

THE SINGING REVOLUTION



Subject: Music & Art

The Meaning in the Music: Emotional Connections

Aim / Essential Question

How does music inspire emotional response from an audience?

Overview

Composers and artists often write to capture a certain emotional perspective. In classical and orchestral music, the conductor helps communicate these emotions to the musicians, and, in turn, the audience. This lesson will consider how music can convey emotion, as students examine a clip and lyrics from *The Singing Revolution*.

Materials & Technology

- A brief, teacher-selected recording of a song
(Optional: www.freeplaymusic.com)
- Song Festival Performance: “Ilus maa/Beautiful Land”
(from Disc Three / Section 5: Song Festival / Laulupidu)
- Class set of the lyrics of “Ilus maa/Beautiful Land”
(from Disc Three / Section 5: Song Festival / Laulupidu / Printable Documents)
- Class set of Word Association Chart and discussion questions for student groups
(below)
- Index cards or small paper slips for “ticket out the door.”
- An audio player to play the teacher-selected recording
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period.

Objectives

Students will:

- Listen to several examples of music and associate emotional words and phrases.
- Compare associated emotional words with the lyrics of “Ilus Maa/Beautiful Land.”
- Evaluate the benefits of major vs. minor keys, and the differences in the emotions each conveys.
- Discuss the emotions conveyed through gestures, facial expressions, and harmonies along with the music and lyrics.

Instruction

Opening: Bell Ringer / Do Now

Select a brief (2 minute) but evocative section of a song to play for the class. The choice could be a relaxing piece of piano music, an energetic rock song, or a driving hip-hop beat; just take care to choose a piece that demonstrates a clear emotional tone, (whether it’s sad and somber, angry, exciting and energetic, relaxing and calm, etc.). If a recording is not readily available, the website www.freeplaymusic.com offers free MP3 files in a wide variety of styles and keys for use in non-commercial projects.

Students use Section I of the Word Association Chart to list five words which relate to how they feel while listening to the music. After playing the song, ask students to share examples of their emotional words and record them on the board. Use this whole group discussion to highlight connected and similar answers, and to provide students an example that music often unites an audience by evoking similar emotions.

Activities

1. Review the difference between major and minor keys. If possible, play examples of minor chords/scales on piano, guitar or other available instrument, (or use a recording). Lead a brief discussion in response to the examples. Ask students what emotions do the different notes inspire? Do the emotions change depending on whether it's a minor or major note? What is the benefit of a minor key? What is the benefit of a major key? What could a composer gain from changing between minor and major keys in a song?
2. Students watch the 2004 Song Festival Performance, "Ilus maa/Beautiful Land," from *The Singing Revolution*. Before starting the clip, instruct students to pay attention not only to the music but also to the gestures and motions of the conductor, as well as the facial expressions of the various singers. As students are watching, they should use Section II of the Word Association Chart to list words and phrases which represent how they feel during the beginning, middle, and end of the song (distinguished by the key changes).
3. After listening to the song, students read the lyrics to, "Ilus maa/Beautiful Land" and compare their word associations to the corresponding sections of lyrics. Students independently answer question III on the Word Association chart; "Did your associated words offer any insight into why the composer would pair this music with these words? How do your words connect with the song lyrics?"
4. Students work in small groups, (pairs or trios), to discuss and answer the discussion questions relating to the clip and lyrics. If there is not enough class time to complete these responses, students may finish for homework.

Close: Application / Summary

Distribute index cards or small slips of paper for students to write one paragraph answering the aim/essential question as a, "ticket out the door." Collect these at the conclusion of class to check for student understanding of the lesson.

Word Association Chart

- I. In the box below, list 5 (or more) words or short phrases which relate to how you feel during while listening to the song.

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- II. In the box below, list words and phrases which relate to how you feel during the three sections of “Ilus Maa/Beautiful Land.” The section changes correspond with the key changes in the music.

Beginning:

Middle:

End:

- III. Did your associated words offer any insight into why the composer would pair this music with these words? How do your words connect with the song lyrics? _____

[illegible]

Discussion Questions

1. Compare your answers to question III on the Word Association Chart, and after discussing, why do you think the composer chose to change keys in the middle of the song, and then back to the original key at the end? What emotional effect do the changes add to the music?
2. Consider the expressions of the different singers who had close ups during the video clip. What do you notice about their expressions while singing? Is there a difference between young and old singers? Can you tell what the singers are feeling? How?
3. The conductor is quite animated. How can you tell that he's emotionally connected to the music? Which of his actions most stick out in your memory? Do his mannerisms enhance the emotional effect of the music? Why or why not?
4. Consider the size of the choir and how defined the harmonies are throughout the song. Does the harmony enhance the emotional power of the music? How? Is it inspiring to see so many people singing together? Why or why not?