

2008 Convention Improvisation Assignments Improvisation Celebration Recital

The following topics will be put "in a hat" for you to choose from at the Convention Recital. Students may practice improvising with these topics in mind, so you will have some ideas ready when you improvise on the topic you will "pull from the hat."

1. The featured composer will be Felix Mendelssohn (refer to *Games and Activities for Improvisation*, page 142).

Create a melody for The Mendelssohn rhyme:

Felix Mendelssohn of the Romantic Period,
His sister Fanny a composer too.
Felix Mendelssohn commanded many talents
Conductor, piano, violin, to name a few.
Felix Mendelssohn, who brought back Bach
Was a gracious German Lutheran Jew.

Create (improvise) a musical picture of one of the scenes from the life of Mendelssohn:

1. Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn playing music together in the little theater in the garden of their spacious home.
2. Felix performing for Queen Victoria of England her favorite piece from "Songs Without Words" and then explaining that it was really his sister, Fanny, who had composed it.
3. Felix's teacher, Zelter, showing him music of Johann Sebastian Bach that he found in a closet. This kindled in Felix a great desire to bring forth the music of Bach which had been lost to the world for almost one hundred years.
4. Felix grieving greatly over the death of his beloved sister, Fanny, and dying himself soon afterwards.

2. The featured topic will be Birds (refer to *Games and Activities for Improvisation*, pages 116-118 for the pictures of the birds).

The birds included are pigeon, hummingbird, crow, flamingo, woodpecker, swan, duck, eagle, ostrich, mockingbird, robin, and penguin.

3. The featured theme of the year will be "The Four Seasons." (see below).

THE SEASONS - AUTUMN Don Antonio Vivaldi

**Create an improvisation describing something about
autumn**

or

Use something from one of Vivaldi's Sonnets of his "FOUR SEASONS" CONCERTO to create a piece about autumn.

The countryman celebrates with dance and song
the sweet pleasure of a good harvest, and many,
fired by the liquor of *Bacchus, end their
enjoyment by falling asleep.

Everyone is made to abandon singing and dancing
by the temperate air, which gives pleasure, and by
the season, which invites so many to enjoy the
sweetness of sleep.

The huntsmen come out at the crack of dawn
with their horns, guns and hounds; quarry
flees and they track it;

already terrified and tired out to the great noise
of the guns and hounds, the wounded beast
makes a feeble effort to flee but dies in agony.

*God of wine

Note: If possible play a CD or Record of a small portion of each of Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" as the student is arriving. On the following website you will find Vivaldi's concertos for each of the seasons, along with the sonnet about each season, and a media link so you can listen to each movement of the four concertos - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Seasons_\(Vivaldi\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Seasons_(Vivaldi))

THE SEASONS - SPRING Don Antonio Vivaldi

**Create an improvisation describing something about
spring**

or

Use something from one of Vivaldi's Sonnets of his "FOUR SEASONS" CONCERTO to create a piece about spring.

Spring has arrived, and joyfully the
birds greet her with glad song, while
at Zephyr's breath the streams flow
forth with a sweet murmur.

Her chosen heralds, thunder and lightning,
come to envelop the air in a black cloak;
once they have fallen silent, the little birds
return anew to their melodious incantation:

then on the pleasant, flower-bedecked meadow,
to the happy murmur of fronds and plants, the
goatherd sleeps next to this trusty dog.

To the festive sound of rustic bagpipes nymphs and
shepherds dance beneath the beloved sky at the
glorious appearance of spring.

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THE SEASONS - SUMMER Don Antonio Vivaldi

**Create an improvisation describing something about
summer**

or

Use something from one of Vivaldi's Sonnets of his "FOUR SEASONS" CONCERTO to create a piece about summer.

In a harsh season burned by the sun, man and flock languish, and the pine tree is scorched; the cuckoo unleashes its voice, and soon we hear the songs of the turtle-dove and the goldfinch.

Sweet Zephyr blows, but *Boreas suddenly opens a dispute with his neighbor; and the shepherd laments his fate for he fears a fierce squall is coming.

His weary limbs are robbed of rest by his fear of fierce thunder and lightning and by the furious swarm of flies and blowflies.

Alas, his fears are only too real: the sky fills with thunder and lightning, and hailstones hew off the heads of proud cornstalks.

*The Greek God of the cold North Wind

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THE SEASONS -WINTER Don Antonio Vivaldi

**Create an improvisation describing something about
winter**

or

Use something from one of Vivaldi's Sonnets of his "FOUR SEASONS" CONCERTO to create a piece about winter.

To shiver, frozen, amid icy snow in the bitter blast of a horrible wind; to run, constantly stamping one's feet and to feel one's teeth chatter on account of the excessive cold;

to spend restful, happy days at the fireside while the rain outside drenches a good hundred; to walk on the ice, and with slow steps to move about cautiously for fear of falling;

to go fast, to slip and fall down; to go on the ice again and run fast until the ice cracks and opens up;

to hear coming out of the iron gates *Sirocco,
**Boreas and all the winds at war: that's winter,
but of a kind to gladden one's heart.

* a wind that reaches hurricane speeds

**Greek god of the North Wind

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