



LISTEN – Educational Activities to accompany *Hummingbirds* by composer Marti Epstein

Glossary

Etude - a short musical composition, typically for one instrument, designed as an exercise to improve the technique or demonstrate the skill of the player.

Hummingbird - a small nectar-feeding tropical American bird that is able to hover and fly backward, typically having colorful iridescent plumage.

Geography - the nature and relative arrangement of places and physical features.

Navigating - following or finding a course across, over, or through.

Range - the distance from the lowest to the highest pitch an instrument can play.

Keyboard - the set of adjacent depressible keys on a piano that play the twelve notes of the Western musical scale in multiple octaves.

Harmonic - describes the musical tones whose frequencies are related to one another.

Tone - a musical or vocal sound with reference to its pitch, quality, and strength.

Pitch - position of a single sound in the complete range of sound.

Repeat - do (something) again, either once or a number of times.

Structure - the arrangement of and relations between the parts or elements of something complex.

Climactic - highest or most exciting point in a piece of music or story.

Tension - the anticipation music creates in a listener's mind for relaxation or release.

Color - One of the basic elements of music is called color, or timbre (pronounced "TAM-ber"). Color includes all the aspects of a sound that do not have anything to do with how high or low it is, how loud or soft, or how long or short.

Listen

Geography and Hummingbirds

Travel the journey of the notes.

Dig Deeper

The whole story – map the parts

Follow the method of approaching music that pianist Jihye Chang creates and see how it prepares someone to hear, play and enjoy the music.

Create and Make

Create a “colorful conversation” of the music as you listen to it.

12 pitches that diminish down to 2.

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Listen

Geography and Hummingbirds: Travel the journey of the notes.

Composer, Marti Epstein first titled this etude “Geography” to describe the navigation across the range of a piano keyboard. The words did not seem to express the poetry of the piece so she changed it to “Hummingbirds.”

The descriptive title of “Hummingbirds” brings movement and interaction to mind as the geography or range of the piano keyboard is played, flitting like a hummingbird.



Moving like a hummingbird:

Hummingbirds have unique flight abilities; they are able to fly not only forward, but also backward, sideways, and straight up.

Hummingbirds can hover extensively, and can even do aerobatics such as backward somersaults as they dart among flowers searching for nectar and insects.



Hummingbirds will repeat a flight path in a u-shape to communicate to other birds what is their territory.

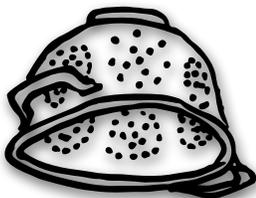
Listen and Move with Hummingbirds: an active listening exercise - **Go Gather:**



-- Something that is long and thin like a hummingbird's beak. like a pipe cleaner, pencil, or cotton swab



-- A strainer/ turned upside down and pretend the holes are flowers for a hummingbird's beak to gather nectar from.



As you listen to Jihye Chang perform the etude, “Hummingbirds” ...pretend your hand is a hummingbird navigating a field of flowers (the holes on the strainer) and move the beak in and out of the holes all over the strainer with the rhythm and range that the notes in the song do.



How does the amount of movement change between the beginning and end?

Dig Deeper

The whole story – mapping the piece

When pianist Jihye Chang first looks at a new piece of music, she likes to get an overall idea about the piece before she starts practicing,

To create an overall idea or to “map the geography” of the piece, she looks for the answers to some questions:

- What is the structure of the piece?
- Where are the difficult parts (complicated rhythms and notes)?
- Where is the climactic point?
- How does the piece end?



Thinking about the *Hummingbirds* etude, write down descriptive words that help answer the questions that Jihye Chang uses to “map the geography” or “tell the story” of the composition.

Descriptive words you might want to use to “tell the story”: fast, slow, loud, soft, quiet, chaotic, melodic, soothing, tense, rough, galloping, painful, joyful, sad, relaxed, bouncy, quick, organized, going up, going down, uneven, full, empty, expansive, short, long



 What is the structure of the piece? _____

 Where are the difficult parts (complicated rhythms and notes)?

 Where is the climactic point? _____

 How does the piece end? _____



You can use these questions to remember a story and the way you want to tell it.

Jihye Chang says this method helps to enjoy the whole piece and not get worried about just playing the right notes. *“I used to think more about not missing any notes, but now I am more interested in the overall architecture and what kind of story it’s going to tell..”*

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Create and Make

Create a “colorful conversation” of the music as you listen to it.

12 pitches that diminish down to 2.

Composer, Marti Epstein wanted the etude, “Hummingbirds” to sound like the harmonic language (the way the notes communicated together) was a little bit mysterious and was not grounded in one harmonic area.

The composition is a cycle of 12 pitches that repeat and then one by one are removed and at the end there is a very reduced harmonic language.

Pianist Jihye Chang described the timbre or color of the notes in Epstein's etude to be creating a tension in the way they played together.

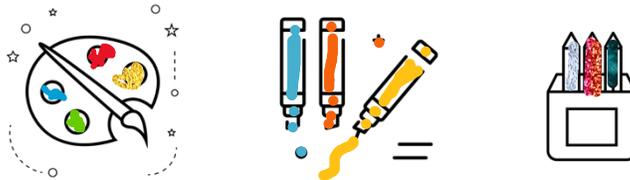
On a separate piece of paper, create an art piece to represent the 12 pitches that are communicating in a harmonic language in “Hummingbirds”.

Art prompt based on the composition:

- 12 colors are unfolding in an art piece slowly.
- There is a tension as each color displays its tone.
- The colors are slow moving and quiet.
- All 12 start out together, but in the end there are only 2.



Represent their color/timbre with an actual color using paint, markers, or color pencils.



12 Colors you are using – record them here and then create.

Try this exercise a couple times with the same piece of music or different ones.