Appreciating Music Appreciation: Strategies for Teaching All Students

Amber Dahlén Peterson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Music,
Mazie Barnett Kilmer Chair for Strings Education
Southwestern College

amber.peterson@sckans.edu

Music Appreciation students offer a different challenge from typical band, orchestra, and choir students. Their limited prior knowledge and experience can make connections to the material difficult. Furthermore, cultural experiences might be assumed from the teacher’s own upbringing (Everyone should recognize Beethoven’s 5th, right?), but such assumptions, in addition to the “curse of expertise”, may impede students’ musical comprehension. Strategies and activities developed by the researcher to better reach her community college students will be shared, which can also be adapted to middle and high school level students. Instructional topics for promoting lifelong music appreciation will also be discussed.

A. Why do we teach Music Appreciation?

B. Who are our Music Appreciation students? (& how are they different from us?)
   1. “The Other 80%”
   2. Reasons they take Music Appreciation

C. What are some of the challenges of teaching Music Appreciation?
   1. What should we teach?
   2. What music should we teach?
   3. Approaches
   4. Curse of Expertise
   5. Attitudes

D. What can we do to make Music Appreciation more meaningful for our students?
   1. Instructional topics to promote lifelong music appreciation
   2. Only “Good” Music?
   3. Guided Listening
   4. Discussion/Group Work
   5. Sample Activities
NOTES:
Sample Prompts for Music Appreciation Discussions
1. What roles does music currently play in your life?
2. On which of Copland’s music listening planes did you listen? Define the plane(s) you indicated.
3. Describe your music listening habits in your personal life. Have your listening preferences changed over the years? Do your teenage and current listening habits differ, and what may have led to this?
4. What kind of music do you have in your personal collection? Is it mostly from specific styles or artists? Is most of your owned music on Tapes, CDs, iTunes, etc? How does the format of your collection affect the music you listen to?
5*. Why do you suppose 19th-century Americans showed so little interest in concert music by American composers?
6*. Discuss the reasons for the rise, and then the decline of Tin Pan Alley.
7*. What characteristics do country blues, classic blues, and urban blues share? In what ways do they differ?
8*. Do you think the radio stations in your area give adequate air time to Latin popular music?

(*Ferris, 2013)

My Favorite Music
What is your favorite style of music? Who is your favorite performer of this style? Locate an example on YouTube. In 1 paragraph, explain why you chose this style and artist/group by describing different musical elements in the performance (Rhythm (tempo, meter), Melody (pitch, intervals, contour, articulation), Harmony, Timbre (instrumentation, voices, range, dynamics), Texture). Email your paragraph, including an active YouTube link, to Dr. Peterson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Favorite style &amp; artist not indicated.</th>
<th>Favorite style &amp; artist indicated.</th>
<th>Question answered in at least 1 paragraph (at least 5 completed sentences).</th>
<th>All 5 elements are described.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>Answer is not minimum length.</td>
<td>Question answered in at least 1 paragraph (at least 5 completed sentences).</td>
<td>Question answered in at least 1 paragraph (at least 5 completed sentences).</td>
<td>Question answered in at least 1 paragraph (at least 5 completed sentences).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements</td>
<td>2 or fewer elements are described.</td>
<td>3 elements are described.</td>
<td>4 elements are described.</td>
<td>All 5 elements are described.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Spelling</td>
<td>6+ minor errors or major mistakes throughout.</td>
<td>4-6 minor errors.</td>
<td>0-3 minor errors.</td>
<td>Question answered in at least 1 paragraph (at least 5 completed sentences).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>No active link included.</td>
<td>Active link included.</td>
<td>Question answered in at least 1 paragraph (at least 5 completed sentences).</td>
<td>Question answered in at least 1 paragraph (at least 5 completed sentences).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**6 Songs of Me**

1. What was the first song you ever bought?
2. What song always gets you dancing?
3. What song takes you back to your childhood?
4. What is your perfect love song?
5. What song would you want at your funeral?
6. Time for the encore. One last song that makes you, you.

1. Go to [http://www.sixsongsof.me/](http://www.sixsongsof.me/)
2. Answer the 6 Questions on the website and save your answers. (You will need to save your answers in order to get the answers for a & b.)
3. Email Dr. Peterson your answers (Song & Artist).
4. Include at least one reflective paragraph in your email, answering the following:
   a. Which of your pieces were most frequently chosen by others? What population most frequently chose it?
   b. Which of your pieces was least frequently chosen by others? Why do you think this was?
   c. What patterns did you notice in your answers (artist, style, elements, etc.)?
   d. Sometimes it is difficult to narrow down our response to a single song. For any of the questions, what additional song(s) (and their artists) would you have included if there were no limitations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>6 Songs</strong></td>
<td>The answers to the 6 Questions were not emailed.</td>
<td>Half of the song or artist information was missing in the email.</td>
<td>The songs were emailed but artist information was not included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>The reflection is not minimum length.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>The reflection is at least 1 paragraph (at least 5 completed sentences).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>1 or fewer reflective questions were answered completely.</td>
<td>2 reflective questions were answered completely.</td>
<td>3 reflective questions were answered completely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar &amp; Spelling</strong></td>
<td>6+ minor errors or major mistakes throughout.</td>
<td>4-6 minor errors.</td>
<td>0-3 minor errors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Personal Pandora**
1. Choose an artist/group from either your “My Favorite Music” “6 Songs of Me” assignment.
3. Type this artist/group in as a New Station.
4. Listen to the first 5 pieces that Pandora plays for your station while completing the tables below.
5. For 1 of the pieces, also fill out a Listening Journal.

Selected Artist/Group ______________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song #1</th>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Artist(s):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Length:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar Artists Listed (3-4):</td>
<td>Familiar Song (Y/N):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Familiar Artist(s) (Y/N):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion:</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Television Soundtracks**
1. Watch 1 hour of television, including commercials. This should be a television show (or shows), rather than a movie.
   - Channel: Day: Time:
2. Complete the log of the music you hear, documenting diegetic and non-diegetic music and any recognizable music. Use a timer to keep track of when different music is occurring. Use additional paper if needed.
3. Write a reflective paragraph summarizing how you heard the music functioning during the television shows. (See p.324-325.)
4. Write a reflective paragraph about how commercials used music. Did certain products use certain tempos, instruments, songs you recognize, other elements? Do you think any of the music was purposefully selected? Why? What is an example of a commercial you thought was memorable because of its music? (This last question does not have to refer to a commercial from this hour of television.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Show or Ad</th>
<th>Type of music</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Familiar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1:00</td>
<td>Glee</td>
<td>Diegetic</td>
<td>Characters singing</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Listening Journal

**Title:** __________________________________________  **Date:** ___________________

**Composer:** _____________________________________  **Year:** ___________________

**Performer:** ______________________________________________________________

**Style:** _________________________________________

If “Classical Music”, check the period:
- [ ] Classical
- [ ] Romantic
- [ ] Contemporary

**Instruments:**
- [ ] String Orchestra
- [ ] Symphony Orchestra
  - [ ] Woodwinds
  - [ ] Brass
  - [ ] Percussion
  - [ ] Strings
  - [ ] Keyboard
  - [ ] Other

**Voices:**
- [ ] A capella
- [ ] With Instrument(s)
  - [ ] Solo
  - [ ] Choir
  - [ ] Both
  - [ ] Male
  - [ ] Female
  - [ ] Both
  - [ ] Language: __________________________
  - [ ] Language: __________________________

**Tempo (in English):** ___________________________  **Texture:** ___________________________

**Form:** ___________________________  **Meter:** ___________________________

**Purpose:**       Sacred
- [ ] Secular
- [ ] Other: _____________________________

**Familiar (Y/N):**  (No)
- [ ] Opinion: ___________________________
- [ ] 2
- [ ] 3
- [ ] 4
- [ ] 5 (Yes)

**Other Notes:**
Discography #1 – Bach, Vivaldi, Handel
1. Select one piece each composed by Bach, Vivaldi, and Handel and email the titles to Dr. Peterson by Friday, February 7. (For multimovement works, select only one movement and email this information as well.) You may find a recording in your own music collection, on YouTube, or from other sources.
2. Complete a listening journal for each piece (3).
3. In the “Other Notes” section, identify the recording this performance appeared on (e.g., the name of the CD, when it was released) or the date and location of the performance.
4. Turn in completed listening journal on Thursday, February 13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Selection</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Song title not emailed in advance.</td>
<td>Song title emailed in advance but not by Friday.</td>
<td>Song title emailed to Dr. Peterson by Friday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Journal</td>
<td>Section not attempted.</td>
<td>Section partially completed.</td>
<td>Section complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Journal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Journal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Journal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Journal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Notes</td>
<td>Section not attempted.</td>
<td>Section partially completed.</td>
<td>Section complete.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bach Score: __________ Vivaldi Score: __________ Handel Score: __________

Total Score: __________
References


