

Teacher Guide

26 / 27
147th Season

EXPRESS THE MUSIC



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ST. LOUIS
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

STÉPHANE DENÈVE, MUSIC DIRECTOR

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Program Overview

Description

Express the Music (ETM) invites students in grades 6-12 to examine the ideas, emotions, and personal experiences that a piece of orchestral music evokes and then respond to specific creative prompts using various media.

Integrated into English language arts, visual arts, and music curricula, ETM offers creative and relevant project-based learning that will easily fit into your existing instruction while supporting your students' critical thinking, creativity, and self-expression.

Teachers submit student work and then a curatorial team, appointed by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (SLSO), chooses for publication a selection of works that reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of students in the St. Louis community. These works will be published on SLSO's and partner organizations' platforms, giving students a powerful opportunity to share their voice with the broader community and be recognized for their work.

View works from previous years of Express the Music at slso.org/express.

Objectives

Through participation in Express the Music, students will:

- Engage in a meaningful and authentic way with orchestral music.
- Deepen their understanding of music and other arts as healthy modes of emotional expression.
- Practice generating, refining, and presenting creative and expressive ideas.
- Share their ideas and experiences with the broader community through various creative media.

Missouri Learning Standards

English Language Arts

W2A, W3A

Music

Re8A, Cn10A, Cn11A

Visual Arts

Cr1A, Cr1B, Cr3A, Cn10A

Illinois Learning Standards

English Language Arts

W3, W4, W5,

Music

Re8, Cn10, Cn11

Visual Arts

Cr1.1, Cr1.2, Cr3.1

Submission, Curation, and Publication

Each teacher may submit up to ten (10) student works per class. Detailed submission guidelines are available on p. 14.

Student works will be reviewed by a curatorial team tasked with choosing a compelling selection of works that authentically connect the emotion of the music with students' emotions and personal experiences. The team is not looking for the *best* works, as they would in a competition. Rather, similar to a museum exhibit, they are looking to curate an engaging collection of works that reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of students in the St. Louis community. The curatorial process will not be blind. Works should not be stripped of the students' identities. If students want to sign their artwork, they should do so. If they want to include names or other identifying information in their writing, they are welcome to.

Selected works will be published on SLSO and partner organizations' platforms.

Students whose works are chosen for publication will be invited to attend a concert and will be honored at an Awards Ceremony.

Contact

If you have any questions or feedback as you implement Express the Music, please do not hesitate to contact the SLSO Education Team:

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Suggested Plan for Implementation

Three suggested Lesson Plans are included in this Teacher Guide. These lessons may be used at the teacher's discretion and modified as needed to suit your students' needs. Using these lessons, Express the Music could be implemented in as little as 90 minutes of class time, plus additional in-class or out-of-class time for independent work. A suggested sequence is provided below.

Class

1

50 minutes

Lesson Plan 1: Connect with the Music (50 minutes).

Select one or both of the creative prompts to offer your students. Access documents with creative prompts at also.org/express.

Create and share a timeline for student work, including when drafts and revisions will be due.

Class

2

15 minutes +

Lesson Plan 2: Introduce Creative Prompts (15 minutes + optional in-class brainstorming).

Students brainstorm ideas and draft projects independently, either during or outside of class.

Class

3

25 minutes +

Lesson Plan 3: Peer Feedback (25 minutes + optional time for independent revisions).

Students finish projects independently, either during or outside of class.

Class

4

(optional)

Students present work and vote on works to submit (optional).

Submit up to ten (10) student works per class using the online submission form. See Submitting Works for Publication (p. 14) for more details.

Lesson Plan 1: Connect with the Music

Class time: 50 minutes

Description

Students will connect with a piece of music through mindful listening and analysis of its emotional trajectory. In Part 1 of this lesson, students practice engaging their active listening skills by listening to a piece of music while observing their own thoughts, emotions, and physical reactions. In Part 2, they will use Kate Hevner's Adjective Circles to explore how music can evoke changing emotions over time. Finally, either in class or independently, students will begin to translate the emotion of the music to their creative media.

This lesson is adaptable for students in grades 6-12. Its intentional flexibility allows teachers to modify the content to best suit their students' needs.

Objectives

Students will:

- Engage their active listening skills.
- Connect music and emotions on a fundamental level.
- Demonstrate their understanding that music is a tool for expressing emotions.
- Build confidence in their creative capacities.

Materials

- [Google Slides](#), optional
- A recording of this year's musical selection. *Links to recordings and suggested excerpts for this lesson can be found in the About the Music document, available at slso.org/express.*
- Adjective Circles worksheet. *Provided below. Print one for each student.*
- Pens or pencils
- Colored pencils, crayons, or markers (optional)

Procedure

Part 1: Mindful listening (10 minutes) – **SLIDES 2-3**

- Introduce mindful listening to your students.
 - Mindful listening involves paying close attention to the music and observing one's own thoughts, feelings, and emotions as they occur.
 - Your mind might wander, and that's perfectly okay—just gently bring your focus back to the music.
 - If you feel uncomfortable or sleepy, simply acknowledge it without judgment and continue listening.

- Before you begin, allow students to make themselves as comfortable as possible. They could move onto the floor or use an extra chair to stretch out into a comfortable position.
- Set expectations for the students, telling them how long the excerpt will be. (An excerpt is a short selection from a more extensive musical work.) Remind students to listen without judgment and simply observe their thoughts and feelings as they come.
- Take a few deep breaths together to center yourselves before starting the music.
- Play Excerpt 1 of this year's musical selection.
- After listening to the excerpt, reflect as a group:
 - What thoughts, ideas, or emotions came up while you listened?
 - Did your emotions shift?
 - How did your body respond to the music?
 - What was it like to listen mindfully?

Part 2: Feelings Mapping (30 minutes) – **SLIDES 4-5**

- Begin by explaining to students that music often evokes a range of emotional responses as it progresses.
- Hand out an Adjective Circles worksheet to each student. Ensure that students understand the various adjectives they might use to describe their emotional response to music before moving on.
- Tell students they will listen to different excerpts. After each excerpt, they will pause to reflect and select an adjective or multiple adjectives that describe the emotions they heard and felt in the music. Encourage them to choose as many adjectives as they like or write their own words if they feel something different. Emphasize that there are **NO RIGHT ANSWERS** – this exercise is about their perception of the music.
- Play Excerpt 1 of this year's musical selection. Instruct students to circle the first adjective that comes to mind and then draw lines to each subsequent adjective they choose, creating a "road map" of their emotional journey. It may be helpful to demonstrate this to the class before asking the students to work individually.
- Repeat with the remaining excerpts.
 - After each excerpt, pause for about 30 seconds to give students time to reflect and make notes on their Adjective Circles worksheet.
 - Optional: Have students use a different color for each excerpt. For example, they could use red for the first excerpt, blue for the second, and so on.
- After listening to all of the excerpts, discuss the students' various emotional responses and how different excerpts elicited different emotions, highlighting that everyone's experience is unique. Leave time for students to reflect on their experience and share their work if they feel comfortable. Discussion questions may include:
 - How did the emotions in the music shift or change?
 - What did you hear in the music, and how did it influence your map of the emotions/adjectives?
 - Who had a similar experience/map?

- Who had a different experience/map?
- Did your mood change after listening to the music? How so?
- Did you wonder about anything while listening to the music?

Part 3: Free writing / Free drawing (10 minutes) – **SLIDE 6**

- Have students turn over their Adjective Circle worksheets to use the blank side of the paper. Tell students that you're going to play the musical selection again. As they listen, they should write or draw freely. A few guidelines:
 - Keep your hand moving the entire time.
 - Don't cross out or erase.
 - Don't worry about making things correct.
 - Don't try to be logical.
- At the end of class, be sure to save or instruct students to save their Adjective Circles worksheet and free writing / free drawing for reference going forward.

Evaluation

Using a four-point rubric, assess the following. The student:

- Part 1: Fully engaged in mindful listening, focusing on the music and staying present throughout the activity (1 point).
- Part 1: Provided thoughtful reflections during the group discussion, clearly articulating the mindful listening experience and how it impacted their emotional and physical state (1 point).
- Part 2: Engaged their active listening skills by identifying different emotions evoked by the music and creating a feelings map (1 point).
- Part 2: Through self-reflection, demonstrated an understanding of how music expresses emotions (1 point).

**Adjective
Circles**

Name:

1

Happy
Merry
Joyous
Cheerful
Bright

2

Playful
Fun
Delicate
Light
Graceful

3

Relaxed
Lyrical
Serene
Quaint
Soothing

4

Thoughtful
Dreamy
Sentimental
Longing

5

Sad
Tragic
Depressing
Gloomy
Heavy

6

Serious
Awe-inspiring
Dignified
Quaint
Solemn

7

Angry
Strong
Vigorous
Empathetic
Majestic

Lesson Plan 2: Introduce Creative Prompts

Class time: 15 minutes + optional time for small group brainstorming

Description

The Express the Music creative prompt(s) are introduced and students work in small groups to brainstorm ideas for their individual projects.

This lesson is adaptable for students in grades 6-12. Its intentional flexibility allows teachers to modify the content to best suit their students' needs.

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the process and expectations for creating their works for Express the Music.
- Generate a handful of ideas and receive feedback on their ideas from their peers.

Materials

- [Google Slides](#), optional
- About the Music document, *available at slso.org/express. Links to recordings and suggested excerpts for this lesson can be found on page 1 of the document. Page 2 could be printed and distributed to students or teacher can use this information to share some details about the music with the students.*
- Students' completed Adjective Circles worksheets and free writing / free drawing from Lesson 1
- Creative Prompt handouts, *available at slso.org/express. Print one double-sided handout for each student, according to the prompt they choose.*
- Pens or pencils
- A recording of this year's musical selection. *Links to recordings and suggested excerpts for this lesson can be found in the About the Music document, available at slso.org/express.*

Procedure

Part 1: Introduce Express the Music and the Musical selection (5 minutes, optional) – **SLIDES 7-12**

- Explain to students that, through the SLSO's Express the Music program, they are going to create something in response to the piece of music they listened to in the previous class. Share with students what Express the Music is using the provided slides.
- Use the provided slides and/or the About the Music document to share some information about the musical selection.

Part 2: Introduce Creative Prompts (15 minutes) – **SLIDES 13-14**

- Remind students of the activities of Class 1: listening to the piece of music, mapping the emotions perceived in the music, and free writing / drawing. If you collected students' Adjective Circles worksheets and free writing / drawing, redistribute them.
- Read aloud whichever creative prompt(s) you are offering them as options. Answer any questions that arise. Note that students' creations should communicate something about themselves to their viewer/reader/listener. Empower students by reminding them that they have a story to tell, they have a unique perspective to share with the world.
- If you're offering more than one of the creative prompts to your students, ask them to decide which prompt they would like to pursue.
- Distribute copies of the Creative Prompts and Brainstorming Framework handout, according to which prompt each student chooses.

If time does not allow for in-class brainstorming, instruct students to use the provided Brainstorming Framework to begin generating ideas for their creations outside of class.

Part 3: Brainstorming (15 minutes, optional) – **SLIDE 15**

- Use whatever brainstorming activity you'd like to help students to begin to generate ideas. One small-group possibility using the Brainstorming Framework provided is outlined here:
- Divide students into small groups of 3-4 people. If students are choosing different creative prompts, divide them so that they are brainstorming with students that have chosen the same creative prompt.
- Give students about one minute to independently review their Adjective Circles worksheet and free writing / drawing from Class 1.
- Put on a recording of this year's musical selection in the background as students work.
- Begin the following brainstorming activity:
 1. Brainwriting. Give students two minutes to individually write down at least five ideas in response to the question at the top of their Brainstorming Framework handout. Especially for the self-portrait prompt, doodles and drawings can replace words. Emphasize that quantity is more important than quality at this stage.
 2. Rotate and respond. Have students pass their paper to someone else in their group. Give students two minutes to write on their classmate's paper. They should at least: circle one idea they really like, write down a question about one idea, and add one "what if" statement to one of their classmate's ideas.
 3. Rotate and respond again.
- With any remaining time, students should discuss their ideas and responses in their small groups.

Evaluation

Using a two-point rubric, assess the following. The student:

- Generated at least five distinct ideas in response to their brainstorming question (1 point).
- Offered constructive feedback on their classmates' ideas (1 point).

Next Steps – SLIDE 16

After brainstorming – either in class or independently – students should choose an idea to pursue and begin drafting/sketching their work. This could happen outside of class or during class. Provide students with a timeline for completion of the first draft. Once students have completed their drafts, proceed to Lesson Plan 3, where students will share their drafts with their classmates for feedback before revising.

Lesson Plan 3: Peer Review

Class time: 25 minutes + optional time for revisions

Description

Students review each other's works and plan for revisions.

This lesson is adaptable for students in grades 6-12. Its intentional flexibility allows teachers to modify the content to best suit their students' needs.

Objectives

Students will:

- Provide constructive feedback on their peers' works.
- Consider peer feedback to plan for revisions.

Materials

- [Google Slides](#), optional
- Peer Review worksheet. *Provided below. Print one for each student.*
- Pens or pencils

Procedure – SLIDE 17

- Use whatever process for peer feedback you would like. One small group possibility using the provided Peer Review worksheet is outlined here:
 1. Divide students into small groups of 3-4 people. Groups could include students who chose differing creative prompts. Students should gather in a small pod with their assigned group. Each student should have the draft of their work and one copy of the Peer Review worksheet.
 2. Instruct students to fill in the information about their creation at the top of their worksheet: Creator's name and Title of work (or "Untitled").
 3. Each student passes their worksheet and their work to the student to their left. Give students five minutes to review their classmate's work and complete the "Reviewer 1" column of the worksheet. When students are done reviewing, they should fold the paper back so that their comments are not viewable by the next student they pass it to.
 4. Have students pass the work and worksheet to the left again, repeating step 3 one or two more times, depending on the size of the groups and time available.
 5. After each student's work has been reviewed by 2-3 classmates, allow 5-10 minutes for discussion in their small groups.
 - Encourage the student creators to discuss and consider what revisions they could make to improve their work.

- Encourage students to review the last two questions on the worksheet (perceived emotion and what they learned about the creator). If the peer feedback is out of line with what the creator intended, what revisions could be made to better communicate their emotion and their experience?

Evaluation

Using this rubric, assess the following. The student:

- Provided at least one piece of thoughtful, respectful feedback for each work they reviewed (1 point per work).
- Respectfully discussed feedback with peers (1 point).

Next Steps – SLIDE 18

After receiving feedback, students should begin revising their work. This could occur outside of class or during class. Provide a timeline for completion of a final draft.

Peer Review Worksheet

Creator's Name:

Title of Work:

Reviewer Name:	Reviewer Name:	Reviewer Name:
COMPLIMENT: <i>I really like...</i>	COMPLIMENT: <i>I really like...</i>	COMPLIMENT: <i>I really like...</i>
QUESTION: <i>One question I have is ...</i>	QUESTION: <i>One question I have is ...</i>	QUESTION: <i>One question I have is ...</i>
SUGGEST: <i>What if...</i>	SUGGEST: <i>What if...</i>	SUGGEST: <i>What if...</i>
What emotion(s) do you perceive in the work?	What emotion(s) do you perceive in the work?	What emotion(s) do you perceive in the work?
What did you learn about the creator through their work?	What did you learn about the creator through their work?	What did you learn about the creator through their work?

Submitting Works for Publication

A link to the submission form can be found at sloso.org/express.

Choosing works to submit

- Each teacher may submit up to ten (10) works per class.
- Teachers may not submit multiple works by the same student.
- Submissions must be the creative work of one individual. Group work will not be accepted.

It is up to the discretion of each teacher to decide how to choose works for submission. For example, the teacher could:

- Allow students to present their work and have the class vote on which works to submit.
- Set up a gallery in the classroom or online to allow the larger student body at the school to vote on works to submit.
- Ask a panel of colleagues – other teachers and administrators at the school – to choose which works to submit.

Submission requirements for visual art

Visual Art entries must fulfill these requirements:

- Artwork must be two-dimensional. Works will be submitted as digital files.
- Acceptable media include crayon, oil pastels, pen, ink, paints, batik, mixed media collage, photography, digital art, or any other flat, 2-dimensional media.

Digital files of student artwork and artist statements will be uploaded via an online submission platform.

When photographing student artwork for submission:

- Take the photograph in a well-lit room.
- Avoid photographing the art from above. Instead, place the artwork on an easel or something similar.
- Put a solid background behind the art (preferably white).
- Determine whether the photograph should be taken in landscape or portrait mode.
- Acceptable file types include: .jpg and .png with a maximum file size of 10MB.

Artwork must be accompanied by an artist's statement of no more than 60 words (title and artist's name excluded from the word count) that includes the following:

- Title of the work
- Artist's name

- What emotion(s) you perceived in the music and how you conveyed that emotion through the artistic media or process

Artist statements will be copied and pasted into the online submission form.

Submission requirements for creative writing

Creative writing entries must fulfill these requirements:

- Submissions should be no longer than 150 words.

Student work will be copied and pasted into the online submission form.

Academic integrity

The SLSO relies on you – the teacher – to ensure that all submitted works adhere to your school's expectations around appropriate content, academic integrity, and use of artificial intelligence and other technology. By submitting works, teachers confirm that their students' works reflect their school's standards in these areas.

Entries must be original works created by individual students. Submitted works must not have been previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere.

Works will be published exactly as submitted.

Permission to publish

By submitting works, you are giving permission to the SLSO to publish works on SLSO and partner platforms including but not limited to: SLSO webpage (www.slsso.org), SLSO social media platforms, SLSO concert playbills and programs, SLSO e-newsletters, SLSO pre-concert slides, and similar platforms owned by partner organizations. Students' names, grade levels, and school names may be published alongside their work.

Before submitting

Before accessing the online submission form, you should have all of the following information available:

- Students' full names
- Grade levels

- School name
- Teacher's full name
- Teacher's email address
- Titles of student works (if applicable)
- Student works
 - Image files of visual art
 - Text to be copied and pasted into the form for creative writing and artist's statements

Instructions for submission

- Access the submission form at slso.org/express.
- Complete one Submission Form for each class. On this form, you will be able to submit up to ten (10) student entries. If you implemented this program with more than one class, submit a separate form for each class.
- **Double check the spelling of all student names.** Names will be reproduced exactly as teachers submit them.
- **Double check titles and (for visual art submission) the orientation of the file uploads before hitting submit.** Titles and artwork will be reproduced exactly as submitted.
- For all file uploads, please use the following naming system
 - **StudentLastName_FirstInitial_Grade** (6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12)

If you have any issues while submitting student work through the online form, please reach out to sarahr@slso.org for assistance.