Listening, Composing, and Performing: Teaching students to think like a musician

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Session Description
One goal of music education is to teach students how to think like musicians. Curriculum developed with this goal in mind will have students listening, composing, and performing. This session outlines how teachers can integrate listening, composing, and performing activities into their curriculum through the use of technology. Participants will leave with an understanding of how to develop curriculum that offers multiple entry points to thinking like a musician through listening, composing, and performing activities.

Curriculum Outline
The curriculum outlined on this handout encompasses an entire unit of study in the Beginning Guitar and Composition course at Chicago Bulls College Prep. The unit focuses on teaching students about the musical concepts of scales and melody, the interrelation between these two when composing, and, specifically, the pentatonic scale. The entire unit takes one month to complete.

Technology Supporting the Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LISTENING</th>
<th>COMPOSING</th>
<th>PERFORMING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Audio for Listening Exercises are uploaded onto Google Classroom</td>
<td>- SoundTrap is a Digital Audio Workstation that is accessible from anywhere there is internet. All data in SoundTrap lives in the cloud.</td>
<td>- Student performances are recorded using a Yeti microphone and Audacity software. Audacity is free to download and allows for recordings to be quickly exported into MP3s. *This is also the setup I use to record any Listening Exercises that I create</td>
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<td>- Types of audio include: podcasts (Song Exploder, Dissect, Switched on Pop, Déjà Vu, among others), recordings of exercises created by me, student recordings, and professionally produced songs.</td>
<td>- Students work on SoundTrap using chromebooks and headphones in the classroom</td>
<td>- Recordings are uploaded to Google Classroom and Google Drive.</td>
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<td>- When sharing or working in partners, students use headphone splitters.</td>
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### Listening

**Listening Exercise #1**  
**Objective:** Students will identify patterns within recordings of the pentatonic scale.  
**Procedure:** Students will match recordings to standard notation. All recordings will use the pentatonic scale.

**Listening Exercise #2**  
**Objective:** Students will identify patterns and mistakes within recordings of the pentatonic scale.  
**Procedure:** Students will compare standard notation to recordings of the pentatonic scale and identify mistakes (rhythmic or pitch) they hear in the recordings.

**Listening Exercise #3**  
**Objective:** Students will analyze a pentatonic pop song melody and identify compositional techniques used throughout.  
**Procedure:** Students are given the song’s melody in standard notation and asked to identify moments of repetition.

**Listening Exercise #4**  
**Objective:** Students will analyze a pentatonic pop song melody to identify compositional techniques.  
**Procedure:** Students are given the song’s melody in standard notation and asked to identify moments of leaps and stepwise motion.

### Composing

**Composition Exercise #1**  
**Objective:** Students will record a pentatonic scale using SoundTrap.

**Composition Exercise #2**  
**Objective:** Students will compose “responses” to 2 measure melodies using the pentatonic scale.

**Composition Exercise #3**  
**Objective:** Students will compose multiple 4 measure melodies using the pentatonic scale.

**Composition Exercise #4**  
**Objective:** Students will compose an 8 measure melody using the pentatonic scale.

*Composition Exercises use the procedure of a flipped classroom. Students will watch a “how to” video on their own time and will complete the exercise detailed in the video during class time.*

### Performing

**Whole Group Rehearsals**  
**Objectives:**
- Students will understand the definition of a scale.  
- Students will understand the mechanics of playing the pentatonic scale on the guitar.  
- Students will understand multiple methods for the practice of scales.

**Procedure:** Whole Group Rehearsals take place at the beginning of each class period.

**Small Group Rehearsals**  
**Objectives:**
- Students will use practice methods to work towards mastery of the pentatonic scale.  
- Students will practice duets, melodies, and exercises which use the pentatonic scale.  
- Students will perform a song (duet or trio) which uses the pentatonic scale.

**Procedure:** Small Group Rehearsals take place every other class period. Students are assigned small groups and roles and responsibilities within those groups. Small group rehearsals are largely student-led.

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This course meets every other school day for 75 minutes. Typically the first day of class is spent working on the Listening Exercise and in Whole Group Rehearsals. The second day of class is spent working on Composition Exercises and in Small Group Rehearsals.

This arrangement allows for concepts to be introduced through sound first and in a whole group setting. Then, on the second day, students work with these concepts in small groups and individually.