

Chapter 2: Lesson Plan

2014 Music National Standards

In this lesson we used the standards of Create, Perform and Respond

Create: Students improvising, composing, or creating new musical ideas.

*Students were imagining and creating musical ideas for the purpose of expressing feeling when playing music for themselves and for their audience.

Perform: Instruction that encourages students to perform

*Students performed two different ways while thinking of different things each time in an emotional context

Respond: Instruction that results in students responding to music with critical thought.

*After the students played through the excerpt of the music, I asked them to respond to what they heard or felt. We noted the differences between the two performances. (NAfME, 2014).

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students in my Wind Ensemble class are the best high school band musicians in the school, so they come with a lot of prior knowledge. They play at the proficient to accomplished level performing pieces of music at grade level 3 and 4. During the year we went back to the basics and built the knowledge level back up due to many months off during the pandemic. They know notes, rhythms, dynamics, tone, balance, etc....so I often work on the higher order thinking skills with this class.

Rehearsal Objective

The objective of this rehearsal was to make students think about why they play a certain piece of music. I want them to explore why they like or dislike the music, to get in touch with their feelings and emotions when playing their instrument with other people. Ultimately what do they need to do as a performer to extend these thoughts and emotions to the audience while playing a certain piece.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

The rehearsal went well, the performance of the piece improved from the first time to the second time. The first time we played the excerpt from *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* arranged by Randall Standridge (2014) I told them absolutely nothing about the emotion of the piece or the context, we were just running it to “work” on it. The second time through the piece I prepped them with a possible meaning behind the piece, prompted them to think about a memory that the piece conjured up and had them play the excerpt again. It definitely made a difference. There was more dynamic contrast, better tone, and simply more thought put into what they were doing.

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
8:18	Introduction	Explaining the purpose of the lesson	1	Students attentively listening
8:23	Lecture of emotion with quotes	Background of why music can be emotional	2	Students gave thoughts on why music is emotional.
8:25	Warm-up scale	Get lips going before we rehearse excerpt	3	Warmed up sufficiently enough for lesson
8:27	What emotions music can convey	Get students thinking about why they play their instrument like they do. What appeal is there for the audience and yourselves?	4	Students named emotions such as nostalgic, excitement, solemn, sad, sentimental, anxious, fun, happy, think of the movie they are portraying
8:30	Play excerpt of Come Thou Fount without explanation	To play the excerpt of my choice without explanation to see how it was played	5	Students did what was asked, many technical problems but not the point today.
8:35	Play excerpt again but this time prep them on what to think about while playing the piece	See if there are any musical changes from the first time playing the piece to this time.	6	More confident, played with more of a purpose, there were bigger swells, it meant more to the kids this time around.
8:40	Reflection	Do you play better when you think about why you are playing?	7	Students said they personally play much better when they think about the emotional background of piece.

8:44	Prep and play excerpt from Great Locomotive	What are the different feelings and emotions of this piece and why?	8	Class was ending but an obvious change of emotion with that piece and they stated that before the piece began. We also mentioned the historical background.
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Table 2.1 Rehearsal Plan

Reflections Of the Lesson

The objective of this rehearsal was to make students think about why they play a certain piece of music. I want them to explore why they like or dislike the music, to get in touch with their feelings and emotions when playing their instrument with other people. What do they need to do as a performer to extend these thoughts and emotions to the audience while playing a certain piece? Ultimately by doing this with more advanced students there is the hope that the ensemble will sound better, play together with correct notes and rhythms, with pure tone and balance and intonation. When students care about the piece they are playing and why they are playing it, they will want the fundamentals to be there and to be good. It all ties together and the finished product will be wonderful and unique.

Hopefully during this process, the students learn to think deeper about specific parts of the music, for example, what makes the part at measure 38 sound sad and realize that they are the third of the chord there and their instrument is what is making the chord minor and initially making it sound sad or somber. Or perhaps they learned during *The Great Locomotive Chase* (Smith, 2000) that a song sounds more powerful and exciting when the ensemble is exactly together and precise. Then they can transfer that knowledge from that moment to a snare drum line in marching band, the more together and clean the snare line is, the more powerful they become.

In this lesson I spent about half the time lecturing and asking for responses to questions regarding the emotional value of music and specific pieces. I asked them what emotions came to mind when listening to certain pieces and they listed a number of different emotions including, nostalgic, sad, somber, happy, excited, tense, anxious, fun, sentimental and solemn. We talked about what brings on those responses and had a good time of question and answer. I then moved on to the rehearsal section of the lesson. We did a short warm up and then played the same excerpt of *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* arranged by Randall Standridge (2014) two times. The first time I told them to start at measure 36 and play to the end and try to play it well, and that is the only prep I gave them. After we played the excerpt the first time, we reflected on what sounded good and what needed work, very typical of a rehearsal on any piece. Then I asked the ensemble to play the same excerpt again, only this time think of something that you never

want to forget, it is a person or a moment in time, or a pet or a favorite item from childhood and play the excerpt again. After the second time through, we reflected on what we heard, and all the students concluded that the second time was overall a better run of the excerpt. I asked them why, and got a resounding response, “Because you made us think of a person, thing, or time that meant something to us and we played with more emotion. When we play with more emotion we connect more with the sound and our instruments and the listener.”

The only assessment I used in this particular lesson reflected what the students heard after they played. We assessed the music on the spot each time. Sometimes I will do the assessing and report that to my students and sometimes I will make them self-assess, in this case they did a self-assessment and a comparison of *Come Thou Fount* (Standridge, 2014) and a short self-assessment of *The Great Locomotive Chase*. (Smith, 2000).

I really enjoyed talking with the students about the background of both pieces and having them do the majority of the reflecting on the pieces. I will incorporate this kind of lesson more often. I believe this type of lesson would be good with every piece at the beginning stages of learning and towards the end of learning the piece. You could then reflect on how the piece of music may have changed over the period of weeks that it was rehearsed and why it changed. Is it because the students now think differently about the piece, so they are playing it differently, or is it because the ensemble is playing better now and that is simply why the piece has changed for the better? Once a class has sat through the lecture of emotions and how they affect music, the lecture will not have to be done again, that will make the lesson more concise and quicken the process so more rehearsing and reflecting can be done.

It always amazes me when I videotape a lesson how it changes me as a teacher for the better. The question remains, why do I not videotape my lessons more so that I become a better teacher? The answer is it is scary! I do not like to see myself on camera and I do not like the way I sound, but if I force myself to watch the videos, I always learn something about myself and the way I teach and conduct. In this lesson, I repeated myself a little too much and I answered my own questions too often instead of using a bit more wait time. I use my left hand more than I should when conducting and it can sometimes become a distraction and the big moments are not as big because the left hand is overdone. I also took away some positives such as my students are great listeners and are attentive to the things that I am saying. Knowing that, I could rehearse more and think about shorter things to say that make an enormous impact because they will get it. I also have learned not to fear that camera, use it, and become better!