

Lesson Plan: Applying Musical Processes to Composition

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Timeframe: 50 minutes

Target Audience: College-level writers but could be used in high school or adult education

Materials needed: Scratch paper, pen or pencil, computer or some kind of music player, classical music playlist, image for Step 2, and prompts for steps 1 and 3

Objectives: After the lesson, students will be able to

- create connections, relationships, and applications between two different artistic mediums.
- understand how compositional process affects style.

Introduction to Lesson [2-3 minutes]:

- Define the word “composition” as the way in which information is organized. Compositional processes are the tendencies with which we organize information.
- Theoretically, we could take the compositional process of an artist in any medium and apply it to writing.
- As a result, we will analyze the compositional processes of three different musical composers: Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn.
- For all three composers we will discuss their unique compositional processes, and I will play a segment of a piece that best encapsulates each composer’s process.
- After we listen, we will imitate their compositional processes through writing.
- Finally, we will evaluate the successes and failures of each compositional process.

Procedures [45 Minutes]:

Step 1: Beethoven (Frenetic Composition) [15 Minutes]

- a. Describe Beethoven’s compositional process. [3 minutes]

We will call this particular compositional process a “Frenetic Compositional Process.” I would say that this ideology is characterized by a piecemeal and frenzied “invention.” In other words, there was no particular order to Beethoven’s ideas when he first had them. He had ideas and documented them for use later. Eventually, he would take these individual ideas and create order out of them, or, compose with them. He would invent first and structure at the end. What we can learn from Beethoven’s compositional process is that a composition can be a

bunch of individual ideas arranged in a specific way. What is compelling about his style is that Beethoven was able to achieve organic unity in his pieces despite his frenzied and piecemeal musical ideas! After we listen to Beethoven's "Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major," we will use Beethoven's process to create such a composition ourselves through writing.

- b. Play a segment of a piece that best encapsulates Beethoven's compositional process: "Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Op. 109: II." [3 minutes]

Beethoven's music is characterized by this frenetic approach. His compositions are both emotional and aggressive, while paying attention to the interaction of each idea. This process is best encapsulated in "Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major."

- c. Imitate Beethoven's frantic compositional process by quickly generating ideas onto scratch paper. [2 minutes]

Because Beethoven wrote ideas often unprompted, we will do the same. We will have a two-minute "free write," and afterwards we will have four minutes to structure these ideas into a coherent composition.

- d. Structure these ideas into a coherent narrative order. [4 minutes]
- e. Share compositions as a class. Ask for one or two volunteers. [3 minutes]

Step 2: Mozart (Recursive) [15 minutes]

- a. Describe Mozart's compositional process. [3 minutes]

Unlike Beethoven, Mozart claimed to have the final composition, or the final product in his mind. As a result, he was able to document the individual parts of the final product at one time. He said, "Nor do I hear in my imagination the parts successively, I hear them all at once. What a delight this is! All this inventing, this producing, takes place in a pleasing, lively dream." However, there was still a small responsibility to edit as he went along. This may happen in English composition as well. Let's say that you begin with a strong thesis and ideas with which to support it. All that's left to the composer is to capture those ideas and put them into order. The composer would have much of the structuring and inventing done before writing—all that would be left is editing to taste.

- b. Play a segment of a piece that best encapsulates Mozart's compositional process: "Piano Concerto No. 26 in D Major." [3 minutes]

- c. Imitate Mozart's process. [5 minutes]

I will provide an image for the entire class to see. This image is attached to the end of this lesson plan. Students will then have to recreate this image through writing from memory. They have the finished product, and it is up to them to recreate this. Form is not necessarily stressed in this process. They can start by capturing key details, attempting to define the whole image, or writing about the parts in relation to each other, for instance. What matters most is that the students represent this image through writing to the best of their ability.

- d. Ask for one or two volunteers to share their work. It will be important to note where the volunteers choose to begin and how they develop the final product. [4 minutes]

Step 3: Joseph Haydn (Linear) [15 Minutes]

- a. Describe Haydn's compositional process. [3 minutes]

Unlike Beethoven, whom we can say started somewhere in the middle, and Mozart, who started at the end, Haydn started right at the beginning. He came up with his own ideas and linked them to one another, stressing form heavily. Put simply, I think of Joseph Haydn as writing "from left to right." He would come up with ideas and structure them as he went along. In turn, he established his place in history as an innovator of form, and he eventually became known as "Father of the String Quartet" for all his innovation in form during the 18th century. In writing composition, this would be structured writing to a prompt.

- b. Play a segment of a piece that best encapsulates Haydn's compositional process: "Sonata in C Major." [3 minutes]
- c. Imitate Haydn's process. [5 minutes]

I will provide a prompt. Students cannot go back and revise, but they must put a heavy emphasis on form as they write. In other words, they must edit heavily as they write.

Prompt: What is your favorite instrument and why?

- d. Ask for one or two volunteers to share their responses. Ask if this method is easier or more efficient. Is this writing style more like the one that they are used to? [4 minutes]

Closure/Evaluation [2-3 minutes]:

- Ask the students if they have any questions.
- Students will then be given the guidelines for a broader, on-going project based off this lesson plan.
- For this project, ask the students to do the same process that we did for our three composers: Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn. They must find a different musical composer and follow the same steps. Students can choose a composer whose process is either similar or completely different from the composers in class. Once they apply the process to their composer, they will present it to the class.

Lesson Analysis:

Many students view composition as an inherently linear process. This lesson demonstrates that composition is not inherently linear but a combination of many different processes. Experimenting with the compositional methods of individual composers forces students to engage in an imaginative aspect of composition. Students will realize that each idiosyncratic process does not fail to produce an organically unified composition. Furthermore, as we experiment with the connections between writing and music, students can apply this method to other artistic mediums. Ultimately, this lesson is meant to make the students think differently about writing. Although this lesson plan can be self-contained, it should culminate in a broader, on-going project. This lesson plan is a good way to demonstrate to students that writing can be the product of many different processes. The main concern about this lesson is the issue of time. It might be more effective to split the lesson over two class sessions and to include a wider range of composers and their processes. Also, it might be beneficial for students if the instructor presents this information visually or through handouts. Finally, this lesson is highly conceptual and might be difficult for some students to grasp.

ПРИСВЯЧУЄТЬСЯ
ГРАФІНІ БАБЕТТІ ФОН КЕГЛЕВИЧ

DER GRÄFIN BABETTE VON KEGLEVIC
GEWIDMET

СОНАТА

тв. 7

SONATE

op. 7

№ 4 Allegro molto e con brio (♩: 126)

10 20 30 40 50

63

SECHSUNDZWANZIGSTES CONCERT

(Krönungs-Concert)

für das Pianoforte

von

W. A. MOZART.

Köch. Verz. N^o 537.

(253) 1

Mozart's Werke.

Serie 10. N^o 26.

Componirt 24. Februar 1788
in Wien.

Allegro.
TUTTI

Flauto.
Oboi.
Fagotti.
Corni in D.
Trombe in D.
Timpani in D. A.
Pianoforte.
Violino I.
Violino II.
Viola.
Violoncello e Basso.

This system contains the first five measures of the piece. The woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, Bassoon, Horns, Trumpets, and Timpani) are marked with rests, indicating they are silent. The strings (Violins I and II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass) and the piano part are active, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The piano part begins with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano).

Allegro.

Fl.
Cor.
Trombe
Timp.
Violino I.
Violino II.
Viola.
Violoncello e Basso.

This system contains measures 6 through 10. The woodwinds (Flute, Cor Anglais, Trumpets, and Timpani) enter with a melodic line. The strings continue their rhythmic accompaniment. The piano part remains active, providing harmonic support. The tempo marking **Allegro.** is repeated at the beginning of this system.



Image 1

Franz Joseph Haydn
Sonata in C Major
(1794-5)

Allegro

p *cresc.*

ff *f* *mf*

f *p*

mf

cresc. *ff dim.*