page!

TASK/ACTIVITY

Watch and listen to the short video...



There's another famous piece of music by Bach called '**Toccata AND Fugue in D minor**'. You may have heard it before because it is often used with **spooky** stories and films!

There's a short video all about it [HERE](#) with James May from Top Gear. Have a watch and listen to the video, then...

Get arty!

Use the music to inspire you to create a **SPOOKY** picture! It could be a drawing, a painting, a collage, anything you like! Will it be a haunted house? Will it be a ghost? Will it be a monster? It's up to you! We'd love to see your art work – so if you want, you can take a photo of your picture and send it to us by email to office@meridian.e-sussex.sch.uk to scare us silly!

Here's a quick sketch of a **Vampire Mole** I made quickly on my computer to give you some inspiration!

Mwahaha!

