

Improvising and Composing with Familiar Rhythms, Drums, and Barred Instruments

Introduction and Lesson 1

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PEDAGOGICAL

Overview

Hans Poser, in his 1970 article, "The New Children's Song," called for an educational approach to music that would be a place "where the child's personality would find room to grow in creative and independent work." Musical experiences created by children provide a rich context of learning where the elements of music combine with social and emotional development. These songs are not only created by children, but become performance material for an audience that is primarily children.

The main material is an idea based on the rhythmic composition of Gunild Keetman. This composition is extracted from *Rhythmische Ubung*, the book of rhythms. As it should be, the books serve as models for student creations. Working with the simple idea of rhythmic counter, students engage in a journey that will combine more complicated melodic elements to compose a rhythmically driving piece that toys with the mysteries of the coming spring. Ostinati, a fun combination of bass bar and drum accompaniment, provide a playful texture that enhances the quality of the text and the student creations. From these experiences, critical analysis, rhythmic reading, and notation easily find their place in the classroom.

Drumming, speech, compositions, and xylophones provide the students with material needed for concrete music learning and creating. Synthesizing these materials will provide an aesthetic experience that is joyful and meaningful to teacher and students while the fundamentals of music are utilized. These fundamentals are presented in new and varied forms through the media of movement, choral speech work, instruments, and song. As with any experiences with the Schulwerk, the possibilities are fueled by the imaginations of the teacher and the students.

Objectives

- Rhythm: Students will identify, compose, read, and perform 16-beat rhythms containing quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes, syncopation, and quarter rests.
- Melody: Students will compose and perform melodies using the Dorian Mode.
- Harmony: Students will accompany themselves using a tonic drone bass.
- Texture: Students will perform pieces with two ostinati accompaniments.
- Form: Students will identify, compose, and perform AABC phrase form. Students will identify and construct an overall arching form that includes Introduction, rondo, canon, and coda.

Duration

Four lessons approximately forty-five minutes in length.

Materials

- Speech: March comes in like a lion but leaves just like a little lamb.

Instruments: Various hand and standing drums, alto xylophones, soprano xylophones, soprano glockenspiels.

Movement: Pathways and gesture.

Music: "Vier Kleine Kanons," No. 76, *Rhythmische Ubung*, Gunild Keetman, p. 22.

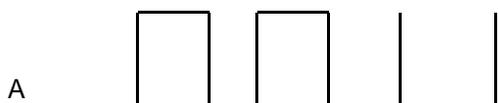
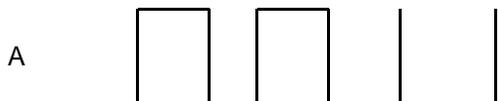
The National Standards of Music: Targeted Standards

- Standard 2** Performing a varied repertoire of music on instruments, alone and with others.
- Standard 3** Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
- Standard 4** Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
- Standard 5** Reading and notating music.
- Standard 6** Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
- Standard 7** Evaluating music and music performances.
- Standard 8** Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

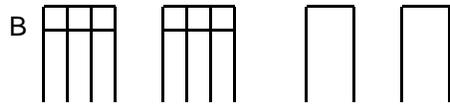
INSTRUCTIONAL: Lesson One

Introduction

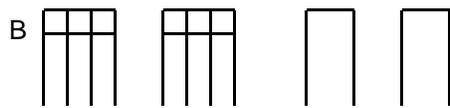
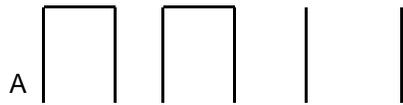
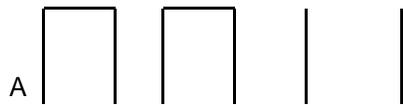
As students enter the room, begin playing the initial phrase of Gunild Keetman's rhythmic canon. This four-beat phrase, ta-te ta-te ta ta, can be played with clapping. Repeat this as the students begin to imitate the phrase. Continue until the phrase is secure. When students are comfortable, have them to play the phrase twice. Ask students to describe their observations about the phrase they played. These observations can lead to other questions. How would you label the phrases (A A)? Have the students write the notation for the phrase:



Invite students to play the written notation while saying the syllables. Repeat this and inform the students you will be playing more rhythms after they stop. Their responsibility is to observe and analyze the new rhythm. After the children play the first part, continue with the last two measures of the Keetman rhythm:



Repeat the process above until the entire piece is notated. Play the piece several times. Then play the piece in canon starting on the third beat. When the notation is finished, draw a line through the middle of the notation as follows to indicate the canon:



Have students play the entire rhythmic piece using clapping and patting.

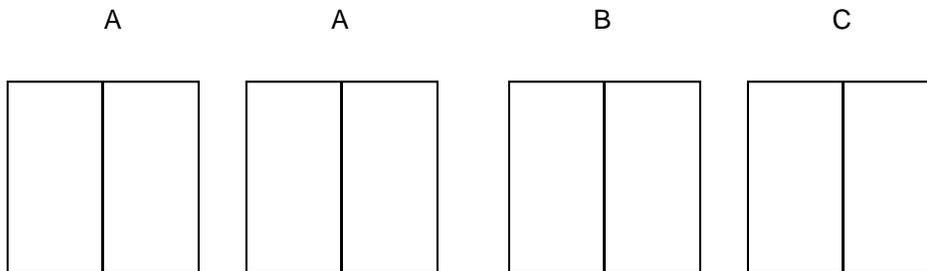
Exploration

As students become more comfortable playing and saying the rhythm, begin probing to construct further ideas and observations. How many beats are in each line? How many beats are in the entire piece? How did you get your answer?

Focus the conversation on the equal halves of the canon by asking students about their observations of the left and right sides. Do the sides have the same number of beats? How are the right and left sides similar? How are the two sides different? This analysis will provide the information students will need to construct their own canons. The differences will most likely be explained as the left side "having more beats" than the right side. At this point, remind your students of their previous answers. "You told me that each side of the line had two beats and then explained your answer. Does one side really have more notes?" Students will most likely respond with "the left side is faster" or "the left side has more notes." At this point, simply explain to students that musicians would say the left side is more rhythmically active than the right side.

Now ask students why the composer of the canon made rhythms that were more active and less active. Many of my students explained that the excitement of the piece occurs when the tension creates rhythms working to complement each other. Explain to your students that musicians call this rhythmic counterpoint. The pattern may be active vs. less active or less active vs. more active.

Provide the following visual organizer for the students. This may be in handouts and/or on a white board:



In small groups, let students compose their own canon based on the form of the Keetman canon. Remind students of the information they constructed:

- Rhythmic counterpoint is less active rhythms working against more active rhythms (or vice versa).
- The form of the canon is A A B C.
- Each box must contain four beats and each side of the box must contain two beats.

The first step of this process may be to brainstorm all rhythms with the students, reminding them of the rhythms they can use:

Quarter notes
Eighth notes
Quarter rests
Syncopation

What happened to the 16th notes mentioned earlier? Do they come later?

Remind students that their primary goal is to be able to say their rhythm in unison and write their composition in the visual organizer.

When this is complete, have each group exchange papers and assess each other's work on the following criteria:

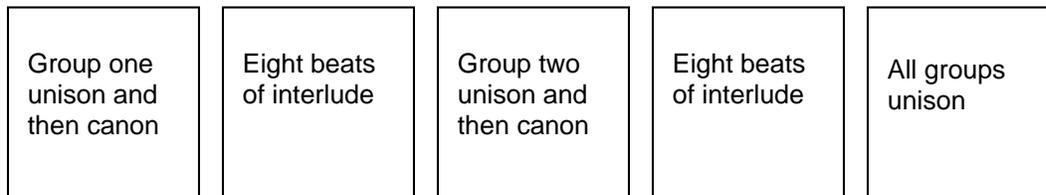
- A pattern of less active vs. more active rhythm (or vice versa) is evident.
- Each box contains four beats.
- Each side of the box contains two beats.
- The phrase form of the piece is A A B C.

If the compositions do not meet all the criteria, have the group offer suggestions for the composition. This assessment will provide a clear understanding for the composers and the analyzers. Once the assessment is completed, have the groups return the compositions, allow each group time to discuss, and if needed, make adjustments to the compositions.

Once these compositions are adjusted, listen to each group say the rhythm of the composition. Next, transfer this rhythm to patsching (tapping or patting). Now have each group perform the syllables and the patsching of their composition. Once secure, transfer the speech and body percussion to drums.

Culminating Aesthetic Moment

Invite each group to play their compositions on the drums. Once unison playing is secure, have each group perform their compositions in canon. The canon may need to be practiced several times with students assessing themselves after each playing. Once secure, collaborate on a final form for the drumming and perform. A final form may look like the following:



Reflection for Learning

Inquiry and listening provide a strong pedagogy for authentic learning. After moments of performance, ask students about the plans and executions of their compositions. “What was the most rewarding part of your group’s performance?” and “Why?” are critical starting points because they invoke the intrinsic worth of the student performance and reveals the strategies students used to accomplish a goal. Ask students about difficulties in their performance: “What was the hardest aspect of the composition for your group?” “How did you resolve the problem?” “What advice would you give another group with a similar problem?” This questioning displays the social development of the collaborative learning environment and requires students to examine their cooperation and negotiation skills. It also provides a venue for metacognition.

Assessment

This comes in many forms in the lesson. The analysis of the Keetman canon reminds me of the rich dialogue that is vital in working with students. This provides evidence of critical thinking and collaboration. Besides the dialogue, the visual organizer is an essential tool for students to assess their own work and that of others. Here is an example of student work with the graphic organizer. This type of assessment focuses on the thoughts of Richard Stiggins, who writes that assessment should not only be of learning but for learning. In this manner, students are responsible for helping others in the community construct and define knowledge.