



**Teaching Plan for
Amazing Grace
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MUSIC SELECTION

The song Amazing Grace holds a unique place in Western culture, particularly in the United States of America. The intrinsic message of personal transformation, of recognizing and ending tragic and/or “wrong” behaviors or attitudes, speaks to all individuals at a variety of levels. This seeming universality has taken Amazing Grace from the solitude of the hymnal to a place of prominence. Experienced in practically every Western musical style from popular to country to jazz to classical to gospel, it is performed at public events ranging from state funerals to professional football games. It has been used on popular television shows and has received its own “special” on PBS. Students need to experience Amazing Grace through the performance of an exquisitely sensitive instrumental setting combined with an in-depth study of the work to foster both musical understanding and personal reflection.

ANALYSIS

Amazing Grace is a work that transcends the music – imparting a profound experience to those who perform and/or listen to it. Amazing Grace (the text) was written by John Newton. Shortly after the death of his mother, Newton began his life as a sailor at the age of 10. At the age of 19, he was forced to serve in the British Navy. After a failed attempt at desertion, he was publicly flogged and demoted. At his request, he was exchanged to serve on a slave ship. The troublesome Newton was discharged in Africa. He gained employment with a slave trader, only to become treated as a slave. After one year, he was rescued by another slave trader and returned to England. For several years, he served as a captain of a slave ship until in the midst of a huge storm, when all seemed lost, Newton experienced his sudden and great transformation – realizing how wrong his actions were. Newton went on to become one of the great

church leaders of England. His writings and speeches are directly credited for the inspiration for the abolishment of slavery in England and fueling the fires of the Free Slave movement in the United States.

The form of this version might best be described as a quasi-sonata allegro form. All of the elements are there, except the appearance of a second theme. Ticheli provides the following outline of the form - Introduction, First Statement of Theme, Second State of Theme, Episode, Development, Transition, Final Statement (Climax) and Coda. The "final statement" serves as the traditional recapitulation.

The rhythm of this composition is very basic half, quarter and eighth notes with the occasional triplet, three instances of sixteenth notes (one beat), three instances of the "Scotch snap" (sixteenth-dotted eighth) and one use of a quarter note triplet.

Melodically, the piece is based on the melody New Britain, the tune that has been most closely associated with the known version of Amazing Grace. This melody is pentatonically based. The development section focuses on various entrances of the Perfect 4th "motif". The recapitulation introduces a definitive countermelody used to build this section to the climactic point of the work. Harmonically, Ticheli sets the work in Eb with excursions into Bb, Db and F in the development section and Bb in the transition section leading to the recapitulation. The use of Db in the work offers an excellent opportunity for a discussion on the use and impact of non-chordal tones. First presented in the m. 2 and reinforced in m. 3, the Db occurs at various points throughout the work – notably, m 41, m. 56-63 in the development section and m 101-103 in the coda. Other harmonic devices include quartal and quintal "chords". Lastly, the final chord is Eb triad with a subtle F written in Flute 2.

The timbre of the work varies from subdued to grand, but generally "dark" or "warm". The texture is varied by instrumentation. The Introduction begins with a unison Bb and then begins immediately to ascend and descend simultaneously, developing into stacked quartal harmonies based in the Eb pentatonic scale, with the exception of the aforementioned Db. The indicated swell, supplemented by the suspended cymbal roll and subsequent diminuendo can be heard to evoke a sense of the nautical or a sense of the introspective or both! The first statement of the theme is presented in a chamber setting. In fact, Ticheli notes that this section is to be performed one on a part until the second statement of the theme. This first section also is the precursor to the oft used technique of harmonic activity starting on beat 2. The accompanying instruments are scored using intervallic figures which compliment/support the theme in a polyphonic manner. The second statement of the theme is scored for full winds and minimal percussion. The polyphonic writing weaves around the melody which itself receives a rhythmic embellishment. There are also continued instances of beat 2 harmonic emphasis. The texture in the development section thins as voices add and dissolve with the opening motivic interval of the Perfect 4th. The Recapitulation brings forth a continued constant thickening of the texture, subtly increased rhythmic activity and expansion of ensemble range to build to the climax, which then retreats in volume to the coda. The coda presents the solo altosaxophone presents 2 measures of the them

accompanied by homophonic clarinets and saxophones which leads to 3 chromatic chords in low brass/horns leading to a final tonic chord which adds clarinets and bassoons, with a brief statement of flutes and vibraphone – fading to silence.

Expressive markings and critical listening (balance) are crucial to the expressive qualities of this arrangement. Subtle dynamic shifts combined with scoring changes demand attentive knowledgeable performing.

Additional Consideration – There is minimal percussion writing in the piece. The use of marimba to support clarinet 3 or bassoon parts is recommended. If you add any other percussion writing, be mindful of Ticheli's masterful use of timbre and be certain to not upset the balances called for in the music.

Reasons to Perform This Composition – Steve Turner writes that *Amazing Grace* has essentially become one of the anthems of our country. It is heard/sung in a variety of settings and seems to reverberate with people of diverse backgrounds. The song is felt to be a proclamation of personal transformation. "When *Amazing Grace* is sung in America, particularly at times of national mourning or rejoicing, people feel they are connecting with something that is shared not only by their contemporaries but by their ancestors." (Turner, p. 196)

The Heart – I believe the "heart" of this arrangement of *Amazing Grace* is the manner in which it evokes incredibly strong feelings by masterful use of the elements of music combined with both the listener's individual life history and the general societal associations with the song. Perhaps Ticheli states this best, "I believe that music has the power to take us to a place that words alone cannot. And so my own feelings about "Amazing Grace" reside in this setting itself. The harmony, texture, orchestration and form are inseparable, intertwined so as to be perceived as a single expressive entity."

Introducing the Piece – Have the melody printed for all instruments, but without any title or composer information. After the ensemble performs it, ask if anyone knows that melody and what it is. Ask if anyone knows the story of it, but only by a show of hands. Tell the students that the ensemble will be performing an arrangement of the song and that the journey will include learning about the music, author and choices made by the arranger.

OUTCOMES/STRATEGIES/ASSESSMENTS

SKILL OUTCOME:

Students will be able to identify and demonstrate techniques used to make a performance expressive.

STRATEGIES:

1. Students will list what makes a musical performance expressive.
2. After a demonstration by the teacher, students will conduct the ensemble during a warm-up chorale adding expressiveness by indicating dynamic changes and the use of rubato.
3. Students will be chosen to read a brief literature excerpt. The first time they will be instructed to read it without expression. The second time they will be asked to add expressiveness to their reading. Other students will describe what the reader did to add expressiveness.
4. The use of embellishment as a means to enhance the expressiveness of a song shall be demonstrated through listening to select performances of Amazing Grace. Students will discuss if and how the embellishments added to the expressiveness of the song.
5. Student charcoal and pencil drawings will be displayed in the room. Student artists will briefly describe their use of nuance in their art.

ASSESSMENT:

Before – I believe that the world in which we all reside fosters neither sensitivity nor expressiveness. Students seem to need constant coaxing to perform music at a basic level of expressiveness.

During – Students will be provided the melodic line of Amazing Grace. Students will develop a rubric to assess the expressiveness of a performance. After one week, pairs of students will perform for each other two times. The first time, the student performer will use techniques discussed to add expressivity to the melody without adding embellishment. The second time, the student performer will add embellishments. The listening student shall complete the expressiveness rubric.

After – Students will assess their concert performance using the rubric previously developed.

KNOWLEDGE OUTCOME:

Students will be able to identify the development section of a composition and describe the techniques used within a specified development section.

STRATEGIES:

1. In rehearsal, students will analyze the form of Ticheli's setting of Amazing Grace.
2. Students will list and define what compositional devices Ticheli uses in the development section.
3. Students will compare the techniques used by Ticheli to those used by Beethoven in the first movement of his Symphony No. 5 as analyzed in Peter Schickele's "New Horizons in Music Appreciation"
4. Students will explore how techniques used in jazz improvisation relate to techniques used in development sections of Western Art music.

ASSESSMENT:

Before – Students will be asked to define what a development section of a composition is in music and to describe techniques used in a development section.

During – Students will select one movement to listen to from a list provided. Each student will identify the respective techniques used by the composer.

After – Students will identify and analyze the techniques used in the development section of a musical composition in an assessment setting. (You know, like a test! 😊)

NCS – Performing/Analyze

AFFECTIVE OUTCOME:

Students will reflect on the experience of personal transformation, recalling examples brought forward in class and in their own lives.

STRATEGIES:

1. Students will explore what personal transformation means to them.
2. Students will view a video segment of a person describing their experience of personal transformation and discuss.
3. Students will research and present information on the life of John Newton.
4. Students will seek and reflect upon instances/stories of people working through personal transformation expressed in music.

ASSESSMENT:

Before – Students will privately share their own story of personal transformation.

During – Students will reflect upon John Newton’s transformation and instances of transformation of which they are personally aware.

After – Students will describe and discuss in writing why they chose the selection they did, what transformation the person/people went through and how the composer effectively conveys the essence of the experience.

RESOURCES

BOOKS -

Amazing Grace: An Anthology of Poems about Slavery 1660-1810
James G. Basker, ed. ISBN 0-300-107579

Amazing Grace in John Newton
William E. Phipps ISBN 0-86554-8684

Dear Master: Letters of a Slave Family, 4th ed. 1985
Randall M. Miller, ed. ISBN-10 0801411343

Letters from the Slave States
James Stirling Kraus Reprint Co., New York (first pub 1923)
ASIN: B00A90LDDO

Slave Testimony: Two centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews and Autobiographies
John W. Blassingame, ed. ISBN 0807102733

Out of the Depths
John Newton ASIN B001YQEZFK

Amazing Grace: The Story of America's Most Beloved Song
Steve Turner ISBN-10 0060002190

The Life and Spirituality of John Newton: An Authentic Narrative (Sources of Evangelical Spirituality)
John Newton, Bruce D. Hindmarch ISBN-10 1573831182

Amazing Grace Reading Rainbow Book
Mary Hoffman & Caroline Binch (a children's book)
ISBN-10 0803710402

Boundless Grace: Sequel to Amazing Grace
Mary Hoffman & Caroline Binch (a children's book)
ISBN-10 0140556672

Amazing Grace: The Story of the Hymn
Linda Garfield & Janet Wilson (a children's book)
ISBN-10 0887763898

Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation
Jonathan Kozol ISBN-10 0770435661

MEDIA –

Bill Moyers: Amazing Grace

Available at www.amazon.com

ASIN: B005X5XI5S

This video is truly inclusive presentation of the song. There are 24 renditions ranging from Jessye Norman to prison inmates.

The number of recordings is staggering. One source states that Amazing Grace has been recorded by over over 6,100 artists! A search on YouTube listed “about 1,600,000 results”. A title search on “iTunes” brought forward 500 hits. This does not include listings on iTunesU or podcast episodes. My strong suggestion is to download the selections you want from iTunes.

THE WEB –

<http://johnnewton.org>

The John Newton Project.

<http://www.puritansermons.com/>

A great source for Newton’s letters.

<http://www.cowperandnewtonmuseum.org.uk>

The site for the Cowper and Newton Museum.

<http://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org>

Use Search Option for John Newton.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia>

Home of the “Africans in America” PBS feature. Part 1 houses a feature on Newton. The entire site is enlightening.

<http://www.texasfasola.org/biographies/johnnewton>

An informative article.

<http://www.banddirector.com/article/pg-interviews/an-interview-with-frank-ticheli>

Like it says, An Interview with Frank Ticheli! Written out. Good general background information.

<http://vimeo.com/50505547>

A remarkable shape note singing choir version from The Sacred Harp.

“Faith’s Review and Expectation”
a poem by John Newton

Amazing Grace! (how sweet the sound)
That sav’d a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,,
And grace my fears reliev’d;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believ’d!

Thro’ many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
‘Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promis’d good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the vail,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who call’d me here below,
Will be forever thine.

Amazing Grace by Joan McKillop (first published in *The Cowper and Newton Bulletin*)

Of all the many emails and enquiries that come into the museum, by far the most numerous are about 'Amazing Grace'. "How did it come to be written?", "Did Newton write the music?", etc., etc. Consequently I wrote this piece as a standard answer to all such questions. Most of these enquiries come from the United States but I hope the following explanation will be of interest to everyone.

The Revd John Newton wrote the hymn 'Amazing Grace' for the New Year's Morning sermon at Olney parish church in 1773. It was based on the sermon's text, I Chronicles 17:16-17, 'Faith's Review and Expectation', and was first published in *Olney Hymns* (1779). Newton's friend and neighbour William Cowper wrote some 67 of the Hymns, the remainder of the total of 348 being written by Newton himself. They were mostly intended to illuminate a particular point or sermon during the weekly Bible meetings which took place in the Great House, Olney. They were chanted at first and perhaps later sung to a popular tune, metre allowing.

'Amazing Grace' was no exception. In England it was first sung to the tune 'Hephzibah'. In New York and the eastern United States another tune, 'Loving Lambs', was possibly used some time in the early 1800s, while from the mid- to late nineteenth century about ten further tunes were in evidence. In a new book published in 2002, Steve Turner presents extensive research into the origins of the different melodies used. Between 1779 and 1807 the hymn was published in four other collections in addition to the *Olney Hymns*, three of them American, an early indication that the hymn resonated more across the Atlantic than in home territory.

In 1937 George Pullen Jackson wrote, "The poem is by Newton but the source [of the tune] is unknown to the southern compilers." The familiar tune, which we all associate with Newton's words, was also unknown in Britain. According to Mr Turner's researches, two similar tunes were published in *Columbian Harmony* (Cincinnati, 1829). One was called 'Gallaher', used for a Wesleyan hymn; the other, 'St Mary's', for one by Isaac Watts. Then in 1830 the tune, now called 'Harmony Grove', was published in *Virginia Harmony* to the words of 'There is a Land of Pure Delight', another Isaac Watts hymn. The tune was published again in *The Lexington Cabinet* (1831), and in *The Christian's Harp* and *Genuine Church Music* (both 1832) to the words of the Cowper hymn 'There is a Fountain Filled with Blood'. Finally in 1835 William Walker, from South Carolina, polished up the tune, gave it a new name - 'New Britain' - and set Newton's 'Amazing Grace' to it for the first time. He published it in *Southern Harmony*, a very successful collection which sold an estimated 600,000 copies, mainly in the southern states of America.

In 1844 a compiler, Benjamin Franklin White, published 'Amazing Grace' in Philadelphia to the now established tune 'New Britain', in another popular collection entitled *The Sacred Harp*. This was instrumental in spreading the hymn in the northern states. By the American Civil War it had become very popular in the north and was to some extent associated with the Union cause, helped by its inclusion in two hymnals, *Hymns for the Camp* and *The*

Soldier's Hymn Book, which were issued to troops along with the New Testament.

Some say it is an old Scottish tune; others that it is an American plantation song. It could of course be both: an old Scottish melody taken to America by emigrants and later adapted. Certainly the geographical area associated with the source of the tune contained a high percentage of Scottish immigrants. If the tune does have Scottish roots, why was it unknown in Scotland at the time? One answer might be that from time to time, especially during the period of the 'Highland Clearances', entire areas of the Scottish Highlands became depopulated as their inhabitants moved to the New World. One musicologist, Peter Van der Merwe, has argued that it is "an overwhelmingly Scottish tune" because it uses the "pentatonic (scale) in a specifically Scottish way" (quoted in Turner, p.123).

What is certain is that Newton never heard his hymn sung to this melody. The familiar tune and words were introduced to Britain during the late nineteenth century. Indeed 'Amazing Grace' was not the most popular of Newton's hymns, the British preferring 'Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken', sung to Haydn's tune known as 'The Austrian Hymn', and 'How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds'.

It is only with the growth of the record industry that the hymn's popularity has spread internationally. Two recordings out of so many should be mentioned in this respect. The first by Judy Collins made the pop charts in the USA and Britain in 1971, exemplifying the crossover from gospel and folk music to pop. The second was a recording by the pipes and drums of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards in 1972. This recording has led to pipe bands all over the world making the tune their own, perhaps reinforcing the idea of a Scottish origin for it. Since '9/11' we have heard it played most poignantly by the pipes at funeral and memorial services for members of the New York Fire Department and the NYPD.

During the Civil Rights campaign of the 1960s the hymn became associated with the struggle for equality in the southern states. This is perhaps ironic for a hymn written by a former ship's captain in the slave trade. Later Newton became actively involved in its abolition, was a friend and colleague of William Wilberforce, and lived to see the trade abolished in 1807. He would have been gratified that his words should be associated with the black cause, for he once refused an honorary Doctorate of Divinity from the University of New Jersey, saying that the dreary coast of Africa had been his university and that he would never accept any diploma "except from the poor blacks".

Bibliography

Jackson, George Pullen, *Spiritual Folk-Songs of Early America*, 1937.

Rouse, Marylynn (ed.), *Richard Cecil's The Life of John Newton*,
Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000.

Turner, Steve, *Amazing Grace: The Story of America's Most Beloved Song*,
New York: Harper Collins, 2002.

National Core Music Standards

CREATING

Imagine

Generate musical ideas for various purposes and contexts.

Enduring Understanding: The creative ideas, concepts, and feelings that influence musicians' work emerge from a variety of sources.

Essential Question: How do musicians generate creative ideas?

Plan and Make

Select and develop musical ideas for defined purposes and contexts.

Enduring Understanding: Musicians' creative choices are influenced by their expertise, context, and expressive intent.

Essential Question: How do musicians make creative decisions?

Evaluate and Refine

Evaluate and refine selected musical ideas to create musical work that meets appropriate criteria.

Enduring Understanding: Musicians evaluate, and refine their work through openness to new ideas, persistence, and the application of appropriate criteria.

Essential Question: How do musicians improve the quality of their creative work?

Present

Share creative musical work that conveys intent, demonstrates craftsmanship, and exhibits originality.

Enduring Understanding: Musicians' presentation of creative work is the culmination of a process of creation and communication.

Essential Question: When is creative work ready to share?

PERFORMING

Select

Select varied musical works to present based on interest, knowledge, technical skill, and context.

Enduring Understanding: Performers' interest in and knowledge of musical works, understanding of their own technical skill, and the context for a performance influence the selection of repertoire.

Essential Question: How do performers select repertoire?

Analyze

Analyze the structure and context of varied musical works and their implications for performance.

Enduring Understanding: Analyzing creators' context and how they manipulate elements of music provides insight into their intent and informs performance.

Essential Question: How does understanding the structure and context of musical works inform performance?

Interpret

Develop personal interpretations that consider creators' intent.

Enduring Understanding: Performers make interpretive decisions based on their understanding of context and expressive intent.

Essential Question: How do performers interpret musical works?

Rehearse, Evaluate and Refine

Evaluate and refine personal and ensemble performances, individually or in collaboration with others.

Enduring Understanding: To express their musical ideas, musicians analyze, evaluate, and refine their performance over time through openness to new ideas, persistence, and the application of appropriate criteria.

Essential Question: How do musicians improve the quality of their performance?

Present

Perform expressively, with appropriate interpretation and technical accuracy, and in a manner appropriate to the audience and context.

Enduring Understanding: Musicians judge performance based on criteria that vary across time, place, and cultures. The context and how a work is presented influence the audience response.

Essential Question: When is a performance judged ready to present? How do context and the manner in which musical work is presented influence audience response?

RESPONDING

Select

Choose music appropriate for a specific purpose or context.

Enduring Understanding: Individuals' selection of musical works is influenced by their interests, experiences, understandings, and purposes.

Essential Question: How do individuals choose music to experience?

Analyze

Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.

Enduring Understanding: Response to music is informed by analyzing context (social, cultural, and historical) and how creators and performers manipulate the elements of music.

Essential Question: How does understanding the structure and context of music inform a response?

Interpret

Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators'/performers' expressive intent.

Enduring Understanding: Through their use of elements and structures of music, creators and performers provide clues to their expressive intent.

Essential Question: How do we discern musical creators' and performers' expressive intent?

Evaluate

Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

Enduring Understanding: The personal evaluation of musical works and performances is informed by analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

Essential Question: How do we judge the quality of musical work(s) and performance(s)?

CONNECTING

Connect #10

Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make music.

Enduring Understanding: Musicians connect their personal interests, experiences, ideas, and knowledge to creating, performing, and responding.

Essential Question: How do musicians make meaningful connections to creating, performing, and responding?

Connect #11

Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.

Enduring Understanding: Understanding connections to varied contexts and daily life enhances musicians' creating, performing, and responding.

Essential Question: How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts, and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?