



EXPRESS YOURSELF

KEY STAGE 2 TEACHERS' RESOURCES

SERIOUS & PLAYFUL

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 1: Serious and Playful**. In the film, Yolanda Brown presents an exploration of Edward Elgar's serious sighing piece *Sospiri*, followed by Ruth Crawford Seeger's playfully skipping *Rissolty Rossolty*. 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

SERIOUS

Edward Elgar – *Sospiri*

English composer Edward Elgar (1857–1934) became famous in 1899 when he had the genius idea of describing his best friends in music. This became the *Enigma Variations* – a piece that is still hugely popular today. Its most famous movement is '[Nimrod](#)', which is often performed at memorial services as it is very moving. Within a few years he was knighted and made Master of the King's Music. *Sospiri*, a short piece for strings and harp, was written in 1914. Elgar wanted to write a piece in honour of his best friend Billy Reed but, troubled by thoughts of impending war, the music came out much more serious than he initially planned. The title means 'sighs' in Italian.



Draw

As you listen to Elgar's music, encourage your class to draw the shape of the melodies in the air with their hands. They might notice that the melodies often swoop downwards or arch like little sighs. Give out paper and pens and as you listen again, ask your children to draw the arching and swooping melodies. Demonstrate how to do this by keeping your pen or pencil on the page and just moving it up and down with the music.

Discuss

Elgar was very troubled when he wrote this piece. He was thinking about his best friend and about the worries of war. Have a class discussion about worries. Create a long list on the board of things that people worry about. Try not to make it too specific at this point. General themes like ‘homework’ and ‘arguments’ will point your children in the right direction without asking them to share their own worries at this stage.

Next, talk about friendship. Encourage your class to think about the people in their lives that they trust. Who do they turn to in times of trouble?

Write

Finally, ask your children to write a letter to a good friend and include in it anything that is troubling them or causing worry. Listen to Elgar’s music as you do this. *Sospiri* ends with a ‘happy’ chord signalling hope for the future. Ask your children to end their letters with a wish or hope too.

Option 1: Keep the secrets

When the letters are complete, ask your children to seal them in an envelope, collect them and put them somewhere safe. It’s important that you don’t read them or open the envelopes and make sure that your children know that no one will ever read them. Explain that writing down our thoughts and troubles can help us to solve them.

Option 2: Share the worries

Have another class discussion and select some children to read from their letters. Discuss any issues and problems that arise and explain that sharing a problem or worry can be a great way to feel better about them.

You can make this project less revealing by asking the children to write as if they are Elgar, faced with impending war. Or you could ask your class to channel another character or historical figure they are studying.

PLAYFUL

Ruth Crawford Seeger – *Rissolty Rossolty*

Ruth Crawford Seeger (1901–1953) was an American composer with an interest in folk music. She initially dreamed of becoming a poet but after starting piano lessons, the family discovered she was very talented and so she switched her ambitions to music. She was the first female composer to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship which enabled her to travel to Europe, where she met and worked with many very famous composers. In the 1930s she became interested in folk music and started collecting, preserving and publishing pieces that would otherwise have been lost forever. *Rissolty Rossolty* (1941) is a short orchestral work which uses three of these tunes in a very clever way.



Draw

Rissolty Rossolty is a very lively and playful piece. Many of the fragments of melody near the beginning sound like short bursts of laughter. Watch our exploration of this piece and then give out paper and pens to your class. Ask them to draw a small smiling or laughing face for each burst of laughter they hear in the piece. If the music is loud, the face could be drawn bigger than if it is quiet. As the music grows more complicated these musical bursts of laughter start to layer up so your artists must work fast and allow their page to fill up with lots and lots of laughing faces.

Towards the middle of the piece, the fragments of melody grow into a lively dance. Can your children draw this as well?

Compose!

Crawford Seeger's piece is made up of fragments of folk songs. Explain to your children that folk songs are the sort of songs that were possibly sung to them when they were younger. Songs that everyone knows, rather than famous songs sung by famous people. 'Pop goes the weasel', 'Rock-a-bye baby', 'Grand Old Duke of York' and 'This Old Man' are good examples.

1. Choose one folk song that everyone knows and practise singing it as a full class. (If you are struggling to find a song everyone knows, choose a pop song or a song that you might be learning elsewhere in school).
2. Split your class into small groups of four or five and assign each group one line from your chosen folk song. Their task is to use the fragment to make a short new piece. For example, they might use just the first line 'Oh, the Grand Old Duke of York' and sing it overlapping like a round, or very slowly getting faster – or another way.

You could prompt the groups with these questions to help them decide how to sing their line:

- How many times will you sing it?
- Will it be fast or slow? Will it speed up, slow down, or stay at a steady speed?
- Will it be loud, quiet, or have both loud and quiet in it?
- Do you want to repeat any bits of it?
- Does everyone sing together or do different people come in at different times?

3. Hear each group and give gentle feedback.
4. Finally challenge your class to join their pieces together to make one big piece. To do this they need to create a structure for their ideas. Remind them of Ruth Crawford Seeger's piece – she begins with lots of short fragments, then the ideas layer up until the big tune is revealed. Can your children create a similar structure for their ideas?
5. Perform your class piece – you could record it and send it to us, we'd love to hear it! Don't forget to give your piece a name.

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

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

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