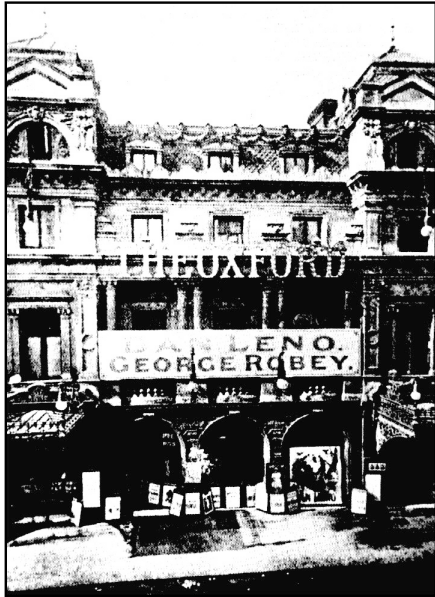


THE VICTORIAN MUSIC HALL



'THE OXFORD'
A FAMOUS LONDON MUSIC HALL

People have always come together and made music. Gradually through time these informal get-togethers became more organised. The origins of the Victorian Music Hall lie in the late 17th century when Pleasure Gardens, such as Vauxhall Gardens, offered people music and entertainment as well as food, and most importantly for many of the audience the chance to have a drink!

By the 1800's the gardens had declined in popularity and new Singing Clubs were formed instead. The working classes tended to go to Taverns and the upper classes to so-called Song and Supper rooms. Often comic singers appeared along with solo singers and choruses for an evening's entertainment. Women were not usually allowed to attend these clubs but were occasionally allowed to view from behind a screened-off area in the balcony. The Taverns were also developing rapidly and many also had music licences and held regular events.

In 1843 the Theatre Act was passed and this meant that the Singing Clubs could either become Music Halls with a licence to sell drinks or Theatres without the right to sell drinks but able to show plays. This naturally caused a split and meant that the Theatres became more the haunts of the upper classes who attended plays. The lower classes tended to attend the Taverns, or Music Halls as they became known, as they were looking for a jolly, boozy night out.

At first Music Halls were literally just halls with a raised area at one end and a gallery around the other three sides for the audience. Women were eventually allowed to attend, although no lady of repute would want to be seen at the rather riotous evening's entertainment at the Music Hall.

By the 1870's there were nearly 30 Music Halls in London. The appeal of the Music Hall lay in the many different acts that performed, ranging from acrobats to comedians and of course singers who sang popular songs such as *Don't Dilly Dally On The Way, Come Into The Garden Maude* and *The Man Who Broke The Bank At Monte Carlo*. The main ingredients for Music Hall songs were humour and a catchy tune.

THINGS TO DISCUSS & DO: -

Discuss with the class why you think the Music Hall was so popular? Why do you think that the upper classes tended to go to the Theatre and the lower classes to the Music Hall?

Plan an evening's entertainment at the Music Hall - what kind of music would you like to hear and what kind of acts would you like to see?



MUSIC HALL PERFORMER





VICTORIAN STREET SELLERS

In Victorian times street sellers would walk through the streets advertising their goods and wares with songs. These street cries could be heard each day in the cities and towns. Here are some examples of popular street cries of the time.

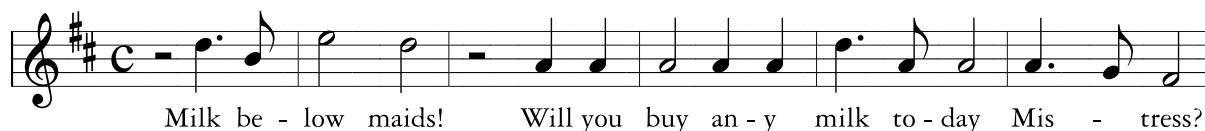
RIPE STRAWBERRIES RIPE

Most fruit was sold by the pound, but strawberries were sold by the pottle which was a kind of cone shaped basket used to measure out the fruit. If you have seen the musical *Oliver*, you will have heard some of these Victorian street cries including Ripe Strawberries Ripe.



MILK BELOW MAIDS

Fresh milk was sold by milkmaids from big churns carried on their shoulders. They would cry Milk Below Maids to the servants that were working below stairs in the large Victorian houses.



KNIVES SCISSORS AND RAZORS TO GRIND

The knife grinder was a familiar figure on the streets. He would sharpen the knives, scissors and cutlery that became blunt with regular use. His charges usually varied from a penny to three halfpennies depending on the size of the blade and the amount of polishing required.



THINGS TO DO: -

Imagine you were a street seller today.
What kind of things would you sell?
Make up some "cries" and a tune to help you sell your wares or goods.



THE 19TH CENTURY ORCHESTRA



Orchestras in the 19th century rapidly increased in size and many new instruments were introduced. The brass section now included the tuba and a new valve system meant that there was a much greater flexibility in the range of brass instruments generally. Valves meant that composers could write music with a much wider choice of keys and it was easier for performers to play accurately.

The woodwind section also increased in size with the piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet and bassoon becoming regular features in new written work.

Percussion became more varied and this offered composers the opportunity to explore new effects. This added to the overall dramatic performance of music and new music was much more personal in style and less bound to tradition.

As a result of these additions the string section had to increase in size too. The violins were now usually divided up into two sections - violin 1 and violin 2 in addition to the violas, cellos and double bass. The harp was used more regularly and again offered composers a new effect with its shimmering sound.

Music in the 19th century explored these new instruments and effects to the full. Composers were less bound to follow the traditional rules when writing and the increasing experimentation led to a wide variety of new directions in music. Many composers explored nationalist themes, looking to the folk tunes and rhythms of their homelands for inspiration. Music became much more about emotion and effect rather than writing music to satisfy the Royal Courts or the Church. For the first time musicians were able to earn a living as freelance composers, performers and teachers which gave them a greater freedom to explore new career avenues.

THINGS TO DO: -

List the four main sections found in an orchestra and the instruments which belong to them.

A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

Christmas was an important part of Victorian family life. The tradition of sending Christmas cards began in Britain around 1840 when the first Penny Post public postal delivery service began. The efficiency of the postal service was greatly increased by the new railways that were being built all over the country. A card in an unsealed envelope could be posted for one half penny, half the price of an ordinary letter. Christmas cards traditionally showed religious scenes of Mary, Joseph and Jesus or winter scenes.



Many of the Christmas carols that are a familiar part of Christmas today were written during the Victorian times, including *Once in Royal David's City*, *O Come All Ye Faithful* and *We Three Kings*.

Carol singers would go *wassailing* and would hopefully be rewarded with mulled wine or figgy pudding. The Christmas song *We wish you a Merry Christmas* is about this practice.



VICTORIAN CAROL SINGERS
"WASSAILING"

In Victorian times Christmas was an important part of the year and everyone from servants to nobility was expected to attend church.

The increasing popularity of the piano and harmonium meant that many people could sing Christmas carols at home together. Educated people were expected to be able to play an instrument so there was no shortage of performers. Impromptu concerts were often given when families got together for the holidays.

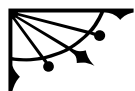
The Christmas tree was introduced into England during the Victorian period by Prince Albert in 1841. Traditionally it would be decorated with candles, ribbons and candy canes. The Christmas song *O Tannenbaum* which celebrates the Christmas tree was written during the 19th century.

THINGS TO DO: -

Try to compose a Christmas carol of your own. Think carefully about the words first and then the tune. Try to have a chorus that is easy to remember with a catchy tune and a strong rhythm. Once your words and tune are written choose the instruments you wish to play the music. Think about what instruments and sounds remind you of Christmas.

Or

Design a Christmas card that illustrates a popular Victorian Christmas carol. On the inside of the card try to write the words for a new verse to the carol you have chosen.



A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

Try to match the tunes below with the correct carol title from the bottom of the page.



The Holly and The Ivy
O Come All Ye Faithful
Silent Night
God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
Good King Wenceslas
Away in a Manger

