

CLASS NOTES

A Recipe for Emotion in Music

(Music & Meaning Part II)

Curriculum Guide

This curriculum guide is designed to help you use the MPR “Class Notes” video *A Recipe for Emotion in Music* as a teaching tool in your classroom —specifically to help teach the Minnesota Academic standards highlighted below.

Teachers are often challenged in their efforts to meet Minnesota Music Standard 4.1.3.3.2: *Describe how music communicates meaning*. Music is an especially powerful medium for communicating both specific as well as ambiguous or “mixed” emotional states, and for conveying an endlessly rich spectrum of subjective and objective meaning. But compared with many visual and literary arts, which frequently employ overtly representational means, music prompts responses in us that can be relatively difficult to identify and articulate.

A Recipe for Emotion in Music is preceded by the companion video *A Journey Through Musical Emotion*, in which four musical examples—from works by Bernard Herrmann, Claude Debussy, Frédéric Chopin, and Gustav Holst—help establish the capacity of music to communicate and induce emotion. Using the same four examples, *A Recipe for Emotion in Music* builds upon that precedent by exploring *what* tools and strategies these works’ composers use, and *how* they coordinate them to achieve emotional impact.

As its title suggests, *A Recipe for Emotion in Music* approaches these concepts with an extended metaphor for a comforting and familiar activity to most children: baking cookies. The setting is a kitchen, and various baking tools are assigned names that correspond with both musical terms and the above works’ suggested emotional effects.

The video’s objective is twofold—

1. To help students identify various musical tools used by composers to yield emotional effects, and to give students a preliminary sense of how these tools interact with each other;
2. To reinforce students’ own emotional connections with music, while suggesting also that not all listeners respond uniformly to the same music.

Below you will find a copy of the Minnesota Music Standards. The standards which are the focus of this video are highlighted in yellow.

2008 Revised Minnesota Academic Standards in the Arts

4-5	Music	4.1.1.3.1	1. Artistic Foundations	1. Demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of the arts area.	1. Describe the elements of music including melody, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, tone color, texture, form and their related concepts.
		4.1.1.3.2			2. Describe how the elements and their related concepts such as pitch, tempo, canon, and ABA are used in the performance, creation or response to music.
	Music	4.1.3.3.2		3. Demonstrate understanding of the personal, social, cultural and historical contexts that influence the arts areas.	2. Describe how music communicates meaning.
4-5		4.4.1.3.1	4. Artistic Process: Respond or Critique	1. Respond to or critique a variety of creations and performances using the artistic foundations.	1. Justify personal interpretations and reactions to a variety of musical works or performances.

Definition of Terms:

TIME SIGNATURE or METER: Time signature indicates the number of beats in a given measure, as well as what type (based on length) of note or rest gets the beat.

DYNAMICS: The volume of music—its loudness or softness.

TEMPO: The speed of music—its fastness or slowness; strictness or looseness; rate of acceleration or deceleration.

HARMONY: How different notes sound together at the same time.

MELODY: A series of single notes that is musically pleasing, recognizable, and/or memorable.

INSTRUMENTATION: The instruments used by a composer in a musical work.

ARTICULATION: The shape of each note in length, attack, and intensity (such as *staccato*: short and separated; or *legato*: smooth and connected).

All four movements accompanied with impressionist artwork:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGcEYALnk8s>

1. Prélude
2. Menuet
3. Clair de lune
4. Passepied

Each movement evokes strong imagery and may spark storytelling among your students. If time allows, it would be good to play all four movements for your students.

- Frédéric Chopin —*Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 35* —III. Marche Funebre
In this video, the score to the movement scrolls as the music plays, allowing students to read the music in real time, and offering you an opportunity to identify various elements within it (dynamics, clef, time signature, notes, chords, rhythms, etc.): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D05AB8xs7qA> -
- Gustav Holst - *The Planets*—IV. *Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity*
A performance of the Chicago Symphony <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nz0b4STz1lo>

You can also find a list of music that evokes sadness at the link below. What may have been the composers' intent or a common response to music may not be the same for each student. Let students know that music may effects each of us in a different way. The most important thing for students is to find music they respond to and begin to discover how and why that connection happens.

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/deceptivecadence/2010/09/27/130157375/the-saddest-music-in-the-world-7-tunes-to-make-you-tear-up>

Highlighted elements for focus in each musical selection

Let's look at each piece of music in this video and identify some of the musical elements the composer used to create the mood or effect in the piece.

1. Bernard Herrmann—*Psycho: A Suite for Strings*

DYNAMICS: The composer creates tension and suspense by starting at a loud volume and intensifying it. The entrance of new instruments builds the sound and the suspense.

INSTRUMENTATION: The composer uses high strings to create a scream-like effect, almost as if the violins are shrieking "Help! Help!" The low notes from double basses and cellos, on the other hand, contrast the strings with a groaning sound. Tension is created by very high and very low sounds happening at the same time.

METER: There are 3 beats between each entrance in this excerpt making it 3/4 time. It may be that the composer chose a meter which lacked the symmetry people naturally find comforting. (We have two arms, legs, eyes etc.) 3/4 time may put the listeners ear off-balance in this piece.

TEMPO: The fast, driving tempo with frequent repetition creates anxiety and the sound of an approach.

HARMONY: The composer puts notes together that clash in their sound, creating dissonance.

MELODY: Here, the *lack* of melodic development combined with driving and dissonant repetition unsettles the listener.

ARTICULATION: The composer uses staccato on the high strings with clean, sharp accents that sound prickly and uncomfortable.

2. Claude Debussy –*The Suite Bergamasque*—III. Clair de Lune

DYNAMICS: The composer uses dynamics that remain even and unchanging. This gives a smooth and steady feel to the music.

TEMPO: The composer uses an Adagio tempo, a graceful pace. This is much like our body in a calm state or the pulse of a resting heartbeat. It creates a sense of serenity and ease.

METER: This movement's time signature—9/8— allows a lilting and timeless *rubato* feel much like wind slowly moving branches in a summer breeze. *Rubato* means an elastic tempo or slightly faster moving to slightly slower.

HARMONY: The composer uses major intervals with little dissonance.

MELODY: The recognizable melody here is a sustained liquid flow of unbroken sound. It is slow and appealing enough to remember after just a few hearings.

INSTRUMENTATION: This arrangement combines the flute and guitar in the middle of their range. The flute has a sustained sound and the guitar has warm articulation on mellow strings. The flute gives a comforting voice-like quality.

ARTICULATION: The legato flow on the flute imparts a sense of security because we know we're not going to be surprised by sudden changes.

3. Frédéric Chopin —*Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 35* —III. Marche Funèbre

HARMONY: The composer creates a somber mood through the use of a minor key and minor melodic intervals.

DYNAMICS: The composer uses soft, quiet dynamics that remain unchanged throughout.

TEMPO: The composer indicates *Largo*, which allows a plodding pace, much like a labored march.

METER: 4/4 – The duple meter enables the slow march-like feel.

MELODY: The composer creates a very simple melody with repeated notes and motifs that repeat at different intervals. He also repeats notes effectively, giving the impression of solemn tolling bells.

INSTRUMENTATION: The solo piano here pares down the mournful mood conveyed by the music. The effect is simple and direct.

4. Gustav Holst - *The Planets*—IV. *Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity*

METER 3/4 – The composer uses the 3/4 time signature as a happy waltz—playful and lilting.

TEMPO—The tempo is *Allegro giocoso*, a fast and humorous tempo—lively and happy.

INSTRUMENTATION—The use of the glockenspiel lends a bright, festive sound. Trumpets create a sense of fanfare. The tambourine implies a dancing waltz.

DYNAMICS— In this movement, the dynamics crescendo as instruments are added. This builds anticipation and the festive atmosphere intensifies.

HARMONY—The major key is uplifting and even at times euphoric.

Classroom activities that support the targeted standards:

Standard

Describe the elements of music including melody, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, tone color, texture, form and their related concepts.

Describe how the elements and their related concepts such as pitch, tempo, canon, and ABA are used in the performance, creation or response to music.

Class Activities

3. Have the students listen to the *Psycho* theme and lightly pat the beat on their laps. Then have them count the beats between entrances to see if they can figure out the time signature. Something changes every three beats with the entrance of a new instrument or change of notes. See if your students can discover a time signature of 3/4.
4. Play various intervals on the piano for your students and have them share how those intervals make them feel. This can be a great introduction to the concept of dissonance in music much like what we hear in the *Psycho* Theme. Compare to the tritone with the open fourth or fifth as an example.
5. Play major and minor chords on the piano for your students. Ask them to use adjectives to describe how these triads make them feel. This can be an entrée into harmony and the minor key of the Chopin or the major tonality of the Holst.

Standard

Describe how music communicates meaning.

Justify personal interpretations and reactions to a variety of musical works or performances.

Class Activities

- Listen to each of these four works in their entirety with your students. Take the discovery activities from the first video in this series as the students wrote stories, shared their feelings, or moved to the music. Now have them identify specific music elements that inspire or connect with their creative activity. If there is a specific emotion, mood, or meaning they identify, what happens in the music to bring this out?
- Have students listen to the following different versions of this piece and ask them to describe what they like more about a specific version. Have them use musical terms to explain their answers.

Claire de Lune

Full Orchestral Version: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEITKhbnQxU>

Solo piano http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvFH_6DNRCY

John Williams Guitar http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1i_2HYmJkA

Clarinet Quartet http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaUUt_XqN-Y

Tomita electronic version <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcDxw6O1oRQ>

classicalMPR



classicalmpr.org/education