

Beethoven Symphony No. 8, Movement 2 Tempo and Expression

Iowa Fine Arts Standard

Artistic Process:	Performing
Anchor Standard:	Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
Process Component:	Analyze
Enduring Understanding:	Analyzing creators' context and how they manipulate the elements of music provides insight into their intent and informs performance.
Essential Question(s):	How does understanding the structure and context of musical works inform performance?

MU: PR4.2.4

c. Explain how context (such as social and cultural) informs a performance.

Learning Target

The student will demonstrate how tempo affects expression.

Time for lesson: 30 minutes

Materials: Metronome (pendulum, electronic or phone app)
Projection system for showing online video clip
Ball or bean bag
Written on board: *adagio* MM = 60
andante MM = 72
allegro MM = 120

Lesson Plan

Warmup: In the summer of 1812, Beethoven was in poor health so he went to a spa in the country. While he was there, he wrote Symphony No. 7 and No. 8. He was very proud of No. 8 but when it was first performed in 1814, the audience did not seem very impressed; after hearing Symphony No. 7, for example, there was uproarious applause.

With Symphony No. 8, Beethoven tried new things like extreme contrasts (*pp* to *ff*) in dynamics and no slow movement. Usually, the second movement of a symphony would be at a slow tempo, but Beethoven chose to write it as *Allegretto scherzando*, which means “moderately fast joke.”

Some people believe that Beethoven wrote the second movement as a tribute to the new invention called a **metronome**. Johann Maelzel, an inventor who made hearing aids for Beethoven, improved upon an early version of the metronome. The device was housed in a wooden pyramid and had a metal marker attached to a pendulum that moved up or down to tap out a slow or fast tempo.

Watch this video to see a metronome like Beethoven used (close up at 6 min, 27 sec; working at 8 min, 44 sec): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4NUDOYb3tQ>.

Beethoven was fascinated with the metronome and became the first composer to give his music metronome markings (MM = 120). In the second movement of Symphony No. 8, the music is played at a steady tempo, matching that of a metronome's tapping.

Direct Instruction:**Say Your Number game**

- students sit in a circle; start a metronome at MM = 60
 - have students take turns counting around the circle on the beat of the metronome (each student says one number)
 - reset the metronome at MM = 72 and try again, starting with a different student on number 1
 - last time, reset the metronome at MM = 100 and do again with a different student on number 1
- *for a challenge, count backwards!*

Guided practice:**Metronome Menace! game**

- add a ball or bean bag and pass on the beat of the metronome
- “The object should touch your neighbor’s hand when you say your number”**
- start at MM = 60 and increase the speed to MM = 72 and then MM = 100
- someone is OUT if they miss passing on the beat; the game starts over at that spot at number 1

Independent practice:

Once the students have gotten used to the metronome, it is time to experiment with it.

1. Choose a song the students know well, like This Land is Your Land, America the Beautiful, Brother John or Yankee Doodle.
2. Show the students three Italian tempo markings and their approximate metronome markings:
adagio MM = 60
andante MM = 72
allegro MM = 120

“Let’s experiment with tempo markings using the metronome. We will decide which tempo marking creates the most expressive performance of the song.”
Have the students create their own definition of *expressive* (fits the words of the song, sounds the best with the melody, etc.)

3. Using the metronome, have the students sing the song at each tempo marking.

Assessment:***Informal***

After they have sung all three tempo markings, have the class vote on the tempo that created the most *expressive* performance.

- Thumbs up = Perfect for the song!
- Thumbs sideways = Could have been worse, could have been better
- Thumbs down = Does NOT fit the song!

“Why did this tempo work the best for the song?”

Resources:

Goodwin’s High End Library. “Glossary of Tempo Markings Used in Classical Music.”

http://www.goodwinhighend.com/music/classical/tempo_glossary.htm

Npr Music. “Beethoven’s Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93.” June 14, 2006.

<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5485221>

The Online Piano and Violin Tutor. "How To: Use a Metronome and How It Works."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4NUDOYb3tQ>

6' 27" close up of a traditional metronome

8' 44" playing piano with a metronome

Service, Tom. "Symphony Guide: Beethoven's Eighth." February 11, 2014.

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2014/feb/11/symphony-guide-beethoven-eighth>

WQXR Blog. "The Beat Goes On: A Short History of the Metronome." Oct. 11, 2017.

<https://www.wqxr.org/story/beat-goes-history-metronome/>