Music of Place: YOUR Place

Part Two: Making Your Neighborhood Sing & Dance

Activities by Daniel Felsenfeld, New York Philharmonic Teaching Artist

For this activity, you will need:

- Paper and pencil
- Any instruments and noise makers you can find!

In our previous lesson called “Finding Your Local Motive,” we spent some time figuring out how to take the name of your neighborhood and turn it into a tiny tune, which we call a **motif**.

After some drafting, I settled on this:

![Flute notation]

Now that I have a musical idea — one that I developed by not only rewriting but making some musical choices regarding the instrument — so many other choices can be made. Let’s begin!

**Questions to ask yourself:**

- Are there any specific sounds in my neighborhood that might make good musical material?
In Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, for example, there always seems to be a house under renovation, with saws and hammers blazing. So how might I capture these sounds musically in my piece?

- What is the overall mood of your neighborhood?
  I always imagine where I live to be very sunny. Is there a way to make musical sunshine? Would it be major or minor? Slow or fast?

- Is there a special time of year that is memorable in your neighborhood?
  My neighborhood goes all out for my favorite holiday . . . Halloween!

- Most important, what do you think the feel of the neighborhood is?
  Now that I want to capture the memory of my neighborhood on a sunny Halloween day, I can begin to imagine the different melodies and sounds that make up my musical piece. For example, what sounds or musical ideas can I use to make my music sound spooky?

**The Final (next to last) Thing:**
After you have gathered these musical ideas, how do you translate them into actual music?
For example I might take my flute melody and create an ecstatic sounding string accompaniment to give it that “sunny” feel:
I think I’m off to a great start! Some things I like about it: the F# on the last syllable of “Brooklyn” creates a nice mystery, one that could be unravelled further down the musical line. And while I like the harmony I have chosen, I might want to vary my pattern a little to make it more interesting.

Like this:

Now that I have begun the adventure of composing, I have a lot of fun options to explore and decisions to make!

- What harmonies sound “spooky” for my Halloween neighborhood. Or how can I musically represent the colors orange and black?
- What sort of instruments should I use to imitate the hammering and sawing noises from all the construction in my neighborhood? What sort of percussion should I use?
- In what ways can I develop my local Motif into a full melody?

Great! Now it’s time for you to get started. Try writing your own musical piece about YOUR own neighborhood!