

# **Applying emotion to high school band performance**

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## Abstract

In my lesson, students learned ways to connect emotionally with their audience through shared experience. In Aaron Perrine's work, *Tears of St. Lawrence*, Perrine's inspiration for his work was watching a meteor shower with his young daughter. After listening to and reflecting on music my students felt a connection to, they discovered that using dynamics and rubato will help add emotion and audience connection to their music.

I have developed more as a teacher in this program by putting more thought into my teaching philosophy, and the contemplating the reasons I enjoy teaching daily, supported by the ideas of the philosophers I studied. When learning about these philosophers, I found that I strongly align with David Elliot's teachings and promote the idea that all students can be creative music makers with the encouragement from their teacher to explore improvisation, composing, and arranging. I encourage my concert band students to discover improvisation in our warm up time by modeling a musical pattern of their creation and having the band echo that same pattern back. In learning about Elliot Eisner, it helped me realize that even if some of my students will not continue with music after high school, their time in my class performing music will give them a source of pleasure and encourage higher thinking skills. By learning about specific music education philosophy, I know what my short term and long term goals are with my students and how I want them to grow as a result of participating in my classes during their time in high school.

My overall knowledge as a band director has improved during my time in this program. I enjoyed learning about the history and development of wind band literature and about repertoire I was not familiar with as a musician. Another development of my teaching has been the organization skills learned in my classes. I found new ways to prioritize paperwork and have a

thorough band handbook to cover policies and expectations as well as useful information on instrument brands and accessories and recommended private teachers. I also organized my marching band task list into a monthly task list so that I do not feel overwhelmed at any one point in the year.

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## **Chapter 1 - Music Education: Creating More than a Well-Rounded Individual**

Schooling in America hopes to provide the foundation for students to become well-rounded individuals through the subjects they study. Some individuals may view music as a hobby or as an extra-curricular activity and not as a subject that needs to be taught in school. Music needs to exist in the school curriculum and not as an extra activity that students participate in due to the many benefits to students. Music education is important because it creates well-rounded human beings who are aware of their culture, are able to identify and strive for quality musicianship, and reaches students emotionally through performance in a way that other subjects cannot.

The ultimate value and purpose of education that should guide decision makers as they make curricular plans is to create a well-rounded individual, lifelong learner, and contributing member of society. Students need to learn a variety of different disciplines to help them understand how the world works and how they can take part in it. By learning about the arts, math, science, literature, language, and history in school, students absorb information from these subjects to help their understanding of the world and their communities. These subjects also interact with one another to create new connections, new fields of study, and new opportunities for learning. Additionally, there are many layers and dimensions to the conflicts and opportunities people encounter, both in their personal and professional lives, so to be prepared in only one concentration and only one possible solution tied to their one area of knowledge is not practical. Creating those well-rounded individuals assures that the students will take the knowledge they learn and create solutions to problems, tools for success, and hobbies for

enjoyment. Many teachers hope to create life-long learners, whether it be through higher educational institutions or just a fierce curiosity to learn something that the student did not know before, and seek out the answers and experiences to accompany it.

Music education exists as an outlet and as a medium for students to perform, create, and ultimately experience music as a way of expression and tradition. According to the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), performers make interpretive decisions based on their understanding of context and expressive intent (2014). An advanced musician in an ensemble will demonstrate how understanding the style, genre, and context of a varied repertoire of music informs prepared and improvised performances as well as performers' technical skill to connect with the audience (p. 3). It is important to give students a place to channel their creativity. Giving students the chance to compose or improvise a piece that has never existed before is a great way for them to combine their knowledge of what they consider to be good music with what they want to hear into one composition. From there, the student can share their experience through having their composition performed for an audience. Students can further their musical awareness through listening to music being performed at the highest level by professional groups who are demonstrating ideal musicianship. By knowing what good musicians sound like, students can raise their expectations of their own musicianship.

Studying and performing music from different parts of history gives students a look into what the composer may have been experiencing at that time as well as the world historic events taking place at that time. For example, composer Frank Ticheli was commissioned to write *An American Elegy* for Columbine High School after its tragic school shooting. In the program notes, Ticheli (2000) writes, "*An American Elegy* is, above all, an expression of hope. It was composed in memory of those who lost their lives at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999,

and to honor the survivors. It is offered as a tribute to their great strength and courage in the face of a terrible tragedy. I hope the work can also serve as one reminder of how fragile and precious life is and how intimately connected we all are as human beings.” Music is an important part of history, culture, and tradition. It is important for students to learn about the folk songs that have paved the way for the music students listen to today. In America, it is important for concert band students to learn about marches. Composers like John Philip Sousa and Karl King were very prolific composers of marches and their music is still performed widely today because they celebrate a tradition of composing music to commemorate an event and their music is pleasing to the audience.

The aspects of music education that set it apart from other educational disciplines is the means of expression and creativity. It is difficult to express oneself through history, math, or science since these subjects are more fact-based instead of interpretation-based. Much of my feelings about music education aligns with philosopher David Elliott’s teachings. Elliott (2014) writes, “The auditory events we call music engage and challenge our powers of consciousness (attention, cognition, emotion, intention, and memory) on many levels: pieces of music are multidimensional challenges and therefore, thought-and-feeling generators” (p. 8). This thought shows that music is so much more than reading notes and moving fingers and connects with the performer and the audience on emotional and intellectual levels. Additionally, “The process of learning and ‘entering into’ unfamiliar Musics activates our self-examination and the personal reconstruction of our relationships, assumptions, and preferences about other people, other cultures, and other ways of thinking and valuing” (Elliott, 2014, p. 9-10). Outside of expression and creativity, music encourages students to become well-rounded individuals because they become self-aware and discover who they are as a person. Philosopher Elliot Eisner (1998) also



supports this idea, as he wrote, “When we think about arts not simply as objects that afford pleasure, but as firms that develop thinking skills and enlarge understanding, their significance as a part of our educational programs become clear.” (p. 64).

The experience and aesthetic nature of music also sets music apart from the other disciplines. Philosopher Bennett Reimer (2002) describes the aesthetic nature of performance nearly perfectly, “The key aspect in anything that can be called art is that the person creating it, no matter what that person thinks about, feels, or believes, absorbs all of that into the materials being used, into their look, their sound, their intricate, meaningful embodiment of interactive forces that make the resulting experience special, or significant, *as a function of that embodiment*. Such experience makes the ordinary extra-ordinary, the usual unusual, the common-place vivid, whether a simple creation by a child, a complex achievement by a master, a casual encounter by a spectator, or an engrossed involvement of a connoisseur.” (p. 69). This means every musical experience is unique and special, no matter the difficulty level of the music or experience of the performer. It is difficult to replicate this experience outside of the arts.

Students need to perform to the best of their abilities and they need to be able to identify what good music sounds like by listening to high quality professional musicians. By developing their listening abilities, students can also increase their cognitive abilities. David Elliott includes listenership in his music philosophy when describing the cognitive coin, “Listenership involves the covert (mental) construction of intramusical relationships (within works) and intermusical relationships (between works) through the same kinds of knowing that make up musicianship: procedural, formal, informal impressionistic, and supervisory music knowing” (Elliott, 2014, p. 9). When students can identify ideal musical qualities through musicianship, they will create

goals and work to sound like the quality of musician they are listening to and push themselves towards higher expectations of themselves and their classmates.

Educators need to teach students about a variety of music and its value to society. “To achieve the values of music, music teachers ought to emphasize the interpretive aspects of music as a performing and improvising art and that composing, arranging, and conducting, all of which demand keen listening, should be taught frequently and in direct relation to a reasonable diversity of musical styles during the course of our students’ musical education” (Elliot, 2014, p. 8). It is important to teach world music to students to help them identify with their own culture and ancestry as well as the cultures and ancestries with which they are less familiar to gain insight on another part of the world. Teachers must program a variety of music to keep students interested and to create an interesting performance. Contrasting pieces show that the students are able to play a variety of pieces. By teaching different styles, teachers can also teach various musical aspects unique to each style, such as stylistic articulation, note duration, dynamic contrast, and tempo.

The classroom learning environment needs to be friendly, safe, and serve as an opportunity for expression with support from classmates and the teacher. The professional responsibilities of the music educator are to provide guidance and encouragement to students, a positive learning environment, and a variety of content. According to philosopher David Elliott (2014), “All students can learn to be creative music makers, but doing so requires that teachers allow and encourage students to make creative decisions while they are learning to perform and conduct and that they teach students the various kinds of knowledge they need in order to improvise, compose, and arrange music in several (i.e. a reasonable range of) musical styles.” (p. 7). This means that the teacher provides the tools the students need to be successful and giving

them the creative freedom they need to enjoy music without being told if they are right or wrong. As previously discussed, music can be a highly emotional experience and teachers must teach with the students' feelings in mind. While criticism is a great tool to improve mistakes, music teachers should be sensitive to their students and be sure not to discourage them in their journey to peak musicianship. Honest, positive feedback is essential in encouraging students to continue in the arts.

Students learn so much more from music than notes and rhythms. Through music, students learn how to channel their creativity and expression, realize and enjoy the beauty of the arts, learn about their culture through the music of their predecessors, and appreciate tradition. Their teachers are helping them experience music through composing, improvising, performing, and listening. Student musicians are learning how to become not only a well-rounded individual, but great human beings, making music absolutely necessary in schools.

### **How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching**

My teaching philosophy is reflected in the lesson I will describe and present through discovering creativity by improvising, alone and with others, in the warm up and discussing emotional connection to concert band music based on emotional connection to popular songs. In the warm up, when students improvised on the first five notes of the Bb scale, I hoped I provided a safe environment for students to be confident in improvising without ridicule from their classmates or from their director. Much of my teaching philosophy aligns with David Elliot's teachings, which promotes music as thought and feeling generators. My lesson focuses on bringing out the emotion in *Tears of St. Lawrence*.

## Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan

### Lesson Plan

[Supplemental Files for Lesson Plan](#)

#### **Lesson Plan Format for an Ensemble Rehearsal**

***Prior Knowledge/Skills*** (What do already know and can do?):

Students have been working on *Tears of St. Lawrence* by Aaron Perrine for about 2 months. They can play the notes and rhythms but are having trouble putting emotion behind the music.

**Rehearsal Objective** (What will your student's be able to do as a result of this rehearsal ***with you?***)

By the end of my rehearsal. Students should be able to draw from experience to use emotion in their music through dynamics and phrasing.

**Assessment of the Rehearsal** (How will ***you*** know if your ***students can do*** what they need to?)

I will assess by listening as well as peer assessment to help them discover if they are performing as dramatically as they need to perform.

**Modifications/Accommodations  
needed:**

None

***Instructional materials, resources, & Technology:***

***Tonal Energy app for tuning, Tears of St. Lawrence by Aaron Perrine, sound system, Spotify playlist***

**Rehearsal Plan** (A step by step plan for the rehearsal - with timing - that leads to your objective.)

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Purpose of Activity</u>	<u>Sequence</u>	<u>Assessment</u>
1:00	Announcements	Get students information	Tell the students the announcements in order of how soon they are.	They show up to jazz band rehearsal, our concert, Large Group State Contest
10:00	Warm Up	To improve ear training and encourage students' creativity, centering activity, tuning	Full Bb scale, then students improvise on the first 5 notes and the rest of the band repeats, tuning,	Listen to hear if students can correctly repeat the pattern back, listen for using the first 5 notes of the Bb scale
7:00	Listen to music	Help students feel emotion	Play music with increasingly important ties to their experience, based on what I know about my students	Engage students in conversation about what they feel when they listen to the music.
5:00	Watch video of meteor shower with <i>Tears of St. Lawrence</i> and discuss	Try to replicate what Aaron Perrine was feeling while watching the meteor shower	Play <i>Tears of St. Lawrence</i> on the sound system while I play a video of the meteor shower on the smart board	Discuss with students how they would describe the meteor shower and how the group performing made their music sound like a meteor shower

20:00	Rehearse <i>Tears of St. Lawrence</i> , focusing on dynamics and rubato	Since we discussed these musical elements as emotional, we need to practice adding these into our music	I will add rubato and emphasize dynamics in my conducting, ask students to focus on rubato and conducting when playing.	Discuss with students if they felt successful at adding emotion to <i>Tears of St. Lawrence</i> and how we can improve with this piece moving forward.
2:00	Wrap Up	Create a plan for future improvement to keep the momentum of what we worked on going.	Discuss strategies on what to focus on when the students practice this piece on their own	Check for improvement in future private lessons and rehearsals

## Reflection on Lesson Plan

My goal for this lesson was for my students to achieve emotion in *Tears of St. Lawrence* by Aaron Perrine through performance by using rubato and dynamics. Prior to rehearsing *Tears of St. Lawrence*, students experimented with improvisation by creating melodies using the first five notes of the Bb scale and then the rest of the band would repeat what they heard using aural skills.

In the warm up to this lesson, students learned to listen to their fellow students in order to repeat the improvised line their classmate performed and used their knowledge of intervallic relations to play it back correctly. In the rehearsal, students learned how to create emotion in performance by making connections to popular music that made them feel emotion. They watched video of the 2013 Perseid meteor shower while listening to *Tears of St. Lawrence* and

were able to describe the compositional elements Aaron Perrine used to convey the emotions he felt while watching this meteor shower with his young daughter.

The instructional strategies I used in this lesson were a combination of interactive lecture and teacher-directed rehearsal. I presented information to the students and had a discussion with the class about how popular songs made them feel and what they can do to the music to help the audience feel what Aaron Perrine felt when he composed *Tears of St. Lawrence*. I asked the students to think of a time where the music completely captured the moment. I asked open ended follow up questions to transport the students back to that time in their thoughts— was it a shared experience? Who else was there to share the experience? I then asked them to think about the music that they would consider in a playlist to serve as a “soundtrack to their life” to switch their thinking from specific experiences to a collection of experiences. Before I played the popular songs, I asked students who wanted to share their feelings about the songs to raise their hand, and I would call on them to share their answer with the rest of the class. I would repeat what the student said to the rest of the class and nodded in acceptance of their answer. We also rehearsed the music in a teacher-directed rehearsal and worked on adding dynamics and rubato to the piece together.

I assessed their understanding of the lesson through their answers to the open-ended questioning and through listening during the rehearsal to hear whether or not they made the music feel more emotional through dynamics and rubato. I also chose a student to assess our dynamics by showing us with her arm when we were loud and when we were soft. I asked her in front of the class if we were successful with our dynamics and she was able to tell us our music was too loud or too soft with little in between.

I will continue to adjust this instruction moving forward by helping students through eye contact and more emotive conducting gestures. I record myself regularly via audio recording, but rarely with video recording, so seeing how little I helped the band by giving them reassurance and confidence through eye contact in several instances was pretty painful. I need to tighten up my transitions, in that I could have had my laptop connected to video before playing the video, as the students begin to lose focus when they are not occupied with a task. I want to practice more exercises with rubato if it is a focus of the rehearsal instead of addressing it minimally within the rehearsal. If I address an issue, I need to find ways to fix it. For example, I addressed with my student, Bailey, that the group played really loudly or softly and that there was no mezzo piano or mezzo forte, and then failed to rehearse mezzo piano and mezzo forte dynamics. By not reinforcing the mezzo piano and mezzo forte dynamics, the concept was not emphasized enough and was not utilized by the band. In hindsight, I wish I had gotten feedback from the composer, Aaron Perrine, on the compositional features that he used which he thought described the meteor shower properly to add to how the students would interpret the music.

This instruction expanded my thinking and enhanced my teaching by asking students to draw from their personal experiences with popular music to apply to a piece of concert band music. I enjoyed seeing the students light up when they heard a song that made them think of a good memory or experience and enjoyed their feedback on the popular music and how they made the connection to *Tears of St. Lawrence* when watching the meteor shower. I reflected on music that made me the most emotional and why and in creating this lesson, hope that my students will feel emotion in performing concert band literature. I also enjoyed hearing the students improvising during the warm up, because I hope that I provide a safe environment for students to both succeed and fail without the danger of being criticized.



## **Chapter 3 - Reflections**

Since starting the Kansas State University Masters' program, my teaching has improved in that I feel more confident in my abilities and I feel like I have more tools in my tool belt to fix problems. This semester, I tried a rehearsal just based on the B flat scale where students improvised on notes in the B flat scale and had their classmates repeat that measure. We switched seats so they could sit next to someone who does not play their instrument, so they could hear the ensemble from a different location in the room and next to an instrument they do not normally sit next to. I felt good about taking a risk on a rehearsal that was not structured similarly to other rehearsals and my students enjoyed a different structure that day as well. In my Advanced Woodwind Techniques class, I was able to obtain alternate finger positions for my clarinets and saxophones to help them with notes that have issues with intonation.

I also feel like my teaching has improved through writing my own music education philosophy and studying music education philosophers. By really thinking about what makes music education important to me, I was able to really believe in what I do on a daily basis and why I am excited to teach my students every day. I found that my beliefs align closely with David Elliot and Elliot Eisner. David Elliot teaches that music should be thought and feeling generators, so I encourage my students to play more than the notes and rhythms on the page, but to play the music with emotion and encourage the students to perform with the goal of causing the audience to feel the emotions the composer was trying to convey.

Developing my own music philosophy has also improved student learning in my classroom since starting the Masters' program at K-State. Writing my own music philosophy forced me to think about how I want my students to benefit from participating in my band. I truly feel that band should be fun and that participation in band helps to make a well-rounded

individual. Because of that, I have chosen pieces for my band with exciting percussion parts and tricky time signatures and rhythms that also sound energetic and fun to the audience so that the students enjoy playing those pieces and are more excited to practice them.

Student learning in my classroom has also grown through participation in History of the Wind Band. In that class, I had to write program notes for a concert that would show the history of wind bands. My band rehearsed and performed three of the pieces from my program notes this year and I was able to share what I learned through writing the program notes about these pieces. I enjoyed working on that project and am excited to perform more music from the composers in my program note project.

My thought process has changed and developed throughout my work in the Kansas State University Masters' program in that I take the time to plan ahead now instead of living in the moment: musically and organizationally. In Dr. Tracz's History of Wind Bands and Advanced Instrumental Rehearsal Techniques classes, I learned what to look for in selecting music for my ensembles and resources to help me find music that will best fit the instrumentation and skill level of my band. In addition to focusing on the music my band is performing for our next concert, I started giving out more difficult music for the following concert to my students so they would have more time to practice in advance and give myself a longer timeline to work on the difficult music.

In Organization and Administration of the School Music Program, I learned organizational techniques to help me prioritize my work better by working more efficiently. One of the projects for this class was to write a band handbook, which I had not updated in five years of teaching at my school. I was able to create a thorough handbook covering band policies and important dates, but also recommended instrument brands and accessories, private teachers, and

student leadership opportunities. It has become very helpful to reference when a parent objects to a decision reflected on a policy clearly stated in the handbook.

Previous to my time at K-State, I would not prioritize my tasks in a way that let me focus on the most urgent tasks first. In learning Dr. Tracz's Hot, Warm, and Cold organizational system, I can put the paperwork into categorized bins with "Hot" for urgent and important, "Warm" for somewhat urgent and important, and "Cold" for not urgent and important. Through this organizational process, I can see the amount of work that needs to be done within a general timeline, and can chip away at my work easily instead of wasting time on paperwork or projects that are not urgent or important. I also created a yearly marching band checklist to help me plan throughout the year for marching band season instead of waiting until the end of the current school year to start planning for the following year. The Masters' program at K-State has helped my thought process by helping me to optimize my time management to become less of a procrastinator and more of an efficient planner.

My classroom environment has developed since starting the Masters' program at K-State into a safe space where students can be themselves and make mistakes without fear of being ridiculed. Band is at the end of the day, which can be good and bad. Good in that my students have told me that they look forward to band all day; bad in that some of my students are exhausted by the time they get to my class and do not have the same amount of energy or enthusiasm for band than they would if it were a different time of day. Because of the different students' attitudes coming through the door, I feel it is important for me to strive for an upbeat attitude and to provide a learning environment where students have their outlet for creativity. This environment allows students to end the day on a positive note with a subject they really

look forward to or use band as an outlet for stress relief and time to be with others who with similar musical opportunities and goals.

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