

# I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY! HELPING STUDENTS EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN THE “LANGUAGE” OF MUSIC

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- I. Is music a language? No, but.....
  - A. Music is learned in the ways that a language is learned. What allows us to “speak?” Syntax (in music, tonal and rhythm are the two primary syntactical systems) and vocabulary.
  - B. Rich immersion and structured guidance (like language)
  - C. Goals: Audiation and musical independence. Lays the foundation for lifelong music interaction.
  - D. Variety of tonalities and meters. Language parallel: being surrounded with a rich vocabulary results in better language development.
- II. Tonal Syntax
  - A. Audiation of tonic
    1. Performance of tonic by pausing during song and having students (as a group and then individuals) perform tonic. You can make it into a game using almost any song. (Bean bags, Ball toss, Hoberman sphere)

## Russian Folk Song



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2. Performance of sustained tonic along with the melody of a song.

## Bumble Bee

Edwin Gordon  
adapted by Cynthia Taggart

$\text{♩} = 120$

7

The musical notation for 'Bumble Bee' is written on two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 5/8 time signature. It contains the first six measures of the melody. The second staff starts with a measure rest labeled '7', followed by measures 7 through 12. The time signature changes to 6/8 in the final measure of the second staff.

Original song from *The Early Childhood Music Curriculum: Experimental Songs and Chants Book One* by Gordon, Bolton, Hicks, and Taggart. GIA Publications, 1993. Used by permission.

3. Performance of tonic ostinato (Works best with rounds)

## Oh, How Lovely is the Evening

Traditional

8

Oh, how lo - vely is the e vening, is the e vening, when the

13

bells are sweet - ly ring - ing, sweet - ly ring ing.

Ding Dong Ding Dong Ding Dong

The musical notation for 'Oh, How Lovely is the Evening' is written on three staves. The first staff is in 3/4 time and contains the first six measures of the melody. The second staff continues the melody for six more measures. The third staff consists of six measures of a tonic ostinato, with the notes D, F, and A (representing the notes Ding, Dong, Ding, Dong, Ding, Dong).

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### B. Harmonic Audiation

1. Lots of hearing chord-root accompaniments

# Five Cents Have I

♩ = 120



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2. Singing chord roots from rote

Bow Belinda

# Button You Must Wander

Traditional

♩ = 120

Musical notation for the piece 'Button You Must Wander'. It consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff contains the melody with the lyrics: "But-ton you must wan-der, wan-der, wan-der. But-ton you must wan-der ev' - ry where." The second staff contains a lower line of music with the lyrics: "Bright eyes must find you. Sharp eyes must find you. But-ton you must wan-der ev' - ry where".

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Can even use popular music recordings as a way of bridging the gap between school music and music in the lives of students.

(Tonic and dominant in M and m and then add subdominant. Other tonalities have different harmonic functions that are primary.)

3. Singing chord roots from audiation

# Autumn Wind

Slowly

Heather Nelson Shouldice

$\text{♩} = 76$

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff in 2/4 time. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The tempo is marked 'Slowly' with a metronome marking of quarter note = 76. The score consists of two systems of four measures each. The first system contains the lyrics: 'Ooh - Ooh - Wind is blow - ing through the trees.' The second system contains the lyrics: 'Ooh - Ohh - Au - tumn time is here.' Chord symbols 'i' and 'V7' are placed below the bass line of each system. A '5' is written below the first measure of the second system. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Ooh - Ooh - Wind is blow - ing through the trees.

i V7 i

5

Ooh - Ohh - Au - tumn time is here.

i V7 i

From *Music Play Two* by Reynolds, Valerio, and Taggart. In press. GIA Publications. Used by permission.

Challenge students to see if they can find songs on their playlists that use the chords that they know.

## 4. Singing chordal accompaniments

Skip to My Lou, Autumn Wind

## III. Rhythm Syntax

A. Flow: Scarves facilitate flow. Different body parts for body awareness. Hips are really helpful as they are the center of body weight.

# Molly Bann

Kansas

$\text{♩} = 120$



Mol - ly Bann went a wal - king, wal - king a - lone. Mol - ly

5



Bann went wal - king when the show - ers come on.

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the song 'Molly Bann'. The first staff is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 120. The lyrics are 'Mol - ly Bann went a wal - king, wal - king a - lone. Mol - ly'. The second staff starts with a measure rest labeled '5' and continues with the lyrics 'Bann went wal - king when the show - ers come on.' The key signature has one flat (Bb).

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## B. Flow with pulsations

Ocean Waves: Flow with pulsations to microbeats and macrobeats separately (can be disguised through games and facilitated by props)

# Ocean Waves

$\text{♩} = 120$



The image shows a single staff of musical notation for 'Ocean Waves'. It is in 6/8 time with a tempo of 120. The notation consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, creating a rhythmic pattern that mimics ocean waves. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

From *The Early Childhood Music Curriculum: Experimental Songs and Chants Book One* by Gordon, Bolton, Hicks, and Taggart. GIA Publications, 1993. Used by permission.

## C. Feel beat without creating tension (only needed as remediation): Haul Away Joe (Rowing in pairs and finding new partners)

# Haul Away, Joe

Traditional Sea Chanty



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Rowing as a group:

# Tiptoe



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D. Audiation of Multiple Levels of Beat (meter):  
Improvise and have them do micros. Then macros. Then both.

“Seashells” by Cynthia Taggart (ostinati: Sea and seashells)

Walking on the shore with me,  
Picking up seashells, 1, 2, 3.

### “I Love Lydian” (Lydian/Duple)

- Pat lap to and chant macrobeats and microbeats.
- Students walk and move the pictured body part to macrobeats. Repeat with moving to microbeats. Then students choose whether to move to macrobeats or microbeats!

## I Love Lydian

unknown

I love ly - di - an, yes I do. I love ly - di - an, you will too.

5  
I love ly - di - an, yes I do. It's my fav - orite mode.

(A student in one of my summer workshops wrote this song, but I don't remember who it was! If it was you, please tell me so that I can start giving you credit for it! I love it and use it all of the time.)

- IV. Development of Vocabulary: Learning the “words” of music. . . tonal and rhythm patterns.
- A. Hearing: We are surrounded by language. Children need to be surrounded by music as well, and that music should be varied rich in diversity.
- B. Imitating (echoing): As part of their learning process, children imitate words. They also need to learn to imitate tonal and rhythm patterns individually and in groups.

Tonal Patterns:

## My Pony Bill

My pony bill, my pony bill, my pony bill, my pony bill.

My pony bill, my pony bill, my pony bill, my pony bill.

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Rhythm Patterns:

## Walking Shoes

$\text{♩} = 120$



I'm gon-na put put put on my wal-king shoes. I'm gon-na but - but - but-ton up my coat. I'm gon - na walk, walk, walk where's there's things to see and if you want to you can walk with me.

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- C. Recognizing/identifying: Part of language comprehension is recognizing familiar words in the language environment.

Tonal Patterns:

## Ally Bally

Traditional

$\text{♩} = 120$



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Rhythm Patterns:

## Jumping

Alison Reynolds

$\text{♩} = 120$



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D. Labeling: Syllable systems and rationale.

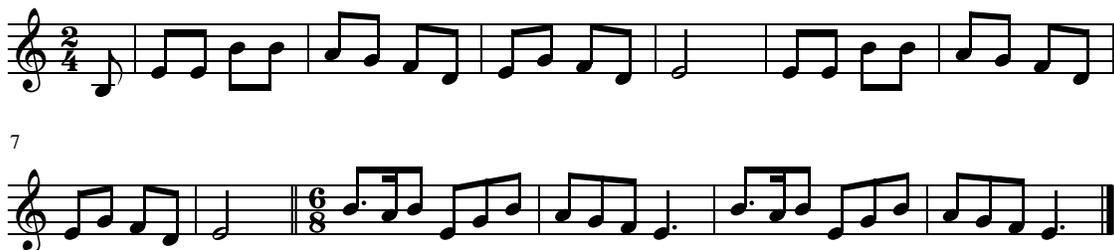
Same types of activities only with solfege/rhythm syllables.

Example: Singing the resting tone with syllables: Play a game with Russian Song using the Hoberman sphere. When the sphere closes, the students should sing the resting tone using the tonal syllable.

Example: Chanting the syllables of macrobeats and microbeats: Labeling of meter

## The Pirate Song

Unknown



- Chant macrobeats with syllables
- Chant microbeats with syllables
- Combine the two

- Identify the meters

Example: Echo patterns with syllables (tonal and rhythm)

## Little Rondo

Anonymous

♩ = 120



Ba - ker's hat, just your size, when it's on your head you im - pro - vise.

Change text in this case to “Baker’s hat, 1, 2, 3, when it’s on your head you echo me.”

- Move around the room with flow and pulsations
- Freeze at the end of each repetition of the song, pretend to put a “Baker’s Hat” on a student’s head and chant rhythm patterns with syllables for that student to echo.

Example: Label functions of patterns

## LOVE SOMEBODY

♩ = 120



Love some - bo - dy yes I do. Love some - bo - dy, yes I do.  
Love some - bo - dy, yes I do. Love some - bo - dy but I don't know who.

- Find the pattern in the song
- Echo the pattern using syllables
- Identify the tonality of the song
- Identify the function of the pattern
- Sing the song with students singing the pattern with syllables and teaching singing the rest.

V. Children as creators of music: Natural outgrowth of having vocabulary, syntax, and something to say.

A. The case for creativity:

1. Lets us see what children actually know.
2. Lets children express themselves in a much richer way musically.
3. Deepens and internalizes what children are learning, but most important...
4. Allows children to express their own ideas. Makes them feel like real musicians.

B. Definitions:

Exploration: Experimenting with sounds. Child is unable to predict the sound that he or she is about to make. Serves as readiness for the rest of the list.

Creation: An umbrella term that can include composition and improvisation. Make up something new either in performance, audiation, or as a written product. Child knows what it will sound like before it is performed or written.

Improvisation: Making up something new either during performance or in audiation within specified boundaries. Improvisation is like conversation or speaking.

Composition: Composition is like composing and writing an essay or speech...prepared and replicable. Not necessarily, but can be written down. Not necessarily boundaries.

TIPS: It helps children to see creative processes modeled. They are so used to imitating that creating can be difficult at first. (Puppets, other adults)

C. Creative Activities: Will be most successful after readinesses are in place, but that is not a reason to wait to engage children in creative activities. The goal is not "correctness."

1. Tonal and Melodic Creation: Patterns and melodic conversations (Skin and Bones, trading phrases, make up song to traditional poem in time by phrase: Humpty Dumpty)
2. Tonal Improvisation: Start with patterns
  - a. Conversation: no function specification/same function/different function
  - b. Improvisation between performances of a song with a partner (My Own True Friend)
3. Tonal Composition:
  - a. Replace patterns in a song to create a new song. (Love Somebody). Solidifies audiation.
  - b. Compose an ostinato to a song (Are You Sleeping). Could move these to instruments. Could notate them. Could allow students to make an arrangement of them.
  - c. Compose an introduction or a coda
  - d. Compose a melody to a text or without a text
4. Rhythm Improvisation

- a. Rhythm conversation
- b. Rhythm rondo (Baker's Hat) (Start with shorter improvisation periods...4 macrobeats...and move to longer ones...8 or 16 macrobeats.)

5. Rhythm Composition

- a. Rearrange rhythm patterns in a new order: Can use flashcards
- b. Substitute a created pattern for one that occurs in a song (Little Wind)
- c. Compose an introduction or coda to a song (Canoe Song)
- d. Compose an ostinato to a song (Canoe Song)
- e. Compose a chant

D. Azzara's Improvisation Process (Sandy Land)

- 1. Sing chord roots on macrobeats
- 2. Sing chord roots with rhythmic improvisations
- 3. Sing pitches of chords on macrobeats
- 4. Sing pitches of chords with rhythms
- 5. Add neighboring and passing tones
- 6. Sing with a neighbor

Could move to composition with reflection and/or notation.

VI. Role of Arranging

Building blocks: Some of these can be taught, and others can be created by the students

- Melody
- Counter melodies
- Rhythmic ostinati
- Melodic ostinati
- Chord roots
- Chordal accompaniments
- Body percussion
- Movement
- Beat box accompaniment
- Optional introductions
- Optional codas
- Improvisations
- And there probably are many more

**Getting Started:** Model the process by including the entire class in arranging process. Be explicit about your thinking. Age and experience dependent.

**Swing a Lady** Mixolydian/Duple

**Task (parameters of arrangement):** Create an arrangement of the song that uses all three rhythm ostinati as well as the root melody and the melody. It must have a coda and

an introduction. (Engaging building blocks of melody, introduction, coda, and rhythm ostinati that were taught by the teacher as well as the musical concept of form)

**Teach the building blocks:**

- Sing song or play recording. (Children must know the music well to arrange it.)
- Add whole note chant of “Swing, Swing”
- Add next layer of chant “Swing her up, Swing her down”
- Add final layer of chant “Cedar swamp, it’s muddy”

**Model the process:**

- Create an arrangement with the class, including the ostinati (Model the process for them)
- Reflect on the arrangement. Perhaps make changes. Perhaps make a different one to demonstrate that there are no “right” answers. Could allow children to work in small groups after modeling the process to let them create their own arrangements.

## Swing A Lady

Kentucky



A - way down yon-der in the ce - dar swamp, Where the wa - ter's deep and mud - dy,

5



There I spied my pret - ty lit - tle girl and there I spied my ho - ney.

9



Swing a la - dy up and down, Swing a la - dy 'round.

11



Swing a la - dy up and down, Swing a la - dy home.



$\text{♩} = 120$



Swing her up.

Swing her down.

♩=120

Ce - dar swamp it's mud - dy.

### Are You Sleeping (Major/Duple)

**Task (parameters of arrangement):** Create an arrangement of the song that uses at least three of the melodic ostinati as well as the melody. Include an introduction and a coda. The ostinato can serve in these roles. Use a round (canon) in the arrangement, but the melody does not need to be in canon each time that it is presented. Transfer at least two of the ostinati to tonebar instruments. You can create another ostinato to include in your arrangement if you wish. (Engaging building blocks of melody, introduction, coda, and melodic ostinati that were taught by the teacher as well as the musical concept of form, canon, instrumentation and dynamics)

**Teach the building blocks and model the process. Make sure to reflect.**

♩=120

Ding ding dong

♩=120

Ring

♩=120

Ding dong ding dong

♩=120

Ring a ling

**One final arrangement opportunity if time:**  
**The Eefin' Song** Minor/Swing

**Task (parameters of arrangement):** Create an arrangement of the song that uses at least three of the melodic parts and at least one of the body percussion ostinati. Create one



Valerio, W. H., Reynolds, A. M., Bolton, B. M., Taggart, C. C., & Gordon, E. E. (1998). *Music Play: The Early Childhood Music Curriculum*. Chicago: GIA.