

Understanding and Identifying Musical Expression

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Grade/Level: 9 - 12 High School Band

Length: 60 minutes

Central Focus: *Refining expressive performance choices to clearly communicate artistic and emotional intent to an audience.*

Standards:

- Performing: MU.P.3.HS - *Convey intent and meaning through expressive performance.*
- Responding: MU.R.4.HS - *Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and personal criteria.*
- Connecting: MU.C.1.HS - *Relate personal experiences and ideas to the expressive intent of music.*

Learning Objectives:

- Students will refine expressive choices (dynamics, tone color, articulation, phrasing) to communicate artistic intent.
- Students will evaluate their own and peers' performances using musical vocabulary and performance criteria.
- Students will reflect on how expressive decisions enhance communication of meaning and emotional impact.

Assessments:

Formative:

- Ongoing teacher feedback during rehearsal.
- Peer comments during performance run-throughs.

Summative:

- Performance Reflection Worksheet – students analyze their expressive intent and its effectiveness after final run-through.
- Performance Rubric – used by both teacher and students to evaluate expressiveness, tone quality, and interpretation.

Criteria for Success:

- Performance demonstrates deliberate expressive intent and technical control.
- Reflection includes accurate terminology and connects expression to musical meaning.

Materials/Resources

- Ensemble sheet music
- Recording of student rehearsal (from Lesson 2)
- Final performance recording equipment
- Reflection Worksheet
- SmartBoard/audio system

Academic Language

- Language Function: *Describe expressive elements in musical performance.*
- Key Vocabulary: *dynamics, articulation, phrasing, expression.*

Language Supports:

- Pre-teach key vocabulary with symbol and sound examples.
- Provide sentence frames for discussion ("*this section used _____ to express _____.*")
- Model responses with musical terminology.

Instructional Strategies and Learning Tasks:

Introduction (10 min)

- Brief review of previous lessons: identifying → applying → refining expression.
- Ask: "What separates a "correct" performance from an expressive one?"
- Explain today's goal: perform expressively with clear artistic intent and reflect on meaning.

Rehearsal and Refinement (20 min)

- Ensemble runs through selected excerpt (from Lesson 2).
- Playback a short portion of the prior recording (Lesson 2).
- Students compare: "What's changed expressively since last time?"
- Teacher leads guided adjustments focusing on contrast, phrase shape, and tone consistency.
- Emphasize interpretive decisions (e.g., "Why choose a softer dynamic here?").

Performance and Peer Evaluation (15 min)

- Perform final run-through for class.
- Each section fills out Performance Rubric for self and one peer group.
- Students discuss feedback in small groups using musical language.

Individual Reflection (10 min)

- Students complete the Performance Reflection Worksheet (below).
- Encourage connecting performance choices to emotional or artistic outcomes.

Closure (5 min)

- Class shares final thoughts: "How did your expressive intent come through?"
- Teacher summarizes growth: "We moved from recognizing expression to creating it."

Planned Supports for Varied Learners:

- Students with IEPs/504: Use simplified reflection prompts with visual cues; allow audio-recorded responses instead of writing.
- English Learners: Provide bilingual vocabulary list; model oral reflection.
- Gifted/Advanced: Encourage exploration of alternate interpretations or dynamics to create unique expressive nuance.
- Students with Attention Challenges: Use checklists for rehearsal focus; assign them as section leaders or reflection reporters.

Connections to Prior Learning and Theoretical Rationale:

- Extends expressive understanding from Lessons 1–2 into synthesis (performance + reflection).
- Incorporates constructivist and experiential learning theories—students learn through creating and evaluating real musical experiences.
- Aligns with Bloom’s Taxonomy: creation and evaluation at the highest cognitive levels.
- Encourages metacognition: students think about how and why they express music.

Example Performance Rubric:

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Piece Title: _____

Describe one expressive decision we made in today's performance.

Why did we choose to perform it that way? What emotion or idea were you trying to express?

How did your section or ensemble improve its expressive communication compared to earlier rehearsals?

If you could perform this piece again, what expressive element would you focus on improving next?