A series of music lessons for implementation in the classroom F-10.

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Four 15 minute lessons for easy implementation in the classroom based upon the Thunderstorm from Beethoven’s *Pastorale* Symphony

**Year level: 5-6**

Written in the language of the Draft Australian Curriculum in the Arts they include activities in each of the music learning areas: performing, composing and listening and identify the key competencies reinforced in each activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Focus activity</th>
<th>Matched to content descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Listening and imagining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reading and Performing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Listening and Performing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Composing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lesson Index**

**Lesson 1:** This listening activity focuses upon how Beethoven has used the elements of music to paint a picture in sound. Students then compare the treatment of the elements of music at different points in the piece to see how they have been manipulated to show the varying intensity of a storm.

**Lesson 2:** Here students learn the main themes used by Beethoven to represent the parts of the storm. Simple score reading activities are included before a full listening to the whole movement of the symphony.

**Lesson 3:** Explores how drama is created by manipulating texture and dynamics and how musical ideas are communicated using symbols.

**Lesson 4:** Here students in groups will compose their own piece describing in music something from the Australian environment using a mixture of acoustic sounds and technology to source the material they use in their composition.
Thunderstorm from Pastoral Symphony (1808)

Composer: Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven (1770-1827) carried a sketchbook with him at all times. He jotted down ideas as they came to him. Some themes in the Pastoral Symphony (No.6) were written 5 years before Beethoven finished the work. Beethoven was a master of noting down a good idea and using it years later. He wrote a great deal of music and was deaf by the age of 46 and by the time he wrote this piece. He struggled with his deafness, and once wrote: “What a humiliation when someone, standing beside me, heard a flute from afar off while I heard nothing, or when someone heard a shepherd singing and again I heard nothing!” He craved the sounds of bird calls, rustling water and even a thunderstorm.

Beethoven called this a “Characteristic Symphony” which means it is programmatic music or music which depicts a scene, place, object, person or mood. While elements of nature are clearly present in this symphony, Beethoven did not intend to catalogue and present "sounds of nature." He used the sounds and inspiration of nature to inspire his musical material. Each movement was given a descriptive subtitle of a scene:

- Movement I: Awakening of happy feelings upon arriving in the countryside
- Movement II: Scene by the brook
- Movement III: Joyous gathering of country folk
- Movement IV: Lightning, Thunderstorm
- Movement V: Shepherds' song

Movement IV. Lightning, thunderstorm

Suddenly, the skies darken as a thunderstorm approaches and the peasants scurry to their homes. The atmosphere of an impending thunderstorm is vividly depicted in the opening bars of the movement. Without warning, the wind begins to blow violently, lightning and thunder are everywhere. Eventually the storm passes, and the grateful peasants intone a chorale of thanks to God. This music segues into the finale.

This movement is representative of one of the brilliant orchestrations from this era. Beethoven uses many instruments in ways that are quite unusual. For instance, the celli and basses are asked to play very rapid notes in their lowest range. In no way will this, based on the capabilities of the instruments, be heard cleanly. What one hears, instead, is a deep rumbling resembling distant thunder. We see the brilliant flash of lightning in the rapid ascending notes of the violins, and hear the rain and swirling winds in the arpeggiated tremolo string writing. It was also for this movement that Beethoven saved the special timbres of trombones, piccolo, and timpani for extra punch and fuller orchestral sound.

Key musical concepts contained in this work

- Use of the elements of music to create a picture in sound.
- Texture – manipulating and identifying layers of sound
- Instruments of the orchestra with a focus on the timpani and piccolo.

At the conclusion of the activities students should be able to:

- Discuss how the elements of music can be used to represent an image or scene (program music).
- Discuss what they hear in the music
- Apply this knowledge to a composition activity.
- Create a score (graphic notation) to communicate ideas.
- Aurally identify the instrumental characters in each scene.
## Listening Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audio Cues</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 0:00-0:25  | • Introduction – storm on the horizon.  
• Cello and double bass tremolo, the storm in waiting.  
• Violin I play two melodic lines that rise in pitch sequentially.  
• Violin II and viola represent small rain drops. |
| 0:26-0:44  | • Thunder claps from timpani (drums heard for the first time in *Pastoral Symphony No. 6*).  
• Trumpets add texture and timbre to the storm.  
• Full orchestra plays *ff* (fortissimo - very loud).  
• 3 descending melodic phrases followed by 3 chords. |
| 0:45-1:23  | • Clear descending melodic phrase from the string section and bassoon, repeated 3 times.  
• Emphasis from kettle drums and trumpets continue.  
• Strings maintain the tension of a storm with tremolos. |
| 1:24-1:41  | • First glimpses of the sun heard in violin I with a counter melody in the clarinet.  
• Conversation between woodwind and strings follows, crescendo to: |
| 1:42-2:00  | • Trumpets herald a rolling arpeggio (broken chord) in the string section.  
• Rising melodic shape adds tension and anticipation ending when a piccolo plays a high G natural (*cue 2:00*). |
| 2:01-2:32  | • Descending chromatic scales in violin I and cello are accompanied by sustained notes in other parts.  
• Storms last fury with descending melodic lines.  
• Held chords mark a change in the weather (*cue 2:24*). |
| 2:33-end   | • Arpeggios in the strings.  
• Slow diminuendo (gradually getting quieter) to calm the storm.  
• Cadences (a progression of chords that mark the conclusion or punctuation of a phrase) rumble the last of the storm (*cue 2:58-3:12*).  
• Oboe shines the sun light (*cue 3:12*).  
• Final flute line leads straight into the movement V. |
Visual Guide – digital teaching materials

A presentable interactive classroom PDF is included as a separate download to use with these lessons. In this download you will find:

- Slide Three: Introduction
- Slide Four: Lesson 1 – Lesson 1 Listening and imagining
- Slide Five: Lesson 2 – Reading, Performing & Listening
- Slide Six: Lesson 2 – Reading, Performing & Listening
- Slide Seven: Lesson 3 – Moving, Listening and Creating
Sequential Classroom Activities

Lesson 1 Listening and imagining

1. As a class identify the sounds you would hear in a thunderstorm and list them on the board.
   
   a) How would you represent the above elements of the thunderstorm with graphic notation? Brainstorm the way you could communicate those sounds using graphic notation that would represent elements of the storm. These can be used as reference later during activity 3).
   
   b) Predict how Beethoven might include these elements within his composition (relate discussion to pitch, dynamics, tempo, duration, texture, timbre).

Consider the images below while listening to the three short excerpts from Beethoven's symphony.

Which picture might best represent each excerpt?

What did you hear in the music to make that decision?

Consider each of the elements of music in your discussion and use the table below on the board under the headings pitch, dynamics and expressive devices, rhythm, texture, instruments and tone colour to collect your answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Start of the storm</th>
<th>Height of the storm</th>
<th>Calm after the storm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pitch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamics and expression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythm</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Texture</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone colour</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extension:

Listen to or watch the storm scene from the opera Peter Grimes

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8co9sGSuSNo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8co9sGSuSNo)

Compare the composition ideas and techniques that a composer from the 1900's used to those used by Beethoven two hundred years earlier.
Lesson 2: Reading, performing, listening

Remind the students that this piece is representing a thunderstorm

1. Learn the following rhythms by copying their sound and following the notes as they are played. Repeat each one until it is secure.

2. Test the students recognise each of the patterns by clapping them in different order and asking them to identify which one you clapped. If you are not secure doing this – have one of the students who is clap and the rest of the class recognise or ask them class to shut their eyes while you play the cue.

3. Make up a sentence which can be said to that rhythm which depicts the stages of the storm. E.g. for pattern no 2 Heavy rain, big black clouds, run inside the storm is here.

4. Perform the rhythm patterns on a range of percussion instruments

5. Consider tone colours or sound qualities of each percussion sound and and discuss how they might contribute to the sounds of a storm in a composition.

a)

\[\text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet } + \text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet }\]

b)

\[\text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet } + \text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet }\]

c)

\[\text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet } + \text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet }\]

d)

\[\text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet } + \text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet }\]

e)

\[\text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet } + \text{\textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet }\]
2. These rhythms are used by Beethoven in *Thunderstorm*. Listen to the following sections while you are following the music written below.

You should be able to recognise the rhythm. The notes move with the up and down direction of the pitch (high and low)

a) Double bass and cello play a low repeating note which creates suspense followed by violin II playing the light raindrops (**cue 0:00-0:04**).

![Double bass and cello](image)

b) Violin I – heavier raindrops (**cue 0:05-0:08 and 0:18-0:22**).

![Violin I](image)

c) Strings and bassoon – section of descending storm sequence (**cue 0:45-0:52**).

![Strings and bassoon](image)

d) Strings descending chromatic notes at the height of the storm (**cue 2:06-2:17**).

![Strings descending chromatic notes](image)

e) Oboe – sunshine at the end (**CD cue 3:12**).

![Oboe](image)

Now finish this lesson by listening to the whole piece and identifying each of these themes as they are heard.
Lesson 3: Moving, Listening and Creating

Warm up activity: Seat group in a circle (or semicircle if that suits you better), begin at one end and encourage each student to snap their fingers in an irregular pattern as the teacher walks past them. They continue doing so until you pass them again and give them a new sound to do. The sound increases in dynamics and energy as you pass each person and the sound accumulates (like terrace dynamics).

- When you return to the first child transfer the snapping to a clap using finger tips, pass this round
- Then transfer to a clap using the whole hand
- Then tapping chest with alternate hands
- Then patsching with alternate hands (patsching is a term for slapping your legs just above the knee)
- Then add alternate feet stamping to the patsching so they happen simultaneously

Encourage the group to increase the intensity of the sound on their knees and feet to a dramatic crescendo. They are experimenting with dynamics. Then go backwards: Remove the sound of stamping feet as you pass each person:

- then patsching knees,
- then tapping chest,
- whole hand claps,
- finger claps,
- snapping fingers finishing with one person making the sound of an irregular finger snap.

You will find you have the sound of a storm being built up from a few rain drops to a full thunder storm and back to the calm after a storm has passed….magic!

Below is a graphic score of the first 25 seconds of this piece. A graphic notation represents sound that is heard. **Cue 0:00-0:25** has three main sections, a tremolo in cello and double bass, violin II and finally violin I with raindrops. Listen to the score and identify each of these sections as they occur.

Play through this score and then create your own graphic score of the sounds in one or more of the following sections of the piece on a large sheet of paper or cardboard.

a) Cue 1:25-1:41  
b) Cue 1:42-2:38  
c) Cue 2:39-3:44

Once these are completed rehearse them and try performing them on available sounds and instruments found your classroom. This may include voices, body percussion, instruments and everyday objects) Evaluate and compare graphic scores by using words such as tone colour, texture, dynamics, tremolo, chromatic, descending.
Lesson 4 Composition and Performance

Beethoven never set foot in Australia. This great composer would have been amazed at the sights and sounds of our country, especially the bush. If you had to be Beethoven’s tour guide in sound, how would you compose your tour?

Find some pictures of Australian storms in the countryside (not a city) on the internet. Divide the class into groups and have them form an ideas bank of sounds that they might use to capture some of these images.

3. Work in groups of between 4 -6 to compose your own thunderstorm.
   a) Consider five or six features of the Australian bush and include a thunderstorm as one of these elements.
   b) Use available sound sources (instruments, voices, body percussion other sound sources) or technology to devise ways of creating these features of the bush.
   c) If there is access to technology (computer programs, sound bites from the internet or sounds of nature recorded by the students and brought to the lesson), students might use that to select a series of sounds that can be used for this task and combine them with the acoustic sounds.
   d) Compose a theme for each section of these elements; remember to consider tone colour, texture, changing dynamics, rhythm patterns, and ascending and descending pitch patterns.
   e) Consider how you can use symbols or traditional notation to communicate your ideas. How would you indicate to a performer the following information?
      o length of sound
      o high and low pitch
      o volume
      o texture (i.e. the layers of sound)
      o the order in which your sounds are heard and combined in your piece.
   f) Create your score giving enough information so that other players could perform your music without you having to give additional information.
   g) Play from your score and rehearse your piece as a group.
   h) Perform your composition to the class.