

War and Music Topic

Song Story 5: Mack The Knife by Kurt Weill

Kurt Weill was a composer who lived in Germany in the first half of the 20th century. He was a Jew. His music was very popular with the German people in the 1920s and 1930s, but when the Nazis came to power his music was banned by them. He decided to leave the country and first of all went to France and then to the USA where he remained until his death in 1950.

This song is from an opera by Weill called The Threepenny Opera with words in German by the playwright Bertolt Brecht. It is about the murderous deeds of a gangster called Mackie Messer or Mack the Knife.

Aim: To research information about a musician; To compare music through focussed listening

Music Skills: Listening; Learning about Music and Musicians in context

Resources: Two recordings of the song, one by Louis Armstrong, but first, one that not.

Activities: Listening; Research; Listening Comparison

★ Listen to a recording of Mack The Knife . It's by _____

★ Think of words to describe the music, (not what you think of it) _____

★ What instruments and voices can you hear? _____

★ Use the internet or books to find out five more things about Kurt Weill's life.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

★ List five of his compositions.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

★ List at least five more singers who have recorded this song.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

?. _____

Probably the most famous recording of this song is by the Jazz musician Louis Armstrong.

★ Listen to his version of the song and compare it with the first version you heard.