CREATIVE COMPOSING: *A Joyous Pathway to Musicianship*

Presented by Nancy Modell at the May 2014 Suzuki Conference, Minneapolis, MN

Every child can… compose! Composing is your students' opportunity to capture and communicate original ideas and personal emotions through music. Expand your vision for your students by learning ways to introduce composition. It is a joyous activity as well as an invaluable pedagogical tool to enhance musicianship. By melding the roles of composer and performer, a student, at any performance or theory level, achieves a remarkable artistic feat while enjoying the creative process.

What are the benefits?

- Develops creativity as a vital part of our students' music-making experience.
- Allows for freedom of expression in an imaginative way.
- Encourages risk-taking in sharing students' innermost emotions and thoughts publicly through music.
- Familiarizes students with musical form and other aspects of music theory as they construct their own work.
- Reinforces the many aspects of reading music notation by actually writing it.
- Motivates students to respect the details of a composer's intentions when performing others' compositions.
- Builds confidence and gives pleasure by adding another dimension of music making.
- Provides positive reinforcement and validation for students who compose and perform their own works.

Who is ready to compose music?

All Suzuki students! All levels: readers and non-readers.

Budgeting time for composing activities

- For flow, find an 8-10 week period of uninterrupted time.
- Plan to use 5 minutes or more per lesson.
- The bulk of the student's work is done at home, with supportive parents on hand.
- Schedule a world première, public performance.

The Process

- Select a general topic or theme for all students.
  - Music Inspired by…
    - Literature, Art, Nature, Motion
- Each student picks a specific topic for their composition.
  - Brainstorm with students.
  - Ask lots of open questions.
  - Student selects a concrete storyline, emotion or situation to be expressed in musical sounds.
- Discuss parent's role for work at home.
  - Parents promote student's independent thought and ideas.
  - Parents, as facilitators, give support and encouragement.
- Guide the student to discover how different musical elements (melody, rhythm, range, articulations, dynamics, etc.) can be used to express the selected topic.
- Students try out various options at home and choose the best one that fits the bill.
  - Help student adjust the difficulty of the music to a manageable level.
- Students write/notate the music:
  - For Non-readers
    - Record ideas (smart phone/ipad, parent's preferred device)
    - Reminder cards
  - For Readers
    - Record ideas (smart phone/ipad, parent's preferred device)
    - Notate drafts of ideas (motifs)
    - Notate the composition
      - Long-hand
      - Use software (*Noteflight, Sibelius, Finale*, etc.)

Detail from ***Giovanni Francesco di Majo*** **by Diego Pesco**

- Help students polish and prepare towards a public performance.
- Students perform the composition in the world première recital.

Pedagogical guidelines

- Keep in mind: *Every child can…* compose!
- Kindle our Suzuki students' inner drive for self-expression through music.
- Encourage and assist our students, of all levels, to tap into their imagination and take on this rewarding challenge.
- If necessary, overcome mental blocks and inhibitions with improvisation exercises.
- Support expressive risk-taking and experimentation with their instrument.
- Be receptive to innovative ideas, such as collaborations with other. students/siblings (duets) and with other instruments besides their own.

RESOURCES to explore:

Pattern Play by Forrest Kinney
Piano Teacher's Guide to CREATIVE COMPOSITION by Carol Klose
Musical Improvisation for Children by Alice Kay Kanack
Creative Composition Toolbox Step-By-Step Guide for Learning to Compose by Wynn-Anne Rossi
Composition for Young Musicians: A Fun Way for Kids to Begin Creating Music by Jennifer Wilson
Music Composition for Teens: a graded first course by Adriana Janse van Rensburg Ph.D.
Teaching Music Through Composition: A Curriculum Using Technology by Barbara Freedman