

# Developing Musicianship in the Music Technology Classroom

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# Core Belief: It's *AND*, not *OR*

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- Music technology instruction is a part of a comprehensive music education. Students who enroll in courses that utilize technology receive an opportunity to learn about and experience music from a different sensibility than is offered through our bands, choirs, and orchestras.
- The conception that technology-based music courses run counter to the mission of the traditional ensemble should be reframed to acknowledge that all of our music courses are central to developing knowledgeable and productive musicians and music consumers.
- There is enough room in the profession for all of the ways that we can teach music to our students!

# 2025: What Now?

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- In March 2020, many of us were thrown into the deep end of music technology use as COVID began to spread across the world.
- Many music teachers recognized the power and efficiency of software applications' ability to connect to their students as they learned remotely.
- Now that conditions are returning to senses of normalcy, how can we capitalize on what we've learned during this time to empower our students to develop musicianship skills while interacting with music technology software?

# *Something Just Like This*

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- 6<sup>th</sup> Grader
- Did not participate in school music, other than *Music Production* class
- No prior interest with participating in formal music settings



# Musicianship: Inclusive or Exclusive?

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- What defines musicianship?
  - Are all humans musicians?
  - Does one need to study music to be considered a musician?
  - Are there benchmarks other than those used in the ensemble setting (mastery of technique, tone, pitch, dynamics, etc.) that can be used to track musicianship development in the technology-based music class? And, if so, what are they?
- How does music consumerism affect students' music education?
  - All students listen to music.
  - The school is not divorced or hermetically sealed from our students' outside worlds.
  - How can we provide an education that is inclusive of students' natural affinities for *their* music while expanding what they already know?

# Musician Profile

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- In an effort to create a repository for students to identify and describe tenets of the music that they are drawn to, students' first project in Digital Music courses is to create a *Musician Profile* about themselves.
  - Google Sites template
  - A living document
  - Students create a short musician's biography, where they compose three sentences that describe musical aspects about themselves.
  - Students post three YouTube clips, each containing a song that is aligned with who they are. Additionally, they write about the specific aspects of each song that speak to them in some way while they search for commonalities among their selections. They are encouraged to share their profiles with each other throughout the duration of the semester.

# Musician Profile Examples

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# Musician Profile

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- An effective way to celebrate and affirm their musicianship, and to find vocabulary to describe elements of music that appeal to them aesthetically.
- Students cite a connection between their musical selections and the type of music that they compose in class.



# Classroom Culture and Musician Identity

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- Classroom culture study mechanics
  - Observed Tom's Fall 2022 Digital Music classes
  - Took field notes and engaged with students regularly
  - Interviewed students individually and in group discussions
- How did students describe how the classroom culture influenced their identities as musicians?
  - Students praised the different types of projects and the creativity required for them, as well as the space to do them (metaphorically and physically).
  - Students also cited Tom's personality and teaching processes.
  - The classroom culture encouraged students to further develop their musician identities and engage in musical experiences.

# Possible Benchmarks for Musician Development

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- Quality of class participation and contributions to discussions
- Composing more purposefully
- Expanding their Musician Profile
- Using specific music vocabulary
- Other insights

# Conclusions

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- When students are in a band, choir, or an orchestra, they're trained to perform. They're being educated to a paradigm of music that values the performance as the gold standard; it's a long-standing tradition in this country.
- In this study, some students who were involved in a music creation process didn't consider themselves to be *musicians*, even though they were participating in a process in which they created music that was better aligned with what they were likelier to consume for pleasure.
  - Whose responsibility is it to change this narrative? And how?

# Curriculum Design for Musicianship Development

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# Essential Questions

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- What does musicianship development look like? How do you know they are growing as musicians?
- What do you want students to learn?
- What do you want them to do that they cannot do already?
- In what modality will students work (e.g., notation, production, etc.)?

# Essential Questions

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- What type of music instruction have they had before?
- How will you affirm and meet them where they are and take them to new places?

# Software For The 1:1 Classroom

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# MusicFirst

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- Provides a suite of cloud-based, cross-platform music applications that are ideal for the 1:1 setting
- Features MusicFirst Classroom (LMS-type environment) to streamline workflow and assess student work more conveniently
- Very inexpensive





# Music Notation: Noteflight

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- Web-based notation application



# Flat for Education

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- Real-time collaboration: allows for multiple students using different devices
- Automatically saves like a Google Doc - no more remembering to click *Save!*
- Similar to a Google Doc, users can access previous versions of compositions and provide feedback.
- Can integrate with multiple learning management systems, Google Workspace, Microsoft 365, Soundtrap, and Groove Pizza

# Music Production: Soundtrap

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- Web-based Digital Audio Workstation (excellent entry-level software)
- Compatible with Makey Makey

(—) Soundtrap®



# YouDJ for Education

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- Free online software for mixing music and creating DJ sets
- Affords students the opportunity to learn about and practice DJing skills using pre-loaded (school appropriate) and student-provided music, as well as music pulled from YouTube
- Can be accessed via the YouDJ website, mobile app, Chrome extension, and/or client software download
- Available through MusicFirst, along with a course entitled, *You're The DJ*

# Delivering The Instruction

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# Project Ideas

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- While developing the curriculum, choose projects that utilize the platform that you feel will best serve your students' needs and facilitates musician development:
  - Simple rhythmic notation projects
  - Traditional composition assignments
  - Rhythmic dictation activities
  - Basic sequencing
  - Composing using musical forms
  - Podcasting

# Project Ideas

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- While developing the curriculum, choose projects that utilize the platform that you feel will best serve your students' needs and facilitates musician development:
  - Using virtual instruments in Soundtrap or another DAW
  - Movie and video game scores
  - Creating cover songs
  - Creating remixes
  - Original song compositions/songwriting
  - Live Recording



# Guidelines

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- Assist students with setting goals! This affords agency in the musicianship development process as students should feel that they have autonomy over their development as musicians.
- Model the process.
- Provide clear parameters.
- Hold students accountable to project parameters.
- Base assessment on parameters.
- Provide space.

# Guidelines

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- Allow students to share their work.
- Teach students how to use constructive and kind feedback.
- Be available as much as possible to provide feedback.
- Assume the roles of learner AND teacher.
- Motivate students to move beyond their comfort zones via the feedback process.
- Maintain positive interactions between yourself and students as often as possible.

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- Other insights

Technology is a means to the end:  
music teaching and learning.  
Technology serves the teaching  
process.

“Teach music, the technology will  
follow.” – Barbara Freedman

THANK YOU!!

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