



Somewhere Over The Barline: A toolkit for teaching musical expression

Australian National Band and Orchestra Conference

Jarrod Butler
23 - 26 September, 2021

Straw Poll:

Q1: Can musical expression be taught by a teacher?

a) Absolutely 43%

b) Probably 35%

c) Doubtful 15%

d) No 7%

How to Quantify Expression?

Patrik Juslin's GERMS model:

- * *Generative Rules*
- * *Emotional Expression*
- * *Random Variations*
- * *Motion Principals*
- * *Stylistic Unexpectedness*



Patrik Juslin, "Five Facets of Musical Expression", 2003

Jessika Karlsson, "A Novel Approach to Teaching Emotional Expression in Music Performance, 2008"

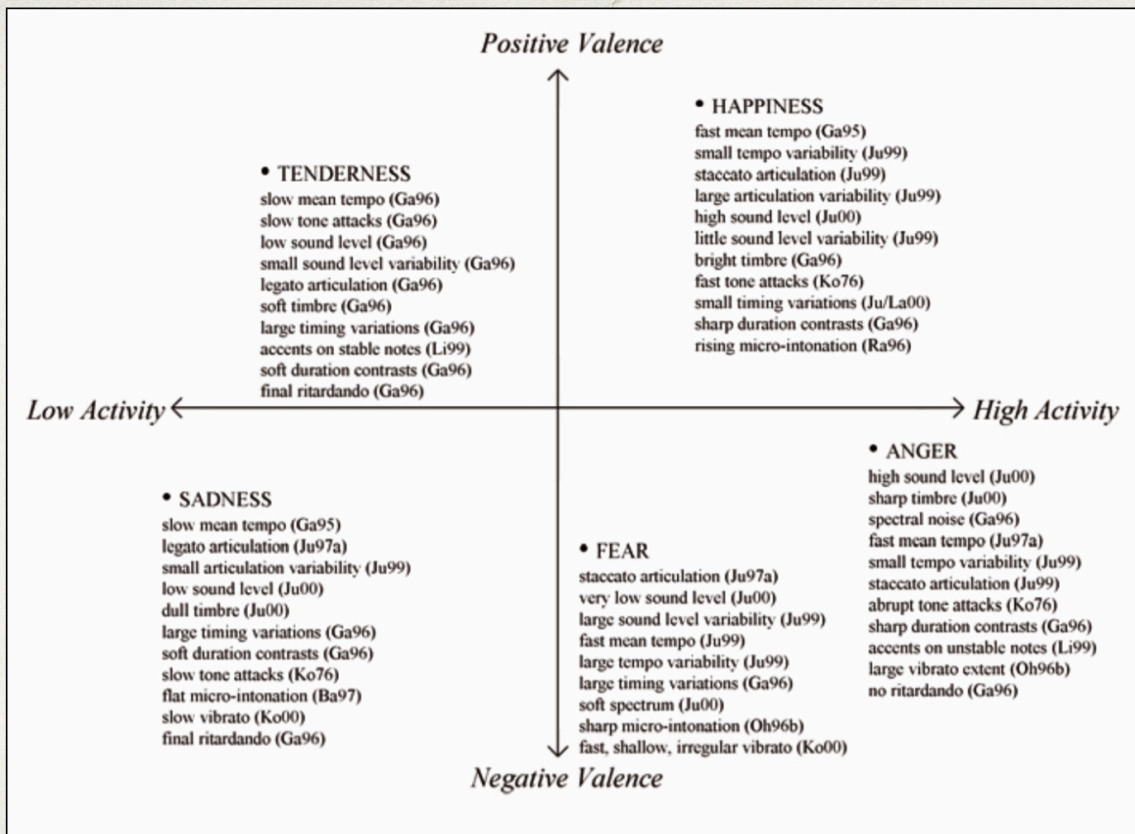
What Emotions Can Music Express?

Table 3

Frequencies (in percent) with which various emotion labels were selected by music students in response to the question "What emotions can music express?"

Emotion	Freq.	Emotion	Freq.	Emotion	Freq.	Emotion	Freq.
joy	98%	fear	79%	expectancy	66%	interest	44%
sadness	91%	loneliness	79%	confusion	65%	guilt	43%
anxiety	90%	nostalgia	76%	curiosity	63%	jealousy	42%
love	89%	desire	74%	satisfaction	57%	sympathy	39%
calm	89%	solemnity	73%	regret	56%	shame	39%
tension	89%	longing	71%	contempt	53%	admiration	37%
humor	87%	hope	70%	tiredness	52%	trust	33%
pain	86%	pride	69%	disgust	51%	humiliation	31%
tenderness	86%	hate	69%	disappointment	49%	Others*	16%
anger	83%	surprise	68%	boredom	47%		

* This refers to the possibility of providing one's own emotion labels, in addition to the 38 labels included in the list (see text for examples).



How Do We Teach Musical Expression?

Metaphor	Modeling	Felt Emotion	Verbal Instruction
Outcome Feedback	Concrete Models	Gesture	Listening
Technique	Notation	Playing By Ear	Improvisation
Vague Statements	Phrasing	Connection To Life Of Student	Imagery
Listening To Own Recordings	Humour	Score Study	Student Questioning

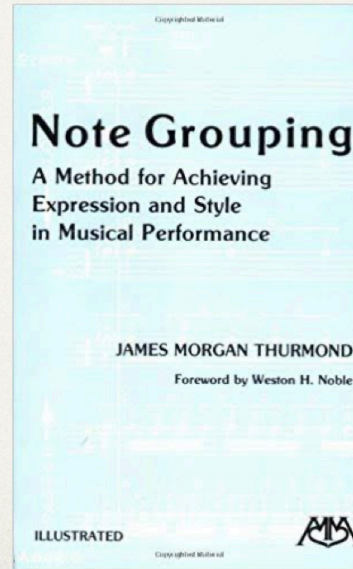
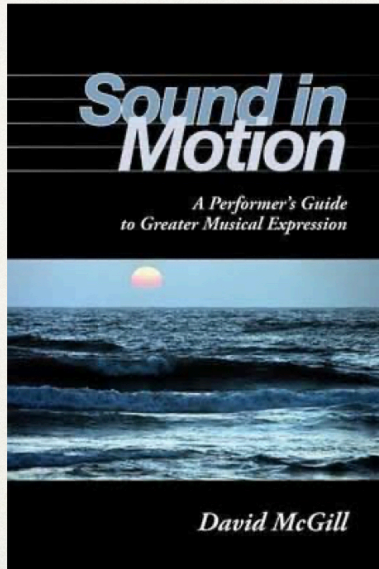
A Typical Lesson: The Research

- a. Reproduction of specific pieces
- b. Focus on technique
- c. No playing by ear
- d. No improvisation
- e. Explicit goals or plans are rare
- f. Teacher comments are ad-hoc

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Structured Musical Elements



Structured Musical Elements

- Advocates for expression through highlighting musical structures
- Form, sections, and phrases are fundamental and tangible to an audience
- Performer must utilise skill, craft, and in-depth knowledge
- Achieved through careful score study

The Critical Note: A Musical Joint

A change in language:

- *Critical note* to replace 'high point' or 'climax' of a phrase
- Language implies highest note - not always the case

Defining the critical note:

- The note with a natural sense of arrival or departure
- Linked to phrase structure
- Linked to harmonic structure
- Experience of an 'ah-ha' moment

An expressive style:

- *Critical note* connects note to phrase, phrase to section; section to work

Shule Agra - Trad. (Siúl a ghrá)

Andante [$\text{♩} = \text{c.}92$]

p

5

9

13

Motivic Grouping

Ride Of The Valkyries

Wagner: Die Walküre, Act III - *Ride of the Valkyries*
Lebhaft

Breaths: , , , ,

hns
(concert pitch)

Beats: 1-----2-----3 1-----2-----3 1-----2-----3 1-----2-----3

I II III
same rhythmic construction

Motivic Grouping

Ride Of The Valkyries

Example 44



Example 45



So, What's The Point?

Why should we think more about teaching expression explicitly?

They [teachers] know a lot about expressivity but find it difficult to express the knowledge verbally in a way that is accessible to the student

Lindström, 2003

Arguably, a stronger focus on expressive skills could help students to increase their intrinsic motivation, thereby helping them to achieve a 'deeper' approach to learning

Karlsson and Juslin, 2008

In Summary...

1. Music can express emotion and expression can be taught
2. We are getting better at quantifying what makes music expressive using research
3. Teachers have excellent implicit knowledge, but find it hard to communicate explicitly
4. Students who play expressively are more intrinsically motivated
5. More thought about explicit teaching of expression will result in better student and teacher outcomes
6. Teaching using structured musical techniques is one such way to give students explicit expressive tools



Thank you!
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