

Creating, Responding, and Connecting in the Ensemble Setting

Daniel J. Albert
dalbert@umass.edu

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“Ideally, music education should equip young people to be lifelong music participants—not mere consumers.” – Robert Woody, professor of music education, University of Nebraska (2012)

“The reason for teaching music is not to help children get good ratings at competitions, but rather to help them learn the musical skills and knowledge in order to become lifelong music makers and supporters of the arts.”

-Mitchell Robinson, associate professor of music education, Michigan State University

Why teach music through technology? Relevance and access:

- 95% of students own a smartphone or have access to one.
- 88% of students have access to a desktop or a laptop at home. (Pew Research Center, 2018)
- 1:1 initiative in schools (one school-provided device per student)

Why teach composition?

- “New” National Core Arts Standards (www.nationalartsstandards.org)
- Helps to achieve deeper levels of musical understanding through the ensemble experience
– Maud Hickey (1997)

Why learn by ear/informal music learning?

- They contribute to improvising, sight reading, and performing rehearsed music.

Development of multiple facets of musicianship and understanding *enhance* performance and prepare students for lifelong music making experiences.

Assistive Framework (Norris, 2010)

1. Develop a sequential curriculum.
 - What do you want your students to know? What do they need to know?
 - Develop vocabulary of musical elements
2. Select repertoire that embeds musical elements.
3. Create opportunities that facilitate learning and demonstrate understanding of musical elements:
 - Composing
 - Arranging
 - Improvisation
 - Writing
 - Discussion

Demonstration repertoire

Robert W. Smith, [*The Great Locomotive Chase*](#) (Alfred Publishing, 2000).
Omar Thomas, [*A Mother of a Revolution!*](#) (Omar Thomas Music, 2019).

Learning By Ear/Informal Learning

- Call and response games, then “trade 2s and 4s”
- Solfege in rehearsals to connect sound with visual representation.
- Teach scales, prominent and recurring melodies by ear.
- Sing warm-up exercises, chorales, arpeggios, rhythms, and pitch sequences.

Using their ears, students can:

- Organize themselves into small groups and arrange songs for themselves or the ensemble.
- Compose for solo or small ensemble.
- Create variations based on themes in ensemble repertoire.
- All of the above can be performed for the public.

Creating strategies

- Variation of articulation patterns (or other musical elements, such as dynamics).
Possible embedded Responding activities include:
 - Discussion of students' articulation patterns.
 - Discussion of the intent of the composer.
- Improvise your own ending to a 2- or 4-measure phrase. Create some parameters to guide students and provide them with structure.
- Create rhythmic variants for and/or harmonize the accompaniment.
 - Incorporate the variants as part of a warm-up.
- Create an alternate text.
- Arrange a section of the song: vary who has the melody at different points, harmonize the melody, add special musical effects.

Responding strategies

- Composer's Intent activity
 - Describe how the composer uses elements of music to evoke a scene.
 - In the case of a soundtrack, how does the composer use elements of music effectively to accompany visual images and enhance the viewing experience?
- Analysis of the text with activities to include:
 - Meaning of the text
 - Tone painting through the text
 - How does the text complement the music?
 - Articulation/effects
- Comparison of interpretations via YouTube and online recordings
- Utilizing formative rehearsal "performance" recordings
- Post-concert assessments
- Selecting repertoire

Connecting strategies

- Have students research the background of the work!
 - It's part of the score study process for a conductor-teacher.
 - Researching the background informs one's interpretation.
 - This also includes analysis of text.
- Assign sections for students to read.
- Discuss
 - During class
 - Outside of class via social media platforms (wiki, blog, Google Docs)
- Analysis of the text
 - Writer's background information
 - Historical era
- Purposeful selection of repertoire

- Film score/Soundtrack analysis
- Composing with film scores

Think about assessment! How will you assess your students for understanding? What do they already know? What do they need to know? What do you want them to know?

Books and Articles on Technology in Ensemble Settings:

William I. Bauer, [*Music Learning Today: Digital Pedagogy for Creating, Performing, and Responding to Music, 2nd edition*](#) (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Christopher Cayari, "Using Informal Education Through Music Video Creation," *General Music Today*, 27, no. 3, (2014): 17-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371313492537>

Jay Dorfman, [*Theory and Practice of Technology-Based Music Instruction, 2nd edition*](#) (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Robin Giebelhausen, "What the Tech Is Going On? Social Media and Your Music Classroom," *General Music Today*, 28, no. 2, (2015): 39-46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371314552523>

Megan Poole, [*Using Social Media in the Classroom: A Best Practice Guide, 2nd edition*](#) (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2020).

Books and Articles on Composing, Improvising, and Responding:

Daniel J. Albert, "Musical Adventures with Michael Colgrass," *The Instrumentalist*, 63, no. 6, (2009): 22-28, 51-52.

Pamela Beach and Benjamin Bolden, "Music Education Meets Critical Literacy: A Framework for Guiding Music Listening," *Music Educators Journal*, 105, no. 2, (2018): 43-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432118808580>

Matthew Clauhs, "Beginning Band without a Stand: Fostering Creative Musicianship in Early Instrumental Programs," *Music Educators Journal*, 104, no. 4, (2018): 39-47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432118768383>

Matthew Clauhs, Brian Franco, and Radio Cremata, "Mixing It Up: Sound Recording and Music Production in School Music Programs," *Music Educators Journal*, 106, no. 1, (2019): 55-63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432119856085>

Ann C. Clements, editor, [*Alternative Approaches in Music Education: Case Studies from the Field*](#) (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).

Michael Colgrass, "Composers and Children: A Future Creative Force?," *Music Educators Journal*, 91, no. 1, (2004): 19-23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3400101>

Barbara Freedman, *Teaching Music through Composition: A Curriculum Using Technology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Patrick K. Freer, "Choral Improvisation: Tensions and Resolutions," *Choral Journal*, 51, no. 5, (2010): 18-31.
https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1046&context=music_facpub

Maud Hickey, editor, *Why and How to Teach Music Composition: A New Horizon for Music Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

Maud Hickey, "Teaching Ensembles to Compose and Improvise," *Music Educators Journal*, 83, no. 6, (1997): 17-21. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3399019>

Maud Hickey, "Assessment Rubrics for Music Composition," *Music Educators Journal*, 85, no. 4, (1999): 26-33, 52. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3399530>

Julie Derges Kastner and Saleel Menon, "Popular Music in Choir: Helping Students 'Find Their Voices,'" *Music Educators Journal*, 106, no. 1, (2019): 48-54.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432119856083>

John Kratus, "Music Listening is Creative," *Music Educators Journal*, 103, no. 3, (2017): 46-51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432116686843>

Martin Norgaard, "Developing Musical Creativity through Improvisation in the Large Performance Classroom," *Music Educators Journal*, 103, no. 3, (2017): 34-39.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432116687025>

Leo Park, "Inside Out: Integrating Creative Practices into the Orchestra Classroom," *Music Educators Journal*, 105, no. 3, (2019): 54-59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432118817813>

Clint Randles and David Stringham, editors, *Musicianship: Composing in Band and Orchestra* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2013).

Aaron Rivkin, "Group Improvisation in Secondary School Instrumental Ensembles," *Music Educators Journal*, 109, no. 1, (2022): 37-43.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00274321221112870>

Stephen A. Paparo, "Circle Singing: Composing, Improvisation, and Improvising Composition," in Jody L. Kerchner and Katherine Strand, editors, *Musicianship: Composing in Choir* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2016).

Michael Patrick Wall, "Does School Band Kill Creativity? Embracing New Traditions in Instrumental Music," *Music Educators Journal*, 105, no. 1, (2018): 51-56.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432118787001>

Robert H. Woody, "Playing by Ear: Foundation or Frill?," *Music Educators Journal*, 99, no. 2, (2012): 82-88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432112459199>

Informal Music Learning:

Lucy Green, [*Music, Informal Learning, and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*](#) (Routledge, 2008).

Lucy Green, "The Music Curriculum as Lived Experience: Children's "Natural" Music-Learning Processes," *Music Educators Journal*, 91, no. 4, (2005): 27-32.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3400155>