

# Soundtracks for... Welcoming

by Mark McKergow

One of the easiest ways to include music in classroom lessons is to use it before the lesson starts. This sets the mood of the room and lets pupils know that something interesting is about to happen.

In my experience, good welcoming music is moderately bright and optimistic. The emotion of the music should be positive and happy - no dreary dirges please! You can use lots of different genres here - classical and world music are two of my favourites. This is also one of the times when pop music is useful; it is designed to attract the listener's attention and is therefore not the best background to other classroom activities. Here, it can set an upbeat note.

You may find that baroque and classical music can offer a good combination of pace (not too fast, not too slow) and emotion. Some people find that teens respond better to classical music once they have become familiar with your using it in other ways during lessons. A variety of styles can be useful.

Some of my own collection of welcoming music includes:

- **Vivaldi** - The Four Seasons and other concertos

- **Bach** - Brandenburg Concertos
- **Mozart** - overtures and faster movements from symphonies and concertos - 'Mozart Effect Volume 1' is a good collection
- **'Classical Rhythms'** - an excellent collection of uptempo baroque music from the LIND institute collection
- **The Bhundu Boys** - True Jit album
- **Penguin Café Orchestra** - faster tunes like Scherzo and Trio from the Union Café album

You can also use the welcoming music to link to the session topic - this might relate to a period or context (history or geography), as well as other linguistic, TV and film connections. One way to move into the lesson proper is to increase volume for a moment or two, and then fade out and smoothly begin to speak. Pupils are familiar with this convention from TV, and the louder music can create a buzz of excitement and anticipation.

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Mark McKergow is a speaker, author and learning consultant. His website [www.mckergow.com](http://www.mckergow.com) contains more information and research on music and learning, as well as links to CD, book and web sources.

