

Motif and Rhythmic Accompaniment

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Intent

This lesson is designed to help students learn how to develop a motif and complement it with a rhythmic accompaniment in ostinato form.

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

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.


3.10 Teamwork – Students perform effectively on teams that set and achieve goals, conduct investigations, solve problems, and create solutions.


Prior Experiences and Knowledge:


The students will have learned rhythmic notation, worked with melody construction, understand what an ostinato is and have used notation software.


Procedure:


- ♪ Discuss with the class what a motif is. (According the Harvard Dictionary of Music it is “a short figure of characteristic design that recurs throughout a composition or a section as a unifying element”)


 Listen to an example such as Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, First Movement. First play the four note motif for the class. (I find this piece very effective because the motif is very clear and most of the students have heard it before.) Play a recording of the movement and have the students raise their hand or indicate in some way, each time they hear the motif repeated.


 Ask the students what characterizes a motif.
A motif is short - could be only two notes
A motif can be identified by specific rhythm or intervals or both and has a distinct character.


 Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to develop a motif using a mallet instrument or keyboard.


 Have each group perform their motif, **critique**, and help them notate it on staff paper. (See additional information about the critique process from the resources page.)


 Taking the motifs, have each group go to a computer and set up a program using one melodic instrument of their choice and the drum set. Create a sheet with twenty-four measures.

 Using their motif and their knowledge of development (sequence, diminution, augmentation, retrograde - probably good to review this) from previous work with melody, have the students create eight measures in the melodic instrument starting and ending on the tonic.

 Talk about the ABA form and especially emphasize that the B section is often different in character than the A. Then have the groups write an eight measure B section still using their motif.

 Finally cut and paste the first eight measures into the last eight. Now the melodic part is complete.

 The second step of this exercise is to have the students create a rhythmic ostinato. I often give them a sheet of examples of Latin Rhythms that they can use - see rhythm sheet - or they can make their own. They should try to make it so that the rhythm compliments their melodic line and does not detract from it by being too dominating.

 Input the first statement of the ostinato (one or two measures) and then paste it into the next six measures. The students can use the same ostinato for the entire piece or change the ostinato for the B section (see student example above).



Once the rhythm section and melodic part are complete then do a final **critique** with the whole class.

Assessment:

- Is the motif used throughout the piece?
- Did the A section begin and end on the tonic?
- Is the B section different in character than the A?
- Does the ostinato complement the melodic line?
- Did the group work well as a team?

Comments: By using the rhythmic ostinato, the students can create a two-part composition without the harmonic constraints.

Comments and Extension:

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