

Listening to The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra

Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Purcell Op.34

Name _____

Form _____

Benjamin Britten wrote a piece of music called "The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra" in 1946 for an educational film called *Instruments of the Orchestra*. His piece is based on an old theme (another word for melody or "tune") that he 'borrowed' from an earlier English composer called Purcell.



Henry **PURCELL** (1659-1695)



Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

We hear this theme at the beginning of the piece, that is played by the full orchestra. Then, Britten gives us a brief tour of the four different sections of the orchestra that play a **VARIATION** of the theme. Listen carefully and write down in what order you hear each of the four sections or families of the orchestra being introduced at the start of the piece.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

After the four sections or families have been demonstrated playing together, the full orchestra plays the theme again.

Now, Britten takes each section or family of the orchestra in turn and demonstrates the sound of each instrument as they play a variation of the theme that was heard at the beginning. First, it is the **WOODWIND** section. Listen carefully and write down the order in which you can hear the woodwind instruments being played

5. *(two instruments being played here!)*
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.



Next, Britten introduces us to the **STRINGS** section. Listen carefully and write down the order of the string instruments that you can hear playing.

- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.



It is now the turn of the **BRASS** section of the orchestra to introduce themselves. Listen carefully and write down the order of the brass instruments that you can hear playing

- 14.
- 15.
- 16. *(two instruments being played here!)*



The final section of the orchestra, the **PERCUSSION** section, now demonstrates the sounds of their instruments. There are a lot of percussion instruments to see and hear here, so try and identify as many as you can!

- 17.



Once all the instruments of the orchestra have been introduced, Britten starts off a **FUGUE** where all of the instruments enter one after each other overlapping.

- 18. What happens to the **TEXTURE** of the music as more and more instruments join in?

At the end of the piece, the theme returns majestically played by the brass section before an exciting and triumphal ending.

