

Fiddlin' a Hoedown



[Tore Sætre / Wikimedia](#). *Fiddler Fiona Monbet* ([CC BY-SA](#))

Objectives

Overview

Students will learn about the fiddle and fiddle music, and then experience how it is used in Copland's *Rodeo*.

Time frame: 30 minutes

Musical Selection

"Hoedown" from *Rodeo* - Aaron Copland

"Bonapart's Retreat" - traditional

Standards

Music Standards: MU.5-8.M-CE-M5 (Perform in organized musical activities including singing, playing, and movement.), MU.5-8.M-HP-M1 (Identify distinguishing characteristics of musical styles representative of various historical periods and cultures;), MU.5-8.M-HP-M2 (Compare and contrast the function of music within historical and cultural contexts, such as celebrations, ceremonies, and events;), MU.5-8.M-HP-M5 (Identify major works of great composers and recognize achievements of prominent musicians;)

Correlated Standards: Social Studies (American history)

Preparatory Exercise

Fiddling is a genuinely American style of music. Let's learn about some of the words associated with fiddling:

- **Fiddle music:** The fiddle is usually exactly the same as the violin, but the style of playing is different. Fiddle music can include reels, hornpipes, jigs, and other dances. Sometimes fiddle players hold the instrument differently than a classical violin player. Also, sometimes the violin is tuned differently (for example, instead of G-D-A-E, some may use D-D-A-D or "dead man's tuning").
- **Rodeo:** A rodeo is an event for spectators to watch events based on cattle herding. These can include roping, bronco riding, bull riding, and barrel racing. They are also major social events, sometimes including concerts and food. Originally coming from Spanish, this might be pronounced ro-DAY-oh, but the usual pronunciation in America is RO-dee-oh.
- **Hoedown:** A hoedown is a specific type of music associated with dancing, especially in Appalachian country. It's specific to America, but shares much in common with British Isles dances such as the jig.

Teach students some dances that can go with the music. Here is a youth performance of "Millionaire's Hoedown" that you can use: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhBrMFzma84>.

Consider having students dance in a line, circle, or (with older students) in pairs. This music sits well with sets of 8, so consider teaching each move as having 8 beats.

Composer Profiles

Aaron Copland (1900 - 1990)



CBS Television (Public Domain)

Aaron Copland was a 20th-century American composer of modern styles of classical music. He is known for his works for orchestra, piano, and voice. He used many American folk songs in his music, but he drew on his studies with composer and teacher Nadia Boulanger in France, incorporating some avant-garde music styles as well. Many of his pieces are instantly recognizable, such as "Fanfare for the Common Man," *Appalachian Spring*, *Billy the Kid*, and *Rodeo**.

**A note on pronunciation: Many classical musicians pronounce Rodeo with its original Spanish pronunciation ro-DAY-oh, sometimes even adding an accent. Copland himself used the more commonly American RO-dee-oh when referring to this work.*

Lesson Content

Copland's *Rodeo* is a ballet that Copland wrote with choreographer Agnes de Mille. It premiered in 1942.

Unlike older European ballets, the Copland and de Mille based the music and movement for the ballet on American folk music and dance. Copland was known for using American folk songs in his music, usually in small pieces, but de Mille likely wanted most of the original tunes to be heard.

One of the most recognizable tunes they used was called "Bonyparte," or sometimes "Bonaparte's Retreat." Here's a record of a fiddler playing this tune.

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfk50L41Vpo> (0:00 - 2:40)

Listen to how Copland used this in "Hoedown" from *Rodeo*. Listen for what instruments he uses in the full orchestra.

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ajQYANLiug> (0:00 - 3:32)

Have students list the families of instruments they hear throughout. There should be strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. Then list prominent instruments in each family. Of note are the strings playing the main melody, xylophone joining in, brass in the middle section, and timpani, cymbals, and drums throughout.

Now, play through the music again and incorporate the square dance steps you learned. If the music is too fast to start off with, you can slow it down. Click the gear on the bottom right of a YouTube video, select "Speed" and try 0.75x. As students catch on, try full speed.

Enrichment Activities

Fiddle in Louisiana

Fiddle music is not just found in Appalachian music. Styles of fiddle music can be found in Louisiana, such as Cajun fiddle. Here are some examples:

- L'Angelus playing "Big Mamou": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XMUM4_Wu6o (0:00 - 3:08)
- Michael Doucet (with David Doucet and Mitchell Reed) playing "Parlez-nous à boire": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpct_HTgAaM (0:00 - 4:24)

How to Fiddle

If you have string students, continue watching the video on Bonaparte's Retreat for details on how tuning and bowing can give fiddling its distinctive sound.

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfk50L41Vpo> (0:00 - 9:28)

Here is another video with details about the perspective of Cajun and Creole fiddle.

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXAYSBZQzBo> (0:00 - 7:25)

Hoedown with the LPO

Beethoven saddles up for this concert full of incongruous orchestral favorites. The concert is off to the races with Rossini's *William Tell Overture*, most famously used as theme music for *The Lone Ranger*. Our adventure barrels ahead with a few selections from the cowboy-themed ballet, *Rodeo*, with Aaron Copland's "Corral Nocturne" and "Hoe Down". Finally, it's time to put our horses out to pasture and enjoy the countryside with Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 'Pastoral.'

Learn more here: <https://www.lpomusic.com/online/article/beethoven-meets-the-wild-west>

Can't saddle up to the Northshore for this event? You can take a sneak peak at our Open Rehearsal at Loyola University's Roussel Hall.

More info here: <https://www.lpomusic.com/online/article/open-rehearsals>

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