Name: _____ Date: _____

The Gamelan: An Orchestra Tuned as One Set

Circle group

In parts of Indonesia, such as Java and Bali, people play music in a gamelan. A gamelan is an orchestra of mostly percussion. It has gongs, drums, and rows of metal bars. Players hit the bars with mallets. The sound is shimmering and full of ringing tones.

A gamelan is not like an orchestra of violins and trumpets. Its instruments are made and tuned together as one set. A violin from one maker can usually play with a violin from another. But a gong from one gamelan may not match another gamelan. Each set has its own tuning. So the instruments in a set belong together. Many sets have their own names.

Players often sit on the floor, close to their instruments. No one waves a baton. Often a drummer gives signals. They tell everyone when to speed up, slow down, or end. Big hanging gongs mark the end of long phrases. They are like the period at the end of a sentence.

A gamelan may play for a village party, a dance, or a shadow puppet show. The players listen to each other. The music works when the whole group stays in step.

Questions

1. What kinds of instruments are in a gamelan?

_____

_____

2. On which islands is gamelan often played?

_____

_____

3. How are the instruments made?

_____

_____

4. Who gives signals to speed up or end?

_____

_____

5. Why might a gong from one gamelan not fit another?

_____

_____

6. Why must the players listen to each other?

_____

_____

Words to know

gamelan: an Indonesian orchestra of gongs, drums and metal bars
percussion: instruments that you hit or shake to make sound
mallet: a small hammer with a soft head used to play instruments
tuning: the set of notes an instrument is adjusted to play

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Gamelan: An Orchestra Tuned as One Set

Triangle group

In parts of Indonesia, especially on the islands of Java and Bali, music is often played by a gamelan. This is an orchestra made mostly of percussion instruments, such as gongs, drums, and rows of metal bars that are struck with mallets. The sound is shimmering, layered, and full of ringing tones.

A gamelan is different from an orchestra of violins and trumpets in one way. Its instruments are made and tuned together as a single set. A violin from one maker can usually play with a violin from another. But a gong from one gamelan may not match another gamelan, because each set has its own tuning. So the instruments in a set belong together, and many gamelans have their own names.

Players often sit on the floor, each one close to an instrument. No one person leads with a baton like a conductor. Often a drummer gives signals that tell everyone when to speed up, slow down, or end. Big hanging gongs mark the ends of long musical phrases, like the punctuation at the end of a sentence.

A gamelan may play for a village celebration, for a dance, or for a shadow puppet show. The players listen closely to one another, because the music is made by the whole group working in step.

Questions

1. What kinds of instruments make up most of a gamelan?

_____

_____

2. On which islands is gamelan music often played?

_____

_____

3. How are the instruments in a gamelan made?

_____

_____

4. Who gives the signals about when to speed up or end?

_____

_____

5. Why might a gong from one gamelan not fit another?

_____

_____

6. Why do gamelan players need to listen closely to each other?

_____

_____

Words to know

gamelan: an Indonesian orchestra of gongs, drums and metal bars
percussion: instruments that you hit or shake to make sound
mallet: a small hammer with a soft head used to play instruments
tuning: the set of notes an instrument is adjusted to play
conductor: a person who leads a group of musicians

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Gamelan: An Orchestra Tuned as One Set

Square group

In certain regions of Indonesia, particularly on the islands of Java and Bali, music is frequently performed by a gamelan. This is an orchestra composed mostly of percussion instruments, including gongs, drums, and rows of metal bars that are struck with mallets. Its sound is shimmering and layered, and it is filled with ringing tones.

A gamelan differs from an orchestra of violins and trumpets in one significant respect. Its instruments are crafted and tuned together as a single set. A violin from one maker can usually play alongside a violin from another maker, but a gong belonging to one gamelan may not match the notes of a different gamelan, because every set has its own tuning. For this reason the instruments in a set belong together, and many gamelans are even given individual names.

Players often sit on the floor, each one positioned close to an instrument. No single person leads with a baton in the manner of a conductor. Instead, a drummer will often give signals that tell everyone when to speed up, slow down, or finish. Large hanging gongs mark the ends of long musical phrases, much like the punctuation at the end of a sentence.

A gamelan might perform for a village celebration, for a dance, or for a shadow puppet show. The players must listen attentively to one another, because the music is created by the entire group working together in step.

Questions

1. What kinds of instruments make up most of a gamelan?

_____

_____

2. On which islands is gamelan music frequently performed?

_____

_____

3. How are the instruments of a gamelan crafted?

_____

_____

4. Who often gives the signals about speeding up, slowing down or ending?

_____

_____

5. Why might a gong from one gamelan fail to match another gamelan?

_____

_____

6. Why must gamelan players listen attentively to one another?

_____

_____

Words to know

gamelan: an Indonesian orchestra of gongs, drums and metal bars
percussion: instruments that you hit or shake to make sound
mallet: a small hammer with a soft head used to play instruments
tuning: the set of notes an instrument is adjusted to play
conductor: a person who leads a group of musicians

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: The Gamelan: An Orchestra Tuned as One Set

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: The Gamelan: An Orchestra Tuned as One Set

Easier · 194 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4.7

1. Mostly percussion, such as gongs, drums and metal bars hit with mallets.
2. Java and Bali.
3. They are made and tuned together as one set.
4. Often a drummer.
5. Each set has its own tuning, so the notes may not match.
6. There is no conductor, so the music works only when the group stays in step.

Triangle: The Gamelan: An Orchestra Tuned as One Set

This passage · 216 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.9

1. Percussion instruments such as gongs, drums and metal bars struck with mallets.
2. Java and Bali.
3. They are made and tuned together as a single set.
4. Often a drummer.
5. Each set has its own tuning, so the notes may not match.
6. There is no conductor, so the music works only when the group stays in step.

Square: The Gamelan: An Orchestra Tuned as One Set

Harder · 237 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 10.4

1. Percussion instruments such as gongs, drums and metal bars struck with mallets.
2. Java and Bali.
3. They are made and tuned together as a single set.
4. A drummer.
5. Each set has its own tuning, so the notes may not match.
6. With no conductor, the music succeeds only when the whole group stays in step.