



# music studio

## LESSON PLAN

### storytellers

## VH1 Storytellers for Save the Music Starring Billy Joel

A VH1 Save the Music Special  
VH1 Music Studio  
Cable in the Classroom

Lessons for High School Keyboard and General Music Classes

Lesson 2 of 3

**Note to Teachers:** Before showing the videotape to your classes, please review for possible objectionable language.

### Objective

Students will create and improvise melodies over given accompaniment patterns

National Standards for Music Education: Content Standard 2--Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music; Content Standard 3--Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments; Content Standard 4-- Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines; Content Standard 5--Reading and notating music; Content Standard 6--Listening to, analyzing, and describing music;

Content Standard 7--Evaluating music and music performances; Content Standard 8--Understanding relationships between music, other arts, and disciplines outside the arts; Content Standard 9--Understanding music in relation to history and culture

### Materials

VH1 Storytellers Billy Joel videotape  
Television and videotape player

A series of short action scenarios, rich in possible detail and ambiguous in meaning, such as "Walking down a dark street late at night," "Daydreaming on an August afternoon," and "Downhill skiing through an alpine forest" (Scenarios with a beginning, middle, and end that last no more than five minutes)

## **Prior Knowledge and Experiences**

Students have created melodic and harmonic improvisations for given melodies.

## **Procedures**

1. Have students watch Segment 4 of VH1 Storytellers Billy Joel videotape.
2. Discuss with students the story Billy Joel was telling in the song "Scenes from an Italian Restaurant." Lead students to find the song's inception (what happened to high school students Brenda and Eddie) and the problem of "setting up" the scene or framing the story.
3. Have students point out music elements in the song. Where is the tempo fast and where is it slow? Does the melody move in steps or leaps? What emotions does the music evoke? Does that help tell the story? Review Billy Joel's earlier discussion and musical example of the different emotions evoked by major and minor keys.
4. Have students decide if other songs on the videotape tell stories, for example, "River of Dreams," "Movin' Out (Anthony's Song)," or "Allentown." Identify the elements of music chosen by Billy Joel to help convey the story in each song. (E.g. "River of Dreams" makes use of call and response, interesting timbres and instrumentation)
5. Tell students they are going to write a scenario for a song (see ideas in materials), no longer than one or two sentences, on a chalkboard easily seen at a glance from the keyboards.
6. Briefly discuss the scenario with students, pointing out key words that suggest an expressive approach.
7. Establish guidelines for the scenario (for example, tonal center or rhythmic or melodic motif).
8. Give students a few minutes of private exploration (using headsets) to develop their sounds and improvisational ideas for each section of the scenario.
9. Have students create melodic phrase while teacher plays an accompaniment pattern. Teacher leads the ensemble through the scenario, using conducting techniques, hand gestures, and verbal suggestions and encouragement. When a strong motif emerges, encourage students to respond to it appropriately. Allow the improvisational composition to emerge, but move the group ahead if they get stuck on one idea or theme. Listen for an appropriate end. Create one if necessary.
10. Encourage students to notate any themes they find especially appealing or interesting and incorporate them into a more formal composition.

## **Indicators of Success**

Students create improvisations over given accompaniment patterns.

## **Follow-up**

Ask all students to submit scenarios. Explain that two will be chosen for a class project resulting in two one-act plays, complete with original dialogue, sets, and music.

The lesson is adapted from *Strategies for Teaching Middle-Level and High School Keyboard*, compiled and edited by Martha F. Hilley and Tommie Pardue: 1996 ( MENC: Reston, Va.).

**VH1, in partnership with Cable in the Classroom, collaborated with MENC: The National Association for Music Education to develop this series of lessons.**

## **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.**