

Symphony No 5 by Ludwig van Beethoven

PRIMARY CLASSROOM LESSON PLAN

For:

- Key Stage 2 in England and Wales
- Second Level, P5-P7 in Scotland
- Key Stage 1/Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland

Written by Rachel Leach

Background

The composer: **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)**

- German composer and pianist
- Transformed music by adding an extra layer of drama and emotion to classical structures
- Was deaf from the age of about 26 so didn't actually hear most of his greatest works

The music: **Symphony No 5, movement 1**

- First performed in 1808
- A symphony is a large work for orchestra usually in 4 sections or movements
- Has one of the most famous beginnings in all of orchestra music

Learning outcomes

Learners will:

- listen and reflect on a piece of orchestral music
- invent their own musical motifs and structure them into a piece
- perform as an ensemble
- learn musical language appropriate to the task

Curriculum checklist

- play and perform in ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

Glossary of music terms used

Coda	another word for 'ending'
Graphic Score	a graphic or diagrammatic representation of music
Movement	a large section
Pitched percussion	percussion instruments that can play different pitches – xylophones, glockenspiels, chime bars etc.
Sonata	An oft-used shape in music made up from three sections
Symphony	A large piece for orchestra often with four movements, the first of which is often a sonata
Tune	another word for 'melody'. A linear line of notes that makes a satisfying musical shape
Unpitched percussion	percussion instruments that can only make a limited number of sounds – drums, shakers woodblocks, tambourine etc.

Resources required

- Paper and coloured pens/ pencils
- Classroom percussion instruments and any other instruments that your children might be learning

This scheme of work is plotted out over six lessons. Feel free to adapt it to suit your children and the resources you have available.

The six lessons at a glance

Lesson 1:

Activities: Listen and describe a piece of music
Watch the orchestral performance and discuss
Create a graphic score

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians

Lesson 2:

Activities: Create a piece inspired by Beethoven's rhythm
Orchestrate the rhythm
Use technical terminology where appropriate

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 3:

Activities: Create a piece inspired by Beethoven's melody
Orchestrate the melody
Use technical terminology where appropriate

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 4:

Activities: Learn about sonata form
Combine ideas into a development section

Curriculum link: Improve and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Develop an understanding of the history of music

Lesson 5:

Activities: Continue to structure ideas into a sonata form
Use technical terminology

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Improve and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 6:

Activities: Create a coda
Perform in front of an audience

Curriculum link: Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Improve and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

LESSON 1

Watching and listening

1. Prepare your class

Explain to your class that you are going to begin a six-week music project focusing on a fantastic piece of music by a composer called Ludwig van Beethoven and watch the introductory film with Barney Harwood.

2. Have a class discussion

Discuss what you have just watched and perhaps ask the following questions:

- i. Did you like the film?
- ii. Did you like the music?
- iii. How do you think Beethoven would have felt not being able to hear his own music?

3. Listening task

Give out A4 sheets of paper and a variety of coloured pens to everyone and ask them to place the paper landscape on their desks. Ask them to gently fold the paper lengthwise so you have two sections like this -



To save time, you may want to prepare this ahead of the lesson!

- a. Listen, without images, to the opening 45 seconds of Beethoven's 5th symphony and ask your children to choose a colour that they think matches the sound of the music. Now listen to the music that comes after the horns at 0'45 and encourage your class to choose a different colour to match this contrasting section.
- b. Listen to the opening again, this time just famous first phrase (da-da-da-duh!) and ask your class to draw a shape in the top section of their page using their chosen colour. This shape should be inspired by the jagged sound of the music. Skip to 0'45 after the horns, and ask your class to do the same in the bottom section of their page using their contrasting colour and again, matching their shape to the smooth sound of the music.

4. Take a look at their answers and discuss them.

Hopefully there will be a jagged shape at the top and a smooth shape at the bottom. Explain that the whole piece is made up of just these two types of sound - jagged and smooth. Now listen to the whole movement. Again it's

better if they're just listening and not watching the orchestra - it's too distracting! As they listen encourage them to add more jagged shapes and smooth shapes to their page as they hear them in the music. If the music is loud the shapes should be big. If they are quiet, the shapes should be little. If the two sounds combine they must combine the two shapes

5. **Listen several times** until everyone is satisfied with their work. Afterwards discuss their artwork and the music. Talk about how Beethoven makes 5 minutes of music out of just two ideas and manages to make one of most exciting pieces ever. Explain that their artwork is a **graphic score** - it is a graphic (diagrammatic) representation of the music and could be used to make more music.

6. **Finally** if you have time, ask your children to swap their paper with a neighbour and follow their neighbour's score as you listen to the Beethoven once more. (This time you might like to watch the orchestra too).

Or if you have more time, choose one 'score' and turn it into a new piece of music. Find one sound for the jagged shape and one for the smooth shape – it doesn't have to sound anything like Beethoven!

LESSON 2

Da, da, da, duh!

1. **Warm-up.** Begin with your class sitting in a large circle. Play a quick game of 'copy me'. The children must copy whatever you do until you say 'stop'. You can make this as energetic, loud, rhythmic, gentle, focused as you like. Try to end up with the class in a good mood for the creative work that follows.
2. **Continuing the game** say 'Beethoven 5!' loudly using the opening rhythm from his piece (below) and encourage the class to copy you.



'Bee -tho-ven five!'

3. Then, **split the circle into two groups** and try this -

- **You: Beethoven 5....**
Class: Beethoven 5....
- **You: Beethoven 5**
Grp 1: Beethoven 5
Grp 2: Beethoven 5
- **You: Beethoven 5**
Grp 1: Beethoven 5
Grp 2: Beethoven 5
- **You: Beethoven 5**
Class: Beethoven 5
- **You: Beethoven 5**
Class: Beethoven 5
- **All: Beethoven. 5, 5, 5!**

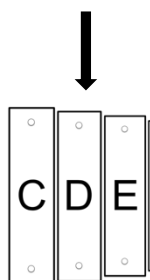
You have just performed the exact opening of Beethoven 5 and your children will now be really familiar with its iconic rhythm!

4. **Remind your students** of the work they did last lesson and how they discovered that Beethoven uses just two ideas to make his piece. Explain that you are going to work with just one of those ideas today - the jagged 'Beethoven 5' rhythm.
5. **Re-do the exercise** above but this time clapping the rhythm rather than saying the words. Now ask you children to suggest which instruments should play it. You might like to stick to

just unpitched percussion for this but if you have a lot of xylophones or children learning orchestral instruments demonstrate how Beethoven uses just two notes, the first is higher than the second and he misses a note out in between, like this –



(missed out)



6. **Split your class into small working groups** and ask each group to make a short piece using Beethoven's rhythm. They may wish to add other jagged rhythms to it.

Beethoven's real rhythm is actually very difficult because of where it is placed within the bar. Don't worry too much if your children shift it around a little as they work with it. They are simply making it their own!

7. **Bring the class back together** and hear each group separately. Ask the class to give feedback and tweak the pieces a little so that they are neat and everyone knows what they are doing.
8. **Challenge** the class to structure their group pieces into one big piece and end the session with a rough run-through of this piece. Give it a name - Beethoven would call it 'Section A' but maybe you can give it a more exciting name than that!

LESSON 3

The contrasting, twisty tune

1. **Warm up.** Begin in a circle again and talk through what you did last lesson. Perhaps play the 'Beethoven 5' copy me game again or practise your 'Section A' on body percussion.
2. **Remind** your class about Beethoven's second idea, the smooth idea they drew during lesson 1. You could refer back to the recording, the film or even their artwork. Call this idea the 'twisty tune' because it twists around, and demonstrate how to play it on a white-note xylophone.



3. **Split your class back into their working groups** and ask each group to invent their own twisty tune and make a short piece using it. They can add other, unpitched, sounds to the tune but they must keep their piece gentle and smooth in complete contrast to the jagged sounds from last week.
4. **Bring the class back together** and hear each group separately. Ask the class to give feedback and tweak their pieces a little so that they are neat and everyone knows what they are doing.
5. **Challenge** the class to structure their group pieces into one, big 'twisty' piece and end the session with a rough run-through of this piece. Give it another name - Beethoven would've called it 'Section B'

LESSON 4

Combine & develop

1. **Warm up.** Begin in a circle and, after playing a quick focussing game like 'pass the clap', talk through what you have done so far – both sections
2. **Split back into your groups** and give the class a few minutes to get their instruments out and remember what they did in both the jagged rhythm piece and the twisty tune piece.
3. **Bring the class back together** and slowly put your two big pieces back together working out any problems with switching or sharing instruments that might arise.
4. **Explain** that Beethoven's piece is in a special and important musical shape called a SONATA. A lot of music has this shape including a lot of Beethoven's music. You are going to turn your two pieces into a sonata. The first section of a sonata features two ideas back to back. Ask your children to figure out which of their two pieces should go first and which second and practise playing them back to back.

You might want to remind them, perhaps by listening again or looking at their graphic scores, that Beethoven places his jagged idea first, but they don't have to if they would sooner place it second.

This is called the **EXPOSITION**

5. **When this is achieved**, explain that the next bit of a sonata combines both ideas together. Challenge your children, working as a full class or back in their smaller teams, to combine ideas from the two sections they have created so far into one new piece. Encourage them to combine the pieces however they like. They can fragment ideas, combine just their favourite bits or simply play one on top of the other. Keep things simple though by limiting how much new material they create.
6. **Hear the results of this** and check that everyone knows what they are doing. Explain that this is known as the **DEVELOPMENT**.
7. **Finish this lesson** by performing your 'exposition' (jagged piece then smooth piece) followed by your 'development' (both pieces combined)

LESSON 5

Recap

1. **Warm-up.** Again, begin in a circle and talk through what you have done so far – both sections and the combined ‘development’. This is an opportunity to clap through the rhythms and fix any ‘wonky’ moments. Encourage the children who played xylophones and orchestral instruments to mime their ideas and put together a silent version of the piece.
2. **Put the piece back together** on instruments.
3. **Explain** that the third section of a sonata is called the **RECAPITULATION**. During the recapitulation, both ideas from the exposition (1st section) are heard again.

If your class are struggling to remember everything at this point just work towards the following structure:

- *Exposition (jagged then smooth)*
- *Development (jagged and smooth combined)*
- *Recap (repeat of Exposition)*

If however, they are up for an extra challenge continue onto the steps below

4. **Explain further** that in the recap, the ideas from the exposition are sometimes altered slightly as if they have picked up something on their journey through the development.
5. **Staying as one big class** decide on one way to alter the jagged music and one way to alter the smooth music. This should be a simple alteration such as adding a rhythm, cutting something shorter or changing the volume level.
6. Practise your sonata. The structure should be similar to this –
 - EXPOSITION (jagged then smooth)
 - DEVELOPMENT (jagged and smooth combined)
 - RECAP (new jagged, then new smooth)

If, however your children opt for a different order, encourage their ideas. Beethoven himself often changed and broke the rules. That’s what made him such a genius!

7. **End the lesson** with a performance of your piece so far and write up a full diagram of it on the board so that putting it together next lesson will be easy

LESSON 6

Coda

1. **Warm up.** Sitting in a circle again, remind your children of everything they have worked on so far off-instruments. Then slowly get out the instruments and put your sonata back together
2. **Explain** that Classical composers like Beethoven often put big endings on their pieces. These endings showed off how clever they had been with the rules. The ending of a piece is known as the **CODA**
3. **Challenge** your class, working either in groups again or as a full team, to make a big dramatic ending for their sonata. It should be based on their favourite idea from the piece. Beethoven obviously used his jagged rhythm in his piece over and over but your children might choose something different.

Encourage them to also use –

- One note to play over and over (or two that alternate before getting stuck on one)
 - One rhythm that is repeated several times
 - All the big, loud, splashy percussion instruments such as cymbals, gong, triangle, big drums
 - Clever dynamics (lounds and softs). Is it more effective to be loud all the time or to vary the volume?
4. **When this is achieved**, add it on to the end of your sonata. You might therefore have this structure –
 - EXPOSITION (jagged then smooth)
 - DEVELOPMENT (jagged and smooth combined)
 - RECAP (new jagged, then new smooth)
 - CODA (big showing ending)
 5. **Finally**, invite another class in to be your audience and perform your sonata in full to them

TAKING IT FURTHER

Cross-curricular activities

- **LISTENING:** Beethoven wrote nine wonderful symphonies. The 6th (Pastoral) was one of the first symphonies to tell a story - it describes a day in countryside with a celebration and a storm. The 7th is all about dance rhythms and the 9th has a very famous tune in its last movement
- **LITERACY:** After Beethoven lost his hearing, he could only communicate through letters and a 'conversation book'. In both he wrote about his life; his letters tend to talk about the big things – his ideas for symphonies, how his work is going – his conversation books are much more everyday – his shopping lists, instructions for his cleaner etc. Challenge your children to write their own versions of Beethoven's letters or conversation books
- **RESEARCH:** Beethoven had an amazing life and was admired by many other composers. He lived at the same time as Mozart and Schubert, he was obsessed with Napoleon and he had several secret girlfriends. There are many things to research and find out about.

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