It's Time to Teach Music Production! Now What?
Everything You Need to Know to Get Started.
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I. What is Digital Music Production?
   A. The process of creating, capturing, and manipulating music using primarily software programs and digital hardware such as a computer.
II. What technology equipment do I need?
   A. Hardware tools
      1. Computer, laptop, or tablet
      2. Headphones or earbuds
      3. (optional) MIDI keyboard, MIDI pad controller (such as Ableton Push or Native Instruments Maschine), audio interface, microphone, cables
   B. Software tools
      1. Digital Audio Workstation (DAW)
         a) A multifunction software tool that can be used for a wide range of audio production tasks including composing, recording, editing, and mixing.
         b) The DAW is at the center of music production.
III. What to consider when choosing a DAW.
   A. The two main types of DAWs are online-based and software-based.
      1. Online DAWs do not download onto your device. They exist as cloud-based applications that you access on the internet. The audio recordings, music, loops, effects, and everything else is saved to the cloud.
         a. Benefits
            i. Can be used to make music anywhere with any device as long as there is internet access.
            ii. No software download necessary (works on Chromebooks).
            iii. Offers ability to collaborate with other users separated by distance.
            iv. Saves room on your hard drive.
         b. Drawbacks
            i. Internet service required.

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      ii.   Internet speed and bandwidth can be issues if trying to record many live tracks simultaneously.

2. Software-based DAWs download and install onto your computer. All audio recordings, music, edits, loops, etc. are saved on your local hard drive.
   a. Benefits
      i. Do not need internet service.
      ii. Can process multiple tracks simultaneously.
   b. Drawbacks
      i. Requires device that can download applications.
      ii. Must be in the same room as collaborators.

B. Where can I get a DAW for free?
   1. Click this link for a list of the [10 best free online DAWs](#).
   2. Click this link for a list of [20 Free Software DAWs](#).

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IV. Introduction and walkthrough of the most important elements of a DAW.
   A. **Transport**: used to control recording and playback.
   B. **Track header**: controls to mute or solo the track's signal, arm the track for recording, and set the volume.
   C. **New track command**: creates a new MIDI or audio track.
   D. **Regions**: blocks of MIDI or recorded audio.
   E. **Workspace**: displays MIDI or audio regions.
   F. **Sound library**: where virtual instruments are stored.
   G. **Loop library**: where loops are stored.
   H. **Piano roll grid**: where you can add and manipulate MIDI notes and rhythms, and edit live audio in more detail.

V. Lesson ideas.
   A. Begin with loop-based compositions.
      1. Loop-based composition is the simplest and fastest way to compose a song in a DAW.
         a. A **loop** is a short sound or musical phrase that can be repeated continuously.
         b. Loop-based composing requires students to make creative decisions.
   B. The next level of creativity : composing original music in the DAW.
      1. Compose a rhythm track.
      2. Compose a melody track.

3. Compose a harmony track.
4. Compose a bass track.
5. Record a vocal or live instrument track.
6. Arrange the sections of the song.
7. Edit.
8. Mix.
9. Share.

VI. For further reading.
    A. Lyons, M. J. (2023). *Produce this!: Digital music production and songwriting workbook*. Neil A. Kjos Music Company.
    B. Kuhn, W., & Hein, E. (2021). *Electronic music school: A contemporary approach to teaching musical creativity*. Oxford University Press.
       DOI:10.1093/oso/9780190076634.001.0001
    C. Freedman, B. (2013). *Teaching music through composition: A curriculum using technology*. Oxford University Press.
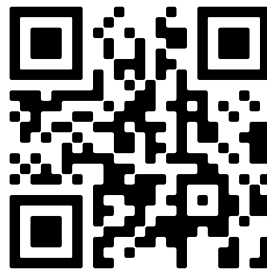
VII. Networking tools
    A. Facebook Groups: I Teach Music Technology
    B. TI:ME - Technology in Music Education

VIII. Contact info
    A. matthewlyonsmusictech@gmail.com

Visit the Neil Kjos Music booth for a free copy of *Produce This!*

**Scan here to download the BandLab App. on your smartphone or tablet
Or visit:** edu.bandlab.com **on your laptop computer**

Bio

Matthew Lyons earned a Bachelor of Music degree in music education and a teaching credential in music from San Diego State University in 2004. After graduation, he spent a decade teaching fourth and fifth-grade band and orchestra for the San Diego Unified School District. During that time, Mr. Lyons earned his master's degree in teaching and curriculum development from the University of San Diego and won the Schuchman Outstanding Elementary Instrumental Music Teacher award in 2010. In 2014, Mr. Lyons became the music director of Oak Park Elementary Music Conservatory— a music-focused inner-city school in the most diverse area of San Diego County. As music director at Oak Park, Mr. Lyons teaches kindergarten through third-grade general music, fourth and fifth-grade band, and fifth-grade music production. In addition, Mr. Lyons is an adjunct professor of music at Point Loma Nazarene University and a published author and speaker. Mr. Lyons is certified in Sibelius and Pro Tools and earned a master's degree in music technology from the University of Valley Forge in 2024.