Lesson Five: Melody-Motifs

Empire State Creates: Teaching Artist-Led Activities for Everyone

Project Title: Musical Storytelling  Age(s): 7-8 year-old (2nd-3rd grades)
Time: 40 - 45 minutes  Arts Discipline: Music

ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

Goal(s):
- Create melodies and melodic motifs
- Choosing an instrumentation for our piece
- Watch Companion Video 5

Materials:
- The annotated story
- Glockenspiels or melodic instruments (keyboards, recorders, etc.)
- Notebook
- Pencil & eraser

New Word(s)
- **Melody**: A linear succession of musical tones that the listener perceives as a single entity, often called the *tune*. It is usually the part of a song that we remember and can sing back. It is composed of musical phrases or sentences.
- **Motif**: A short succession of notes that produce a single impression; a brief melodic or rhythmic formula out of which longer passages are developed.
- **Instrumentation**: The particular instruments used in a piece of music. The choice of instruments has to do more with the *tone color* (timbre) each instrument brings, and less with its playability.
- **Families of Instruments**: There are 4 families of instruments in the Classical Orchestra. They represent instruments grouped together based on the way they look, and how their sound is produced.

NYS Arts Learning Standards (select no more than 2 - student audiences only)
- Pr-Performing (standard 8): Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work
- Cr-Creating (standard 1): Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

STEPS

Step #1
- Now that you have completed the creation of patterns for every word in your story, it is now time to add notes (pitch) to them to create *melodic motifs* (or short tunes) to create longer melodies.
- Working in pairs (one student playing the glockenspiel, one recording on paper the notes), each group is assigned a word (go in the order they appear in the story). Using the glockenspiel one student will play and choose notes that he/she likes to fill the exact number of sounds in each pattern, while the other student will write them down next to the pattern in their book.
- If a pattern is long (for example 10 beats) don’t try to come up with all 10 notes at once as it will be too much to remember. Instead, proceed 2 or 3 notes at a time.

**Note:** At the bottom of each plate on the glockenspiel the name of the note is carved in as follows: (A-B-C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C-D-E-F), this will tell you the name of each note you are playing. Electronic keyboards also have the names of the notes written above them.

### Step #2
- Once you finish with your word, double check that you have exactly the same number of notes from the glockenspiel as the number of sounds in the original rhythmic pattern. Then get a new one (not already assigned to another group), and switch position in your group, If you played, now you’ll write and vice-versa.
- For this to go smoothly, your teacher should be the one assigning the words for each group so as to keep track by giving them numbers.

**Example:** 1) *Rain:* I   I   I   I   I   I   I   I   I   (11 beats total)

A C B A G D F G A D C (11 chosen pitches on glockenspiel)

### Step #3
- Once the entire story and all its words have been assigned pitches. As a class, do a run through to double check that EVERY word has been assigned (once), and has the right number of notes (pitch) to it.
- Your teacher will collect all your work in one place. DO NOT go home with it as things tend to get lost or eaten by your imaginary dog.
- Again here this activity may require more than one session to complete.

### Step #4
- Now that you have completed all your rhythms and melodic motifs, it is now time to decide on the instrumentation (which instruments you want to play what).
- The 4 Families of Instruments are: Strings, Woodwinds, Brass and Percussion (cf: Instruments chart)
- The choice of instruments is entirely up to the composer (in your case the class must vote and agree). There are however some basic guidelines that you may want to follow:
  1. Don’t choose too many instruments as the more instruments, the more complicated it will be to write for them. Especially since one instrument can be used in many different situations.
  2. Try to match the sound of the instrument with the character or word from your story (for example if your character is a hummingbird with a high sounding song, you might not want to use a tuba or bassoon for it, but instead a flute or violin might be more appropriate.
- Make a new list of all the characters, actions and settings in your story, and next to them decide which instrument you think would be best.

(For example in our story I chose the Glockenspiel for the white butterfly brother, the piccolo for the red one, the clarinet for the yellow one and the cello for the sun).
**Activity Modifications (as needed):**

Here the instrumentation will be entirely up to the school budget or musical resources.

*For very young students,* it is possible to do the entire piece using only percussion instruments (bought or homemade), and have them perform their piece much like a play with them providing a rhythmic background while acting.

*For older grades that cannot afford live musicians,* there are musical software the class can use with a computer or Smartboard to create a score and an audio track. There are even free online ones that can be used in classroom settings such as *Noteflight*.

*Finally for schools that can implement it,* nothing compares to having live musicians perform your children's piece. It must be noted that the rhythms and music the students will be able to create will be far beyond their ability to perform even if they are taking music lessons, which makes the use of software or live musicians the two best options to fully appreciate the final composition.