

**Make decisions about the style of my pieces, thinking about, for instance: dynamics, tempi and articulation.**

And this is important because?

Well, for all sorts of reasons, actually

Like?

OK. Why do folk write great music?

Make money?

Nah – much easier ways to do that... Money is necessary, but it's not why composers actually start writing.

Fame?

Nice to have, but that's what you get FROM writing well...

Got something to say?

Yup. And really caring about people LISTENING to it. And you get your message over by being passionate about it.

And perhaps the best way to communicate your passion, is by using EMOTION

Emotions like?

All of them! Joy or Sadness. Anger or Calm. Struggle or Acceptance. Beauty or Ugliness.

Beauty isn't an Emotion...

But your response to it is....

Yeah; Right; OK..

So, "Music is the sound that Emotions make"?

....wish **I'd** thought of that.

You can't communicate all that emotion just through playing music. But you CAN, by **Performing** it.

And **performing** involves decisions around [e.g.] how fast or slow it should go, about the way in which you produce the sounds, how loud or soft it is, and the way in which you move from loud to soft, and back.



The speed (Tempo, pl. *Tempi*) of a piece is one of the key issues in setting up mood, or emotion. We're humans, we know this. When we're excited, we'll talk *quickly*. If we're depressed, then "well....you know....I just....couldn't...even begin...to get...up.

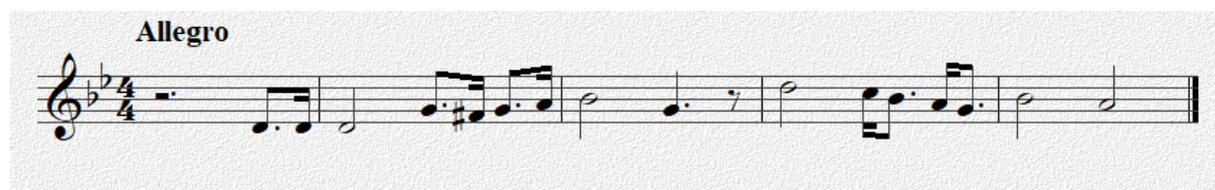
Most times, composers will give a major hint. You'll often see = 60 or = 120 at the start of a piece. The number relates to the number of beats per minute. 120 beats per minute = 2 beats per second. **Check your watch, click your fingers**

**twice per second.** Get your feet moving, and it feels like a brisk walk. **132 beats** a minute is fast marching pace for an army going into battle. [Personally, I'd do 132 beats a minute in the run-up to a battle, but I'd be going in the other direction]. **90 beats** per minute is a gentle stroll. **45 beats** is a slow trudge – the pace you'd be doing in a funeral march. Oddly enough, it's also about the pace at which brides walk up the aisle. Can't think why.

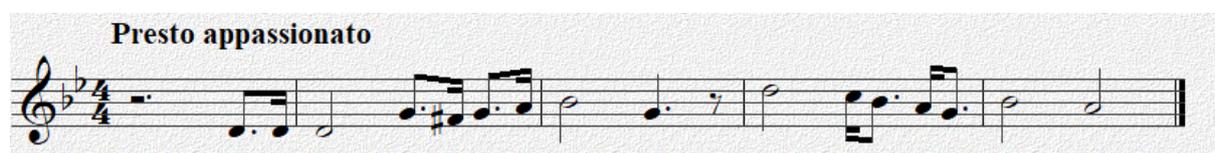
Try this... Grab your instrument, and play the following. First play it as if you were taking a gentle stroll through a field full of flowers – this will probably work out at 90 or so beats per minute.



Ok. Wasn't that nice? Now imagine that you're heading for a Big Mac at lunch-break. Don't know why you'd want to, but apparently folk do. Or a Vegan burger and a smoothie, if that floats your boat. Whatever; you're a bit peckish but not starving, so it'd be a brisk 120 bpm.



That did the job – filled a hole. But **Now**, you realise that you've been sitting chatting for too long, and you need to get back to school. Pronto! It's Chemistry (Maths / R.E – insert least liked lesson of your choice) and it's Mr(s) Tchgsuryteaski's lesson, and (s)he's terrifying. You can't run (too full of [your choice of comestible]), but by heck, you're scared and moving quickly... **GO! - QUICKLY!!**



AHHH! Didn't make it. On report, and you're on the way to the Head-teachers office. [To make this really effective, you've also travelled back 40 years in time, and in THOSE days, Head teachers didn't just look disappointed in you – they also had canes hanging behind the door...] You can't run, and you can't hide. You're going, but your heart is in your boots, and your legs are dragging... Think funeral. Yours...



Which of those was “Right”?

ANSWER - It depends on what the composer was intending to communicate. ANY of those tempi could work – but this is what the composer actually meant to say.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmm2k4fRUO4> (and SKIP the ad...)

You will have noticed (Obv.) that each of the examples was different. Not the notes, but in the words written at the start. These instructions from the composer will often be a further clue to the intention behind the piece. They aren't as precise as a metronome mark, (which isn't always used) but will almost always relate to the intended speed.

In the above examples you had

- **Andante Sostenuto** (Andante = at a walking pace, Sostenuto = Sustained),
- **Allegro** (Quick / Brisk / Lively / Bright),
- **Presto Appassionato** (Quickly – with Passion) and
- Beethoven's own marking, “**Adagio Assai**” (Adagio = slow, Assai = rather / somewhat).

[I happen to think that the performance on You-tube is too slow. It feels “Adagissimo”, or “Grave”, and it makes that movement drag on forever...(Yawn, stretch)]

### But here's the next point...

None of the above descriptions relate **purely** to the speed. There's nearly always another hint in there about the character of the piece, which should lead a performer to think about the **Articulation** and the **Dynamics** needed to help convey the emotion.

To make this work, we need to think about how we use the bow to create different types of sound.

**Andante c.**  = 90, and **Sostenuto** implies **long smooth bow strokes**, with the opening note of each phrase having a gentle start. In spoken terms, think of a sentence beginning with the word “Softly”...You'd probably start the phrase with a slurred “Up” bow. The bowing arm will be relaxed and flowing and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> minims will have a “Bloom” to them – if you can, intensify the vibrato a bit...



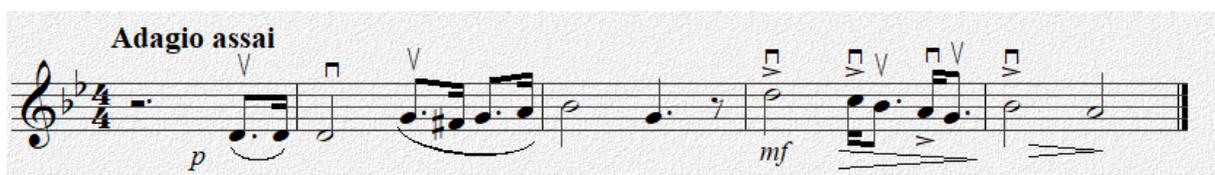
**Allegro's**  = 120 “briskness” implies a much more positive start to the opening note. There’s a need to create energy in the sound, hence there’s a forte dynamic, so we’ll be using a fair bit of arm weight, with the bow relatively close to the bridge to create a clear and crisp sound. With a touch of pressure through your right hand index finger, you’d get a definite “Click” as the note Kicks into life with a much faster bow stroke. You’d definitely start with a Down bow, and there might be a slight lift at the end of it so that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> notes have a distinct “TA-DAH”. You can hear the sound of heels clicking off the paving slabs.



**Presto**  = 135 and **Appassionato**, means that we need to communicate urgency and a bit of fear, in this case. We’ll need the bow close to the heel, for maximum “bite”, and both the crescendo to the fortissimo accentuated minim, and the series of stabbing accents in the 2<sup>nd</sup> part are really important to emphasise. We’ll need to do a rapid re-take of the bow from the top “D” to make that happen, but we’ll still have to sustain the “D” for as long as possible. Hard work, this passion. Even harder to spell it correctly - oops...



And finally, more in line with what Beethoven intended – the Funeral March from the “Eroica” symphony. At **Adagio assai**,  = 60 there’s going to be an inexorable heavy legged tread. The dynamic is muted. The accents (not Beethoven’s markings) are within this quieter range, but will sound like stifled cries of sorrow – you’ll use less arm weight than in the Presto – just a bit of bow speed, and the fading diminuendo adds to the sense of sadness.



### A final philosophical point. Or two. Or more.



This chap – Beethoven – wrote the Eroica symphony more than 200 years ago. The emotions [in this part of the symphony – sadness and resignation in the face of mortality] – are the same for us now, as they were for people then. He is relying on us to transmit these [and many other] emotions over the centuries.

**But to transmit emotions authentically, we not only have to have sufficient musical understanding and technical knowledge to do it, we also have to have the empathy to understand them, and the confidence to bring them over through our performances.**