



## Graham Sattler suggests an approach to combining music, emotion, language and technology in your classroom using the NSW Music Syllabus...

### Introduction

It is widely accepted that music pre-dates speech (Botha, 2009; Mithen, Morley, Wray, Tallerman & Gamble, 2006; Storr, 1993). Investigations of all cultures that have ever existed, and have been documented, indicate that music played and plays an essential part in cultural, individual and group (community) human development (Harvey, 2017).

While human speech developed, and continues to develop, to impart information, music exists to communicate emotion. Music acts as a social and emotional glue, connecting and comforting, inspiring, motivating, uniting and enthusing people. Even motivational speeches, whether to small groups of people or whole populations, rely on prosody; that is, the discipline of emphasising and exploiting the proto-musical elements of speech (rhythm, phrasing and intonation), to achieve a compelling and impactful result. Think of significant speeches throughout history, expressions such as *hanging on every word* and *music to my ears* exist for a reason.

The arts (and specifically, creativity) as a learning area is becoming compromised. The requirement of teachers to engage students in the understanding of (and expression through) artistic concepts, brings with it a need to develop tools, resources and strategies to facilitate student creativity and confidence in their capacity to create, appreciate and connect creative capacity and experience to their lives, their learning, community and cultural meaning. The good news is that tools and resources are easily, and in many cases freely, available. This article proposes a practical solution, called Music Emotion Language & Technology (MELT), to the third element of the equation; it offers a strategy, by way of a project plan for students to engage in the creative process, satisfy syllabus outcomes, and integrate with other Key Learning Areas while affording awareness and appreciation of cultural and language diversity.

Although the plan proposed herein for stages 4-6, it is both practical and scalable for students of any age and stage from early stage 1 upwards. For a list of NSW 7-12 syllabus outcomes integrated through this process please see Attachment 1.

While the project can be tailored to run across any number of sessions, here we consider an eight-week or session 'course'. The number of sessions, however, is not a critical consideration; it is the staging of the process across the course that is important.



## Outline

Across the (say, 8) class *sessions*, students identify and explore the musicality and emotional impact of everyday language and transform *information-weighted* text into *emotion-weighted* music.

To do this, students bringing a line of text to the session, and using music notation apps ([ScoreCloud](#) or similar), chart the expressive inflection in their own vernacular, language, or dialect (elements of pitch, emphasis and rhythm) and transform the inherent intonation of speech into musical patterns, creating a musical composition or compositions.

The melody, melodies, or sets of melodic fragments that result can be interwoven, creating *counterpoint* (separate melodies played in conjunction with each other). Harmonies and instrumentation (both acoustic and electronic, and potentially including the use of tablet and/or smartphone technology) can be explored and applied in relation to the emotional and dramatic meaning that emerges from the melodies and the texts.

Using available music technology programs or apps, such as *Garageband* or *Logic*, the composition(s) can be assembled and recorded with all participants having contributed to the development and performance outcome. While this sounds complicated, it need not be. Simple compositions can 'emerge' from one simple line of text from the youngest student. Two simple lines, or more, from a few or many students in the class as desired can be woven into original compositions and recorded on whatever devices (smartphones/mp3 recorders) are available. The music notation app or program comes into play in notating the pitches and rhythms inherent in the intonation of the recited text.

This is the point at which students' emotions *present* as music!

There may or may not be a lyrics component in the final work or works. To some degree, outcomes demonstrate the primacy of music in expressing emotional meaning and drama over 'language' as a medium for communicating information. Shared ownership of the compositions means that the pieces, or sections/fragments thereof, would be available for students to incorporate into other workshops and learning activities across animation, game development, filmmaking and so on.

## Initiating the process

Students would only be required to bring one or two lines of text to the process. The text(s) should not be from existing song repertoire, and should ideally be of the student's devising. There is no requirement for rhyme, sophistication or poetic quality, and the inclusion of texts in more than one language, reflecting the cultural and language diversity of the school or class, is encouraged. The line(s) of text should be in some way meaningful to the student, and the student should be able to articulate, in simple terms, what that meaning is.



## The plan

Lesson	Content	Concepts (Elements)	General Capabilities	Learning Experiences
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion about music literacy (notation and graphic score reading)</li> <li>• Discussion about text and different languages, similarities and differences, what intonation is, its expressive purpose and function, and how it can change the meaning of words and phrases when varied</li> <li>• Demonstration, exploration and discussion of intonation as music element, charting and transcribing pitch and rhythm in spoken language of simple/familiar phrases in one or more languages/dialects</li> <li>• Students present their prepared lines of text, whole group discussion</li> </ul>	pitch, duration	literacy	listening, performing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine musical notation/scoring system relevant to cohort and project</li> <li>• Review the text lines and record each for reference (simple audio recording, smartphone/mp3 recorder)</li> <li>• Whole class or small groups (3 – 4 participants in each) to put the lines together to create stanzas</li> <li>• Whole class assessment of texts; order them in agreed, appealing, logical order. This may involve some repetition, editing and so forth</li> </ul>	pitch, duration, dynamics, structure	critical & creative thinking, literacy, ICT capability	listening, performing
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assemble complete text</li> <li>• Review the complete text</li> <li>• Break into small groups (different to previous session) and make adjustments as mediated by teacher or delegated group leader</li> <li>• Consolidate revised text(s), then discuss the emergent moods and meanings</li> </ul>	pitch, duration, dynamics and expressive techniques, tone colour,	critical & creative thinking, literacy, intercultural understanding, ICT capability	listening, performing, composing, recording



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals recite the text (for clarity of intonation) and record in music notation app/program</li> <li>• Explore and discuss English translations and meanings of non-English texts (literal and poetic), assessing and establishing accuracy of intent and meaning, ensuring appropriate language-relevant syntax and grammar</li> </ul>	structure		
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals recite the text (for clarity of intonation) and record in <i>ScoreCloud</i></li> <li>• Look at the melodic pattern(s) created by the texts and discuss the pitch range, rhythms, phrasing, contour and pulse</li> </ul>	pitch, duration, dynamics and expressive techniques, tone colour, structure, texture	critical & creative thinking, literacy, intercultural understanding, ICT capability	listening, performing, composing
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insert words into the notated 'scores'</li> <li>• In small groups, investigate tonal colours, timbres and textures suggested by mood of the text</li> <li>• Bring the discussions back to the large group, report and consolidate</li> </ul>	pitch, duration, dynamics and expressive techniques, tone colour, structure, texture	critical & creative thinking, literacy, intercultural understanding, ICT capability	listening, performing, composing
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss possible instruments and sounds to apply to the arrangements</li> <li>• Develop sound and instrument 'palette'</li> <li>• Discuss musical keys, harmonic structures and 'tonal environments'</li> <li>• Discuss counterpoint and consider the harmonic implications of the interweaving of the melodies</li> </ul>	pitch, duration, dynamics and expressive techniques, tone colour, structure, texture	critical & creative thinking, literacy, intercultural understanding, ICT capability	listening, performing, composing



7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using <i>Logic pro</i>, <i>Garageband</i> or <i>ScoreCloud</i>, working in small groups, overlay harmonies and sounds in recorded versions of the compositions. Create notated versions</li> </ul>	pitch, duration, dynamics and expressive techniques, tone colour, structure, texture	critical & creative thinking, literacy, intercultural understanding, ICT capability	listening, performing, composing, recording
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine structure and confirm allocated roles among student</li> <li>Perform composition, utilising notated/scored versions</li> </ul>	pitch, duration, dynamics and expressive techniques, tone colour, structure, texture	critical & creative thinking, literacy, numeracy, intercultural understanding, ICT capability	listening, performing, composing

## Creating musicians

Through the process outlined above, students will create, record and perform a composition that is meaningful to them, is culturally relevant and, that explores both awareness and appreciation of diversity. Through thoughtful investment and engagement in the creative process from the first step, you can lead them to participate in making their own music, regardless of their age and stage, while developing facilitated collaborative practice and identity. Placing students in control and supporting them to use existing, found, and developed materials, also develops the skills to be creative, innovative, thoughtful, confident and informed musicians. Through our lessons, we can encourage our students to express themselves and their cultures; and consider and engage with the cultures, cultural values and practices of others.

And, isn't that what a comprehensive public education is all about?



## References:

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