

# COLOR IN MUSIC—GERMAINE TAILLEFERRE

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## CURRICULUM

CLASS NOTES®

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# INTRODUCTION

The following lessons and activities are designed to support awareness and build competency of several foundational music skills and concepts in the Class Notes Video Color in Music—Germaine Tailleferre. Built around the core concepts of Create, Perform, Respond and Connect, the suggested order of lessons aims to establish comprehension of key terms and sequentially build on the concepts presented. Use them in this order or feel free to mix and match, according to your needs.

The following lessons and activities were created around the following ideas:

- Timbre/tone color
- Individual expression in music making
- Collaborative music making
- Expressive intent of composer
- Personal emotional response to music and music making

Activities were created with a range of grade and skill levels in mind. Again, adjust and modify to meet the unique needs of your classroom.

Finally, get in touch with your thoughts, feedback, ideas or requests for modifications or additional resources.

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## LESSON/ACTIVITIES

### **RESPOND and CONNECT by comparing, contrasting and describing a variety of timbres.**

Context: Timbre awareness is a basic skill that taps into children’s innate curiosity. After the idea is presented and explored with students, continue to integrate the concept and use the vocabulary whenever possible.

- Explain that the unique or special sound that a thing makes is called its *timbre* (TAM-ber). Give examples to further secure understanding. Sample language: Imagine the sound of a flute. Now imagine the sound of a trumpet. They sound different, right? The unique, special sound each instrument makes is called its timbre. In fact, everything that makes sound has a timbre. Every person’s voice has its own unique timbre.
- For younger students:
  - › Play and sing “Box of Sound” in order to help develop sound discrimination skills. Create a box of sound—any small, opaque box with a flap or lid on top will work. Fill four or more baggies of various items to be placed inside the box of sound. Some ideas:
    - › Uncooked pasta, rice, beans, or popcorn kernels
    - › Small plastic balls or superballs
    - › Single jingle bells
    - › Cotton balls or cotton swabs
    - › Feathers
    - › Paper clips

Have the box prepped by emptying the contents of the first baggie into the box. Other baggies should be hidden from view but easily accessible. Tell children, “This is my Box of Sound. I put different things inside, and when I shake it, it makes different sounds. You get to guess what’s inside. Let’s try it out.”

Use the following chant to play Box of Sound:

*Box of sound,  
Box of sound,  
Shake it around.  
What have we found?*

Identifying sound sources can be a helpful means of beginning to discriminate timbre.

- › Select one piece of music played by several different instruments. In the TIMBRE COMPARISON section of the [Color in Music—Germaine Tailleferre Lesson Plan Audio](#) playlist, you will find several recordings of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major—I. Prelude, each performed on a different instrument. Listen to each one and compare them using the Timbre Comparison Chart (found in the PRINT PAGES section of this curriculum).

If students do not have a lot of experience identifying various timbres of instruments, tell them what the instrument is before listening. If they have some experience identifying various instrument timbres, make it a guessing game.

Timbre is often described as either “dark” or “bright.” Other adjectives, such as dull or sharp, work well. Sometimes students will use words associated with the materials from which an instrument is made (such as metal). If necessary, do some pre-listening to help develop some common vocabulary.

Reinforce instrument awareness by asking students to draw a picture of the instrument they hear. Eliminate the picture element if it’s not age-appropriate, or modify the third box to ask students to identify the instrument family as well.

- For older students:
  - › Explore the science of timbre. Two factors heavily influence the timbre of an instrument: 1) the source of the vibration and 2) the shape of the instrument. [Here](#) is a short, easy-to-understand YouTube video that gives a lot of information in a short amount of time.

## LEARNING CHECKLIST

- I can differentiate timbres through active listening.
- I can identify and describe elements that create contrasting performances of the same musical selection.
- I can apply teacher-provided criteria to evaluate music selections, citing specific elements and characteristics.

**KEY WORD** timbre

## PERFORM movement alone and with others to demonstrate awareness of timbre.

Context: This activity focuses in on one piece of music: Dmitri Shostakovich's Concerto for Trumpet and Piano. You can find the audio for this on the [Color in Music—Germaine Tailleferre Lesson Plan Audio](#) playlist. The following paragraphs outline a few different ways to present and explore this piece with your students. Feel free to vary, adjust or combine activities as needed.

- Explain that the Concerto for Trumpet and Piano by Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich is a great piece to explore and respond to different timbres. Tell students there are three distinct timbres in this piece: the piano, the trumpet and the string section of an orchestra.

Play the provided audio of the work. Using the TRUMPET, PIANO and STRING SECTION images from the PRINT PAGES (found at the end of this curriculum), ask students to point to the appropriate image when they hear the respective timbre of that instrument. Of course sometimes they will hear more than one at a time, so sometimes they will point to two or three at once. If you use small versions of the images or put them together on one sheet, each student can do this independently.

- Extend this activity with a game of Orchestra Charades. Divide the classroom into three sections: trumpets, pianos and strings.

Play the Shostakovich piece again, asking each group to pantomime playing their assigned instrument when they hear its timbre. Help groups who have to wait a long time enjoy the suspense of listening carefully until they enter.

Add the additional step of appointing a conductor to cue each of these groups for each entry.

## LEARNING CHECKLIST

- I can respond to and demonstrate awareness of different timbres through listening and movement.

**KEY WORD** timbre

## CREATE and PERFORM a found-object composition exploring three very different timbres.

Context: This composition activity provides an opportunity for students to combine various timbres and to start thinking about layers of timbre without requiring full music literacy or knowledge of traditional notation. Integrate any elements of traditional knowledge you feel appropriate for your classroom. The activities outlined below describe actual composition, with decision-making and preservation of ideas through alternative notation practice. The activity can also be adjusted to be largely improvisation-based. The lesson as written is best broken up over several class periods. Adjust as needed based on your own schedule. For specific ideas for accommodations or modifications, contact Katie Condon at [kcondon@mpr.org](mailto:kcondon@mpr.org).

- Rock, Paper, Scissors

Before teaching this lesson, gather an assortment of rocks, different kinds of paper and classroom-safe scissors.

Ask for a show of hands: Who knows how to play Rock, Paper, Scissors? Chances are many or most of your students will know—consider selecting a volunteer to give a brief demonstration. Deep knowledge of the game, and agreement on specific rules, is not necessary for this composition exercise.

Begin by pointing out that each object has a very different timbre. Of course we might not think of any of these objects as traditional instruments, but they can all produce sounds. Facilitate some exploration of the various ways each object can make a sound. For example, you might ask how many different ways you could make a sound with a piece of paper. Here's a non-comprehensive list:

- › Crumpling
- › Small tears made slowly
- › A big, fast rip, tearing the paper into two pieces
- › Waving it in the air

Experiment with different kinds of paper—construction paper, notebook paper or cardstock. Make sure your rock collection includes rocks of various shapes, sizes and densities.

After a thorough exploration of the various sounds created by each object, tell students that notated music is essentially directions that a composer gives to performers. Explain that they will compose a piece for rock, paper and scissors. Provide them with a ROCK, PAPER SCISSORS template to organize their musical ideas. (See PRINT PAGES for a printable version of this template.)

Put students in groups of three (or six, with each part doubled) and give them an adequate supply of rocks, paper and scissors. They must:

1. Create directions for each item.
2. Put those directions in the appropriate box in the template.
3. Decide who plays what object.
4. Rehearse their composition.
5. Perform for the classroom.

A few tips to help facilitate the composition process:

- › Give clear benchmarks and time guidelines to keep groups on track. Based on your schedule—and whether or not you use this lesson in one classroom session or split it up over several sessions—assign each numbered item above an amount of time. Keep track and give notice: “Five more minutes for rehearsal...” etc.
- › Encourage integration of prior knowledge and well-developed skills (more on this below).
- › If time permits, model the process and create a sample composition performance together with students.
- › Go over some good protocol for group collaboration (see bullet points below).

As students rehearse for their classroom performance, here are a handful of ideas to promote a successful performance. Writing these on the board for easy reference may help guide student collaboration:

- › Starting and stopping together can be tricky. Assign someone to count off so that all players begin together.
- › Practice beginning together several times.
- › Practice ending together several times.
- › Look at each other and move together with a pulse. These things help performers stay together during performance.
- › Using a repeated pattern (ostinato) is an easy and effective way to compose music when you don't have a lot of time for composition or rehearsal.
- › Sometimes simple is better.
- › Making music together takes teamwork! Encourage and support your teammates and keep a positive attitude.
- › Practicing a lot helps build confidence.

As noted above, encourage integration of prior knowledge as appropriate. The general template is very open and can be used to accommodate any age. Perhaps very young learners will simply put a number in each open box, signifying the number of times they will tap (or rip, or snip) their object.

For more advanced students or those with some music literacy, you might consider making a list of required elements, such as:

- › Time signature
- › Tempo markings
- › Dynamic markings
- › Rests
- › Specific note values
- › Repeat signs

Here are two sample compositions:

<b>ROCK</b>	<p>Tap 2 Rocks Together <u>10</u> Times with a steady beat:</p> <p>1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 9 · 10</p>
<b>PAPER</b>	<p>Use your finger to flick a piece of paper. play this pattern with a steady beat:</p> <p><u>flick</u> · wait · <u>flick</u> · wait · <u>flick</u> · wait · <u>flick</u> · wait · <u>flick</u> · wait</p>
<b>SCISSORS</b>	<p>Play this pattern while snipping a scissors and saying these words:</p> <p><u>Rock</u> · <u>Paper</u> · <u>Scissors</u> · <u>SHOO!</u> <u>Rock</u> · <u>PAPER</u> · <u>SCISSORS</u> · <u>SHOO!</u></p>

<b>ROCK</b> Tap 2 Rocks Together	2 4 S x x Rest tap-tap	S x x Rest tap-tap	— — Rest Rest	S x x Rest tap-tap	<sup>3</sup> x x x <sup>3</sup> x x x strawberry strawberry	x S Tap Rest
<b>PAPER</b>	2 4 ~~~~~ crumple	~~~~~ paper gently				S x Rest <u>RIP!</u>
<b>SCISSORS</b>	2 4 x S snip-rest	x S snip-rest	x x snip-snip	x S snip-Rest	x x snip-snip	x x snip-snip <u>SNIP!</u>

\*Notice the addition of vertical lines to help promote vertical alignment of each part.

\*Notice that words/syllables are written under some of the notation. In these cases, the text is a mix between the action a player must perform (“Snip”) or the musical symbol (“Rest”). In some cases, you might encourage the use of a word you use in the classroom to learn a certain rhythm (“Strawberry” for a triplet). Saying their part along with performance may help students successfully stay on track as they perform a layered piece.

## LEARNING CHECKLIST

- I can collaborate to create an original artistic work.
- I can generate and develop original artistic ideas using a limited set of rhythms and timbres.
- I can develop and refine artistic techniques and work for performance.
- I can collaborate as part of an ensemble to refine and prepare music for presentation or performance.

## KEY WORDS timbre, ostinato, compose, improvise

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Historical and biographical information

The Class Notes video *Color in Music—Germaine Tailleferre* touches on a bit of the biography of French composer Germaine Tailleferre. Here are a few easy-to-understand, easy-to-remember details that will enhance the viewing experience.

- › She lived from 1892 until 1983.
- › She was born and died in France. She lived in the United States for a little while during World War II.
- › When she was born, her last name was Taillefesse, but she changed it to Tailleferre after an argument with her father, who did not support her work as a composer.
- › She was part of a group of composers known as “Les Six.” The other members of “Les Six” were Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Georges Auric and Louis Durey. These composers often worked with other artists, including painters, filmmakers, and dancers.

Scroll down to the LES SIX section of the [Color in Music—Germaine Tailleferre Lesson Plan Audio](#) playlist to hear a sample of these composers’ works.

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**PRINT PAGES**



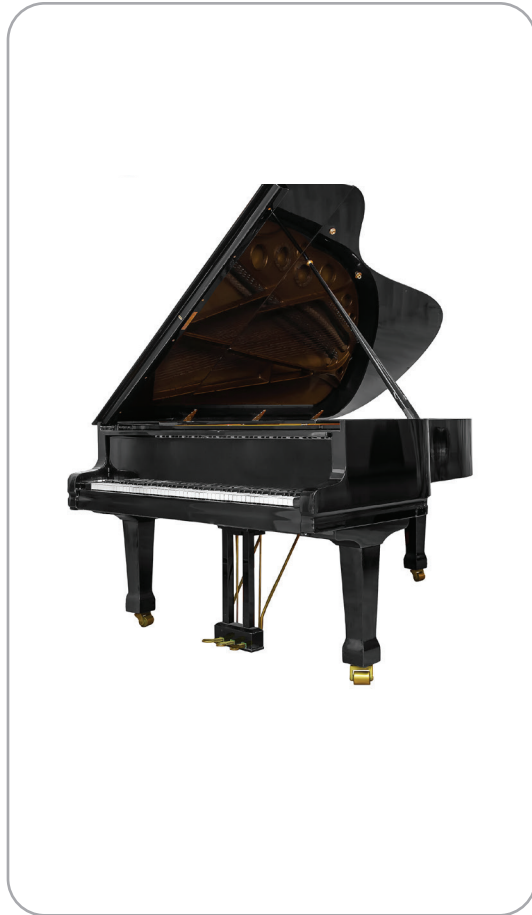
## TIMBRE COMPARISON CHART

TIMBRE COMPARISON CHART		
Instrument	Description of Sound	Picture of instrument

TRUMPET PRINT PAGE



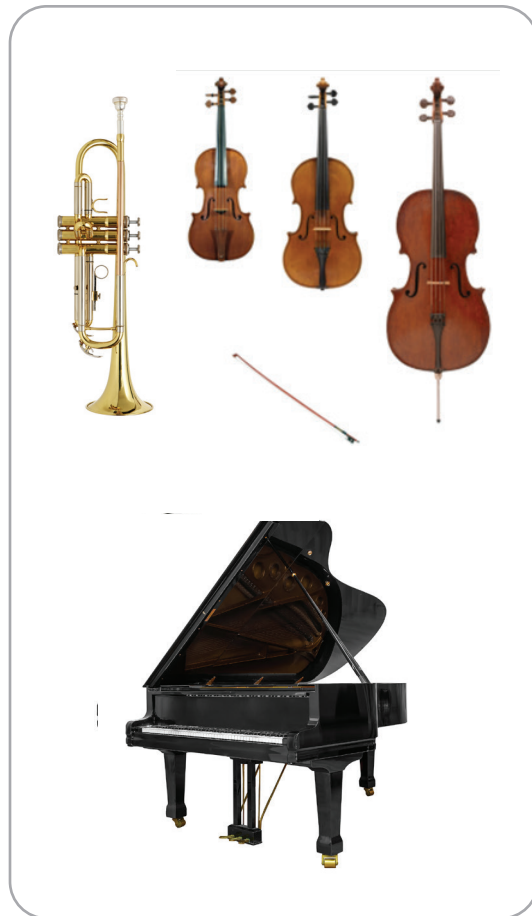
PIANO PRINT PAGE



# STRING INSTRUMENTS PRINT PAGE



TRUMPET/PIANO/STRING INSTRUMENTS PRINT PAGE



## ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS TEMPLATE

<b>Rock</b>	
<b>Paper</b>	
<b>Scissors</b>	