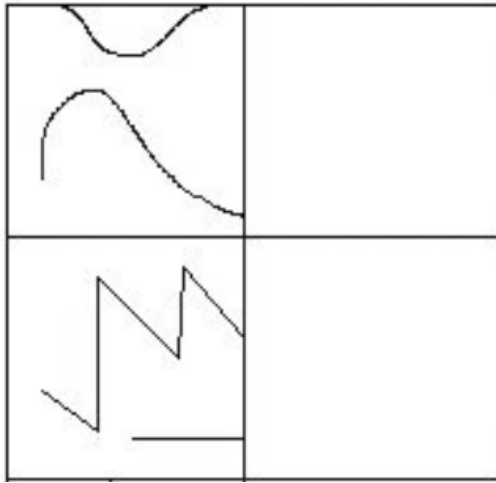


COACHING YOUNG COMPOSERS...TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Utah Music Teachers Association Conference 2022

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“The more technical our world becomes, the more essential it is that we see the whole of life as an art form, protecting the creative nature of mankind from an exclusively symbiotic existence with electronics.”—Mildred Portney Chase, Improvisation. Berkeley: Creative Arts Book Co., 1988, p. 9.

“Few of us could disagree that today’s students must be taught the necessary skills to function in an increasingly complex, conceptual, and globalized 21st-century society and economy. Students have to acquire so-called “habits of mind” that will enable them to develop the skills of creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving. In addition, they must be able to communicate effectively, collaborate with people different from themselves, exercise

initiative, and be self-directed. Consider the list of skills cited above. Aren’t these 21st-century skills, in reality, arts skills?” -- Bruce Taylor, Director of Education, Washington National Opera

TODAY’S QUESTIONS

- How do I develop and foster a culture of creativity and composition in my studio?
- How are composition lessons different from traditional music lessons?
- What kinds of prompts can I offer to the composition process started?
- What kind of specific feedback can I offer to students’ existing compositions?

SETTING UP A CREATIVE MINDSET CULTURE

- Non-creativity as a learned behavior
- Creativity and the Growth Mindset
 - “The whole self-esteem movement taught us erroneously that praising intelligence, talent, and abilities would foster self-confidence and everything that would follow. But we’ve found it backfires. People who are praised for talent now worry about doing the next thing, taking on the hard task, not looking talented, and tarnishing that reputation for brilliance. Instead, they’ll stick to their comfort zone and get defensive when they hit setbacks. So what should we praise? The effort, the strategies, the persistence, and the resilience to bounce back when things go wrong. We need to convey the value of process, and not just a successful outcome.” - Carol Dweck, “Mindset: The New Psychology of Success”

OUR ROLES AS COMPOSITION COACHES

- *Educatus*: “to draw forth, bring out”
- Teachers can help students develop confidence, creativity, and craftsmanship in composition through
 - Inspiration
 - Guidance
 - Feedback
 - Support
 - Building spaces for creativity (camps, group classes, lessons, recitals, competitions)

TOOLS TO BEGIN

- Computer notation and playback software
 - Software Free (Finale Notepad, Avid, MuseScore, Noteflight, Forte, etc.)
 - Finale (<http://www.finalemusic.com>)
 - PrintMusic (\$99)
 - Finale (\$239)
 - Sibelius (<http://www.sibelius.com>)
 - Sibelius First (\$129)
 - Sibelius Professional (\$299)
- Dedicated time
- A definable goal (competitions, recitals, collaborations)

THE PROCESS

- Improvise – integrate with music concepts being learned
- Archive & select best ideas
- Notate – help if needed
- Develop (unity vs. variety)
- Finalize score, produce playback track, and perform (if needed)

COMPOSITION PROMPTS

- Black Key Pieces
- Five-Finger Patterns
- Ostinatos
- Notate a given lyric (<https://www.myfunpianostudio.com/>)



Scale _____ Thumb on _____

What are 3 things you're thankful for? **1** _____ **2** _____ **3** _____

Write finger numbers on the leaves to compose your song.



I am thank- ful for the/my _____
..1



for the/my _____ and for the/my _____
..2 ..3

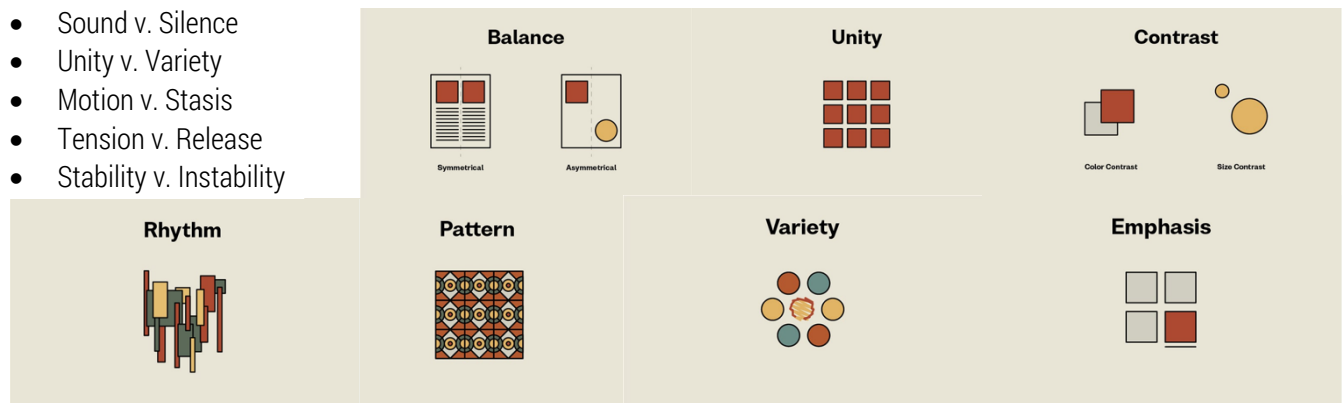
- Re-arrange an existing piece
- Finish a given phrase

THE COMPOSITION LESSON

- Students bring new music to each lesson (e-mail, if possible)
- Ask questions, offer suggestions (what if...?) about the following
 - Rhythm (metric invention)
 - Melody (horizontal materials)
 - Harmony (vertical language)
 - Timbre (tone color, dynamic control, orchestration)
 - Form (structural coherence, motivic manipulation)

TAKING IDEAS FROM PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

- Sound v. Silence
- Unity v. Variety
- Motion v. Stasis
- Tension v. Release
- Stability v. Instability



MUSIC ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER

- Rhythm (Metric Invention)
- Melody (Horizontal Materials)
- Harmony (Vertical Language)
- Timbre (Tone Color, Dynamic Control, Orchestration)
- Form/Structure (Formal Coherence, Motivic Manipulation)

LOOKING FOR STRENGTHS

- Memorable melodies
- Catchy rhythms
- Fun titles
- Great storytelling




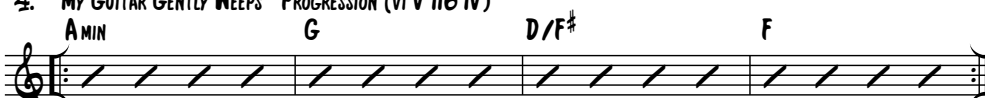
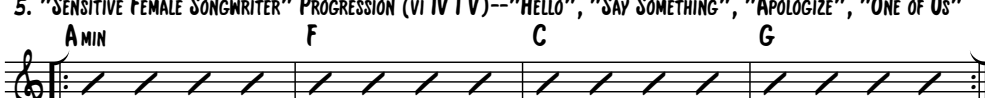

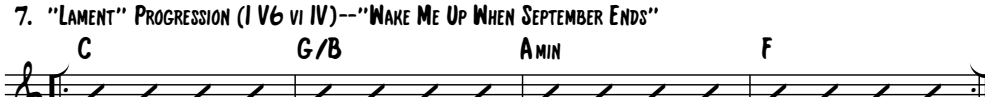
PROVIDING RECOMMENDATIONS

- More development of ideas
- More exploration of harmonies (chromatic)
- Areas that need more unity or more variety (dynamics, range, texture, rhythmic embellishment, etc.)
- Overall structure/climax (analogy of three-act movies)
- Transitions (smudging)

GETTING READY TO SUBMIT COMPOSITIONS

- Efficient, attractive layout
- Expression markings
- Clarity of directions, notation
- Audio
- Contest application instructions

SOME FAMOUS CHORD PROGRESSIONS

1. "DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'" PROGRESSION (I V VI IV)--"LET IT BE", "I'M YOURS", "PAPARAZZI", "LET IT GO"

2. 50s PROGRESSION (I VI IV V)--"FRIDAY", "BABY", "STAND BY ME", "I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU"

3. DESCENDING FLAMENCO PROGRESSION (VI V IV III)--"CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'", "GOOD VIBRATIONS", "HAPPY TOGETHER"

4. "MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS" PROGRESSION (VI V II6 IV)

5. "SENSITIVE FEMALE SONGWRITER" PROGRESSION (VI IV I V)--"HELLO", "SAY SOMETHING", "APOLOGIZE", "ONE OF US"

6. "VIVA LA VIDA" PROGRESSION (IV V I VI)

7. "LAMENT" PROGRESSION (I V6 VI IV)--"WAKE ME UP WHEN SEPTEMBER ENDS"


MY FAVORITE COMPOSER QUOTES

- Claude Debussy: "Works of art make rules; rules do not make works of art."
- Georg Frideric Handel: "I should be sorry if I only entertained them. I wish to make them better."
- Leonard Bernstein: "To achieve great things, two things are needed; a plan, and not quite enough time."
- Johannes Brahms: "Without craftsmanship, inspiration is a mere reed shaken in the wind."
- Ludwig van Beethoven: "Don't only practice your art, but force your way into its secrets."
- Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: "Inspiration is a guest that does not willingly visit the lazy."
- Jean Sibelius: "Music begins where the possibilities of language end."
- Gustav Mahler: "I am hitting my head against the walls, but the walls are giving way."
- George Gershwin: "I frequently hear music in the heart of noise."
- Igor Stravinsky: "Lesser artists borrow, great artists steal."
- J.S. Bach: "I was obliged to be industrious. Whoever is equally industrious will succeed equally well."

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge." – Albert Einstein