



## Lesson – *Performance Poetry*

**Companion Videos** – Serenade for Strings, Mvt. IV *Larghetto*; student’s original poems

### Suggested Grade Level

Grades 6-12

### Background

This lesson is based on the listening, responding and writing exercises that Buffalo poet/performer and founder of Pure Ink Poetry slam, Brandon Williamson, incorporates in his creative workshops with students.

### Objective

Students will use self-reflection to identify perceived stereotypes of themselves and in society. They will express emotions associated with these stereotypes both verbally and in writing. Students will listen to pieces of varied musical styles and express emotional connections to music through creative writing.

### Suggested Materials

- BPO video of Dvořák’s Serenade for Strings, Mvt. IV *Larghetto*
- Videos of students’ original poems
- Brandon Williamson Fact Sheet (provided)

### New York State Arts Standards

MU:Re7.1.E.5 MU:Re7.1.E.8 MU:Re7.1.E.HSI

MU:Re7.2.E.5 MU:Re7.2.E.8 MU:Re7.2.E.HSI

MU:Re8.1.E.5 MU:Re8.1.E.8 MU:Re8.1.E.HSI

### New York State English Language Arts & Literacy Standards

Writing, Standard 2, 3 & 4

Speaking & Listening, Standard 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6

Language, Standard 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6

### Procedure

How does the music make you feel? Different music evokes different emotions in us all, and these emotions can vary from person to person. What aspects of the music draw out these emotions? The lyrics? The tone? What if we were to take away the musical sounds of a song? How can emotions be expressed through words only? Just as a composer uses



different *timbres*, or sounds, to evoke emotions, it is the duty of the poet to use tone and language to convey emotions in their writing and through their own voice.

**Writing Warm-up Exercise #1:** Have students list what they believe to be perceived stereotypes of themselves. These stereotypes can be positive or negative and include categories such as age, race, gender, religion, etc. Explain that the problem with stereotypes is that they are not always untrue, but are always incomplete. They do not convey who we are as individuals. Have students write 3-4 sentences about the ways in which they are more than their stereotypes. What attributes or talents make them unique? What intrinsic characteristics do they possess that are not seen on the outside?

**Writing Warm-up Exercise #2:** Ask students to draw a connection between music and themselves. Have students compare themselves to the music they enjoying listening to, or one of their favorite songs, and write a few sentences about themselves in a positive light. Engage students in a discussion about their choices. What are some of the musical qualities or features of their favorite music that they are drawn to? How is the music representative of their individual being?

- 1) Have students watch the BPO video of Dvořák’s *Serenade for Strings, Mvt. IV Larghetto*. How does the music make you feel? Have students attach an emotion to the musical selection. Using the five senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste), have students list the different ways of describing how the music makes them feel. For example:

*The music makes me feel comforted. When I listen to the music, I picture snuggling up in front of a warm fire on a cold, winter night. The strings make the music sound warm and bright. The music feels like a warm, fuzzy blanket wrapped around me. It smells sweet like cinnamon. It tastes like Grandma’s homemade apple pie.*

Perhaps they experience different emotions at different times during the piece. Does the music remind them of anything? What is the story behind the music? Ask students to describe, in writing, the feelings they experience while listening to the music. Have students include a comparison with themselves and the music they selected. How are their personality traits reflected in the music they chose? What qualities of the music mirror their individual persona?

- 2) As they write, encourage students to think about the reader or listener’s perspective. What new perspective does the poet want the reader to come away with after experiencing the poem? What emotions do you want the audience to feel as they take the poem in? How do you want them to react? Words have the power to affect how the reader thinks and feels. Have students focus on framing their poem in a positive light that encourages the reader to gain new perspectives and insight into different points of view. Students may view the featured videos of other student performers reciting their own original poems for reference.
- 3) Have students share their poetry in a reading to the class. Encourage students to focus on being expressive, both in their tone of voice and inflection, and in their facial expressions, in order to effectively communicate the emotions in their poem.

