

**John Williams - *Hedwig's Theme* from Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (Topic: Music for Radio, Film, Television & Multimedia - Film Music, MANDATORY)
Lesson plan ideas by Rachel Hocking**

About: *Hedwig's Theme* is a well-known prominent theme from the film score for much of the Harry Potter series. John Williams often uses themes in a leitmotiv manner, and this particular theme uses interesting intervals and chromaticism to project a magical, mysterious quality associated with the film. The piece is scored for celeste, synthesizer, with mostly string orchestra, and is used both in a diegetic and non-diegetic way, typical of much film music. The theme has also appeared in other forms of multimedia including video games and ringtones.

Musical Elements: *Pitch*

The theme uses all notes from the chromatic scale but in the framework of E minor. The diminished intervals and tritones add a sense of 'another world' because of its shift away from diatonic tonality. It would be worth playing the melody to the class using a diatonic scale and then comparing it with William's chromatic version. The intervals within the melody, such as the tritone, are worth analysing, singing, aurally recognising and using in melodic dictation to reinforce.

Musical Elements: *Structure*

William's use of leitmotiv within a movie is worth exploring, alongside other examples of his work such as *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*. There are well-known themes from *Harry Potter* (eg *Hedwig's Theme*, *Voldemort's Theme*, and *Nimbus 2000*) which could be compared and discussed. In addition, scenes from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* use *Hedwig's Theme* in a diegetic way (eg when Hagrid plays the theme on the flute) and in a non-diegetic way as underscoring.

Teaching Activity: *Creativity/Composition - Dramatic Scoring*

Take a dramatic 1 minute scene from an existing movie e.g. *Antz*, *The Lion King*. Provide the scene to students and ask them to create a soundtrack that underscores the action. In addition to the music, the soundtrack needs to have some sound effects that are part of the dramatic action. This activity can be done using software such as Audacity, Garageband etc.

Teaching Activity: *Aural - The Devil's Interval*

Explore the tritone as contained in *Hedwig's Theme* both ascending and descending. First identify this in the theme through singing. Isolate the tritone and sing in different ranges. Discuss its importance in Western music, referring to the concept of consonance and dissonance. Aurally test students re recognition of tritone and non-tritone intervals (especially comparing with P4 and P5). Then listen to some other well-known works that use the tritone, such as the theme from *The Simpsons*, Jimi Hendrix *Purple Haze*, The Beatles *Blue Jay Way*, music by Bartok, and ask students to recognise the tritone interval.

Teaching Activity: *Musicology - Manipulated by Music*

Introduce leitmotiv, its purpose, history and examples. Watch scenes from Williams' movies such as *Star Wars* (*Luke's Theme*, *Princess Leia's theme*, *Imperial Motif* etc) and discuss how the emotion of the leitmotiv represents the character associated with it. Apply this knowledge to themes used in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Using the musical concepts, analyse themes and discuss whether each theme is successful at projecting its represented film character. Watch scenes from the movie that contains only *Hedwig's Theme*. Discuss the orchestration for each presentation and whether the theme is used in a diegetic or non-diegetic way and the purpose behind this.

Teaching Activity: *Performance - Reading and Playing Accidentals*

Have the students learn and play the five-finger arrangement of *Hedwig's Theme* on keyboard (*Harry Potter Magical Music: from the first five years at Hogwarts* by Williams, Doyle, Hooper. Arr. Tom Gerou. Published by Alfred Music). Work in pairs if keyboards need to be shared. Discuss/lead students through the notation, including all the accidentals. Relate the types of intervals to the

keyboard, asking students to visually understand the intervals. Monitor practise and then have class play entire piece together. This can be extended into a more complex performance by adding percussive effects and having skilled students play on their own instruments.