Aim: How do unexpected dynamic changes create musical movement?

Summary: We analyze dynamic change and contrast in Mozart’s Overture to The Marriage of Figaro.

Materials: colored pencils or markers, staff paper

Time Requirement: three 20-minute sessions

Standards: US 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8; NYC 1, 2, 3

Vocabulary: overture, opera, dynamics, tempo

Unit 4 Overview

Activity 4.1: What is an Overture?
Activity 4.2: Overture to The Marriage of Figaro Listening Map
Creative Extension 1: Overture to The Marriage of Figaro Dynamics Map
Activity 4.3: Get Things Moving with Dynamic Surprises
Creative Extension 2: Draw Your Own Cartoon Story

Activity 4.1: What is an Overture?

• How do all TV programs—cartoons, news, soap operas—begin?
• Why would you want music at the beginning of a TV program?
• What are some of your favorite TV theme songs, and how does the music connect with the program?

• Play Overture to The Marriage of Figaro, Track 31.
  • What kind of show would this music introduce?
  • Introduce and define the overture and story from Mozart’s The Marriage of Figaro.
Activity 4.2: Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* Listening Map

- Locate the Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* Dynamic Surprises Listening Map (SG46).
  - What information does this map include?
- Play Track 32, Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* (excerpt), while looking at the map.
- Play Track 33, Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* (sections), while tracking the sections on the map.
  - How does Mozart use the orchestra to build excitement in each section?
- Play Track 34, Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* (with pulses), while tracking pulses on the map and counting the pulses out loud with the narrator.
  - How does Mozart play with surprisingly soft and loud dynamics?
  - What else do you notice? Write it on your map.

Creative Extension 1: Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* Dynamics Map

- Locate *The Marriage of Figaro* score reduction, available on the Online Community.
  - What information does this score include?
- Play Track 31, Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*.
- While the CD plays, practice following the score with your finger.
- Choose two contrasting colored pencils or crayons, and highlight notes, phrases, and sections in the score as surprisingly loud (first color) and surprisingly soft (second color).
- Stop and restart the CD from the beginning as needed to check your work and continue your listening.
- Share and compare work.
  - How does Mozart use surprisingly soft and loud dynamic changes?
# Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*

## Dynamic Surprises Listening Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Section 1 at 0:02</th>
<th>Section 2 at 0:07</th>
<th>Section 3 at 0:10</th>
<th>Section 4 at 0:15</th>
<th>Section 5 at 0:23</th>
<th>Section 6 at 0:35</th>
<th>Section 7 at 0:48</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>5 seconds / 14 pulses</td>
<td>3 seconds / 8 pulses</td>
<td>5 seconds / 12 pulses</td>
<td>8 seconds / 20 pulses</td>
<td>12 seconds / 28 pulses</td>
<td>13 seconds / 16+16 pulses</td>
<td>5 seconds / 12 pulses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (loud and soft, with pulse numbers)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes (dynamics and energy)</td>
<td>Quiet, quick notes</td>
<td>Slower notes in four sets of three</td>
<td>Suddenly all very loud</td>
<td>First pulse of every four is suddenly loud for four times, while everything else is soft</td>
<td>Lots of loud unison playing</td>
<td>Suddenly soft with unexpected loud accents then four pulses of quick, soft notes, then the whole 16-note section repeats</td>
<td>Loud, unexpected accents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low and middle range notes</td>
<td>Range rising up</td>
<td>Lots of highs and lows, very full, a little softer near the end</td>
<td>The melody falls into two six-measure sections</td>
<td>Lots of loud, unexpected accents</td>
<td>Slower notes in three sets of two + three</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:** loud surprises = orange  soft surprises = blue
Activity 4.3: Get Things Moving with Dynamic Surprises

- Use two sources of sudden dynamic change to alter your performance of a well-known song, using voice, percussion, or body percussion.
  - Choose a piece of music that everyone knows and can play or sing (maybe one of the Link Up songs you’ve already learned).
  - Sing or play the piece.
  - Plan ways to create unexpected dynamic changes using volume and intensity or ensemble size and weight. For example:

  **Volume and Intensity**
  - Red = forte, blue = piano
  - Come to play, join sound with sound
  - Come to sing, we’ll shake the ground with song

  **Ensemble Size and Weight**
  - Orange = tutti, lavender = soloist
  - Come to play, join sound with sound
  - Come to sing, we’ll shake the ground with song

- Sing or play the altered piece as planned.
  - *How did our dynamic surprises affect the music? Was it an improvement? What other musical surprises would you like to try?*

Creative Extension 2: Draw Your Own Cartoon Story

*The Marriage of Figaro* tells the funny story of a crazy day in which there are lots of surprises, people trying to trick each other, and a happy ending.

- Play Track 31, Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*.
- Think aloud and model making comic-style story panels, as inspired by the music.

**Example for Teachers**

“*My main character is Figaro. As I listen to the music, I ask myself, ‘What does the music tell me is happening here? Is this an exciting part? A chase scene? Are characters making friends? Is someone playing a trick?’ I decide, then draw that scene while I listen.*”

Comic-style story panels can include drawings, dialogue, labels, movement marks, sound effects (Pow!), and more. Use one sheet of paper for each panel. Students’ panels can be a single, continuous story (related), or individual moments (unrelated).

- Students create their own panels while listening to all seven sections.
- When there is a change in the music, change the story in your picture to match the music.
- Share, and compare and contrast stories and drawings.