

**Composing with my junior high/  
middle school band during rehearsal?  
YES YOU CAN!**

**2019 OMEA Conference, Cleveland, Ohio  
February 1, 2019 from 9:30-10:30 a.m.  
Huntington Convention Center – CC24**

- I. Two common questions:
  - A. “I’ve got a student in my band who has been composing?...”
  - B. “Where do your ideas come from?”
  - C. Re-creation and Improvisation have largely dominated school music experiences.
  - D. Planned creation – or *composing* – has been another story.
  - E. Young composers must summon incredible courage.
- II. Inspiration and Execution
  - A. There are two dimensions: What has been outwardly expressed (e.g. what is on paper and being experimented with), and what is yet to be discovered.
  - B. The filters of previous experience and the composer’s long-term knowledge will allow discovery of new ideas that complete an incomplete form, and the idea happens during transition.
  - C. This process helps a composer develop his/her own compositional grammar.
  - D. Four approaches to the compositional process
- III. Why Composing Makes Sense
  - A. Improvisation and the recreation of music in our ensembles is an important part of who we are in instrumental music.
  - B. When does the student gain ownership of the music?
  - C. Beyond that, wouldn’t engaging with concepts and elements within the music we are studying reinforce reading and performing skills?
- IV. Composition as a Teaching Tool
  - A. Process rather than product - Rules are good to have. Watch students break them.
  - B. How can a young composer capture an emerging moment? - Improvise, record, transcribe, revise & grow!
  - C. Write for chamber groups first! (The worst thing that could happen?)
- V. Provide Guidelines
  - A. Identify Key, Meter, Length
  - B. Provide a tonal and rhythmic range
  - C. Account for a suitable harmony to be used (if necessary)
  - D. Composition Assignment Example: DUET
- VI. Ideas for teaching composition using Junior High/Middle School Band Repertoire
  - A. *Irish Jig for Young Feet* by Travis J. Weller (FJH Music, Grade 2)
    - 1. Students write and perform music in 6/8 meter.
    - 2. Discuss and explore antecedent and consequent phrases in melodies.

- B. *Palo Duro Sunrise* by Jack Wilds (FJH Music, Grade 1.5)
  - 1. Students compose within specific guidelines (e.g. A set pentatonic scale, 8 measures in length).
  - 2. Introduce pentatonic scales and identify music in which they are used.
- C. *Sunchaser* by Carol Brittin-Chambers (Carl-Fischer 2)
  - 1. Students compose in triple meter utilizing syncopated rhythms
  - 2. Infuse energy and direction into a melody through articulation choices.
- D. *El Cid* by Scott Watson (Alfred Music, Grade 1.5)
  - 1. Engage students in a collaborative chamber group exercise.
  - 2. Introduce concept of ostinato and explore how it can be used.
  - 3. Allow percussion to make choices for orchestration.
- D. *Unraveling* by Andrew Boysen Jr. (Kjos Music, Grade 3)
  - 1. Students compose using a different and unique melodic language.
  - 2. Create a different emotional state through melodic language.
- E. *Friends of Freedom* by Timothy Loest (FJH Music, Grade 2)
  - 1. Students analyze and compose in a familiar form
  - 2. Students assume different roles in a collaborative process.
- G. *Ancient Conquest* by Jay Coles (C.L. Barnhouse, Grade 2.5)
  - 1. Students create a melody and write an accompanying story.
  - 2. Students apply different articulations, dynamics and phrasing to add dramatic and emotional effect.
- F.
  - 1. Arrange a trio of a folk song or Christmas Carol
  - 2. Write to an emotional state – What “sounds happy”, or what sounds like “I hate Mondays and the trumpets are out of tune”?
  - 3. Write in the absence of rule – “What sounds good to you?”

**Contact Information**

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