

Symphony No. 10 (2nd movement) **by Dmitri Shostakovich**

SECONDARY CLASSROOM LESSON PLAN PERFORMANCE POETRY

For:

- Key Stage 3 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Third and Fourth Level, S1-S3 in Scotland

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Learning outcomes

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Learn a brief history of performance poetry
- Write a piece of performance poetry
- Employ a variety of writing techniques to describe a situation or experience
- Edit and analyse their own poem for performance, making key decisions on tone, pace and intention
- Practice and prepare their piece for performance
- Listen and offer constructive feedback on each other's poems
- Review and evaluate what they have learned

Curriculum checklist

The following aspects of the KS3 and 3rd Level music curriculum (for England, Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland) are encountered in this project:

- Listen and evaluate/appraise
- Performing/playing/rehearsing and reviewing
- Composing/improvising
- Singing
- Technology
- How music is created (i.e. pitch, tempo, timbre etc.)
- Notation (staff or other relevant notations)
- Identifying musical devices and concepts
- Aural skills (imitating, understanding pitch)

This lesson plan also involves creative writing and could be used as an opportunity for crosscurricular working with English teachers.

Required kit/space

For this project teachers need to be able to play online clips and audio but students don't necessarily need access to any particular technology or kit. Students need space in which to write and move.

Time needed

The project may span 2 or more sessions.

1. Introduction and discussion

Before beginning the creative process, students need to have listened to Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10 (2nd movement), learned about the conditions in which Shostakovich was living and working (you can find this on the Ten Pieces website) and watched the Performance poetry inspired by Shostakovich's 'Symphony No.10 film (on the Masterclass page of the Ten Pieces website).

2. Get writing

Step 1

Ask each student to write a list of things they love doing.

Step 2

Give students ten seconds to choose the one they care about the most.

Step 3

Ask students to imagine a life where this activity is limited. Give examples - i.e. you're a footballer, but you are only allowed to play with your weakest foot. You love listening to music, but you are given a playlist and you cannot listen to anything else. Give students a little time to discuss and write briefly how their activity might be limited.

Step 4

Ask students to write what they might do to manage this struggle. The power over them is total. The ultimate punishment is death. This is not an action film, they can't take out the bad guy easily. But their desire to do this thing is not diminished. What would they do? NB These are notes, so no need to worry about structure yet.

Step 5

Listen to the Scherzo, while asking pupils to think about their own struggle. Write down any words or phrases that come to mind - images, colours, the senses. It might help to ask students to imagine a scene from a film where a central character is doing their activity, despite the dangers. Ask students to describe this scene.

Step 6

Students should use these notes and any other ideas they have subsequently had to write a short performance poem. The aim is to describe their experience, paint the picture of it and the feelings of being restricted. It could be in any form - a little prayer, a rap, a mantra, a manifesto, a letter, a series of tweets. The form is dictated by the idea.

A few tips:

- Think about tense (past, present, future) and voice (first, second or third person)
- Avoid clichés
- Make the language surprising/new
- Use solid things to help paint the picture - think blood, heart, snare drums
- Say it out loud - does it feel like language that's real and authentic?
- Keep it brief. No more than one minute.

Step 7

Once students have written their pieces, it needs to be edited. Weed out the fluff, connectives, the lazy words. Ask students to consider how they can strengthen each line so it sounds new and

surprising? Just leave what's necessary to tell the story/describe the experience. It doesn't have to make sense like a story, just give a snapshot of the experience. Ask students to write up their poems.

3. Warming up for performance

Quick warm up exercises - body (feel free to add your own)

In a room with space to move around, stand with whole group in a circle
Everyone hold hands out and shake hands
Shake arms, legs, bodies. Jump. Warm body up
Stretch arms up and drop. Repeat

On the instruction WALK everybody walk around the room - any direction
On the instruction STOP everybody stops
JUMP - everybody jumps
CLAP - everybody claps

Combine these instructions. i.e. call JUMP while walking. Call TWO CLAPS /
JUMP / CLAP / JUMP etc

Reverse the instructions
JUMP means CLAP
CLAP means JUMP
STOP means WALK
WALK means STOP

Quick warm up exercises – face and voice (feel free to add your own)

Standing in a circle, get students to imagine they are chewing a huge piece of gum, stretching their faces.

Then get them to chew an imaginary tiny piece of gum - screwing up their faces.

Repeat a couple of times.

Roll tongues around closed mouths, into cheeks and behind lips.

Blow loose floppy lips out like a horse.

In the circle - get everyone to hum. It's not necessary for it to be the same note.

Teacher - place one hand, palm down, in the air in front of you at waist height. As you raise your hand the volume of pupils humming increases. As you lower it, the volume decreases. Experiment with conducting them.

Note - differentiate between volume and pitch. They should try not to go up or down in pitch - just volume

Now add the other hand so they are both flat in front of you. When you open your hands from palm down to facing each other the sound pupils make changes from a HUM to an AAAH sound.
Experiment with speed and volume.

Ask students to volunteer to be the conductor. After each one, ask them how it was. There's a feeling of power and fun. Discuss as a group, what is easy to follow and what is hard. Discussions are usually around how clear the movements are and their speed.

Gobbledeegook

Everyone walks around the room, stopping to have conversations with each other in a made up language. It's fun and there's no right or wrong way to do it.

Note - when we read our work in front of each other, we can feel self-conscious. If we do a bit of work on being OK with being ridiculous, it can free us up to be less self-conscious.

Notice a few people who are having good gobbledeegook conversations and ask them to demonstrate.

4. Preparing for performance

Once warmed up, students should be given time to revisit their finished poem and prepare how they are going to read/perform it.

It's unlikely they'll have learned them but they can still be encouraged to read 'up' and make a performed reading rather than a flat 'heads down' one.

Using the humming and gobbledeegook exercises as examples, ask students to think about dynamics, pace, pitch, pauses. The nonsense conversations make more sense when there are natural pauses and changes in tone. The humming conducting is easier to follow when the movements are clear and communication is strong physically.

Students don't need to 'act' the poems, but consider the emotion and intention behind them, the voice they are written in, to whom they are being spoken.

Ask students to read their poems out loud to themselves. Let them walk around doing it or standing in corners/against the wall if necessary.

5. Performance and review

Forming an audience (and reminding pupils how to support and respect each other), set up a stage space and get each pupil to read/perform their poem. Applaud each performance.

There won't be much time for feedback but try to offer one or two points between teacher and audience that encourage and also offer opportunity to develop the performance.

6. Applying the performance poetry approach to other music

Any piece of music can be used as stimulus for creating a piece of writing, either by using the same process of researching the intention behind the piece and the conditions in which it was written or performed, as we have done with the Scherzo or in other ways.

For example, you could listen to a piece of music and ask students questions to find a trigger:

- does the music remind you of anything?
- could it be the soundtrack to something, if so what would it be?
- does it trigger any memories?
- could it be communicating something to you that nobody else could know?
- what story do you imagine when you listen to the music?

If you wanted to create a group poem, you can listen together as a class then in turn ask everyone to say what it made them think/feel. Write down each response then cut them up into a series of short lines. The group can then arrange these lines, like fridge magnet poetry. The same process works with images too.

Other variations could involve creating group poems in which small groups choose a subject to write about and each write a verse and contribute to a chorus or repeated motif. They can then work those into performances in their groups.