



Stories and Music of Resilience

In-school performance with Crossing Borders Music

Grade(s): K-8

Description

Crossing Borders Music celebrates musical stories of resilience in a performance of string quartet music by composers from around the world. This unique 50-minute string quartet program features music by composers from Uganda, Argentina, the Soviet Union, the Chickasaw Nation, Iran, Taiwan, and the US. Each piece shares a unique story of resilience, whether in the face of personal loss, political oppression, or schoolyard bullies!

Instructional objectives

Students will:

- Learn about background of each piece and composer.
- Understand how each piece reflects the composers' cultural context, and especially how each piece reflects a story of resilience.
- Identify specific elements of the music that help convey the background of each piece and its story of resilience.

Learning Standards

Understand the role of the arts in civilizations, past and present.

1. Analyze how the arts function in history, society and everyday life
 - Identify the distinctive roles of artists and audiences.
2. Understand how the arts shape and reflect history, society, and everyday life.
 - Know how images, sounds, and movement convey stories about people, places and times.
 - Identify and describe how the arts communicate the similarities and differences among various people, places, and times.
 - Know and describe how artists and their works shape culture and increase the understanding of societies, and past and present.

Repertoire

- Amanda John: *Yeah...I Hit Like a Girl* - Chickasaw Nation (Oklahoma, US)
- Cruise Berry: *Donne XIV* - Chickasaw Nation (Oklahoma, US)
- Dmitri Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 8, in C Minor, Op. 110 - Soviet Union
- Ching Ju Shih: *Mending Broken Fishing Nets* - Taiwan

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- Ástor Piazzolla: *Adiós Noniño (Farewell, Granddaddy)* - Argentina
- Justinian Tamusuza: *Mu KKubo Ery 'Omusaalaba (On the Way of the Cross)* - Uganda
- Parisa Sabet: *Geyrani* - Iran
- Florence B. Price: *Swing Lo, Sweet Chariot*, from *Five Folksongs in Counterpoint* - United States

Preparation

In the classroom, prior to the performance:

- Define and discuss what resilience means.
- Find the following countries on a globe or map: United States, Russia (where the Soviet Union used to be), Taiwan, Argentina, Uganda, Iran.
- Listen to the African American spiritual *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* as a class:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVpJGerB-ZY> This song was used to promote resilience during slavery.
- Introduce the following vocabulary terms:
 - String Quartet
 - Violin
 - Viola
 - Cello
 - Composer (a person who writes music)
 - Tempo (the music's speed)
 - Melody (the tune)
 - Folk Song (a song passed down from generation to generation)
 - Dynamics (volume level - loud or soft)
 - Legato (smooth)
 - Staccato (“bumpy”)

Performance Summary

- What is resilience? Not giving up, even when things get tough.
- All the pieces you hear today will tell a story of resilience from composers from around the world.

Amanda John: *Yeah...I Hit Like a Girl* - Chickasaw Nation (Oklahoma, US)

- Amanda John wrote this piece to talk about her resilience against others' expectations that she'd be weak doing karate, just because she was a girl

Cruise Berry: *Donne XIV* - Chickasaw Nation (Oklahoma, US)

- A man went missing after a car crash. Members of his community searched for him for many days, singing Muscogee-Creek (American Indian*) hymns to help them keep going and keep their hope.
- This piece is written using a melody from one of those hymns.
- Resilient because they never gave up searching even though they didn't find this person for many days

Dmitri Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 8, in C Minor, Op. 110 - Soviet Union

- Shostakovich lived in the Soviet Union. His government did a lot of bad things, and didn't let people speak up about what was wrong. Imagine how he felt.
- If you listen to his music, you can hear clues that he was writing about how he really felt inside.
- Guided listening: what emotions did you hear? How did the dynamics tempo help you hear what he was feeling?
- Resilient because he found ways to keep composing music about how he really felt even when he was threatened by his government

Ching Ju Shih: *Mending Broken Fishing Nets* - Taiwan

- This is a Taiwanese folk song sung when Taiwan was in the process of recovering from World War II. The title has a double meaning, because “fish net” in Taiwanese is the same as the word “hope”.
- Resilient because even though the land was destroyed and the people were devastated, this song was sung to remind people to have hope.
- Guided listening: think about something in your life that is tough now, and see if you can imagine hope for that situation when you listen to this piece. Also, listen to identify who is playing the melody.

Ástor Piazzolla: *Adiós Noniño* (Farewell, Granddaddy) - Argentina

- Piazzolla (1921–1992) was an Argentine tango composer.
- Resilient because this piece was written by Piazzolla to help cope with the loss of his father.
- Guided listening: can you imagine how Piazzolla was feeling after his father's death? How does the music show how he was feeling? (Answer: Slow tempo, legato (smooth) melody)

Justinian Tamasuza: *Mu KKubo Ery 'Omusaalaba* (On the Way of the Cross) - Uganda

- Tamasuza wrote this piece to honor the Uganda Martyrs. The Uganda Martyrs lived in the 1880s and worked in the court of King Mwanga II. King Mwanga asked them to do things that they thought were wrong. They didn't do them, so he had them put to death.
- Resilient because the martyrs held on to their beliefs and did what they thought was right, no matter what!
- Guided listening: What character does this music celebrating the Uganda Martyrs have? How does it make you feel? What do you hear? (Answer: happy character, staccato, louder dynamics, faster tempo)

Parisa Sabet: *Geyrani* - Iran

- Parisa is from Iran. Because of she's a member of the Bahá'í religion, she couldn't go to college or university. So, she went to a school created by Bahá'ís and their Muslim supporters. They meet in basements, living rooms, and online, because they could be put in prison just for going to school.
- Geyrani means “deer.” The piece depicts a deer standing calmly in the woods and then, sensing danger, starting to run away.
- Resilient because Parisa kept going to school even though, like the deer, she had to stay alert for any

danger around her.

- Guided listening: how does the music sound in the beginning, and how does it change? (Answer: slow tempo and quiet dynamics, then faster and louder).

Florence B. Price: *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, from *Five Folksongs in Counterpoint* - United States

- *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* is a spiritual. Spirituals were songs sung by African Americans in slavery in the United States not only provide inspiration through really tough times, but communicate with other enslaved people in their struggle for freedom.
- *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, like other spirituals was a coded song that contained directions of how to escape. “Swing Low” meant to start from the South, “Sweet Chariot” meant to take the Underground Railroad, and “Coming for to Carry Me Home” meant to arrive in freedom in the North. The Underground Railroad was a network of safe hiding places for people escaping slavery in the South and heading North.
- Resilient because people fought against their terrible circumstances instead of accepting them, and kept hope for something better.

Assessments:

- Invite students to share stories of times when they didn’t give up when things were hard.
- Ask your students, if they were to write music about something difficult in their lives and their resilience, what would they write about? How would the music sound? Would it be loud or soft? Staccato (bumpy) or legato (smooth)? Tempo (fast or slow)? Would it sound the same all the way through or change in the middle?
- For younger students, draw a picture of what the music might sound like. For older students, in addition to drawing, write about the piece, or, if the music is a song with lyrics, write the lyrics.
- We'd love to see photos of the students' work! Send to info@crossingbordersmusic.org
- Teachers can take a brief questionnaire evaluating the performance at:
<https://goo.gl/forms/nubcrlxainJOfVkf1>

* A note on terminology: We use “American Indian” rather than “Native American” to reflect the preferences of a majority of American Indians as expressed in US census data and a US Department of Labor survey.

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