



PRIORITIZING CREATIVE MUSICAL ACTIVITIES IN INSTRUMENTAL REHEARSALS

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The majority of creative musical activities “are in the areas of improvisation and composition.”

(Running, 2008, p. 43)

Improvising

The spontaneous creation of original, meaningful musical ideas (without revision) in the moment of performance.

(Azzara, 2002; Azzara & Snell, 2016; Biasutti, 2015; Grasso et al., 2019; Ng, 2019; Piazza, 2023; Pressing 1988)

Composing

The discontinuous process of creating and refining original, meaningful musical ideas with the opportunity to reflect and revise.

(Burnard & Younker, 2008; Doiron, 2019; Piazza, 2023; Piazza & Talbot, 2019)

Most music teachers report they value improvising and composing.

(Fairfield, 2010; Gruenhagen & Whitcomb, 2014; Koops, 2009; Snell, 2012)

Few band directors offer regular instruction in composition and improvisation.

Survey of 243 New York State high school band directors
(Schopp, 2006, p. 169)

Creative musical activities (CMAs), including composition and improvisation, are rarely included in the public school music curriculum. Many music teachers perceive numerous obstacles preventing them from including these activities. The National Core Arts Standards call for all students to “conceive and develop new artistic ideas and work.”

(National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2016)

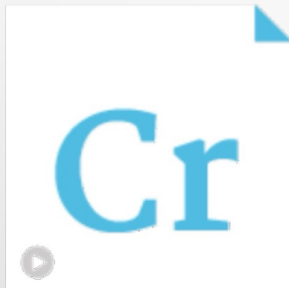
Overwhelmingly, teachers perceived a lack of class time to be the biggest obstacle to the inclusion of CMAs in music curricula.

Survey of 252 New York State music teachers
(Piazza, 2018, p. 19)

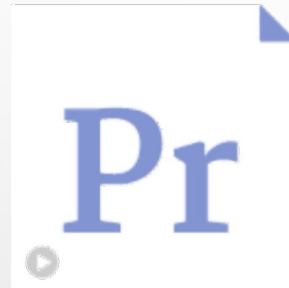
“Will it not mean more in [a student’s] development to be able to create one lovely composition than to know accurately the details of all that Chopin ever wrote?”

(Coleman, 1922, p. 179)

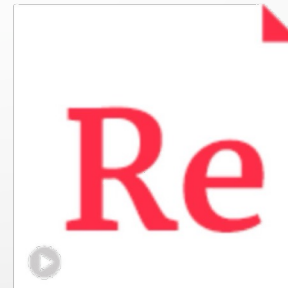
MUSIC STANDARDS



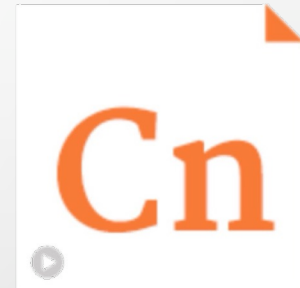
Creating



**Performing/
Presenting/
Producing**



Responding



Connecting

Reasons for inclusion are typically expressed in terms of benefits to students, and reasons for exclusion are conveyed as challenges or obstacles to the teacher.

(Piazza, 2023, p. 26)

SO... HOW?

Things to think about.

Teachers create a “comfortable,
non-threatening environment...
[by] fostering an atmosphere of
acceptance and lack of criticism.”

(Schopp, 2006, p. 148)

Language

1. Listen
2. Speak
(Mimic / Create)
3. Think & Predict
4. Read
5. Write

Music

1. Listen
2. Perform
(Rote / Improvise)
3. Audiate & Anticipate
4. Read
5. Notate / Compose

(Gordon, 2012)

Limits “provide us with something
to work with and against.”

(Nachmanovich, 1990, p. 81)

Creative frameworks that provide choice and impose limits yield “the most creative composition-performance based products.”

(Priest, 1997, p. 133)

“Students with less experience
may benefit from strategies
that have more parameters.”

(Farrell, 2018, p. 180)

GROUPING PRACTICES

Full Ensemble

- During warm-up time
- Embedded throughout rehearsal
- Improvisation instruction

Small Group

- Fixed or flexible
- Teacher or student selected
- Homogenous or heterogenous
- Beginning composition

Individual

- Separate from ensemble
- Group, concurrent
- At home for assignment
- Assessment

MUSIC TECHNOLOGY

Music technology is often used to teach composition.

- Composing individually on laptops in the back of the room, separate from ensemble (Dammers, 2007)
- *Garageband* and MIDI keyboard in adjacent room (Randles, 2010)
- Notate compositions at home with free, online software program (Xydas, 2014)

NOTATION

Notation is rarely included in studies of improvisation.

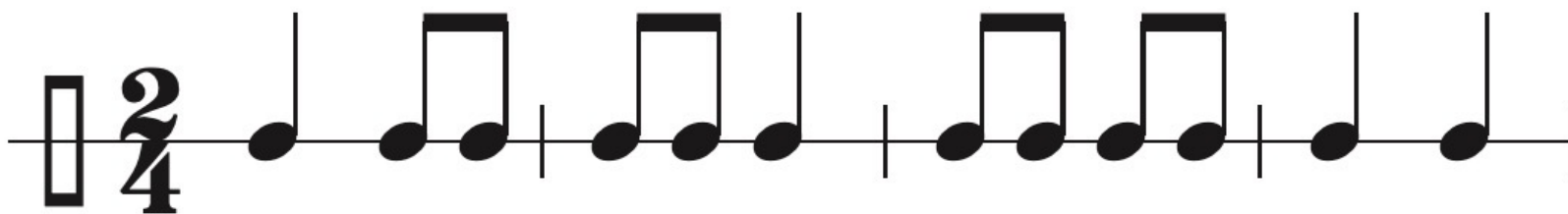
- Difficulty with notation yielded a negative effect (Caslor, 2010)
- Immediate expression through graphic notation (Menard, 2015)
- Notation provides bridge to reflection and revision (Stoltzfus, 2005)

Notation may inhibit creativity.

- Notation is a separate skill from composition (Koops, 2009)
- Discourages exploration (Hopkins, 2019)

NOW... WHAT?

You are what you eat



13.



Melody



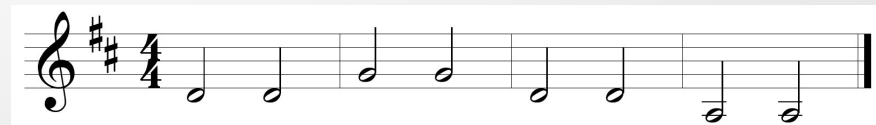
Bass



Guide tone lines



Rhythmic improvising



Big beat improvising

Passing/neighbor tones

Developing Musicianship Through Improvisation

Azzara & Grunow (2006, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2019)

RED	sol	la	sol	sol
-----	-----	----	-----	-----

YELLOW	mi	fa	mi	re
--------	----	----	----	----

BLUE	do	do	do	ti
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EXAMPLES

It can be done!

TWINKLE VARIATION




- Alex – age 4.5

A musical score for a piece titled 'Twinkle Variation'. It consists of three staves of music, all in treble clef, with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is simple and repetitive, featuring a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, followed by a descending sequence: B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. The first staff contains the first four measures, the second staff contains the next four measures, and the third staff contains the final four measures, ending with a double bar line.

NOTATION

Directions for Part I

1. Play the first four measures of Exercises 1 & 2.
2. Improvise an ending (*consequent phrase*) that fits with the first half (*antecedent phrase*).
3. Compose the consequent phrase.
4. Use only quarter notes and paired eighth notes. 

Exercise 1:



Exercise 2:



CREATING HARMONY

- Eli – age 9.5

13.

Eli

The image displays two staves of musical notation. Both staves are in the treble clef, key of D major (one sharp), and 4/4 time signature. The top staff, labeled '13.', contains a melody of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6. The bottom staff, labeled 'Eli', contains a melody of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6. Both staves end with a double bar line and repeat dots.

WHAT NEXT?

QUESTIONS
COMMENTS

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THANK YOU



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