

# History of the World in Seven Acts

## Lesson Plan 2

### Exploring Dynamics – Loud and quiet

This lesson plan will take approximately 60 minutes to deliver.

#### TEACHER INSIGHT

Musicians need to be able to play not just loudly and quietly, but all the different volumes in between! These are called DYNAMICS, which is the musical word for VOLUME.

In printed music, the required volume is usually written in Italian.

English	Italian	Pronounced
<i>very quiet</i>	<i>pianissimo</i>	<i>pea-ah-nissimo</i>
<i>quiet</i>	<i>piano</i>	<i>pea-ah-no</i>
<i>moderately quiet</i>	<i>mezzo piano</i>	<i>mets-oh pea-ah-no</i>
<i>moderately loud</i>	<i>mezzo forte</i>	<i>mets-oh four-tay</i>
<i>loud</i>	<i>forte</i>	<i>four-tay</i>
<i>very loud</i>	<i>fortissimo</i>	<i>four-tissimo</i>

However, to save space on the printed music, abbreviations are used:

*pianissimo* - *pp*  
*piano* - *p*  
*mezzo piano* - *mp*  
*mezzo forte* - *mf*  
*forte* - *f*  
*fortissimo* - *ff*

Sometimes, composers want the musicians to move gradually from one dynamic to another and the Italian words *crescendo* and *diminuendo* are used:

English	Italian	Pronounced	Abbreviation
Get gradually louder	<i>crescendo</i>	Kre-shen-doh	cresc.
Get gradually quieter	<i>diminuendo</i>	Dim-in-you-end-oh	dim.

#### ACTIVITY 1

Watch film 4 (1 minute and 29 seconds): Exploring Dynamics

**Download the Dynamics PDF.** Display the Italian words for volume, their English meanings and abbreviations on the whiteboard.

#### ACTIVITY 2

Introduce a short rhyme, for example:

*Oh, the Grand Old Duke of York,  
He had ten thousand men.  
He marched them up to the top of the hill  
And he marched them down again.*

‘The children practise saying and clapping the rhythm of *The Grand Old Duke of York* (or another chosen rhyme).

Then, challenge them to perform it –

very quietly, (*pp*)  
quietly, (*p*)  
moderately quietly (*mp*)  
moderately loudly (*mf*)  
loudly (*f*)  
very loudly (*ff*)

# History of the World in Seven Acts

## Lesson Plan 2 continued

### Exploring Dynamics – Loud and quiet

#### ACTIVITY 3

Write the musical abbreviations on the board in a random order.

Challenge the children to re-order them, starting with the quietest and ending with the loudest:

(Answer) pp p mp mf f ff

#### ACTIVITY 4

Display the Dynamics PDF on the white board.

Game: One child secretly chooses a dynamic, and claps the rhyme at the chosen dynamic. The rest of the class guess which one has been chosen. Encourage them to use the Italian words when they guess.

N.B. Children can find it hard to make a difference between *mp* and *mf* but they like to try!

#### ACTIVITY 5

Watch film 4a (1 minute and 31 seconds) - Tom explains crescendo and diminuendo.

Then in groups, ask the children to practise the rhyme again but this time use a **crescendo** followed by a **diminuendo**.

#### ACTIVITY 6

Watch film 4b (1 minute and 6 seconds) - *Imitation* from *History of the World in Seven Acts*.

In this section, the piano, violin, flute, bass clarinet, cello, piano and bongos play a variety of different dynamics including crescendos and diminuendos.

#### EXTENSION

Ask the children to choose or invent their own rhyme.

They write down the words of the rhyme and then add musical abbreviations to show how loudly or quietly the words should be performed. Each line can be a different dynamic!

Can they add a crescendo (*cresc.*) or a diminuendo (*dim.*)?

Example:

*f* Twinkle, twinkle little star  
*mf* How I wonder what you are.  
*cresc.* Up above the world so high  
*dim.* Like a diamond in the sky.  
*p* Twinkle, twinkle little star  
*pp* How I wonder what you are.

Finally, can they perform their rhyme with accurate dynamics?



passion for creating and performing new music

[www.psappa.com](http://www.psappa.com)

Facebook: /Psappa.ensemble

Twitter: @PsappaEnsemble