

ACTIVITIES IN MUSICAL COMPOSITION

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TO THE TEACHER

The emphasis in education today is on basic competency in all academic subjects. Now is a very appropriate time to stress teaching the basics in music.

Learning to compose music is a unique way to involve students in a hands-on experience that will improve their note-reading ability and increase their understanding of the fundamentals of music. The end product is a new piece of music created by the students themselves, tangible evidence of their musical accomplishments.

Written evidence of musical knowledge gained can be especially rewarding to those who are in a discipline that deals so much with esthetics. This set of masters should be used in sequence if the students are to get the most out of this course. They do not all need to be used in one course of study, but can be interspersed with other activities. They are appropriate to numerous music education courses, including mini- or full-semester classes in music theory, music appreciation, music survey, general music, and gifted programs.

Activities in Musical Composition was written because of a teaching need of the author. They have been tested with general music students in junior high school.

The goals of the course of study are to help students appreciate composers and the composing process, and to gain a better knowledge of the fundamentals of note writing.

TEACHING METHODS

It is hoped that these forty-eight lessons will awaken an “urge to create” in your students. You may discover some hidden talents as they compose new music with each lesson.

Be sure you are well acquainted with your students’ musical accomplishments before you start these lessons on composing. For instance, do you know what instruments they play or if they have had voice lessons? Everyone has the ability to compose, but some students will need more help than others if this is a new experience for them. Do not move too quickly through the lessons. It is important that the students understand one lesson before they go on to the next lesson.

Listen to the music your students compose. Have them tape some of their compositions and then listen to the tapes. Discuss the compositions. They will learn by sharing their ideas.

Lessons 1 – 6	Completing a Song (finish given phrases)
Lessons 7 – 12	Folk Song (setting poems to music)
Lessons 13 – 18	Rhythm Songs (using basic rhythms)
Lessons 19 – 24	Building Songs From a Motif (enlarging upon a motif)
Lessons 25 – 30	Rounds (using chords to write a round)
Lessons 31 – 36	Calypso Songs (building a song above a base line)
Lessons 37 – 42	Instrumental Solo (flute solo, plus chordal accompaniment)
Lessons 43 – 48	Theme and Variations (I, IV, V ⁷ , I chord structure plus a melody)

LESSON FIFTEEN USING RHYTHMS (Continued)

Question 1: Percussion instruments: drums, bells, cymbals, rhythm sticks, etc.

Question 2: Example:

Question 3: Example:

- 1 -- Each instrument plays his part alone.
 - 2 -- A, B, and C instruments play together.
 - 3 -- D, E, and F instruments play together.
- A form example would be: 1, 2, 3, 1.

LESSON SIXTEEN CHANGING METER

REVIEW: Review time signatures. Practice clapping different rhythms.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Rhythm instruments.

Clap these rhythms until students can feel the changing meters.

Name _____ Date _____

USING RHYTHMS

Compose a song for percussion ensemble. One instrument should be a melody instrument (xylophone, tone bells, etc.).

1. Select 6 percussion instruments.

A _____ D _____
 B _____ E _____
 C _____ F _____

2. Chart out a 4-measure rhythm for each instrument. Use as many rhythms as you can. Use at least 3 kinds of rests. The song will use 4 beats to a measure. Have the melody instrument play 2 tones, D and A. (Stem down designates the low note. Stem up designates the high note.)

A				
B				
C				
D				
E				
F				

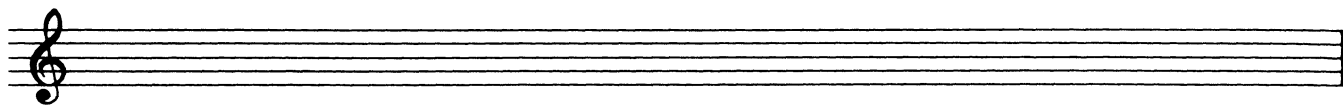
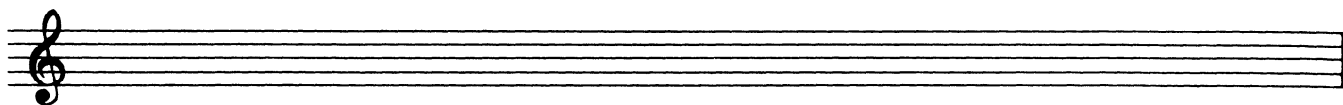
3. Find 2 different ways to perform this rhythm song. Write the form below.

Name _____ Date _____

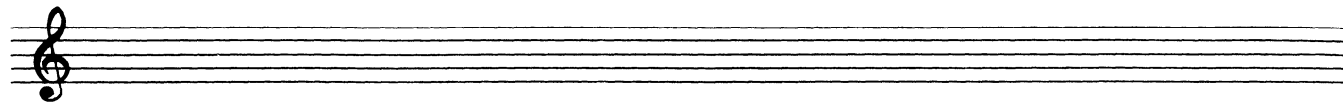
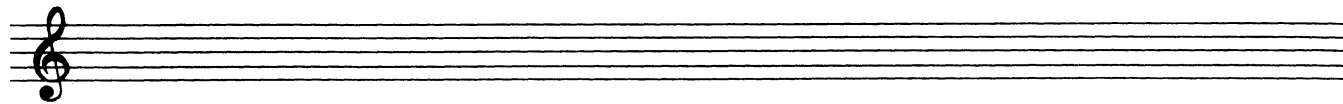
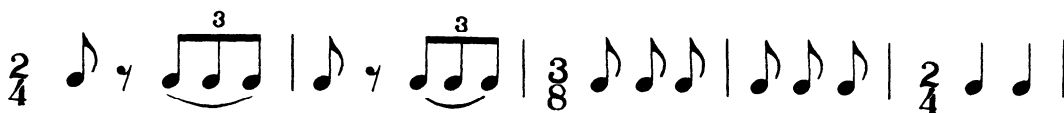
CHANGING METER

Many composers use several different meters in one composition. The changes of meter will add a new dimension to your melody.

1. Using the rhythms below, compose a 10-measure melody.



2. Using the rhythm below, compose a 10-measure melody.



3. Compose a new rhythm. Use at least 2 different meters.