Elegy
Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
for Cello and Orchestra
(transcribed for Cello and Piano)
Schirmer Edition

Analysis

Broad Description: The Elegy is a one-movement piece from the French impressionist period which expresses the wide emotional swings that often accompany a profound loss. *Basis for exploring emotional basis for a variety of sounds (EXPRESSIVE)*

Background Information: The Elegy was composed in 1879, when Fauré was 34, devastated and grieving over his broken engagement to his long-time love. *Student grasps concept that the music wasn't just always there…written by a person who had strong feelings and was trying to express them in his music (KNOWLEDGE)*

Instrumental Information: Though more frequently performed as a cello solo with piano accompaniment, Elegy was originally a kind of tone poem for cello and orchestra. The orchestration requires 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, four horns and strings. *Student can draw on qualities of sounds of other instruments*

Elements of Music
- *Form*   A free ternary form: AABA CCtransD AC^{1}C^{1}Coda *Student can learn about compositional form, shape and unifying elements (KNOWLEDGE)*

- *Rhythm*   The first section primarily uses a repeated two quarters/four eighths motif in the melody, with pulsing, almost dirge-like eighth notes in the accompaniment.
    - The second theme in the C section is syncopated and constantly changing from duples to triplets, over a more fluid accompaniment figure.
    - The D section is based primarily on sextuplet, faster and rhythms that heighten the agitation of this section, and the return of the first theme

is made stormy from the continuation of the sextuplets in the accompaniment. *(KNOWLEDGE OR EXPRESSIVE)*
- o The agitated rhythms gradually slow and return to a more spare rhythmic figure, with eighths returning to the bass line. *Compositional devices that create and manipulate mood swings*

- *Melody* The emotionally burdened first theme is based on a descending line, descending stepwise quarters and four eighths in a four-bar phrase.
    - o Second theme is in Ab Major, and more fluid (but also more ambiguous) in rhythm and direction. The upward sweeps of the melody make this section more hopeful than the first theme.
    - o It becomes increasingly angular, however, as **tritones and whole tone scales** transition into the D section, where all semblance of melody virtually disappears into the storm of fast notes. *Teaching whole tone scales and tritones (both KNOWLEDGE and SKILL)*
    - o The return of the once-hopeful second theme is in C Minor, and is an **inversion of the first statement,** causing the theme to descend to the depths at the end. *understanding inversion (KNOWLEDGE)*

    - o *Harmony*
- *Timbre* This piece beautifully utilizes all registers of the cello, and the piano accompaniment, while not as colorful as the orchestra, helps to create wonderful varieties of sounds throughout the piece. *Comparing use of "bright" sounds with "dark" sounds (EXPRESSIVE)*

- *Texture* Fauré uses both spare and densely textured sections, including the homophonic texture at the beginning with both closely spaced and open chords, the fluid polyphonic second theme, and the thick clouds of triplet thirty-second notes in the accompaniment over the slow moving melody of the cello.

- *Motific elements* The melodic motive of the four eighth notes of the first theme (melody) are shadowed in the bass line, and is also used as the primary accompaniment motive in the second theme. As the piece approaches the stormy area, the eighth note figure is given angular intervals rather than the gentle rise and fall of the original notes.

- *Expression* Extreme dynamic ranges suggest the emotional scope of this piece, which are enhanced by the shifts in tonality: The dark C minor theme, the hint of nostalgia and happier times in Ab Major, the holding pattern

around G made ambiguous and turbulent by the whole tone scales and tritones, and the return to the emotionally burdened C minor to close.

The Heart Statement
The Heart of the Fauré Elegy is the vivid expression of the wide-ranging emotions that accompany loss. Tonal shifts, the use of dissonance and harmonic ambiguity, and expansive register changes on the cello give this piece tremendous emotional range and depth.

Introducing the Piece—Have the student take home a recording and listen to a performance of the piece, writing mood changes in the music using colorful descriptive terms. At the next lesson, introduce what an elegy is and see how the moods that the student has written fit with the concept of an elegy.

Skill Outcome: Student will be able to create a wide variety of sounds on his instrument using bowing variables (pressure, speed and placement).

A. Strategies
1. Have student experiment with bow pressure and speed, and observe how the sound changes.
2. Explore how the string vibrates, and discover why placement is a variable that cannot be neglected.
3. Student will consider why the smallest stringed instrument needs the longest bow, and the largest instrument needs the shortest.

B. Assessment
1. Complete the "Palette of Sounds" worksheet, have student circle the sounds most appropriate for the Elegy, and demonstrate those sounds.

Knowledge Outcome: Student will explore ways that compositional devices are used to heighten expression of emotions in music

A. Strategies
1. Student learns the scales of the tonalities used in this piece (C minor, Ab major)
2. Explore whole tone scales, and how they differ from a regular major or minor scale (no tonal focus, fewer notes, only 2 whole tone scales possible)
3. Learn the interval of a tritone, and how to find it on the cello.
4. Discover the difference between a cadence that finishes on a I chord and one that finishes on a VI.

5. Student analyzes score for ostinato figure that runs throughout piece in both melody and harmony parts. Discuss how this element both unifies the varied sections and sustains the emotional intensity of the piece.
6. Listen to recording, listening for as many compositional elements as student can hear that create the different moods in each of the sections.

B. Assessment
1. Student can find a tritone from any note on the cello
2. Student can write out and play 2 whole-tone scales, and explain why there can only be two whole-tone scales.

Affective Outcome: Student will discover ways to relate vocal expression, physical expression and imagery to the way he expresses music on his cello.

A. Strategies
1. Student listens to recording and writes colorful and descriptive words in the music
2. Student will explore ways to "act out" those descriptions and emotions, vocally or physically—or colorfully describe a scene that the music seems to depict (i.e., anguish, crying, gasping, despair, anger, nostalgia, resignation, apparitions, a graveyard, etc.)—and then transfer these sounds, gestures and images to the cello to create related sounds.
3. Student will experiment with vibrato of varying speeds and widths to discover the quality that best suits the desired expression.
4. Student explores shifts that are an extension of the mood being created (i.e., exhausted, passionate, angry, forceful, etc.)

B. Assessment
1. Student will write a short story about what might be happening during the piece. It could be a movie synopsis, a poem with the wide ranges of emotions, or a eulogy that might be delivered.
2. Through performance student will demonstrate the constantly changing emotions of the piece, and be able to lead the listener through a story from start to finish.

Music Selection— The Fauré Elegy is a kind of wonderful teaching piece for expanding the musical as well as technical range of an intermediate cello student on the threshold of more challenging repertoire. It is excellent for introducing upper register playing for a student who has no thumb position experience yet. It provides a wonderful opportunity to teach the significance of tonality and how unsettling it is

when it seems to be slipping away. The short but fiery section is an excellent opportunity to teach the how to practice and master fast passages.

Other possible Skill Outcomes:
- Develop finger strength and agility
- Learn how to practice fast passages, using note groupings and muscle memory.
- The ability to play legato and create phrasing shapes in various timbres, dynamics, and registers.

Other Possible Knowledge Outcomes:
- Learn to organize and count complex rhythms, including syncopation, duples changing to triplets, and ties that connect a duple to a triplet.
- Learn about Fauré and French impressionist music, quality of sounds, composition styles, and compare to poetry and art of the day.

Other Possible Affective Outcomes:
- Exploring vibrato as a life-giving force to qualities of sound, ways to use it to lead crescendos and diminuendos,
- Interpreting dynamic markings as intensity levels and colors rather than just volume controls, exploring how many different qualities of *f*'s or *p*'s there can be in music.