


Beginning Improv, Composition, and Arranging Ideas for VIM Teachers Who Are Stuck!


BELL RINGERS


1. Finish the Phrase (*CR.1.2 for Novice [Rhythm], Developing [Melodic], Accomplished [Two voices], Advanced [multi-part]*)

- Students compose an ending to any rhythmic or melodic phrase (only for their instrument). Variations could include being open ended, creating a parallel or contrasting ending, ending on a half-cadence or full cadence, etc. They may do this in a manuscript notebook or on a worksheet. Example below:

Title _____Composer _____

T.
Bb.

CL.
B. Cl.

A. Sax.
B. Sax.

2. Composition (*CR.1.2 for all levels*)

- Students are prompted to
 - Novice - Notate an original, simple rhythm
 - Developing - Notate an original, simple melody
 - Intermediate - Notate an original countermelody for a given melody. Guitars or other harmonic instruments can notate harmonic accompaniment for a given melody.
 - Accomplished - Notate an original idea for two or more voices. This could be as simple as a 2-part, 4 bar percussion ostinato.
 - Advanced - Notate an original melody with harmony
- For adaptation, teacher projects a phrase on the board and students are prompted to modify the example. (*CR.2.1 for all levels*)

WARM UPS

1. Scales

- Play/Sing Bb scale whole-ensemble.
 - "Pass" the scale around the room (1 person performs each note for two beats)
 - Invite each student to play a two-beat rhythm on their note. (*Rhythmic Improv - N.CR.1.1*)
 - Extension: students aren't allowed to play the same rhythm as the person before them

2. Ear Training Motifs

- Student leader plays an improvised rhythm on Bb and the ensemble has to echo. Rotate leadership. (*Rhythmic Improv - N.CR.1.1, N.PR.1.3*)
- Student leader plays a short improvised phrase from the Bb Pentachord. Ensemble echos. Rotate leadership. (*Melodic Improv - D.CR.1.1, N.PR.1.3, I.PR.1.3*)
- Combine phrases, write them down. (*Composition - N.CR.1.2, D.CR.1.2*)
- Teacher projects a phrase on the board. Students play game 1 or 2 above but have to *modify* part of the phrase (not ALL of it) (*Adapt - N.CR.2.1, D.CR.2.1*)

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REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES

1. **Rhythmic Motif Study** (from rehearsal literature)
 - a. If there is a rhythm that needs close examination for accuracy, articulation, phrasing, or breathing, instead of simply repeating it over and over:
 - i. Invite students to improve pitch to the rhythm maintaining the articulation, phrasing, or breathing. (*Melodic Improv - D.CR.1.1, I.CR.1.1*)
 - ii. Extension: Students WRITE their melodic Improv (*Composition - D.CR.1.1*)
 - iii. Extension: string together FOUR motifs, but rhythmically modify the second and fourth iterations. (*Adapt - N.CR.2.1, D.CR.2.1*)

SIGHTREADING

1. Using the pitches and note values being studied, students create sightreading examples for their peers to complete. These are turned in to the teacher who shares them out for sightreading practice. (*CR.1.2 AND PR.1.4 for all levels depending on the exercise parameters*)

CHORALES

1. After study of a chorale, students are asked to make changes to some element. (*Arrangement - N.CR.2.1*). Students play their arrangements together! In the example below, students might make rhythmic changes to the whole notes. Each student could establish a rhythmic motif they could apply in every measure.

Chorale #7: Largo from New World Symphony - A. Dvořák ♩ = 72 Student page 18

The musical score is for a chorale titled "Chorale #7: Largo from New World Symphony" by Antonín Dvořák. It is a student page 18, indicating it is part of a larger work. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 72. The score is written for ten instruments: Flute, Oboe/Mallets, Bassoon, Clarinet in Bb, Bass Clarinet, Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone, and Trumpet. Each instrument part begins with a whole note (c) and a dynamic marking of p (piano). The notes are mostly whole notes, with some half notes and quarter notes in later measures. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb).