

FOSTERING CREATIVITY USING COMPOSITION & IMPROVISATION IN THE STRING CLASSROOM

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BENEFITS OF COMPOSITION & IMPROVISATION

- increased self- and group-confidence
- creative expression
- better understanding of your instrument through creative exploration
- can improve aural skills
- creative and spontaneous music making!

21ST CENTURY LEARNERS

- Most future jobs will require creative skills
- Requires the ability to create and be flexible
- Today's students are producers who enjoy working with technology
- Students enjoy collaboration in project-based learning

**WE NEED TO EXPAND
OUR HORIZONS!**



ELEMENTARY STRINGS

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STRING PROJECT
MARIETTA SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED ACADEMICS (GEORGIA)

COMPOSITION TOOLS

- “Premium” Notation Programs - *Finale* or *Sibelius*
- “New” Notation Programs - *Notion*
- Free - *MuseScore*
- Cloud-Based - noteflight.com
 - Works on just about any device!

START SIMPLE

- Don't let students believe it is difficult!
- Set parameters to help guide work
- Let students compose for their instrument
- "Compose your own ending"

IMPROVISATION

- A a part of the NAFME National Standards – “improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments”
- Rarely included as part of many orchestra curricula
- Improve and composition go hand in hand

WHY DON'T TEACHERS INCLUDE IMPROVISATION?

- Teacher is not comfortable with improvising
- Teacher was not taught to improvise or teach improvisation

IMPROVISATION IS FLEXIBLE!

- Can be taught individually
- Can be taught to small and large groups
- Taught with a simple lead sheet or writing on the board

MISCONCEPTIONS

- Improv doesn't have to mean jazz!
- Doesn't have to be complex
 - start simple and gradually increase complexity

21. Seminole Chant from *Essential Elements*, Book 1



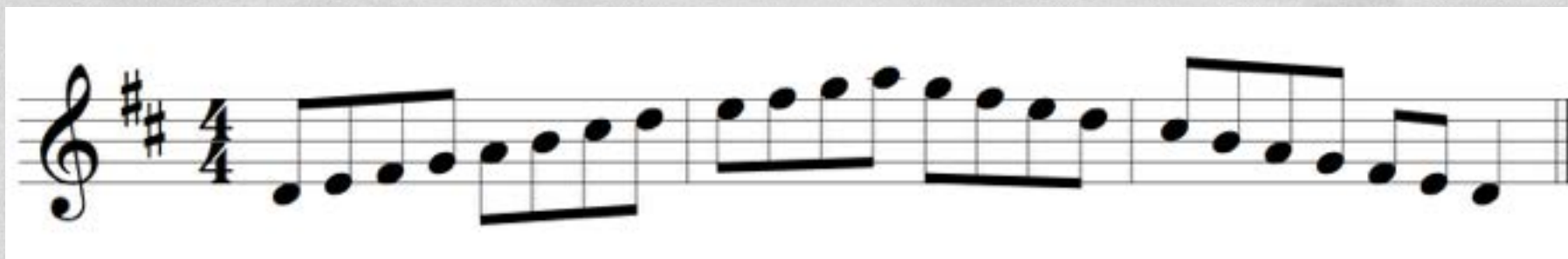
Cripple Creek, arr. E. Siennicki



How many rhythmic variations can you create?

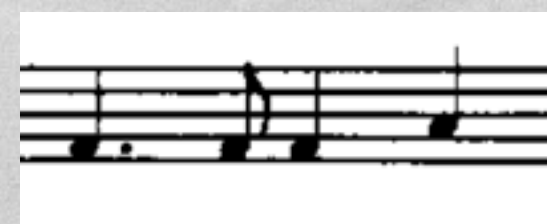
1. Add two eighth notes somewhere in each measure
2. Add four eighth notes in each measure.
3. What else could you do?

Canon in D Improvisation



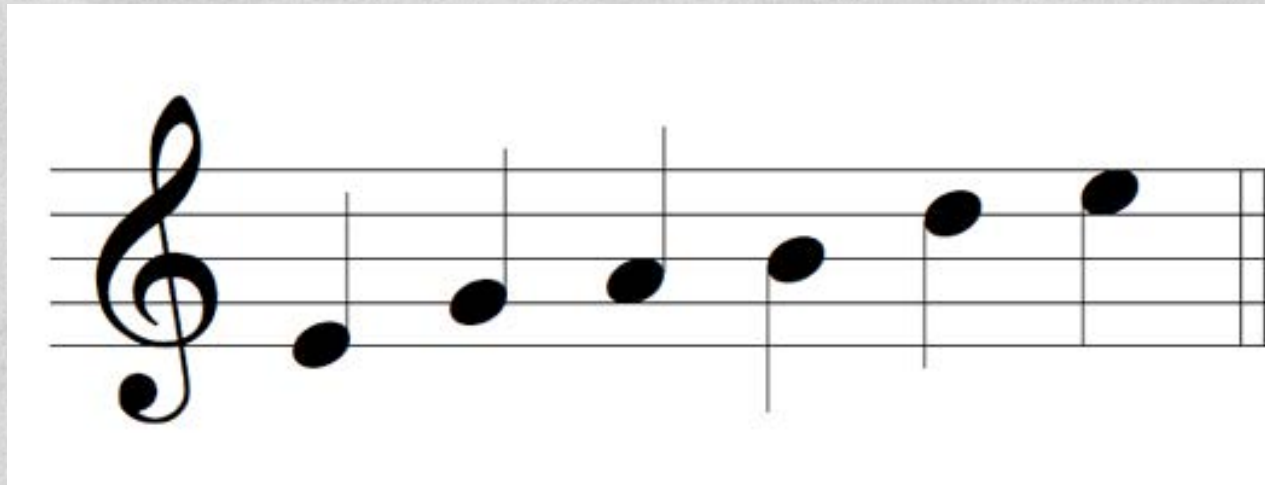
1. D major
2. A major
3. B minor
4. F# minor
5. G Major
6. D major
7. G Major
8. A major

A	E	F#	C	D	A	D	E
F#	C#	D	A	B	F#	B	C#
D	A	B	F#	G	D	G	A
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8



E Minor Rock Improvisation

E minor Pentatonic Scale



E minor Blues Scale



IDEAS! ADD IMPROV TO:

- Daily warm-ups
 - Scales
 - Exercises
- Pieces you know

APPS FOR IMPROVISATION

- Drones (any tuner or tuner app)
- Drones (example: *Cello Drones*)
- Garageband (Mac/iOS)
- Anytune Pro (iOS)
- iReal Pro (iOS app)

TEACH TRANSPOSITION

- A string up or down
- One step up or down
- Major to minor
- Discuss changing the home note or key signature



MIDDLE SCHOOL CONCERT

HILLIARD HERITAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL (HILLIARD, OHIO)

PERFORMANCE INTEGRATION

- Perform a piece written by your students!
- Loop a section in a piece and add improvisation
- Try letting students play other instruments (guitar, electronic instruments, etc.)

IMPROVISATION BOOK FOR STRING ORCHESTRAS

- *Jazz Philharmonic Series* (Phillips/Sabien)
 - spans all levels, from first year beginners to advanced
 - various styles of jazz (swing, latin, etc.)
 - great accompaniments with examples

groovin' for the first time

tune and background



track **three**

Medium swing ♩ = $\overset{3}{\text{♩}}$

tune

bass 2

background 2

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff, labeled 'tune', is in bass clef with a common time signature (C). It contains five measures of music, primarily using quarter notes and eighth notes, with some rests. The middle staff, labeled 'bass 2', also in bass clef with a common time signature, contains five measures of music, mostly quarter notes, with a 'V' (pickup) symbol above the first measure and the fourth measure. The bottom staff, labeled 'background 2', is in bass clef with a common time signature and contains five measures of music, featuring eighth notes and quarter notes, with a 'Dm7' chord symbol above the first measure and a 'G7' chord symbol above the fifth measure. A bracket on the left groups the three staves.

To Coda Θ

The second system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff, in bass clef with a common time signature, contains six measures of music, including quarter notes, eighth notes, and a double bar line with repeat dots. The middle staff, in bass clef with a common time signature, contains six measures of music, mostly quarter notes, with 'V' (pickup) symbols above the first, third, and fifth measures. The bottom staff, in bass clef with a common time signature, contains six measures of music, featuring eighth notes and quarter notes, with 'Dm7' chord symbols above the second and sixth measures, and an 'Am7' chord symbol above the fourth measure. A bracket on the left groups the three staves.

SUMMARY

- Invest the time to learn and get creative
- Experiment — it's fun to learn WITH your students!
- Be the **cool** teacher!
- Reach your students by expanding their creativity and helping prepare them for the future job market

SPECIAL THANKS!



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