



CMP Teaching Plan

Title: Themes from Romeo and Juliet
Composer: Tchaikovsky, arr. Gruselle
Grade Level: 4
Publisher: FJH

The Heart Statement

Tchaikovsky convincingly portrays the depths of both love and tragedy through his contrasting melodies. These melodies find harmonies that reinforce the uncertainty of the fate of the lovers.

Music Selection

450th anniversary of Shakespeare. To use in conjunction with West Side Story ("Star-Crossed" theme). Standard repertoire in an approachable setting. Many will likely play the original down the line (youth symphony, college, etc.). Varied keys and styles gives "lots of bang for the buck" for teaching opportunities.

Analysis

- **Background information**

Tchaikovsky was deeply inspired by Shakespeare and wrote works based on [The Tempest](#) and [Hamlet](#) as well http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphonic_poem#Russia

Mily Alexeyevich Balakirev, a Russian musician , conductor and promoter of nationalistic music in Russia, encouraged Tchaikovsky to write a piece based on Romeo and Juliet. After 15 years, and three versions of the piece it was finally published (1886) in the form we know today.

- **Additional instrumental information**

As Tchaikovsky's orchestration is masterful, it would be worthwhile for students to compare the string version to the original.

- **Elements of Music**

FORM: The original is in a fairly strict sonata form. This arrangement consists of introduction, theme one, transition, theme 2 (ABA "love theme") and coda.

"Tchaikovsky did not call [Romeo and Juliet](#) a symphonic poem but rather a "fantasy-overture", and the work may actually be closer to a [concert overture](#) in its relatively stringent use of [sonata form](#)."
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphonic_poem#Russia

MELODY: widely ranging, from stepwise to large intervals, and diatonic to chromatic, evocative and descriptive

HARMONY: from predictable chorale harmonies to weaving through modulations close and remote. Climax of the love theme presents one of the most famous examples of the augmented sixth chord in the repertoire.

RHYTHM: from the simple and straightforward, to jagged and impulsive—forecasting Stravinsky

EXPRESSION: as wide a range of dynamics as can be found in the repertoire. Utilizes all the elements to create expression from deep tragedy to great joy

TIMBRE: As the flute and horn (for example) are critical to the love theme in the original, it would be worthwhile for students to compare the original to their arrangement. Timbral fluctuations within the strings will be limited to bow placement. One region of pizzicato in lower strings.

TEXTURE: Full range from unison to homophony to polyphony as needed to portray the scene

Skill Outcome:

Students will demonstrate the ability to choose different contact points on the string to create a variety of tone colors as appropriate to the repertoire

Strategies

1. Discussion about timbre—tone color.
2. Find the “Kreisler Highway” and from there, 3 other lanes
3. What colors would you use for each of the characters in the play? Experiment with sound. Not only dynamics.
4. Choose a section of the piece, pencil in lane numbers as appropriate and play.
5. Listen to the original and discuss the tone colors of the full symphony
6. Listen to a variety of recordings with a focus on timbre—journal responses

Assessment

Create varying “rosin paths” for practicing consistency

Informal assessment during class

Rehearsals and concert reflect growth in varied and appropriate tone colors

Knowledge Outcome:

Students will discover and analyze the relationships between the music, the visual arts, and literature.

Strategies:

1. Review Romeo and Juliet plotline. Compare to West Side Story and Prokofiev’s Romeo and Juliet ballet
2. Each student will be assigned either: literature, mythology, Bible, fairy tales, or 19th and 20th century composers, students will fill in a line on a spreadsheet:

Student’s name, story source and link, composer,

composer’s story-inspired piece and link, a paragraph response to the piece

Assessment

1. Responses in spreadsheet.
2. Each student presents to class as time permits
3. Classroom discussion.

Affective Outcome:

Students will examine the characteristics of a meaningful and memorable melody, and also how the relationship between melody and the other elements impacts the listeners' response.

Strategies

1. Score study. Visually look at score and identify:
Friar Laurence, fight scene, love theme –what elements lead you there?
Read 1-10, 38-48, 70-78 and compare to expectations
Compare to correlative text from the play
2. Play several examples during the course of the unit (Beethoven 7th theme and var., One-Note Samba, Adagio for Strings, Vocalise, Eine Kleine...)
3. Compare melodic phrases: Love theme A and Love theme B, and "One Hand One Heart"
4. How does the transition into the A theme set it up?
 - Listen to Sesame St "Acorn" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qi7CA1Dq5Wg> and Nino and April "Our Love" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Pfb5E2PwFg>
 - Journal about the difference in melody effectiveness
5. Read last sentence from Romeo and Juliet. Compare to coda. (discussion or journal)

"A glooming peace this morning with it brings; The sun, for sorrow, will not show his head: Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things; Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished: For never was a story of more woe Than this of Juliet and her Romeo."

Assessment

1. "Write a Love Theme" activity.
Choose a text, begin with diatonic and small intervals, and then adjust.
2. Informal assessment in discussion and journals
3. Concert reflects understanding