

TED® Connection, Category 2
Transformative Power of Classical Music



Overview

Mensa for Kids' TED Connections are short, easy to use guides that help teachers, parents and youth use TED talks in a classroom or home setting. They are not written in a lesson plan format, but they do have a list of discussion questions, all at higher levels of thinking.

Watch the TED talk at:

www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Zander begins the talk by sharing the story of the two shoe salesmen in Africa. Describe something in today's world that one person might see as a glorious opportunity that someone else perceives as a hopeless situation.

2. Think about Zander's assertion that "It is one of the characteristics of a leader that he not doubt for one moment the capacity of the people he's leading to realize whatever he's dreaming." Do you think this places more responsibility on the leader or the people he's leading? Can you think of a leader who is/was able to do this well?

3. Listen carefully to the way that Zander plays the piano as if he were a child at different ages. Compare the sounds and the reactions of the audience to the different levels.

Age	How it sounds or looks different to me	How the audience reacts
7		
8		
9		
10		

4. Why do you think that kids stop taking music lessons? Do you think there is anything that parents or music teachers could do to encourage kids to keep playing without forcing them?

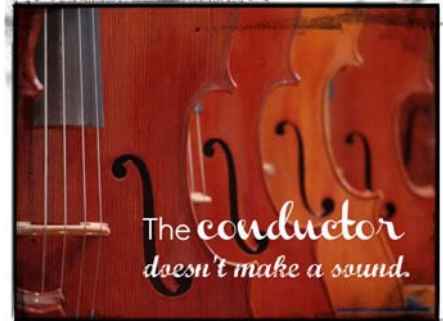
5. Watch this video of a twelve-year-old playing the piece Zander is playing www.youtube.com/watch?v=AP7KeeHNc-Y. What do you notice now that you've heard Zander explain the progression of learning?

6. Zander says that as the students became more proficient, the impulses are reduced. What is an impulse in this context? What are some other connotations of the word? Is there a connection?

7. Four different types of people were described with regard to their attitude towards classical music: those who can't imagine their lives without it, those who don't mind it, those who never listen, and those who think they are tone deaf. What group would you put yourself in? Survey at least ten other people and ask them which group they belong to. Make sure you survey different ages. What did you discover?



8. “The conductor of an orchestra doesn’t make a sound,” Zander says. “He depends, for his power, on his ability to make other people powerful.” Think of two other professions in which the person in charge has no real performance of his/her own, but rather depends upon his/her ability to make others powerful. How are these professions similar and different from music? What would be difficult about being in this position? How is it connected to his other idea of leadership and the ability to engage other people in your vision?



9. According to Zander, it is the job of the “B” to make the “C” sad. In literature, we call this a foil – a character that highlights the characteristics of another character. Why is this important in literature and music? Why have something whose main purpose is to bring attention to others? Can you think of any other disciplines in which this is the case?

10. What impact did Zander’s playing of the Chopin have on you? Can you think of three words to describe your emotions? Why does Zander clap for the audience?

DO IT:

- Listen to the complete piece of the music. It is Chopin's Prelude in E Minor, Op. 28, No. 4.
 - Compare these versions of the piece:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ef-4Bv5Ng0w
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTiEocmcMbM
www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNUOlzCeSIY
Which one do you like best? Least? Which one has stronger impulses? Which one is more "one buttock" playing?
 - This piece is on the soundtrack of the movie "The Pianist." Identify a book for which this piece of music would make an appropriate or evocative soundtrack.
 - Take the free online course from Leonard Bernstein on "The Unanswered Question" here www.academicearth.org/courses/the-unanswered-question-1973--leonard-bernsteins-masterful-lectures-on-music
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READ ABOUT IT:

- Find the sheet music of the Prelude here www.free-scores.com/download-sheet-music.php?pdf=293
 - Read a biography of Chopin here www.ourchopin.com/biography.html
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WATCH IT:

- This interesting TED talk explores the development of music over time:
www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/michael_tilson_thomas_music_and_emotion_through_time.html
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SURF IT:

- Visit Benjamin's Zander's Web site: www.benjaminzander.com
 - You can find more about learning to appreciate classical music here (if you are a little older) www.therestisnoise.com/audio/ or here www.classicsforkids.com/ (if you are a little younger).
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