



EXPRESS YOURSELF

KEY STAGE 2 TEACHERS' RESOURCES

SAD & JOYFUL

Music can express a huge range of emotions, and can connect directly with our feelings without using words. Sometimes music can enhance our mood, and other times, it can change it completely. The London Philharmonic Orchestra's Express Yourself series of three short films for Key Stage 2, explores contrasting musical moods, to channel feelings both positive and more difficult.

This resource accompanies **episode 3: Sad and Joyful**. In the film, Yolanda Brown presents an exploration of George Walker's heart-rending piece *Lyric for Strings*, followed by Felix Mendelssohn's joyously fun 'Dance of the Clowns' from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Of course, all music is subjective and you or your children may feel very different emotions from the ones we've presented, when you listen to the music. Our explorations are all totally up for interpretation, and we encourage discussions in class about the different emotions the music evokes.

Watch the video at lpo.org.uk/ExpressYourself

SAD

George Walker – *Lyric for Strings*

American composer George Theophilus Walker (1922–2018) was the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize for music. He began his musical life by learning the piano at age 5 and entered a music school at 14. *Lyric for Strings* is his most performed work. It was written in 1946, about a year after his beloved grandmother died, and it started life as a piece for string quartet. Walker's grandmother had had a difficult life. She lost her husband when he was sold into slavery. Walker was very close to her and dedicated this piece to her, continuing to refer to it as 'my grandmother's piece' long after it was renamed as *Lyric for Strings*.



Listen

Music can connect us with our emotions more than any other art form. Simply listening and letting the mind wander can be as good as a short sleep for our wellbeing and mental health. So, allow your children to get comfortable (they could rest their heads on their desks or curl up on the carpet), turn off the lights or ask them to close their eyes and simply allow them to listen.

Write

Have a class discussion about family and friends. Ask your children to think of someone they know that they haven't seen for a while, perhaps someone who has gone far away or even died. Someone they miss for whatever reason.

Give out paper and pens to your class and ask them to think of one person and write at the top of the page 'to ...' – just as Walker wrote 'to my grandmother' at the top of his composition.

As you listen to Walker's piece, ask your children to write down their happy memories of the person they miss and what they might do or say if they see them again. They could add a small drawing to their page and a happy wish for the future. Even though the music is sad, encourage your children to write happy thoughts and memories rather than wallow in sad ones (although that's a useful activity too!)

JOYFUL

Felix Mendelssohn – 'Dance of the Clowns' from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) was born into a wealthy family in Hamburg, Germany. He was a child prodigy and died young, perhaps before his full potential had been realised. His father was so rich that he paid for the finest tuition and young Mendelssohn had a chance to conduct fine orchestras at a young age. His music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* includes an Overture (opening piece) written when he was just 17 and later, the very famous 'Wedding March'. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* features a donkey character, which you can hear when you listen to this piece.



Courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London

Count

Watch our film of Mendelssohn's piece (at 10:35 in the film) and challenge your children to count the donkey 'ee-ors' that you'll hear throughout. It's not as easy as you think! You can also count the 'stomps' at the beginning. When you've decided on the answers, ask your children for a gesture to represent each one. They must then perform the gesture every time they hear the corresponding sound (warning – there are a lot of ee-ors, and sometimes they are quite hidden in the music, so you have to listen really carefully!)

Draw & dance

This piece is all about donkeys dancing but what do dancing donkeys look like? Challenge your children to draw the donkeys as a comic strip with each picture representing a different dance move. Once this is done, choose a selection of their pictures and, splitting your class into smaller working groups, encourage each group to create the dance depicted by the drawings. Finally, have a dance off where each group dances to Mendelssohn's music. You could even choose the best team and ask them to teach the entire class their definitive donkey dance moves!

Compose!

Mendelssohn's music sounds just like donkeys because of his musical 'ee-or' and it sounds like they are dancing because of the swirling music surrounding the 'ee-or'. Here's a method for making more dancing animal music:

1. Have a class discussion and make a long list of animals on the board. You could tie this to another topic you are studying (e.g. rainforest animals).
2. Split your class into groups of three and give each group an animal to describe musically, without words.
3. Challenge each group to create a small animal piece using the following three ingredients:
 - The animal's voice (i.e. the sound the animal actually makes, the 'ee-or')
 - The animal's movement (e.g. footsteps, shuffling, the 'stomping' in Mendelssohn's piece)
 - Dancing rhythm. The easiest way to create rhythms is to fit words to a pulse. For example, 'crocodile loves to disco dance' becomes:



Your teams can use whatever resources you have available for this task: instruments, vocal sounds and/or body percussion.

4. When this is achieved, hear each group and encourage the other teams to guess the animal depicted and give feedback.
5. Then, put your groups into an order and perform in turn thus creating an animal dance party. You could even try dancing to these new pieces or, if the pulse is kept the same throughout, try layering them up to create one giant animal samba!
6. Why not perform it to another class, or record it? We would love to see and hear any recordings you make of your class compositions.

We would love to hear from you with any artwork, words or music you create.

You can email us at education@lpo.org.uk or connect with us on social media.

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