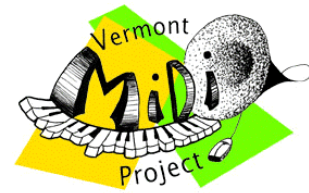


## Approach to Composition

Vermont MIDI Project

<http://www.vtmidi.org>



## Beethoven Copycat

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### Intent

I've found my students are captivated by stories about Beethoven, so decided one of their formal composition experiences could be to emulate his work. Whether their fascination comes from his outrageous behavior and appearance in the movie "Beethoven Lives Upstairs", their instant recognition of some of his famous melodies, or their sympathetic response to his hearing loss, students in elementary grades become interested in musical composition and are eager to try it.

**Example (s) of Student Work:** (posted at <http://www.vtmidi.org/resources.html>)

See Beethoven's Best and Calypso Beat for basic examples on the resources page See Lullaby Dreams and Simplicity for extensions of the basic process

### Standards Addressed:

National Standards for Arts Education (1994) *all below paraphrased from grade 4 and 8*  
Standard #4, Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

- a. compose short pieces within specified guidelines,
- b. demonstrate how the elements of music are used to achieve unity and variety, tension and release, and balance

Standard # 5: Reading and notating music

- a. use standard symbols to indicate pitch, rhythm, dynamics and tempo appropriate to grade level curriculum

Standard #6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Standard #7: Evaluating music compositions

Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities (2000)

1.16 and 5.23 Reflection and critique

Students critique their own and others' works in progress, both individually and in groups, to improve upon intent.

### Prior Experiences and Knowledge:





Although not essential, prior listening experiences with short selections of music by Beethoven provide models and inspiration. I look for pieces with rhythms the students know, or a melodic structure and form that they can hear and identify when they subsequently see it in notation.

Suggested listening pieces: opening to the 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement by Beethoven

"In the Hall of the Mountain King" from Peer Gynt Suite no 1 by Grieg

"Elephant" from The Carnival of Animals, Saint-Saëns

## **Procedure:**

-  Using the attached worksheet “Create Like Beethoven,” students will attempt to “discover” the identity of the tune, “Ode to Joy” from its notation. There are several ways this discovery can occur. Students can write down the letter names of the notes and play the melody on mallet instruments or keyboard. An alternative could be to sing the tune in solfege.
  
-  Once the tune is identified, students look for the form of the piece recognizing the AA<sup>1</sup>B A<sup>1</sup>. Guide students to observe the limited number of pitches and rhythmic choices Beethoven made in creating a melody that has been revered for over 175 years. The class discusses the step-wise motion of the melody, melodic contour, simple rhythm, and contrasting B section. I ask the students to help me post a list of the rhythmic values they know and will be using in their piece.
  
-  Next students create their own composition at the computer using the following guidelines: key of G major, ending the A<sup>1</sup> section on the home tone, 4/4 meter, using AA<sup>1</sup>B A<sup>1</sup> form, step-wise motion, and using simple rhythms. Key concepts are repetition and contrast between the A and B sections. I mention to the students Beethoven’s tied note from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> bar as an “eyebrow raiser” – something slightly new that surprises you.
  
-  Students can work in groups of two or three inputting their composition into notation software making sure to take turns using the mouse to click in the notes. The other student (s) assist with the choices of rhythm and pitch by offering suggestions and engaging in problem solving about the work. It’s important to have students frequently listen to what they’ve created while the work is in progress. The teacher will need to remind students to stop, listen, comment, and revise. My experience is that students don’t think they should listen until they have completed all the measures in one staff or until the entire composition is finished. I find it helpful to ask the students if they think Beethoven revised his work in progress and we discuss what they remember about his composition process from the movie.

## **Assessment:**

See attached rubric of musical concepts and elements.

## **Comments and Extension:**

Elementary students in fourth or fifth grade have had success with this lesson, but it isn’t the very first composition I would suggest for them. The entire process of creating 16 measures is too long for a beginning experience unless students have dedicated time with the computers over a six or eight lesson period.

Depending on the sophistication of the group and current curriculum goals, I might ask them to add tonic/dominant harmony or introduce them to writing I-IV-V chords. With groups who have less time to extend the process, I’ve added a percussion track to enhance their melody featuring a strong contrast in the B section. In some situations, I might ask students who completed the 16 measures to add a counter melody.

## Rubric for Beethoven Copycat Composition

Standard	Just Getting Started	Getting There	Meets the Standard	Exceeds the Standard
<b>Musical Form</b> NAMusic 4, 5,	No evidence of form	AA <sup>1</sup> BA <sup>1</sup> form is not quite clear	AA <sup>1</sup> BA <sup>1</sup> form of at least 12 measures	Composition extends form from AA <sup>1</sup> BA <sup>1</sup> to ABACA -rondo or theme and variations
<b>Rhythm</b> NAMusic 5	Many measures do not match with the meter signature	* Most measures match with the meter signature * There is limited variety in rhythm patterns	* Accurate number of beats per measure according to meter signature * Variety of rhythm patterns evident	
<b>Melody</b> NAMusic 5	Melody has many leaps and skips which make it difficult to sing or play	* Melody has some awkward skips or leaps * There are some repeated patterns for unity	* Melody is singable or playable * Melody clearly shows repeated patterns and variety in the B section	Melody includes an “eyebrow raiser” – element of surprise
<b>Tempo, Dynamics and Instrument Selection</b> NAMusic 4,5	Tempo, dynamics and instrument selection are set to default	Tempo, dynamics, and instruments are selected.	*Tempo appropriate to melody *Instrument selection fits with mood and style of piece *Dynamic contrast evident	
<b>Critique</b> NAMusic 7  Vermont 1.16, 5.23	Comment given has little connection with a composition	Comment describes musical elements in a composition using general terms	Comment accurately describes musical elements and offers a positive suggestion for improvement	Comment accurately describes the composition with musical terminology and provides suggestions for improvement