

Teacher Resource: Examples of Figurative Language used by Music Writers

Examples to use when helping students understand the concept of writing about music with figurative language.

Dreams of Rain by Alan Fletcher

*"The new work on the opening concert was "Dreams of Rain," a piano trio by Alan Fletcher... (who) said the music was inspired by climate change and its consequences...As the title suggests, the work is a response to the drought, not a depiction of it, and indeed, "Dreams of Rain" opens with an **explosive** chord, followed by rapid, repeating **violin arpeggios that suggest the longed-for rain**, rather than the drought. Those arpeggios crop up throughout the piece, in the piano and cello lines as well, surrounding more **introspective and appealingly tactile passages** that evoke anticipation and, at times, tension. The work's ending is oddly inconclusive, but **dreams** often are..."¹*

Piano Concerto No. 5 by Ludwig van Beethoven

In program notes for a San Francisco Symphony Orchestra performance of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, "The Emperor," the eminent music writer, **Michael Steinberg**, described the opening:

*"Beethoven...introduces the piano sooner than an audience of 200 years ago expected to hear it—and not with a lyric or thematic statement, but in a series of flourishes. The orchestra offers three sonorous chords, the piano responding to each with **fountains and cascades of broken chords, trills, and scales**. Each of the three "**fountains**" produces new pianistic possibilities..."²*

Fanfare Ritmico by Jennifer Higdon

*"**Surging, clipped passages punctuate, intersect and overlap** each other in this five-minute work, which, as its title suggests, is infused with a **propulsive rhythmic drive fueled by** the piano and an array of drums."³*

¹ Review by Allan Kozinn in the Portland Press Herald, <http://www.pressherald.com/2015/08/16/concert-review-classics-new-works-create-compelling-mix-for-portland-chamber-music-festival/>

² <http://www.sfsymphony.org/Watch-Listen-Learn/Read-Program-Notes/Program-Notes/BEETHOVEN-Concerto-No-5-in-E-flat-major-for-Piano.aspx>

³ Denver Post Quoted on Jennifer Higdon's website, <http://jenniferhigdon.com/orchestralreviews.html#fanfareritmico>