



Music of Place: YOUR Place

Part One: Find Your Local Motive

Activities by Daniel Felsenfeld, New York Philharmonic Teaching Artist

For this activity, you will need:

- Paper and pencil
- A keyboard or other pitched instrument

One of the most influential and important composers of his age was Duke Ellington. He wrote music in many genres, including music for the orchestra, popular songs, and charts for his own band. And while he is associated with the beautiful flowering of arts and culture we call the Harlem Renaissance, his music thrives today, serving both to help us understand the period and thrill us with how good it is.

In his piece *Harlem*, the composer makes quite a case for his own neighborhood, immortalizing it in a little musical nugget called a **motif** (or motive). It looks like this:

Trumpet (muted)

Har - lem

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of four notes: a quarter note on G4 (B-flat), a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on G4, and a quarter note on F4. The notes are connected by a slur. Below the staff, the word "Har - lem" is written in a stylized font, with a hyphen between "Har" and "lem".

higher sounding instrument, like the flute, and perhaps change the rhythm a little . . .

Flute



Pro - spect Heights Brook - lyn _____

Here I tried syncopating the rhythm! Syncopation is when you play notes off the beat to give a more interesting (and jazzy!) feel to a motif. My friend who plays the flute tells me this fits perfectly on their instrument.

So now I have my local motive and am ready to start composing!

Now it's your turn! Where do you live?

Time for you to create your own musical motif using the name of your neighborhood!