



STUDENT INSIDERS

2023 Pre-Concert Activity

Note: Video clips for these activities are available at www.vso.org/studentinsiders

BRAINSTORM: Music is everywhere!

1. In a typical day, most of us hear music in many different places. Make a list of all the places you hear any kind of music.

Sample responses: grocery store, video games, movies, waiting room at the doctor, commercials, listening to your own music, school band rehearsal, ceremonies, etc.

2. Music is used in lots of different ways for many different purposes. Choose three of your answers from above, and try to describe: what is the purpose of music in that place? Or, why is music used there?

Grocery store: to put shoppers in a good mood. Waiting room: to make time pass more quickly. Commercials: to get your attention, or make something stick in your memory (jingles). Listening to your own music: to help you concentrate on homework, or to lift your mood, or give you energy. Ceremonies: Happy Birthday and Pomp and Circumstance are musical traditions that help link us to the past)

3. Discuss your answers with a friend, teacher, or parent. How would that place be different if there wasn't any music at all? What if there was a different kind of music instead?

Waiting room: would be boring, people might get impatient. Commercials: might not get your attention. Movies: the scene might not feel so emotional. Think about what would happen if a scary scene had silly music, or the opposite.

FOCUS: Movie music

Note: Video clips for this activity can be found at www.vso.org/studentinsiders

Now we're going to think about movie music in particular. From the very beginning, music has always been really important to the way movies are made. In fact, the first movies didn't have any dialogue (speaking) at all! The only sound was music, played live by a pianist or a band in the movie theater.

1. As you watch Clip #1, consider: How does the music help to tell the story?

Write your ideas here, and discuss with a friend, teacher or parent.

Answers vary based on age level and experience: Quiet music when Charlie Chaplin's character is trying not to scare the lion. Pizzicato (plucking technique) in strings sounds like tiptoes. Faster tempo when the dog starts barking (adds excitement). Low brass comes in loudly when the lion yawns and wakes up (danger). Light, silly music when Charlie Chaplin is on the telephone pole being silly

Movie music can be used in many different ways. Let's focus on three main categories:

Music can act as a narrator. Sometimes music tells the viewers, "this is scary!" or "this is exciting," or even, "then something new happens."

Music can paint a landscape. Sometimes music helps us to know where we are in time or space. For example, an old Western movie might have old-timey music. A movie about aliens might have other-worldly music to help us know we're not on Earth.

Music can be used as sound effects. Sometimes the music emphasizes the actions on screen. For example, if there's a crash in the movie, you might hear a cymbal crash. If you see a driver honking their horn, you may hear a honking sound in the music too.

The Charlie Chaplin clip used music in all these ways!

EXPLORE: Let's take a closer look at some examples.

1. Music as Narrator. In Clip #2, you'll see a scene from Lord of the Rings several times, but with different music each time. The music helps you understand what is happening, since what you actually see doesn't give much information. *Parent/teacher: Encourage students to think creatively. Be silly and bold with answers!*

What is the music telling you about the characters and the action?

Do the characters seem like heroes, villains, goofy sidekicks, or is it unclear?

What do you think they're running away from, or running towards?

How do you think the characters are feeling at this moment?

2. Music painting a landscape. In Clip #3, you'll hear the theme music from a TV series called "The Twilight Zone" that first aired in 1959. In this video you don't see any characters or action at all. *Parent/Teacher: Help students notice the strange instrument sounds, unpredictable rhythms, unstable melody. This show focused on paranormal, unexpected or unsettling events.*

Describe what the music sounds like to you.

What do you think the TV show will be like? Why?

How does the music help to paint the landscape of the TV show, even before you see anything on screen?

3. Music as sound effects. In Clip #4, you'll see a scene from Looney Tunes. The action and music are so closely connected that it would be impossible to separate the two. The music illustrates every single event on screen, from the characters' thoughts to the mood of the scene to the actual sound that objects make (for example, horse's hooves). As you listen, try to write down all the ways that the music illustrates what you see. Get ready to write fast! *Parent/Teacher: You may need to show the clip several times!*

Example: Bugs Bunny is startled. Yosemite Sam is stumbling around under a big hat. Gunshots. Keep going!

IMAGINE: If you were a composer...

In the March 29 “Student Insiders” concert, the Vermont Symphony Orchestra will be playing live music for a series of short films. Each film has a different story, different characters, and a different mood. Here are three examples of the movies you’ll see.

“Two Balloons” by Mark Smith. Two lemurs are captains of their own floating airships, until trouble arises.

“Mate” by Rusty Eveland. A shopping cart searches for true love.

“The Greatest Night” by Jeremy Lee MacKenzie. A movie director tells the story of his personal journey from prison to filmmaking.

1. What moods, landscapes and sound effects might you see on screen?

Parent/teacher: “Two Balloons” and “Mate” are animated, “The Greatest Night” is live action. If students need encouragement, ask them to think about animated and live movies they’ve seen, and whether they think that difference impacts the music.

2. If you were composing music for each movie, what kind of music might you use? Music as narrator, landscape, sound effects, or a combination?

3. What instruments, musical styles, sounds, or effects might you use for these films?

4. If you were creating a movie about a story from YOUR life, what story would you choose? What would the music sound like? Share with a friend. *Parent/teacher: suggest a sledding race, opening a birthday present, and meeting a new friend.*

AT THE CONCERT: Listen and learn!

When you attend the Student Insiders concert, you'll see 10 different movies with a live orchestra playing the soundtrack. Each of the movies has at least one Vermonter involved in making it: that could be the screenwriter, the director, the music composer, or a combination of these. And of course, it will be a Vermont orchestra with Vermont musicians and a Vermont conductor!

You'll have a chance to meet the conductor, Matt LaRocca, at 6pm before the 7pm performance. What would you like to ask him about the music, the orchestra, or the films?

At the concert you'll receive a Student Insiders concert program with more information about the movies and music, suggestions for things to think about and listen for, and questions for you to consider as you watch and listen.

Here at the VSO, we can't wait to meet you hear your ideas about what you see and hear on stage and on screen. See you at the concert!