



The Flying Dutchman Listening Guide

Wagner was a musical genius who introduced the concept of the *leitmotif* to opera, taking the art form to another level both musically and dramatically. A *leitmotif* is a musical theme associated with a character, object, emotion or event. The music is played any time a character appears or is referenced to by another character. Over 100 years later, American film composer John Williams used *leitmotifs* in his scores for blockbuster films including the *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones* and *Harry Potter* franchises. Most of the characters in these movies have themes associated with them, one of the most famous being the music for Darth Vader in *Star Wars*.

The tracks listed below correspond to the complimentary Listening Guide CD provided to school group bookings only.

Not coming to the opera but looking to explore *The Flying Dutchman* in the classroom? The excerpts below can be found in the recording on the London label, with Christoph von Dohnányi conducting the Wiener Philharmoniker and the Konzertvereinigung Wiener Staatsopernchor with Robert Hale as the Dutchman, Hildegard Behrens as Senta and Kurt Rydl as Daland.

Track #	Musical excerpt	Connection to the story	Musical elements and significance	Strategies for Listening
1	Overture	Wagner summarizes the story and the moods found in the opera in this exhilarating overture.	The overture is played by the orchestra and introduces the audience to the leitmotifs that will be heard throughout the opera. We begin the overture in the mythological world of the Dutchman and his crew. First the Dutchman's theme is played by the French horns then echoed in the low brass. The musical theme of repeated figures that stems from the Dutchman's leitmotif symbolizes the fate that always haunts him. The quickly moving low strings provide the setting of the raging sea with the storm motif, [0:06 – 0:19]. The Dutchman's ghost crew is summoned to the deck [repeated notes played by the trumpets 0:22 – 0:24, 0:28 – 0:30, 0:35 – 0:37] to steer the wandering ship [rapid notes in the strings, 0:38 – 0:40]. One cannot avoid	Leitmotifs are not fixed – meaning they can be heard in different instruments and played at different dynamics (volumes), tempi (speeds), and moods. This is Wagner's way of showing that a character, object, event or emotion has transformed. Having listened for the individual leitmotifs, now listen to the entire overture and try to come up with an overall story arch. Compare your story arch to the synopsis. Did the

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			<p>the impression of the great ship and its crew being tossed around. The raging storm gives way to the gentle music of love and redemption that belongs to Senta, [played by the English horn, 1:44 – 2:02, immediately echoed by the oboe and flute, 2:05 – 2:23]. Senta’s love for the Dutchman and her search for a more exciting life is embodied in the music as the theme of constancy which is heard in the English horn [2:25 – 2:45]. The peaceful mood is interrupted as Senta’s thoughts drift to the storm and the Dutchman [3:36 – 3:43]. The music changes [5:50] to a more folk-like motif representing Daland’s sailors [6:01 – 6:13]. The music of the ghost world and physical world are played simultaneously [6:20] representing the conflict between them. The overture ends with the return of Senta’s redemption theme [10:51] which brings the listener into the real world where the beginning of the opera is set.</p>	<p>overture offer an accurate musical map of the story?</p> <p>Listen for the motifs, as they will keep reappearing through the opera!</p>
2	“Die Frist ist um” (“The time is up”)	The Dutchman’s ship has just entered the harbour. Under a curse he can only come ashore once every seven years. He prays for the end of the world, anything to escape his dreadful existence.	This is a huge, dramatic, and eerie recitative and aria. A recitative is when words are sung in a way that imitates speech. It has no recognizable melody and is meant to carry the action forward rather than express the emotions of the character. It often precedes an aria, which is a reflective solo piece for one singer and accompaniment, allowing the singer to express emotions and comment on the events of the drama. Starting quietly in the strings and low brass, the Dutchman begins a <i>capella</i> (without orchestral accompaniment). The music alternates between calm and wild sections, illustrating the power of a storm at sea.	<p>How does Wagner let us know that there’s a storm going on? What type of tone does the raging storm music set for the opera?</p> <p>If you like this music, listen to the “Sea Interludes” from <i>Peter Grimes</i>, by Benjamin Britten.</p>
3	“Summ und Brumm” (“Whirl and whirl”)	The village girls spin and sing of the men who will return to them from voyages on the sea. They mock Senta for not joining in. She has eyes only for a portrait of the Dutchman.	The oboe plays a solo throughout. The repetitive rhythms depict the beat of spinning wheels. This music sounds very safe and domestic compared to what the Dutchman sings. This piece is often referred to as the “Spinning chorus”.	<p>How does the music vocally and instrumentally reflect the spinning wheels?</p> <p>What does their song tell you about the village girls?</p>

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4	“Johohoe!... Traft ihr das Schiff” (“Have you seen the ship”)	Senta tells the story of the mythical Flying Dutchman. She describes how he can be freed from the curse, and proclaims that she is the woman who will save him.	The aria begins with the Dutchman’s <i>leitmotif</i> heard previously in his aria. Senta sings three verses, alternating between dramatic recitative (sung-spoken style), and serene, almost religious, music [1:42] in which she describes the Dutchman’s redemption.	How does the music tell the story without words? How does Senta feel about the Dutchman? What gives you this impression?
5	“Steuermann, lass die Wacht!” (“Helmsman, leave your watch!”)	The men bring food and drink to the Dutchman’s crew, encouraging them to come off the boat.	This chorus is a rousing sea shanty. It has a repetitive, catchy rhythm. It sounds boisterous, manly, good-humoured, and – above all – mortal.	Contrast and compare the music that Senta and the Dutchman sing. What makes it different?
6	“Johohohe! Johohohe!”	The ghosts come out of the ship, and frighten the sailors by singing about the curse.	The chorus starts by singing the motif associated with the Dutchman. The orchestra depicts the wildness and weirdness of the ghosts with wailing piccolo and loud brass. The Norwegian sailors try to drown the song of the Dutchman’s crew [1:36] with their own music.	Which chorus do you think wins the choral competition?