



Linking Historical Context to Musical Compositions:

Carter's *Symphony No. 1* (1942)

Play List:

Carter: *Symphony No. 1* (1942)

We Shall Overcome

Beethoven: *Symphony No. 3* ("*Eroica*")

Supplies:

White Board & Markers

Recordings of play list repertoire

Device to play musical selections

Class Discussion:

Musical Motivation

- What inspires composers to write certain pieces of music?
- Can it be argued that every piece of music is historically informed?
- What insight is gained through understanding the historical context of a piece for the performer? For the audience member?

Critical Listening:

Listen to excerpts from Carter's *Symphony No. 1*, Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*, and/or *We Shall Overcome* without background context. Ask students to describe possible musical elements in the music that indicate the atmosphere the composer was emulating. Students should use music vocabulary to support their answers including, but not limited to, articulation, sonority, tempo, rhythmic figures, and melodic motives. After suggestions are offered, discuss the true historical context of the piece. Listen to the piece again and have students verbalize how the composer emulated the events of the time in the music written.

Practical Application:

Students work in small groups to identify and present (1) the historical context of a piece in the school orchestra's repertoire, (2) the musical analysis that highlights the historical context, and (3) practical ways to emphasize these discoveries in their own performance.