



**VH1 Fan Club
ABBA**
VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12

Lesson 3

Note to Teachers: The programs viewed in conjunction with these lesson plans may include references, consistent with the eras portrayed, to substance abuse, violent acts, and topics of a sexual and/or political nature. Because this may be considered inappropriate for classroom use in some communities, you are encouraged to review the programs before presenting them to your students, and if necessary, choose those sections that enhance your lesson and are acceptable for use in your classroom

 **Objective**

- Students will develop a deeper understanding of the connection between improvisation and inspiration.

National Standards for Music Education

3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- VH1 Fan Club: ABBA program
- Web-based lesson materials
- Notebook paper, pencils
- Hand drum

Prior Knowledge:

Students are familiar with the concept of improvisation, and the musical styles in which it is frequently found. Students have experience with basic rhythmic patterns.

Procedures

1. Ask students to write a brief four line poem in their notebook (rhyming couplets are probably best) on the topic of “my best _____.” Allow 5-10 minutes for this writing activity. Ask for a few volunteers to share their work. Through student examples, help students conclude that whatever “my best _____” was, it is something we feel a connection to based on an experience, a mood, or the moment.
2. Show VH1 Fan Club: ABBA, Segment 4.
3. Guide students in a discussion of the thoughts expressed by the composer featured in the program, Ayhan. In the video, Ayhan feels a spiritual connection to the music of ABBA. Through listening to their music, he is inspired to find new things to write about. What might be some of the reasons that he responds in such a way to ABBA’s music? Have students discuss how, as in the case of the “my best _____” poems, our personal experiences, mood, and the moment can make a difference in how we perceive music.
4. Ask students to choose a partner and take out their original poems. With their partners, have them say the poem with a steady beat. Keep experimenting in different ways until it is satisfactory to both the student and his/her partner. Are the beats of your poem in groups of twos or threes?
5. Play a simple ostinato on the hand drum. Demonstrate vocal improvisation by singing the following directions as you play the ostinato:

With your poems now, don't be wise
Now is the time to improvise
Sing what you feel as you read along
That's what it takes to improvise a song.

Keep the ostinato going as you encourage students to participate by improvising their own poems vocally. Keep the mood relaxed. Students may be hesitant to participate at first, but with gentle encouragement, they should gain confidence.

6. Remind students that many styles of music allow for improvisation (jazz, Baroque, rock and roll), and that improvisation can serve as a springboard for ideas. Explain that ABBA did not write down the instrument parts for their pieces. They were experimented, improvised, and overdubbed in the recording studio. Ask students if, in their improvisation exercise earlier in the lesson, there were any beginnings of a hook for a longer composition. Shouldn't we be writing or recording those great ideas?

Curriculum connection - Language arts:

In the movie, "Muriel's Wedding", Muriel has moved from her small Australian town to the city of Sydney. She says, "Now my life is as good as an ABBA song! It's as good as 'Dancing Queen'!" What does she mean?

Supplemental resources:

"The Winner Takes It All - The ABBA Story", DVD, Universal Music, 2002.

National Standards for Music Education

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Lesson One is derived from Strategies for Teaching: Middle-Level and High School Keyboard (MENC: 1996).



These standards-based materials are provided through a partnership with MENC: The National Association for Music Education. This lesson plan was created by MENC member Christopher Fitzpatrick, Theater Division, The Boston Conservatory, Boston, MA.