



storytellers

## VH1 Storytellers: The Dixie Chicks

VH1 Music Studio  
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12  
Lesson 2

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.

### Objectives

- Students will compare and contrast compositional devices using a variety of pieces in pairs and in a large group setting.
- Students will describe in detail significant events occurring within the given musical example.
- Students will explain how the roles of creators, performers, and others involved in this production and presentation are similar to and different from one another.

#### National Standards for music education:

6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

## Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- VH1 Storytellers: The Dixie Chicks
- Compositional Devices Teacher's Guide (provided below)
- Student copies of the Compositional Devices Chart (provided below)
- Student copies of the lyric sheet to "Cowboy Take Me Away" (provided below)

### **Prior Knowledge:**

- Students will be able to identify the basic principles of composition.
- Students will have watched VH1 Storytellers: The Dixie Chicks in its entirety and completed Lesson 1.

## Procedures

1. Cue the second segment of VH1 *Storytellers: The Dixie Chicks* beginning 14:19.
2. Lead a class discussion of life imitating art and art imitating life. Possible discussion questions could be:
  - What musical influences/genres can be detected in both songs?
  - What specific events inspired the creation of these songs?
  - Compare and contrast the uses of characteristic elements in each song and the real world connections made.
3. **Student Activity #1:** Distribute the Compositional Devices Chart (below). Students will complete the chart by entering where they feel each device is used (as applicable) within one of the songs in this segment. Students should pair up and complete the chart together; they need to choose one of the songs featured in this section. Once all students have completed their charts, answers should be discussed as a class. Students should be able to explain in detail the answers they chose. As a class, compare similarities and differences of the two songs in this segment.
4. **Student Activity #2:** Students should list all the people they think were needed to develop this musical creation. Students are to work in groups listing all roles and responsibilities of creators, performers, and others they think it takes to present the songs shown in this segment. Students should be encouraged to think more deeply, beyond singer, songwriter, musician, to all of the roles in front of and behind the scenes it takes to create not only the songs, but the whole television presentation.
5. **Student Activity #3:** Distribute the lyric sheet below. Students are to take the chorus section of "Cowboy Take Me Away," in groups, pairs, or individual, then change one compositional device and recreate the chorus, with their chosen medium of response (for example, keyboard, voice, etc.) students should discuss the difference making one compositional device change can make to the whole piece.

## **Extensions**

- Students should research the responsibilities of a musician, singer, or songwriter to be involved with stage, television, and film music creations.
- For homework students should research film and television music by renowned composers, such as John Williams, Michael Kamen, and Hans Zimmer.
- Students will better understand the relationship of television and film music if they further research the amount of popular music used in television programs, on stage, and in films.

## **Supplemental Resources:**

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dixie\\_Chicks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dixie_Chicks)
- [www.dixiechicks.com](http://www.dixiechicks.com)

## **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.

## Compositional Devices Chart

**Compositional Device**

**Song section**

Augmentation

Diminution

Mirroring

Isolation

Accumulation

Inversion

Retrograde

Transposition

Transformation

Development

Embellishment

Canon

## Compositional Devices Teacher's Guide

Compositional Devices for Exploring Phrase Material

*Definitions in quotes are musical definitions from the Harvard Dictionary of Music, Fourth Ed. 2003.*

### **Augmentation**

“the presentation of a subject in double value, e.g.--quarter note replaced by a half note.”

- to lengthen or make bigger
- to draw out in time and/or space

### **Diminution**

“the presentation of a subject in halved value”

- to reduce in size
- to make smaller in time and/or space

### **Mirroring**

- to do on the other side
- to change the facing

### **Isolation**

- to take one aspect of the phrase and do it, omitting the rest ex.do only the focus and head movements of the phrase.

### **Accumulation**

- a sequential repetition. Start at a specific point in the phrase and gradually add the following counts, going back to the starting point each time and accumulating.

ex. 1. 1,2. 1,2,3. 1,2,3,4. etc.

### **Inversion**

“the general meaning of the term is a substitution of higher for lower tones and vice versa. There are two main types of inversion:

harmonic an interval is inverted by transferring its lower note into the higher octave or its higher note into the lower octave.

melodic a melody is inverted by changing each ascending interval into the corresponding descending interval, and vice versa. The result is a mirror-like exchange of upward and downward movements, comparable to the contours of a forest and its reflection in a lake.”

### **Retrograde**

“the term denotes the backward reading of a melody, i.e. beginning with the last note and ending with the first one.”

- to go from back to front, as in running a film backwards performing the momentum or energy of the movement in reverse

### **Transposition**

(1) “the rewriting of the ex tempore performance of a composition at another pitch, i.e., in another key.”

(2) “the modification of a musical subject or motive made with a view to change its personality.”

- change the energy and quality. personality change. meter change (waltz, march, etc)

### **Development**

“An important technique of recent composition which consists in the unfolding of the thematic material... these devices are used in a manner designed to bring about a feeling of evolution and growth, of increased intensity and higher “temperature,” of dynamic stress and climax.”

- to isolate an aspect and carry it to a new choreographic intention to enhance tension or create release.

### **Embellishment**

“Arose as a spontaneous act on the part of the interpreter who, in performing a written melody, enlivened it, expanded it, or varied it through his technique of improvisation.”

- to add on top of, or to give a special emphasis to one aspect of the phrase; i.e., adding an improvised section every 2 counts

### **Canon**

“a polyphonic composition in which all parts have the same melody throughout although starting at different points.”

**"Cowboy Take Me Away"**  
**Copyright The Dixie Chicks**

I said I wanna touch the earth  
I wanna break it in my hands  
I wanna grow something wild and unruly

I wanna sleep on the hard ground  
In the comfort of your arms  
On a pillow of bluebonnets  
In a blanket made of stars

Oh it sounds good to me I said

Cowboy take me away  
Fly this girl as high as you can  
Into the wild blue  
Set me free, oh, I pray  
Closer to heaven above  
And closer to you closer to you

I wanna walk and not run  
I wanna skip and not fall  
I wanna look at the horizon  
And not see a building standing tall

I wanna be the only one  
For miles and miles  
Except for maybe you and  
Your simple smile

Oh it sounds good to me  
Yes it sounds so good to me

Cowboy take me away  
Fly this girl as high as you can  
Into the wild blue  
Set me free oh I pray  
Closer to Heaven above and  
Closer to you closer to you

I said I wanna touch the earth  
I wanna break it in my hands  
I wanna grow something wild and unruly  
Oh it sounds so good to me  
Cowboy take me away  
Fly this girl as high as you can  
Into the wild blue  
Set me free oh I pray  
Closer to heaven above and  
Closer to you closer to you  
Closer to you  
Cowboy take me away,  
Closer to you



*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 Helen A. Krofchick, Music Educator, Doby's Mill School, Elgin, South Carolina.*