



MELANATED MOMENTS IN CLASSICAL MUSIC

GRADES 9-12 *CURRICULUM DISCUSSION GUIDE*

GOAL

Students will become more appreciative and informed listeners as they engage with the Melanated Moments in Classical Music podcast. They will develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter of MMCM, as well as build community with group music activities.

LESSON 1: THOMAS WIGGINS

Students listen to this episode in its entirety (12.5 minutes in duration), and discuss the major themes of inclusion and acceptance. Students then engage in musical activities that introduce composition concepts and build community.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What challenges do you think Thomas Wiggins faced during his time?
- Do you know what autism is? Do you know any autistic people?
- How do you think Thomas Wiggins felt when he was labeled by his disability rather than his musical ability?
- What musical depictions of sounds did you hear in Wiggins' piece?
- What are some challenges that you have faced at school?
- What is an assumption someone made about you, that you wish they had not? How would you have rather been perceived?

ACTIVITY 1

Students listen to the natural sounds of the school and replicate them through music with body percussion and singing.

- Take a short walk down the hall, or open a window so that the students have access to an environment with more sounds.
- Instruct students to close their eyes and breathe deeply to get their attention centered.
- Instruct students to focus all of their attention on using their ears.
- Have students listen in this highly focused way to the sounds they hear.
 - * Collectively list at least 5 sounds that we typically don't pay attention to.
- Students imitate the pitches with their voices, and the rhythms with body percussion.
 - * Draw attention to the fact that Thomas Wiggins could do this flawlessly, and see who can most accurately replicate the sounds.

ACTIVITY 2

Students engage in an improvisation exercise to express themselves and practice acceptance.

- Instruct students to stand in a large circle.
- Explain that this activity is an improvisation game and that we will focus on accepting one another.
- Students use whatever they can to create sound. This can be body percussion, singing, rapping, or safely using materials in the room.
- One volunteer begins as the leader.
 - * The leader makes their sound for the rest of the group.
 - * The rest of the group mimics the sound and applauds the leader.
 - * The leader makes a different sound for the rest of the group.
 - * The rest of the group mimics the sound and applauds the leader.
 - * The leader then selects a new leader, and the process repeats.
 - * Everyone should have a chance to be the leader.

LESSON 2: MARIAN ANDERSON

Teacher reads the following synopsis: Marian Anderson was a world-renowned singer who became an important figure in the civil rights movement. She traveled to Europe to study and perform music, but eventually came back to the United States to have a terrific career that placed her in the spotlight of the public eye.

After that, students listen to this episode from 6:10-12:26, then 14:06-17:50, and discuss the major theme of activism. Students then engage in performing skits that reinforce practicing advocacy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What did you think about Marian Anderson's subtle acts of civil rights activism in her performances?
- In her performance of *America the Beautiful* at the Lincoln Memorial, Anderson changed the words from "My country tis of thee / sweet land of liberty / of thee I sing" to "My country tis of thee / sweet land of liberty / to thee we sing." What do you think her message was by changing the lyrics to this song?
- What is a form of advocacy you think you could be passionate about?
- What are some ways you have stood up for what you believe in? How could you practice standing up for what you believe?
- How do you feel when someone you care about is being mistreated? What actions do you want to take when you see it happen?

ACTIVITY

Students perform skits to demonstrate what different forms of advocacy can look like.

- As a group, generate 4-6 topics of school related issues (EX: Bullying, Test Taking Anxiety, Sports Hierarchies, etc.). It is a good idea to build these topics from the discussion questions.
 - Examples of other methods include: acting out writing and delivering letters to people in authority positions, presenting speeches to an audience, and/or producing and distributing media with a specific message.
- Divide students into groups of 4, and explain the importance of each student demonstrating a form of advocacy in their skit.
- Assign a topic to each group, and explain that a requirement of this exercise is for at least 3 forms of advocacy to be demonstrated per skit.
 - * Explain that having 3 distinct scenes is a good way to demonstrate advocacy in several different situations.
 - The most common demonstration will be direct, verbal advocacy (speaking up).
 - Give each group time to write their script and rehearse, understanding that certain aspects of the skit will be improvised.
 - * Suggested time allotment is 15 minutes.
 - Randomly select groups in any order to perform for the rest of the class.
 - After each performance, ask the audience members to identify the forms of advocacy they saw.

LESSON 3: IGNATIUS SANCHO

Students listen to this episode from 8:00-end (10 minutes in duration), and discuss the major theme of colonialism. Students then engage in musical activities that introduce folk music of different countries.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the differences between writing an essay for public reading vs. writing a letter to a friend?
- What are some arguments you use to convince others to care about something that is important to you?
- What are arguments that are not effective when trying to convince others to care about something that is important to you?
- How would you describe the style of the musical excerpt we listened to?
- What do you think the difference is between colonialism and cultural exchange?
- Have you ever been asked to act a certain way that was unfamiliar to you? How did it feel?
- What are some modern equivalents of spreading awareness through writing essays? Would you ever do something like that?

ACTIVITY

Students explore the different geographic locations of the Triangle of Trade by observing maps and increase familiarity with folk music of these locations through active listening.

- Produce a world map through Google search and project it on a screen, or refer to a hard-copy map in the classroom.
- Explain that the Triangle of Trade ran between Africa, West Indies, the Americas, and Europe
 - * Point to these areas and communicate the modern countries that now exist in these areas.
- Play musical samples of each of the following areas, explaining which area each piece of music is from:
 - [West African](#)
 - [Brazilian](#)
 - [Cuban](#)
 - [England](#)
- Next, play these same selections randomly in any order and instruct students to identify the geographic area each selection is from.
 - * Do this several times, and ask students how they were able to identify the geographic area from the musical selections.
- Finally, play these same musical selections and have students clap the rhythms of the underlying pulse together.

LESSON 4: ANGELA BROWN

Students listen to this episode from 11:52-22:43, and discuss the major theme of perseverance. Students then engage in a group music making activity that builds community and fosters self-expression.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think Angela means when she says to “be prepared with no opportunity rather than not prepared with an opportunity?”
- What are some things you noticed about the musical performance we listened to?
- What is something Angela said that really resonated with you?
- What is one way you could be preparing for your second act before you begin your first act?
- For Angela, performing at The Metropolitan Opera was a dream come true. Do you have a dream for your future? How do you think it would feel to achieve it?
- Think of a time when you were preparing for a big event that was important to you, like a performance, presentation, or sporting event where you encountered adversity. What was the obstacle? Was it stage fright, lack of preparation, or self-doubt? How did you overcome that obstacle and what did it teach you?
- How have you used that lesson to help you achieve your future goals?

ACTIVITY

Students host an impromptu talent show to present a short performance in their own unique way.

- Divide students into groups of 2 or 3 and inform them that they have a chance to present a reimagination of a song they like. Examples include:
 - * Performing the song in the original style or as a different genre.
 - * Reciting lyrics from the song like a poem.
 - * Presenting a piece of visual art that interprets the song.
 - * Performing a dance to the song.
 - * Writing a short story that explains the meaning of the song.
- Explain that the point of this exercise is to express a unique perspective by interpreting an existing song.
- Give each group time to prepare and/or rehearse, understanding that the most important aspect is self-expression.
 - * Suggested time allotment is 15 minutes.
- Randomly select groups in any order to present to the rest of the class.
- After each presentation, ask the performers to explain what makes their interpretation unique.
 - * Ask audience members to identify the differences between the original song and the newly created presentation.

LESSON 5:

ROBERT NATHANIEL DETT

Students listen to this episode from 0:00-9:17, and discuss the major theme of active listening. Students then engage in a listening activity that encourages multi-sensory thinking.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was something you imagined when we listened to the musical selection?
 - Dett was highlighted as someone who can paint a scene through music in this episode. What is a song you know that makes you think of a specific memory or picture? Why do you think this is?
 - If you were to choose a song that you know to depict your hometown what would it be?
 - Joshua mentioned that Dett was interacting with his contemporaries, and that this influenced how he wrote his music. What is something that you have learned from your peers? Do you still use what you have learned?
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ACTIVITY

Students listen to a second musical excerpt of this episode, without any priming from the hosts. They draw or write depictions of what the music made them think/see.

- Inform students that we will be listening to another musical excerpt, but without any interpretation by the hosts.
- Instruct students to either draw a picture or write a short story that depicts what this musical excerpt makes them think or see.
- Play this episode from 11:22-13:51 and ask students to only listen during this time.
 - * Before playing, ask students to listen critically and consider what this music is trying to depict.
- Give the students time to work on their drawing or short story. Play the excerpt from 11:22-13:51 again, and instruct students to work as they listen.
 - * You may need to play this excerpt a few times during the work time.
 - * Recommended work time is 10-15 minutes.
- After ample work time, ask students to share their drawing or short story. Ask students to explain what they heard and how it relates to their work.

LESSON 6: ROSEPHANYE POWELL

Teacher reads the following synopsis: Dr. Rosephanye Powell is one of America's leading choral composers. She travels the country and internationally presenting lectures, song demonstrations, and serving as a workshop clinician, conductor, and adjudicator for solo vocal competitions/auditions, honor choirs, choral workshops and festivals. Dr. Powell has received numerous awards including the "Living Legend Award" presented by California State University African Diaspora Sacred Music Festival in Los Angeles.

Students listen to this episode from 27:47-42:25, and discuss the major theme of speaking their truth. Students then engage in an impromptu writing activity where truths are shared anonymously, and supportive affirmations are written in response.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How did the first musical excerpt make you feel? What did it make you think about?
- How did the second musical excerpt make you feel? What did it make you think about?
- Dr. Powell created musical depictions of two very different moods. What did you think about the way she described her music?
- Has there ever been a time when you spoke your truth and are proud to have done so?
- Has there ever been a time when you did not speak your truth, and wished you had? What do you wish you had said at that moment?

ACTIVITY 1

Students write a one paragraph truth statement on a piece of paper, and then drop it into a hat. Each student then is randomly given a truth statement, and writes a one paragraph response that offers supportive affirmation.

- Assign each student a number, and track this on a scrap piece of paper or electronic spreadsheet.
- Inform students that they will be writing a one paragraph truth statement about themselves. Examples include:
 - * Acknowledging family history
 - * Sharing a trait or skill they have
 - * Sharing an aspect of themselves they would like to change
 - * Sharing a fear or regret they have
- Give each student 5-10 minutes to write their paragraph. Instruct students to write their number, but not their name on their paper.
- Collect all of the responses and shuffle them up.
- Randomly distribute the responses so each student has a truth statement again.
- Instruct the students to write supportive affirmations as a one paragraph response to the truth statement they now have.
 - * Instruct students to write their responses as if they are writing to a good friend or family member.
 - * Reiterate the importance of being supportive.
- Give each student 5-10 minutes to write their paragraph.
- Collect the truth statements with responses, and redistribute them to the assigned number on the paper.
- Give each student a few minutes to read their responses, and ask if anyone would like to share about this experience.