

Megan Moroney

National Standards: Pr4, Re 7-9, Cn11

Megan Moroney is one of an uncanny few artists who burst into the spotlight from complete obscurity, not because of her connections or industry backing, but because of her unmistakable musical identity. Embracing the messiness of life and love with disarming honesty, Moroney delivers universal sentiments in plain language and unforgettable lyrics. With the release of her third album, *Cloud 9*, Moroney has proven she has the talent to evolve without losing her artistic identity. Share her story with your class today!

Prepare

By a show of hands, ask the class how many of them are familiar with Megan Moroney. For those with raised hands, follow up by asking how they discovered her, as well as the first song that comes to mind when her name is mentioned. The most likely responses are “TikTok” and “Tennessee Orange,” but Moroney’s enduring success has likely provided other pathways for discovery. For those who are unfamiliar, play “Tennessee Orange” or “I’m Not Pretty” to get them acquainted with Moroney.

Next, ask students to describe her style. What kind of lyrics does she write? How does her voice sound? What about Moroney’s songwriting and performance makes her stand out?

Next, read the article as a class.

Key points in the article:

- Born in Savanna, GA, Moroney grew up immersed in music thanks to her guitarist father. While attending University of Georgia, she devoted herself to writing songs and developing her artistic identity. This dedication paid off, as her early singles demonstrated a fully developed style and a knack for conversational ease in her lyrics.
- Moroney’s career took off with the release of “Tennessee Orange,” an anthem about the small compromises of love that took social media by storm. Following on the heels of that success, her debut album *Lucky* launched her to the heights of country fame.
- While some artists can find it difficult to deliver a meaningful sophomore album, Moroney managed to keep the magic alive with *Am I Okay?*, which received glowing critical praise and a warm fan reception. Her third album, *Cloud 9*, has been hotly anticipated and features a studio recording of live fan favorite “Wedding Dress.”

Begin

Review Vocabulary words from the article below:

- **Lauded:** highly praised or admired
- **Indulgent:** Giving in to one's desires, especially in a lavish or excessive manner
- **Allegiance:** loyalty and support for a ruler, country, group, or belief
- **Triumphalism:** excessive exultation over one's success or achievements
- **Paradox:** a statement that apparently contradicts itself despite valid reasoning

Discuss

After reading the article, conduct a classroom discussion about Moroney's career and artistic evolution. Did any descriptions of Moroney's musical style resonate with the class? Do they agree with the author's analysis of why her music has broken through and earned her a massive fanbase? Are students reminded of any other young country artists when reading about Moroney's rise or listening to her music?

Next, listen to "Wedding Dress" or another song from Moroney's latest album. How does it compare to her debut album in terms of songwriting, production, and overall aesthetic? In what ways has Moroney's artistry evolved, and in what ways has it stayed true to her roots?

O&A

1. Which two early Megan Moroney singles (released before "Tennessee Orange") showcased a clear point of view and conversational writing style?
2. Why do many artists fall into the "sophomore slump"?
3. How did Moroney avoid cliches on her debut album *Lucky*?
4. Which instrument did Moroney's father play?
5. Which of Moroney's songs notably tackles comparison culture and the pressure women feel to measure themselves against one another?

Answers

1. "Wonder" and "Hair Salon"
2. Debut albums are often developed over the course of many years, but second albums are written in much shorter time frames with the additional pressure of recreating their initial success
3. By focusing on aftermath rather than drama
4. Guitar
5. "I'm Not Pretty"

Expand

The article states:

"In the broader context of country music, Megan Moroney represents a generational shift. She is part of a wave of female artists in a genre that has often simplified women's narratives. Rather

than being defined by romance alone, her songs explore self-doubt, resentment, humor, and growth.”

Who else is included in this wave of female country artists bucking industry trends? As an additional assignment, have students research other contemporary female country artists that occupy a similar place to Moroney’s in the world of country music and select one. Students will then write a report about that artist’s career and stylistic identity and compare them with Moroney. Did their chosen artist come to prominence through viral fame like Moroney, or through more traditional means? How do their voices compare? How do their lyrical styles and song subjects align or differ?

How To Play "Got To Get You Into My Life" by Earth, Wind, and Fire

National Standards: 1-9

Covers of iconic songs present a unique challenge. Sticking too close to the original version puts the new artist in direct competition with the original artist, and changing the song too drastically risks losing what made the song so great in the first place. For a case study in how to do covers the right way, look no further than Earth, Wind and Fire's cover of The Beatles' "Got to Get You Into My Life" written and recorded for the 1978 film *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Read about how they pulled it off and develop your own version with your ensemble today. It's the perfect song for a school band, "rock ensemble," and chorus to perform together!

Prepare

To start, ask the class if they are familiar with the original version of "Got to Get You Into My Life." Next, ask if the class is familiar with Earth, Wind and Fire and their cover. Ask students how they feel about cover songs. What do they think makes for a great cover? Can students think of a notable cover they enjoy? What about a cover they *don't* like?

Next, play the original version of "Got to Get You Into My Life" for the class first to introduce them to the song. Next, play the EWF cover. Encourage students to take notes on the differences between the two versions. What instruments do they hear on both versions? Is the tempo the same? Is the key the same? Is the song form the same? Next, read the article as a class.

Key points in the article:

- Covering a beloved song presents an extremely narrow window of opportunity. Drift too far from the original and fans will declare it sacrilege. Stick too close to the original and fans will say there is nothing new or interesting about your version. Ultimately, EWF's cover of "Got to Get You Into My Life" works extremely well because it sounds like a classic EWF song in its own right.
- The Beatles version of the song was an experiment in fusing pop and soul music textures, which suits EWF's style perfectly. Both versions are in the same key, and EWF's tempo is slightly faster. Both have varying degrees of 12/8 feel. Besides the horn section intros, the song form of both versions differ wildly.
- Without drastically altering the melody or lyrics of the song, EWF makes the form and arrangement of "Got to Get You Into My Life" entirely their own. By adding vamps, changing strategic chord progressions, repeating phrases, and more, EWF effectively makes the song their own without sacrificing the elements Beatles fans love.

Begin

Review Vocabulary words from the article below:

- **Meter:** the organization of strong and weak beats within a measure
- **Conception:** an idea of what something or someone is like, or a basic understanding of a situation or a principle
- **Syllable:** a unit of pronunciation having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants, forming the whole or a part of a word
- **Illuminate:** help to clarify or explain
- **Foundational:** denoting an underlying basis or principle; fundamental

Discuss

After reading the article, conduct a classroom discussion comparing their notes about “Got to Get You Into My Life” with the article’s analysis. Did their observations match the author’s assessments of the song? Did the author point out any important elements that students missed on their initial listen? Do they agree with the author’s assessment of why the cover works so well?

Next, conduct a class brainstorm about how to adapt “Got to Get You Into My Life” to their lineup of instruments. Both the Beatles and EWF versions feature guitar, bass, drums, and horns, and EWF incorporates a Fender Rhodes keyboard part. Take stock of which instruments your band has and which they don’t. If all instruments are present, the choice is simple. If not, some creativity will be required. If a full horn line isn’t available, could one or more horns be substituted by synth, electric guitar, or some other instrument? Next, decide how closely your group wants to stick to the song form (either the original or EWF version). Which version speaks to them? Could a hybrid of both versions be constructed? Make these decisions with your class before the first rehearsal.

O&A

1. What year was Earth, Wind, and Fire’s version of “Got to Get You Into My Life” recorded?
2. Which section of the song does Earth, Wind, and Fire change the chord progression?
3. Which version of “Got to Get You Into My Life” has a faster tempo?
4. The Beatles sing the chorus line once. How many times do Earth, Wind, and Fire sing it?
5. What is one potential reason why Earth, Wind, and Fire’s cover runs so much longer than the original song?

Answers

1. 1978
2. The turnaround before the second verse
3. Earth, Wind and Fire’s version (141 vs Beatles’ 136)

4. Twice
5. "In the intervening years, the acceptable length of a radio single increased dramatically, and a 2:30 single would have been considered too short in 1978"

Expand

If teaching this song to an ensemble, or a hybrid ensemble...

Before the next meeting of the ensemble, have students learn their individual parts as decided in the earlier brainstorm session. At the beginning of the first rehearsal, listen to "Got to Get You Into My Life" as a class one more time before attempting to play it. Discuss the form and arrangement of the song and any changes agreed upon in the brainstorm session.

Next, set up instruments and play the song. Stop after each play-through of the song to discuss any changes that need to be made and clear up any questions the class may have. Once the ensemble is comfortable with the song and has successfully played it multiple times, record one final play-through (a phone camera recording will do just fine).

After rehearsal, make the video accessible to students and have them watch it before the next meeting. Start the next rehearsal by watching the video together and having a class discussion. How does the song feel overall? Is the arrangement effective? Does the band nail the tempo and dynamics of the song? Does it feel like anything is missing? If so, discuss how to adapt. Repeat this process for as many rehearsals as it takes to nail the tune!

Mastering Odd Meters

National Standards: 1-9

For most Western musicians, it is possible to practice, play, and enjoy music for an entire lifetime without stepping outside the boundaries of 4/4 or 3/4 time. However, there is an entire world of odd meters out there, and they aren't just for jazz cats and European folk musicians. Exploring the ways various cultures quantify and internalize divisions of time can help take odd meters from a cerebral exercise to a grooving good time. Help your students step outside of common time today!

Prepare

To prepare for the concepts outlined in the article, review the basic concepts of meter and time signatures. Make sure students are comfortable with 4/4, 3/4 and 6/8 as a starting point.

Conduct a classroom discussion. Ask the class how often they encounter songs in odd meters. Can anyone in class name a song in an odd meter? Ask them to describe the feel of the song. Did it feel natural and danceable, or did they notice the odd time right away? Ask if anyone in class feels comfortable playing in odd meters. If not, why do they find it challenging?

After discussing, read the article as a class.

Key points in the article:

- The conception of meter in Western music comes from forms of poetry that require specific syllable counts to align with an accent pattern. Most Western music revolves around groupings of three or four beats, all of which add up to even numbers in the end. Our ears have been programmed over time to anticipate a certain number of beats in a measure, which is why odd meters can be so jarring when we encounter them.
- One need not venture far from the West to find heavy usage of odd meters. While we tend to think of odd meters as complex and musically impressive, many forms of traditional folk music use them as effortlessly as we might use 4/4. Folk music from Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans makes prolific use of 9/4, 7/8, 9/8, and other meters that don't fall naturally on Western ears.
- Rather than counting each individual, evenly-spaced beat, many musical cultures break groupings of 5, 7, 9, 11, or more into combinations of "short" and "long" beats. In practice, a "short" block can be counted as equivalent to two beats and a "long" block as three.

Begin

Review Vocabulary words from the article below:

- **Timely:** done or occurring at a favorable or useful time; opportune
- **Rendition:** a performance or interpretation, especially of a dramatic role or piece of music
- **Exception:** a person or thing that is excluded from a general statement or does not follow a rule
- **Implied:** suggested but not directly expressed; implicit
- **Vamp:** a repeating musical figure or accompaniment

Discuss

While reading the article together, stop at each example and allow students to work through it individually or in small groups. Allow volunteers to demonstrate the example for the class. If they perform the example correctly, allow the rest of the class to join in as a group. Playing the examples together in real time will help the group absorb the feel. Encourage students to try internalizing the feel in terms of “short” and “long” blocks before trying to count the beats within.

Afterwards, discuss the article and examples as a class. How did they find the experience? Were they able to internalize the odd meter groove and follow it naturally, or were they counting for dear life? Were they able to think in short and long beats, or was the concept simply too foreign for now? Does this change how they see the concept of rhythm?

Q&A

1. While learning to use “short” and “long” blocks, what is more important than counting and doing the math?
2. In Balkan music: How many beats is a “short” block equivalent to? A “long” block?
3. If our tempo is the speed at which we “paint” a musical picture with our melodies, harmonies, and rhythms, what is our meter?
4. In Balkan countries like Bulgaria and North Macedonia, how is the meter of 11/8 interpreted?
5. Which western bands listed in the article have incorporated odd meters?

Answers

1. Developing your sense of what these blocks feel like to play
2. Two beats for short, three beats for long
3. The size and shape of our brush
4. "short-short-long-short-short"
5. Dave Brubeck, Rush, Snarky Puppy

Expand

For a research assignment/presentation:

Have students research folk songs from one of the countries or regions listed in the article and pick one in an odd meter. Students will write a short report on the history and cultural relevance of the song. Then, students will attempt to identify the time signature and count it in “short” and “long” beats, clapping the rhythm (or, for bonus points, playing along with it on their instrument of choice!).

Students will then present their findings in the following order:

- Play an excerpt of a recording of the song
- Give a verbal presentation about the history and cultural significance of the song
- Demonstrate the count of the song
- Play the recording again and lead the class in clapping along to the short/long beat pattern

"Best Music Schools"

National Standards: 10-11

In Tune's biannual "Best Music Schools" report is back again with more insights on how students can choose their "best-fit" music program. This edition tackles the topics of evaluating a prospective school's faculty and the ins and outs of double majoring. Students have more information about college at their fingertips than ever before, so directing their search properly is crucial. Share these tips and strategies with your college-bound musicians today!

Prepare

To start the lesson, by a show of hands, ask if anyone in class plans to study music in college. Do they have a specific major in mind, or are they considering multiple options? Have they considered a potential double major?

What do students think is important to know about a prospective college music program? Have they given any thought to the faculty at these schools? How would they go about evaluating faculty members? How would they know if they were compatible with the faculty at a prospective program?

After discussing, read the article as a class.

Key points in the article:

- While a school's reputation and prestige might be a big draw for young musicians, the name on the sweatshirt is much less important than the day-to-day learning experience. A famous conservatory might be great for a prodigious cellist, but an aspiring pop songwriter will likely find limited value in the same program.
- One of the most crucial aspects of a student's learning experience at any school is their compatibility with the faculty there. Beyond reading faculty bios and resumes, students can often find opportunities to interact with faculty at their program of choice before committing. Many schools offer trial lessons with faculty members or educational camps in the summer, all of which allow students to interact with faculty and gauge their compatibility.
- The reality for modern musicians is that they will likely need a wide range of skills and income streams to make a living. The rise of the "multi-hyphenate" musician has forced college music programs to follow suit. With an array of interdisciplinary learning opportunities, including double majoring, leading music programs take special care to offer comprehensive, real-world-ready educational experiences.

Begin

Review vocabulary words from the article below:

- **Validation:** the feeling that other people approve of and accept you
- **Trajectory:** The path an object takes as it moves
- **Endowment:** funds or assets donated to universities to provide ongoing financial support
- **Rapport:** a good understanding of someone and an ability to communicate well with them
- **Credentials:** proof of qualification, competence, or authority

Discuss

After reading the article, ask the class if any of the information or advice in the article resonated with them. Had it occurred to them to pursue interactions with the faculty at their prospective college programs before deciding? Likewise, had they considered that the program of their choice might offer the opportunity for double majors, multiple concentrations in the same degree, or informal learning pathways that provide experience in other disciplines without the commitment of a full major or minor? Given this information, what might students do differently in their search going forward?

Q&A

1. While instructor résumés and credentials are essential, what else should students consider in their potential faculty?
2. In the study conducted by Making Music and the Association of British Orchestras (ABO), what percentage of adults working in STEM reported increased perseverance due to their musical studies?
3. What is the difference between a double major and a dual degree?
4. A bio often lists where a professor went to school and what awards they have won ("rear-view mirror" information). What else should students know about their professors?
5. What
6. What real-world tactic is essential for surviving two majors without burning out?

Answers

1. Teaching philosophy, accessibility, and commitment to student development
2. 89%
3. A double major typically involves earning a single degree in two disciplines, while a dual degree results in two separate credentials
4. What they are doing now—how engaged a program's faculty are in the music and entertainment industry today
5. Time management

Expand

For an assignment, have students make a list of five music programs they think might be a good fit for their interests. Once the list is completed, students will evaluate the faculty listed on the school's website purely from the information available in their bios, noting significant achievements and strengths of the professors/instructors they would most likely be studying with. Are these professors actively engaged in performance or music industry activities? Then, students will make a list of potential opportunities each school offers for prospective students to interact with faculty. Do they offer trial lessons or summer camps? Do faculty members maintain an active online presence? Are there opportunities to see faculty perform? Students will then organize their findings into a report.