

All about the sound

CLIL class by the Philharmonic in Szczecin

Group

Upper-Intermediate/Advanced (B2+/C1 - 10-30 students)

Duration

from 45 to 60 minutes

Aims

To learn about sound quality. To practice with authentic materials.

To master vocabulary connected with sound. To be able to discuss issues connected with sound quality and its characteristics.

Warm-up

Show on the screen the question: *What can sound be like?* Or, write it up on the board.

While the students are entering the room, give each a card cut out from the streaming cards copy. When everyone is in, tell them to find partners by only making the sound of the object from their card. Make sure they don't show the cards nor speak English while looking for their partners. When partners are matched, they should sit down together. Now give them time to discuss the question. After 2 minutes get feedback.

Lead-in 1

Tell the students that they are to hear a fragment of a trumpet piece by Modest Mussorgsky 'Pictures at an Exhibition' performed in three spaces of the Philharmonic in Szczecin. Before playing ask the students about the way the sound in each of the spaces can be described: soft, strong, loud, with echo, etc.

The task is to describe the sound in each space: symphony hall, chamber hall and lobby and match each sound bite with one of the spaces presented in the photographs in the spaces of the philharmonic worksheet. Next play the recording - <http://bit.ly/YTallaboutsound>.

KEY:

SYMPHONY HALL- 3, CHAMBER HALL - 1, LOBBY - 2

Ask the students to work with their partners and discuss the question: *Which space and sound do you like best? Why?*

Listening

Tell the students that they are to hear Norwegian conductor Rune Bergmann talking about how he experiences sound in the philharmonic halls where he works with orchestras. Ask them to circle the things he mentions. Before playing the recording pre-teach the names of instruments: viola, double bass, timpani, oboe, horn, trumpet, violin, cello, flute.

KEY:

acoustics, reverb, clarity of sound, colours of sounds, lower registers

Play the recording again and ask the students to decide whether the statements are true or false.

KEY:

a. True

(...all kinds of acoustics - from very much reverb, like a church base...)

b. False

(...just by talking like I do now, I can already feel the reverb of this hall and also feel the colour..)

c. True

(...much reverb that every this they will play will be like blumblumblum, it's very easy that it gets messy...)

d. False

(...timpanis are over there. And behind there is the double basses. They are the lower part of the orchestra...)

e. False

(...they have to work with fingers when they play the strings to be very very clear. And this is an interesting thing, they have to push the strings very hard to get this clarity..)

f. False

(...where the violins are sitting They are playing the upper parts in the higher registers... and violas are here as well and they are in the middle registers...)

CREDITS

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Image credits

P1: Bartosz Barczyk - spaces; Ilya_Repin - Mussorgski; Anna Niemiec - Rune Bergmann; vxla - timpani
P2: Kamila Kozioł - Dorota Serwa; Ivan Dimitrow - sound sys

Lead-in 2

Ask the students to share their experiences with sounds. Tell them to discuss the questions in task 4:

- How do you listen to music? What equipment do you use?
- Do you ever use smartphone apps for listening to music? Which ones?

Reading

Ask the students to read the text about sound production and recording to see if any of the things they have discussed are mentioned. If yes, which ones? Urge them to ignore the gaps for the time being.

Ask the students to read the text again and fill in the gaps with the missing words. For each gap one word can be provided.

KEY:

- 1. or, 2. than, 3. the, 4. owing / thanks, 5. of, 6. the, 7. to, 8. far, 9. such, 10. too / very**

Discussion

Ask the students to discuss the question referring to their potential future jobs - *Would you like to work with sound in the future? As who?*

Additional activity

If you want to extend this lesson to 60 minutes, you should allow more talking time, and if you want to extend this lesson beyond 60 minutes, you could practice the vocabulary via Quizlet Live with your group or do a Kahoot quiz.

Link to the international Quizlet set:

<http://bit.ly/QZLTallaboutsoud>

Link to the Quizlet Polish set:

<http://bit.ly/QZLTallaboutsoudPL>

Or you may use the Kahoot quiz as a follow-up either during a 90-minute class or a review at the beginning of the next class.

Link to the quiz: <http://bit.ly/KHTallaboutsoud>

Audio script

Rune Bergmann

Is this working? Yes, it is.

Hello! This is a conductor's selfie. I'm gonna get some interesting questions now. Are you ready?

Interviewer

When a conductor enters a hall, a concert hall, does he or she feel that this space will be good or bad for certain groups of instruments?

Rune Bergmann

As you can see, Now I am now a hall, and every hall is very different. For me as a conductor, every time I come to a new orchestra, I have to very quickly adapt into the acoustics in the hall. Some acoustics have a lot of reverb and some of them are very dry. Like if we are in a typical cinema, that's usually very dry and so this is very different. You have all kinds of acoustics - from very much reverb, like a church base to a cinema hall that is really dry.

When I come in, just by talking like I do now, I can already feel the reverb of this hall and also feel the colour. If this is a hall that has very... middle range of the notes or the higher end of the notes or the deeper, the bass section of the notes. So...

When I start conducting, I already know, that, wow, I have to really work hard with the bass group here, because there's so much reverb that every this they will play will be like blumblumblum, it's very easy that it gets messy. So I have really work to get clarity from it. And if it's a really dry place, I have to work with the orchestra to get them play more broad, and really use their bow for the strings, to get a big sound.

Interviewer

Which instruments need more work usually in eeeeer.. symphoni... symphony halls?

Rune Bergmann

So... Now we'll have a little... I'll try to walk without falling. So you can see the orchestra here. There's no people playing, but there's their chairs. And if we start at the back, we can see the timpanis are over there. And behind there is the doublebasses. They are the lower part of the orchestra. And.. sometimes if it's a lot of reverb in the hall, it might be difficult to hear the notes. It can very easily just sound like a mess. So they have to work with fingers when they play the strings to be very very clear. And this is an interesting thing, they have to push the strings very hard to get this clarity.

Then we move over here, where you can see the chairs. This is where the violins are sitting They are playing the upper parts in the higher registers, so it is usually easy to hear them. So we sometimes need to work to get their sounds softer and blend more with the deeper instruments. We saw the timpani and the double basses. On my side here, usually sits the cellos and they are in the middle, and violas are here as well and they are in the middle registers, so they are basically in the middle of everything. The warmer sound... They can produce a warm sound, very high sound. So it depends what we need to make the special, special colours. And back there usually the woodwinds sits. The flutes, the clarinets, the oboes and the horns and the trumpets. And they play very loud, they can play very soft, and also it depends on the hall. If the trumpet play very loud in a hall with a lot of reverb, it'll take 5 minutes before it comes down, so it all depends on the hall.