

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Improvisation and Interpretation for High School Instrumental Students

Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Arts in Music Education

by

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**MA: ETHNOMUSICOLOGY/MA: MUSIC EDUCATION/MA: MUSIC AND WORSHIP
PROPOSAL DECISION**

The advisor has rendered the following decision concerning the proposal status for
 Jeff Bianchine
 on the research topic
 title of
Improvisation and Interpretation for High School Instrumental Students
 as submitted on
 December 10, 2021:

- a. X **Full Approval** to proceed with no proposal revisions. The student may fully engage the research and writing process according to the established timeline. Upon full approval, the student may apply for IRB approval, if applicable (see STEP 4 concerning IRB approval process).

- b. _____ **Provisional Approval** to proceed with proposal pending cited revisions. (This is the most common decision). The student must resubmit the proposal with cited revisions according to the established timeline. The Advisor will indicate the committee’s status on your response to the required revisions. The student may NOT apply for IRB approval until full approval is granted.

- c. _____ **Redirection of Proposal.** The student is being redirected to develop a new proposal, as minor revisions will not meet the expectations for the research project. The student may NOT apply for IRB approval.

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Abstract

Improvisation is associated with jazz or rap in modern western culture, but classical music has a long tradition of improvisation featuring famous improvisers such as Mozart and Liszt. Improvisation develops critical thinking and problem solving, essential skills in the American job market. The typical instrumental student does not often get the opportunity to use this. Bloom's Taxonomy explains that students who do critical thinking activities in class have a better understanding of the course material. This course will equip students to improvise with others, make executive decisions about artistic elements in the repertoire, self-critic playing, and compose a short cadenza.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Improvisation is associated with jazz and big band music in Western culture, where improvisational sections are notated in their repertoire. Because of this, students who participate in choir, orchestra, or bands that do not perform big band repertoire are rarely taught how to improvise. Most of the time students are in an instrumental program is spent on the lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy which utilize knowledge and application, instead of the critical thinking levels of analyze, evaluate, and create. Instrumental teachers and ensemble directors make the artistic choices for their students, who try their best to bring to life what is in their director's head. There is a need for a curriculum where high school instrumental students have the opportunity to improvise, create short compositions, and make artistic choices using the instruments they have studied. Critical thinking is a vital skill for adult life and the demands of the changing job market in America. Jobs requiring workers to analyze, synthesize, and make evaluation decisions are usually higher paying and offer more benefits than jobs requiring repetition of applied knowledge. The curriculum in this paper provides instrumental students the opportunity to utilize critical thinking with the instrument they have invested so much time into learning.

Background

Over the past 60 years, the American job market has shifted from jobs that require repetitive tasks to jobs that require creative problem-solving. Arts education has always contributed to a person's growth as a creative problem solver. A study from 2011 showed that 8th and 11th-grade students who were in instrumental programs outperformed students in the critical

thinking part of standardized tests than those who were not.¹ Despite the benefits of improvisation, instrumental programs often have students spend more time learning the instrument through repetition than critical thinking.² Dr. Christopher Azzara defines improvisation as “An ability to make music spontaneously within specified musical parameters.”³ This requires an individual to create new melodies, harmonies, and rhythms to fit what is going on musically around them.

Many states have updated their education standards to incorporate the upper levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. In Massachusetts, one of the five categories for music standards that is required to be taught every year is creating. The creating standards include improvising melodies and harmonies, arranging, and composing. The curriculum outlined in this paper fulfills multiple states’ creating standards for music education.

Bloom’s Taxonomy

Bloom’s Taxonomy is a learning theory that informs educators on how students use the knowledge and skills they acquire to perform specific tasks and has been a driving force in education. In 1956, Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues published a framework called *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. The modern version of Bloom’s Taxonomy, which many state

¹J. McAllister, “A Study of the Relationship between Instrumental Music Education and Critical Thinking in 8th-And 11th-Grade Students, Canadian Winds,” *Canadian Winds: The Journal of the Canadian Band Association* 11, no. 1 (2012): 36, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fstudy-relationship-between-instrumental-music%2Fdocview%2F1283962432%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

² J. L. Forsythe, D.W. Kinney, and E. L. Braun, “Opinions of Music Teacher Educators and Preservice Music Students On the National Association of Schools of Music Standards for Teacher Education,” *Journal of Music Teacher Education* (2007): 19-33.

³ Christopher Azzara, *The New Handbook of Research On Music Teaching and Learning*, ed. Richard Colwell and Carol Richardson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 171-87.

education standards are inspired by, was published in 2001 in *A Taxonomy for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment*.

The most recent version of Bloom's taxonomy has six levels: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. Each level builds upon what is learned in the previous levels to allow greater comprehension. The lower three levels of remember, understand, and apply have been the focal point of industrial revolution era education and are crucial first steps before critical thinking occurs. Remembering facts is the first task a student must complete before interacting with course material on a deeper level. Remembering entails recalling, listing, and defining points.⁴ Understanding the facts that they have memorized is the next task. Students who understand course material can explain why these facts are accurate.⁵ Once students understand the lesson material, they can apply it in various ways. Implementing, solving, and demonstrating are all forms of application.⁶ American education before the 1950s was focused on these first levels because it prepared students to join an industrial workforce focused on product creation. People that worked in factories needed to understand their work and do repetitive tasks with a high level of accuracy. The changing demands of the American job market caused the focus in education to shift to critical thinking skills to better prepare workers.

The top three levels, analyze, evaluate, and create, are the critical thinking functions. Analyzing requires students to make value assessments about and sort data. Students sort, compare, contrast, examine and test the information to better understand it.⁷ Evaluating requires

⁴ P. Armstrong, "Bloom's Taxonomy," Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, accessed October 10th, 2021, <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

justifying a viewpoint with facts. Students explain their opinions on a matter using information they learned earlier in a class.⁸ Creating requires the student to make something new. Creating is the most open-ended of all the levels and often has more than one correct answer. Students design, assemble or investigate to understand the lesson objectives fully. Bloom's Taxonomy stresses the importance of critical thinking, suggesting that teachers work the top three levels into lessons as much as possible.

Incorporating the critical thinking levels of Bloom's Taxonomy is required by many schools and state standards because it is beneficial to student development. Numerous jobs in the modern workplace require critical thinking, and most factory jobs have moved to other countries, so the workers in the United States need to provide other services to make a living. Critical thinking proficiency is a skill many successful people have. These critical thinking activities can occur in any class, including instrumental courses.

Improvisation in Different Fields of Study

Many fields require the use of improvisation and critical thinking. "Improvisation is about listening, collaborating, and creating, and those skills are at the heart of being human; the possibilities to apply improv research to other fields seem almost limitless."⁹ This means that if a music educator devotes time to improvisation and critical thinking in their curriculum, students will be able to apply this same thought process to other essential tasks later in life.

A large variety of jobs in the United States require their employees to use critical thinking skills and elements of improvisation. In the technology field, engineers developing new

⁸ P. Armstrong.

⁹ Clay Drinko, "How Improvisation Changes the Brain," Psychology Today, last modified 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/play-your-way-sane/201910/how-improvisation-changes-the-brain>.

products need to create new solutions to problems posed to them by their employers and the market in general. Engineer D. A. Grier describes that, in regards to his day-to-day work, "The essential element of the story was likely my tendency to improvise with technology while gathering data and assessing my options."¹⁰ This quote indicates that his ability to improvise helped him solve problems in this field.

Many leaders and historical figures in other sciences also credit their music education with having influenced their creative abilities. Thomas Südhof, who won a Nobel Prize in 2013 in Physiology or Medicine, described how his time practicing the violin gave him solid attention to detail and a better understanding of the creative process.¹¹ Physicists Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg, and Max Planck all played instruments throughout their lives, including while working as scientists.¹² Einstein is famous for his theory of relativity, which changed the way physicists understand space, time, and gravity. Heisenberg was one of the first people to research quantum mechanics, and Planck was a theoretical physicist who won a Nobel Prize for discovering energy quanta. These scientists all worked in fields utterly separate from music yet had respect for how their time studying music benefited them in their lives endeavors.

Business and leadership jobs also require problem-solving skills. Leadership is crucial when there are unforeseen problems that arise. "Improvisation represents an effective means by which catastrophic systems failures can be prevented or mitigated."¹³ If a business suffers from

¹⁰ D. A. Grier, "Technological Improvisation," *Computer* 49, no. 5 (2001): 128-29.

¹¹"The Symphony of Science," Nobel Prize, accessed September 26, 2021, <https://www.nobelprize.org/symphony-of-science/>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Margaret J. Trotter et al., "Distributed Improvisation: A Systems Perspective of Improvisation 'epics' by Led Outdoor Activity Leaders," *Ergonomics* (2018): 295-312.

distribution failures or a workers' strike, the leadership team will be able to solve the problem quickly and with fewer negative consequences if they can think creatively. A good solution in a crisis can prevent a company from losing thousands of dollars.¹⁴

Even the construction field requires the workers and supervisors to use problem-solving skills. Construction "Although unpopular, given that it indicates deviation from plans, improvisation is unavoidable in construction planning because it helps address emerging nonstandard issues or unexpected problems."¹⁵ While construction workers are working to build something already designed, how they work to make that happen requires them to resolve situations that cannot always be predicted.

Improvisation and the Working Memory

An interdisciplinary benefit of improvisation is that it boosts workers' working memory who have invested time in it. A person who has a large working memory can keep more concepts floating in their mind at once than someone who does not, and this allows a person to deal with more complex ideas and process more data at once. Having a large working memory benefits workers in almost any field they find themselves in.¹⁶

Statement of Purpose

This curriculum created by this project outlines a new class that utilizes what students already know about their instrument and allows them to make artistic decisions for their instrumental repertoire and improvise. High school instrumental programs rarely address

¹⁴ Paul Hughes et al., "Explaining the Entrepreneurial Orientation–performance Relationship in Emerging Economies Apjm: The Intermediate Roles of Absorptive Capacity and Improvisation," *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* (2017)

¹⁵ Farook R. Hamzeh, Hasnaa Alhussein, and Farah Faek, "Technical Papers Investigating the Practice of Improvisation in Construction," *Journal of Management in Engineering* 34, no. 6 (November 2018).

¹⁶ C. K. De Dreu et al., "Working Memory Benefits Creative Insight, Musical Improvisation, and Original Ideation through Maintained Task-Focused Attention," *Personality and social psychology bulletin* (2012).

interpretation and improvisation because they emphasize preparing for concerts, and improvisation is isolated to jazz bands where the teacher interprets ensemble music. Students who put in the effort to study an instrument through high school should have these skills to keep up their instrument as a hobby into adult life and reinforce their creative problem-solving abilities.

Research Questions

Several questions are addressed throughout this study to justify this project's curriculum. Do modern schools in America require critical thinking skills? School curriculums need to fit each state's education system's standards. What vocations require a significant amount of critical thinking on a day-to-day basis? How do current instrumental programs develop critical thinking? It is essential to know what types of curricula exist before creating something new. What are some unique ways that these programs could promote critical thinking? This project introduces new activities for educators to use when reinforcing the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Research Plan

This project created a curriculum that addresses critical thinking in the instrumental classroom. The research first began with a literature review that examines existing curricula and analyzes the benefits of critical thinking. State standards are reviewed to show how this new curriculum fits into the requirements of modern music education. The information gained from this research informed the activities within the curriculum.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Research has shown Bloom's Taxonomy to teach higher-order thinking effectively. The National Association for Music Education has created standards that incorporate critical thinking activities as a model that states can refer to when writing their standards. Massachusetts, Texas, and California each have a variety of state standards requiring teachers plan activities that use the analyze, evaluate, and create levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Music education researchers have published works that assist teachers in implementing these classroom activities.

Benefits of Applying Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's taxonomy is a significant learning theory that shows students can use higher-order learning when the steps of this taxonomy are implemented. A three-part study at Washington University in 2018 showed that activities such as open-ended comprehension questions increased higher-order test performance than pure fact memorization.¹⁷ The open-ended questions from this study were delivered as quizzes during class and only counted for participation credit to middle school and college students.¹⁸ This activity required students to analyze and evaluate the information they were learning about to respond to the questions. The other group of students took multiple-choice and true or false style quizzes about the course material that also was only for participation credit.¹⁹ The group of students who prepared for the test by answering open-ended questions scored higher than the group of students who memorized pure facts. This study shows a positive correlation between following the outline of Bloom's Taxonomy and the ability to utilize course material to answer higher-order thinking questions.

¹⁷ Pooja K Agarwal, "Retrieval Practice," *Journal of educational psychology* (2019): 189-209.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

A study done in South Korea in 2020 showed that online students remembered facts from class better when they had an assessment at the end of class involving application.²⁰ The classes in this study were an hour long and contained two or three learning objectives²¹. Some of the classes had to take an assessment at the end of class that required them to synthesize the facts they had just learned and apply them to open-ended questions, but the control group did not.²² At the end of the units, the students who were in the group that did the assessment at the end of the class scored higher on their formal assessments than the group that did not.²³ This study shows that when students have to use the application level of Bloom's Taxonomy, they have a better understanding of the course material than when they only use the remember and understand levels.

Bloom's Taxonomy informs the curriculum in a variety of ways. Students are motivated to do well on assessments, so if an assessment contains critical thinking questions, they will put in extra work to prepare for them. A study from 2005 showed that multiple-choice questions could evaluate the bottom four levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, including the higher-order thinking level of analysis, when the teacher considered this taxonomy when writing the questions.²⁴ Bloom's Taxonomy also informs class activities. Teachers should give students opportunities to interact with course materials in ways that require them to use critical thinking.

State Education Standards Regarding Critical Thinking

²⁰ Seung-Joo Na, "Application of Bloom's Taxonomy to Formative Assessment in Real-Time Online Classes in Korea," *한국교육학* (2021): 191-201.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Anne-Marie Brady, "Assessment of Learning with Multiple-Choice Questions," *Nurse Education in Practice* (2005): 238-42.

Many organizations that regulate or advocate for change in state educational standards have emphasized critical thinking. The National Association for Music Education has said that “Students need to have experience in creating, to be successful musicians and to be successful 21st-century citizens.”²⁵ This organization advocates for music education in the United States. It has thousands of practicing music educators who teach to the standards they outline, indicating that many educators already implement or want to implement these standards, including those that reference critical thinking. The National Association for Music Education sets an example for state education systems to strive for by creating standards informed by modern research.

Three states used as examples for the rest of the nation are Massachusetts, California, and Texas. Each of these states has multiple standards that address critical thinking. California anchor standard 4 for performing entails selecting, analyzing, and interpreting artistic works for presentation.²⁶ Activities such as picking skill-appropriate repertoire, creating a unique interpretation of it, then performing it to meet the requirements of this standard.

The Texas music standards contain three tasks that require critical thinking. The creative expression standard states, “The student creates and explores new musical ideas within specified guidelines. The student is expected to: (A) create rhythmic phrases through improvisation or composition; (B) create melodic phrases through improvisation or composition; and (C) create simple accompaniments through improvisation or composition.”²⁷ These three activities all fit the description for critical thinking as outlined by Bloom’s Taxonomy.

²⁵ “Standards,” National Association for Music Educators, accessed October 3, 2021, <https://nafme.org/my-classroom/standards>.

²⁶ “California Arts Standards,” California State Board of Education, accessed June 23, 2021, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/vapacontentstds.asp>.

²⁷ “Fine Arts,” Texas Education Agency, accessed October 20, 2021, <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/subject-areas/fine-arts>.

In Massachusetts, the music standards are grouped into the five categories of singing, notation, instruments, creating, and reflecting. Each category has critical thinking elements, and the creating category exclusively so. Creating contains activities as simple as “Improvising ‘answers’ in the same style to given rhythmic and melodic phrases,” which is intended for kindergarten through third-grade students, or as complex as, “Compose and arrange short pieces for voices or instruments within teacher-specified guidelines, using the elements of music to achieve unity and variety, tension and release, and balance,” which is intended for middle or high school students.²⁸ The notation category is focused on reading and dictating music. The final standard requires students to use critical thinking by requiring that they “use standard notation to record their own musical ideas and those of others.”²⁹ The reflecting category has many critical thinking requirements such as “analyze the uses of elements in aural examples representing diverse genres and cultures.”³⁰ The presence of critical thinking standards in all categories means that teachers in Massachusetts will be required to include critical thinking activities into all of their lessons.

²⁸ “2019 Arts Standards,” Massachusetts Department of Education, accessed October 20th, 2021, <https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/arts/2019-08.docx>.

²⁹ “Ibid.

³⁰ “Ibid.

The State of Critical Thinking in the Modern Music Classroom

While many states and standards promote critical thinking activities, many music educators teach few to no critical thinking activities in practice. A survey of music teachers of grades K-12 showed that the majority considered improvisation and composition low priorities for their yearly curriculum.³¹ A similar survey of college students studying to enter the workforce as music educators showed slight to moderate confidence in their ability to teach improvisation.³² A study of string teachers in California found that the majority of the class time was spent working on technical elements and learning repertoire³³.

The typical instrumental student in America starts with either in school lessons or a private lesson teacher. By the time an instrumental student has three or four years of experience with an instrument, their primary form of instruction is either from a private lesson teacher or during an ensemble class. Private lesson teachers rarely follow a set curriculum instead of working on one piece at a time from the instrument's repertoire. Ensemble classes are constantly under pressure to prepare the music for performances. Good performances are often a significant factor that keeps parents and community members supportive of their music program. This pressure means instrumental teachers only address technical elements, leading the teachers to make all the artistic choices.³⁴ Students often do not get to make these creative decisions until they are in a college music program if they are choosing to pursue a career in music.

³¹ Forsythe.

³² Christian Bernhard and Stringham David, "A National Survey of Music Education Majors' Confidence in Teaching Improvisation," *International Journal of Music Education* 34, no. 4 (2016): 383-90.

³³ J. H. Riveire, "California String Teachers' Curricular Content and Attitudes Regarding Improvisation and the National Standards," abstract (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1997), 59-105.

³⁴ Ibid.

Modern Approaches to Improvisation

Multiple methodologies and curricula seek to teach improvisation to music students. Christopher Azzara's *Teaching Musicianship through Improvisation* is a curriculum for general music and instrumental classes. The set of activities presented in this series of books has students learn a piece of repertoire, learn the rhythmic patterns and chord progressions, improvise new melodies over the existing harmonies, and learn prewritten solos.³⁵ Substantial research informs this curriculum he has published on the subject, including his section on improvisation from *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*.³⁶ It incorporates findings such as Kratus' seven levels of improvisation³⁷. When improvising, having a piece of repertoire in mind helps the student refine choices available to them to fit a single style. Having the piece of repertoire memorized allows this to take place. Studying the chord progression and rhythm patterns independent of the rest of the piece gives the students a better understanding of the piece and elements that can be used in their improvisation. This curriculum is different from traditional vocal or instrumental curricula because it focuses on music-making and critical thinking instead of preparing students for a performance.

John Kratus' seven levels of improvisation is a theory of improvisation that has informed many curricula, including Azzara's curriculum. These levels are exploration, process-oriented improvisation, product-oriented improvisation, fluid improvisation, structural improvisation, stylistic improvisation, and personal improvisation.³⁸ Exploration is considered pre-

³⁵ Azzara Christopher and Richard Grunow, *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation* (Chicago: GIA Publication, 2006), 2-30.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ John Kratus, "A Developmental Approach to Teaching Music Improvisation," *International Journal of Music Education* 26, no. 1 (1995): 27-38.

³⁸ Ibid.

improvisation and is when a person explores different sounds without purpose or structure.³⁹ A Student playing different sounds on their instrument to find out what they sound like would be an example of the first level. Process-oriented improvisation occurs when the person improvising begins to gain control over what they are doing.⁴⁰ During the explore level, the musician does not know what sound their instrument will produce, but during process-oriented improvisation, they can hear what will be created in their head. Product-oriented improvisation occurs when the musician understands their sounds in relation to the surrounding musical setting they are playing in.⁴¹ Fluid improvisation describes when a musician gains the ability to quickly produce the sounds they hear in their head with their instrument or voice. Before reaching this level of improvisation, a student will have to identify what sound they want to create, then think about how to produce it technically. When a musician fluidly improvises, there is no difference between what they want to create and what they are able to create. The fifth level of structural improvisation describes when a musician can adhere to a plan or form to an improvisation session.⁴² A string quartet might agree to take turns switching between melodically improvising and providing harmonic support. Stylistic improvisation allows a musician to fit what they are playing with a genre of music and personal improvisation enables the musician to push the genera in a new direction.⁴³

³⁹ Kratus

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Summary

Bloom's Taxonomy is a revolutionary learning theory that has caused educators in every subject area to change their curriculum to include higher-order learning. Organizations such as the National Association for Music Education and researchers including Azzera and Kratus have published their findings to convince state education boards and teachers to include critical thinking activities. The states of Massachusetts, Texas, and California have state standards requiring teachers to teach improvisation, phrasing, composition, and reflection. While there is a wealth of information concerning these activities, their implementation in instrumental programs is still lacking.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Relationship of Literature to the Project Design

This project used information collected through the literature review to create a curriculum for instrumental improvisation and repertoire interpretation. Many types of activities described in Bloom's Taxonomy literature are adapted to be activities in this instrumental curriculum. The upper three levels, analyzing, evaluating, and creating, are the primary focus of this curriculum. Students are required to have taken lessons on their instrument for at least three years before being eligible for this class, that way, they are prepared to engage with this type of course material. The very first steps in learning an instrument focus on the bottom three levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and are addressed by many curriculums already. Students will prepare a repertoire for this class that they can learn quickly and does not require learning any new techniques or notes, allowing for the majority of class time to be spent on interpretation.

Curriculum Charts

The appendix to this paper outlines how to implement the curriculum. The first chart is a course syllabus that outlines requirements and expectations for the course, to be handed out to students on the first day of class. The analysis chart addresses background information about what the curriculum addresses and the general format of the class, including learning outcomes. The design chart will outline how each learning outcome will be addressed throughout each class lesson and connect the learning outcomes to Bloom's Taxonomy. The Development chart contains a script and flow chart that explains the overall order of activities in this class that will take place throughout the semester. The implementation chart addresses what objects will need to be acquired and what tasks will need to be accomplished for an educator to implement the curriculum. The Evaluation chart outlines how each learning outcome is assessed and justifies

the chosen assessment. The formative assessment is provided to demonstrate how to evaluate student learning at the end of the unit.

Curriculum Activities

This curriculum is centered on the critical thinking experience for students in an instrumental program. Students are asked to do various critical thinking activities, including interpreting a piece of music, self-reflection, improvisation, and cadenza composition. These activities require students to utilize the skills and knowledge they have acquired through their instrumental education and apply them to higher-order learning activities.

Phrasing

Phrasing is an essential part of mature music-making. A novice musician might be able to play all the notes of a piece, but a proficient or masterful instrumentalist will be able to adjust the dynamics, tempo, articulation, and intensity of the notes to create a work of art. Knowledgeable instrumental teachers select music from standard repertoire to work on with their students. This music also has agreed upon phrasing that can be learned by studying marked editions of music and by listening to instrumental masters play the music. Learning to phrase this way would fit the bottom three levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, with the application being the end goal. This is a necessary first step, but Bloom's Taxonomy would argue that students will fully understand the concept of phrasing when they are allowed to create their own.

In this course, students will be choosing how to phrase a piece of music uniquely. Crafting their interpretation will require them to play through their repertoire many times in various ways and choose dynamics, tempo, and articulation that sound compelling to them. This process will likely not yield as refined an interpretation as those of professionals who study this music, but that is not the end goal of these activities. The purpose of having a student interpret a

piece of music is to understand phrasing in general better. English teachers do not expect their students to write as well professionals. Likewise, music educators should not tell high school instrumentalists they cannot choose their phrasings because they are not in a major symphony.

Improvisation

Improvisation is another featured activity in this course. Many composers throughout the history of western music were also famous improvisers, but improvisation has fallen out of favor in the classical world in the modern era. Mozart and Bach were both renowned for their ability to create new compositions on the spot using a variety of instruments, including the violin and keyboard.⁴⁴ One of Mozart's skills during his tours of Europe as a child was his ability to improvise, an activity that continued into his adult life. In the modern era, classical musicians have become obsessed with perfection. Orchestra auditions are flooded with dozens or hundreds of musicians who can all play the audition excerpts with technical mastery. These orchestral musicians are never required to improvise, and therefore do not spend their time honing this skill because there is no financial incentive to do so. Many music educators who work in instrumental programs have degrees from institutions that are a part of this classical tradition. These educators enter their fields focused on performances the same way their teachers were and how classical music is in general. One of the purposes of this course is to fit into a program where the other teachers teach techniques and prepare for performances. Providing students in a program like this the opportunity to improvise will provide them with a better understanding of their instrument and classical music in general.

Improvisation assignments are more open-ended, with is no single correct answer. Students' success will be judged by how well they create an interpretation or melody that fits the

⁴⁴ Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 20-40.

parameters set by the teacher. These activities start simple, with students creating short melodies within the starting and ending parameters on tonic in a familiar key. As the course progresses, students will gain familiarity with this skill and be able to craft more intricate melodies and harmonies, then fit a variety of different styles.

Cadenza Creation

Cadenzas are an opportunity for solo musicians to demonstrate their virtuosity and differentiate their playing from their peers. Studying concertos typically begins in the late high school years, but there are many concertos of varying skill levels that fit the skill levels of all students. Vivaldi, for example, has hundreds of concertos, many of which a younger high schooler could play. Cadenzas are typically found near the end of a concerto and are short compositions made by the performer featuring material from the concerto presented in a new way. A high school student who is auditioning for a college music program will typically be given a particular cadenza from a master musician to study and include with their audition piece, and for those purposes, it is appropriate, but having the opportunity to try their hand at cadenza writing in the context this project's class would be an excellent opportunity for a developing musician. Like the interpretation assignments, the purpose of the cadenza writing isn't for them to produce a cadenza that could compete with a master musician but to give the student a chance to create something new to understand its nature better.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a frequently overlooked form of critical thinking. While professional orchestral musicians typically are not required to write new music, their critical thinking abilities allow them to hone their skills acutely. High school instrumentalists are expected to be able to identify wrong notes in a piece and correct them. This same student is also expected to read the

expressive marking already in a piece of music and adjust their playing to fit it. These tasks require students to analyze and evaluate their playing, which requires critical thinking according to Bloom's Taxonomy.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Importance of Critical Thinking

The literature review conducted during this project has demonstrated that critical thinking is an essential skill for every modern adult. The vast majority of jobs in America require adults to utilize this skill in their day-to-day life. Automation and outsourcing have removed the need for many jobs that existed fifty years ago. It is cheaper to have an automated machine create a product than a worker, and other countries offer companies the opportunity to hire workers for much less than they would have to pay in America. This shift in the market has left jobs that require creating new products or ideas instead of doing repetitive tasks. Even jobs that include manual labor like construction require the workers to interpret data and turn it into a real-world product using this skill. High-profile careers such as engineering or working in the health industry require workers to find solutions to various problems that do not have one clear answer.

This portion of the literature review is crucial because it establishes a need for critical thinking education. Educators need to prepare students to be successful in the modern world. Critical thinking is unique because it is different every time a person is asked to utilize it. Educators cannot prepare students for every eventuality they will encounter, but they can give them the skills to reason their way through the challenges they face in their lives and careers. Educators should present students with various challenges that require critical thinking to solve. Implementing more critical thinking activities will prepare a population of adults for a changing job market.

Curriculum's Relationship to State Educational Standards

The outlined curriculum from this project fits into many states' educational standards. Serving state standards is important because teachers can only teach lessons connected to these

standards. Schools that do not teach to state standards can lose funding or be taken over by the state, which is an outcome school administrators work to avoid at all costs. The state standards also serve as a shield against school districts cutting the arts programs. Often music educators must justify their existing classes or have their funding cut. Connecting lesson plans from a course with what the state requires to be taught in a school is a meaningful way to keep a music program alive and growing.

The main project of the class, the repertoire study, and interpretation, directly fits California music anchor standard 4, which requires students to select, interpret, and perform a piece of repertoire.⁴⁵ One of the first activities in this curriculum is selecting a piece of repertoire appropriate to their skill level. This requires the student to think critically about their skill level and the technical challenges of the music available to them. The instructor will gather a variety of music to choose from to narrow down their choices, but the student will make the final selection. There are multiple activities the students will do to interpret their piece of repertoire, including listening to master musicians play this piece and marking the score with expressive elements. After weeks of working on their repertoire, the students will perform their version of the repertoire. These activities directly fit the description from the California anchor standard.

Both Texas and Massachusetts have standards that require improvisation to be taught. Both states reference starting with simple tonal or rhythmic patterns that fit within a given key or time signature. This curriculum has improvisation activities that fit this description. Early in the semester, students will play short patterns back and forth with each other and over a simple ‘beat’ track. As the semester progresses, the improvisation increases in complexity and length.

⁴⁵ “California Arts Standards.”

Chapter 5 Discussion

Bloom's Taxonomy's Relationship to Curriculum

Establishing a connection between this curriculum and Bloom's taxonomy is important for advocating for its inclusion in a program. School districts must make decisions about how to distribute teachers throughout the district and how many teachers they can afford in general. The addition of any class will require a teacher to run it, a room for it to be in, and other financial resources; therefore, the benefits of this curriculum must be compelling to district personnel as well as the educators who run it. Throughout the country, school districts are requiring teachers to run activities that use the higher levels of this taxonomy. Demonstrating a connection between this project's curriculum and Bloom's description of critical thinking will help justify its inclusion.

Phrasing's Connection to Improvisation

Phrasing and improvisation are connected in multiple ways, and learning to do one benefits a person's ability to do the other. Kratus' sixth level of improvisation is stylistic improvisation and takes place when a musician improvises within the guidelines of a style or genera of music.⁴⁶ Understanding the guidelines of a genre of music is essential when phrasing a piece of repertoire. Kratus' levels of improvisation require a student to master the previous levels before progressing. Similarly, a student will not be able to phrase if they are asked to do so before understanding the style of music they are playing and being able to play the repertoire comfortably. When experimenting with different ways to phrase their repertoire, the student will effectively improvise the piece's artistic elements. While the pitches and rhythm are expected to stay the same, note intensity, articulation, dynamics, and tempo can be manipulated as the

⁴⁶ Kratus

student decides their interpretation of the piece. Being able to phrase a piece of music will help students improvise with phrasing, and building improvisational skills to level six or seven will benefit a student who is learning to phrase.

Study Limitations

This study has multiple limitations. The biggest limitation is that this curriculum has not been tested yet. This paper proposes that a class focused on the critical thinking aspects of instrumental education would be a beneficial, complementary course to what the students are already doing in their ensembles. While the research done in this paper implies the benefits of such a course, a follow-up study done by a teacher who put this curriculum into practice would be beneficial to test its value further.

This course fits a particular niche that might not be available in many schools. To make use of this course, a school would have to already have a band or orchestra program that starts students in elementary school and has many students involved in it. Only a small percentage of the students in an instrumental program will be interested in taking an additional course, so a school that offers this would need to have a full program with multiple ensembles already. This course would be a helpful addition to a developed program, but the reality is many schools do not have strong enough instrumental programs.

A third limitation of this study is the advanced nature of the course material. Phrasing is an intricate skill that differentiates the world's most excellent musicians from each other. To phrase intentionally, a student first needs to have enough mastery over their instrument and repertoire that they can play the piece the same way each time. While a high school student is not expected to have the same attention to detail as a professional, learning to phrase at all is a difficult task. If improvisation is taught in a general music program from a young age, it can be

an approachable skill for an instrumentalist; however, many schools do not have improvisation as a focus. These difficult skills do not warrant them not being taught; however, an educator who tries to teach them many find it challenging.

Summary

Musical independence is an important trait for high school instrumental students to acquire. Self-critiquing enables students to learn their teacher's lessons more effectively and continue making music on their own after they complete their schooling. A curriculum that focuses on critical thinking activities puts more of the responsibility for learning on the student. Learning to improvise is a creative activity that utilizes all their musical knowledge and forces them to apply it in a new way. Phrasing requires students to have great attention to detail and ownership of their interpretation of the piece. Activities in any subject area that prompt students to use critical thinking increase their understanding of the subject and help prepare them for a variety of careers that utilize this skill.

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Appendix

Course Syllabus

COURSE SYLLABUS

NAME OF COURSE: IMPROVISATION AND INTERPRETATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL INSTRUMENTAL STUDENTS

Course Description

This course will engage students in critical thinking as it applies to music through improvisation and interpretation of repertoire. Students will learn to improvise short passages in small groups and make artistic choices for their repertoire.

Rationale

In modern western culture, improvisation is most associated with jazz or rap, but classical music has a long history of improvisation featuring famous improvisers such as Mozart and Liszt. Improvisation also develops critical thinking and problem solving, which are important skills to have in the American job market, yet the typical instrumental student does not get the opportunity to use this very often. This course will equip students with the ability to improvise with others, make executive decisions about artistic elements in the repertoire, self-critic their own playing, and compose a short cadenza.

I. PREREQUISITES

PARTICIPATION IN A BAND OR ORCHESTRA PROGRAM FOR A MINIMUM OF 3 YEARS, OR 4 YEARS OF PIANO LESSONS

II. REQUIRED RESOURCE PURCHASE(S)

Reed, D. (2013). *Improvise for Real: The Complete Method for All Instruments*. David Reed Music.

Green, B., & Gallwey, W. T. (2015). *The inner game of music: Overcome obstacles, improve concentration, and reduce nervousness to reach a new level of musical performance*. London: Pan Books.

III. ADDITIONAL MATERIALS FOR LEARNING

OWN OR RENT THEIR OWN INSTRUMENT FOR THE DURATION OF THIS CLASS, KEYBOARDS PROVIDED

IV. MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- A.** Identify artistic choices that a professional musician has made when playing a piece of repertoire studied in class.
- B.** Practice improvising on a familiar melody with accompaniment
- C.** Identify key signatures and improvise melodies in those key signatures without wrong notes
- D.** Compose a cadenza for a piece of repertoire studied during class.
- E.** Evaluate personal interpretation of artistic elements in a piece of music using a recording

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

A. Repertoire Selection: Students will select a piece of repertoire for their instrument that they can successfully sight-read with only a few errors. This piece of music should not include any notes or techniques that they cannot comfortably play. The purpose of this repertoire is not to advance the students' technical abilities but to allow them to make artistic choices for themselves instead of their teacher deciding them. Students will also need to get their private lesson teachers to sign off on this choice.

B. Repertoire Study: Students will research their piece of repertoire by finding at least 2 recordings by professional musicians. Students will take a copy of the score and write in dynamics, articulations, and tempo changes these performers, then write a one page summary of the differences between these performances and mark up the third score after deciding what dynamics, articulations, and tempo they think are appropriate for this piece of music.

C. Repertoire Performance and Evaluation: At the end of this class, students will perform their piece of repertoire for the class in their own style. Students will also write a short critique of each other's performance and interpretation.

D. Improvisation Practice: Students will be given backing tracks that they will use at home to practice improvising. These are ungraded assignments that will prepare the student for in-class assessments. Students should practice staying in the correct key and using similar rhythmic patterns to the accompaniment track.

E. In Class 'Jam' Sessions: In-class assessments for improvisation. Students will work in groups of four, reading from a lead sheet. Students will take turns improvising melodies while the other three students provide harmonic accompaniment. Students will be graded off their

ability to follow the harmonic flow of the piece, stay in the correct key, and work with the other students.

F. Cadenza Creation: In class and at home, students will use the melody creation skills they learned through the improvisation assignments to create a Cadenza in the style of the repertoire they are studying. This cadenza will be played as part of the piece when they perform at the end of the semester.

G. Practice Recording: Once a week, the students will record themselves improvising to a backup track and submit it online

H. Self-reflection and critic of classmate's performance: At the end of the semester, the student will write a self-reflection on their repertoire performance and a critic of a classmate's performance.

VI. COURSE GRADING AND POLICIES

A. Points

Repertoire Study 500pts. total

Repertoire Selection:	50 pts.
Repertoire Study:	200 pts.
Cadenza:	100 pts.
Repertoire Performance	250 pts.

Improvisation 500pts. Total

10 Graded 'Jam' sessions. One every week. 25 pts. Each

10 Graded recordings. One every week. 25 pts. each

B. Scale

A = 940–1000 A- = 920–939 B+ = 900–919 B = 860–899 B- = 840–859

C+ = 820–839 C = 780–819 C- = 760–779 D+ = 740–759 D = 700–739

D- = 680–699 F = 0–679

C. Late Assignment Policy

It is vital that students complete at-home assignments so that they are prepared to work with the other students in class. Late work will be accepted up to 1 week after the deadline, but with a 50% point reduction.

Analysis Chart

Part I: Curriculum Information

Required Textbook for Class:

Azzara, C. D., & Grunow, R. F. (2010). *Developing musicianship through improvisation*. Chicago: GIA Publications.

Reed, D. (2013). *Improvise for Real: The Complete Method for All Instruments*. David Reed Music.

Green, B., & Gallwey, W. T. (2015). *The inner game of music: Overcome obstacles, improve concentration, and reduce nervousness to reach a new level of musical performance*. London: Pan Books.

Education Goal of Course:

<p>Instrumental students in America are taught the fundamentals of how to read music and play their instrument with a strong emphasis on the first three levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, knowledge, comprehension, and application. In an ensemble setting, most or all the artistic choices are made by the teacher, leaving a lack of critical thinking</p>
<p>Who are the learners, and what are their characteristics?</p>
<p>The learners are high school students in America who have participated in either orchestra or band through middle school.</p>
<p>What is the new desired behavior?</p>
<p>This course will train students to improvise short passages on their instrument and make artistic decisions for solo repertoire.</p>
<p>What are the delivery options?</p>
<p>This course takes place in person with students reinforcing what they learn in class during at home-practice. 5 Classes each week for 10 weeks during the regular school day.</p>
<p>What are the pedagogical considerations?</p>
<p>Students will use the standard western style of notation on the treble, bass, or alto clef depending on their instrument and will learn how to take information from a lead sheet and choose what to play.</p>
<p>What learning theory applies to your curriculum? Why?</p>
<p>This course will utilize Action Theory to engage students in critical thinking activities as defined by Bloom's Taxonomy. Improvisation can be an overwhelming task when taken on all at once. This class will introduce this to students slowly while giving them ample opportunities to apply what they are learning to their instrument.</p>

Part II: Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes**At the end of the course, the student will be able to:**

1. Identify artistic choices that a professional musician has made when playing a piece of repertoire that the student studied during class.
2. Practice improvising on a familiar melody with accompaniment.
3. Differentiate between pitches and rhythms that fit or don't fit with a particular piece of music during improvisation.
4. Compose a cadenza for a piece of repertoire that they studied during this class.
5. Evaluate their interpretation of artistic elements in a piece of music using a recording.

Design Chart

Part I: Learning Outcomes

<p>Concept Statement: This unit will enable students to make artistic choices for pieces of music on their own, the same as if they were a professional, and use critical thinking to improvise short melodies.</p>			
Learning Outcomes	Content	Learning/Training Activity	Assessment
<p>1. Identify artistic choices that a professional musician has made when playing a piece of repertoire studied in class.</p>	<p>Week 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a piece of repertoire that is skill-appropriate for the student. Should not introduce any new technical concepts and should be easily learned. • Research an authoritative recording of the repertoire done by a professional musician. <p>Week 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the recording for 	<p>Week 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Skill level assessment. A non-graded survey to help students identify what concepts they are proficient at and which ones they are still learning. • Repertoire Trial. Students select a piece of repertoire from a list provided by the teacher within their skill level and attempt to play it. If they can't 	<p>Week 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: Students submit a short rationale for why they selected the piece of repertoire and why their recording is a good example of the repertoire. <p>Week 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: Students notate artistic elements of their

	<p>artistic elements.</p> <p>Week 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret their repertoire in their own way. 	<p>play very much of it, the piece is too difficult, and if they can play it all right away, it's too simple.</p> <p>Week 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on artistic elements of music and the freedom a musician has interpreting them. <p>Week 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher presents a piece of repertoire 2-3 different ways, asks students to analyze the differences between them. • Listen to two recordings of a movement from the Bach Cello Suites by Yo- 	<p>repertoire that are present in the recording they choose. Specific as possible.</p> <p>Week 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative Assessment: Student annotates a score of their repertoire using their own interpretation
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		<p>Yo Ma in a small group, one recording from early in his career and one from recently.</p> <p>Analyze the differences and present them to the class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student performs a short portion of their repertoire that they have interpreted midweek. 	
<p>2. Practice improvising on a familiar melody with accompaniment</p>	<p>Week 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform Twinkle Twinkle Little Star and change parts of the melody • Be able to provide whole note accompaniment 	<p>Week 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass the melody game • Listen to Mozart's 12 Variations on "Ah Vous-Dirai-Je Madam" • Presentation on lead sheet accompaniment 	<p>Week 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance: Students perform improvisation they practiced

	<p>t from a lead sheet</p> <p>Week 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform Boil Them Cabbages Down while making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quartette Improvisation on Twinkle <p>Week 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: Mark O'Connor Improvising on Boil Them Cabbages Down • Paraxial Application: 10 Minutes 	
<p>3. Differentiate between pitches and rhythms that fit or don't fit with a piece of music during improvisation.</p>	<p>Week 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify pitches in a major key • Improvise a short melody using only pitches in the key. <p>Week 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify pitches in a harmonic minor key • Improvise a short melody using only 	<p>Week 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on major key signatures • Key recognition quiz on Musictheory.net • Improvisation practice quartette <p>Week 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on the harmonic minor 	<p>Week 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance: Quartette Improvisation in a Major Key <p>Week 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance: Quartette Improvisation in a Harmonic Minor Key <p>Week 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative Assessment:

	<p>pitches in the key</p> <p>Week 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have consistent rhythms throughout improvisation exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key recognition quiz on Musictheory.net • Improvisation practice quartette <p>Week 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass the Rhythm Game • Improvisation practice quartette 	<p>Improvising over a Backup Track</p>
<p>4. Compose a cadenza for a piece of repertoire that they studied during this class.</p>	<p>Week 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and play a cadenza from a professional musician for the piece their repertoire <p>Week 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose a Cadenza for their piece of repertoire 	<p>Week 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cadenza presentation • Using computer lab to research cadenzas for their piece of repertoire. <p>Week 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose a Cadenza, then perform it for two classmates, exchange feedback 	<p>Week 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: Cadenza Analysis <p>Week 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative Assessment: Cadenza Composition

5. Evaluate personal interpretation of artistic elements in a piece of music using a recording	<p>Week 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on their inner thoughts while performing <p>Week 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform their Piece of Repertoire 	<p>Week 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner Game of Music Discussion • Performance Psychology Presentation <p>Week 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher performs a piece of repertoire to start the week. Students perform after. • Evaluate each other performances. 	<p>Week 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner Game of Music Report <p>Week 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summative Assessment: Repertoire Performance
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Part II: Learning Outcomes Related to Bloom's Taxonomy

Learning Outcomes	Rational for Sequence
1. Identify artistic choices that a professional musician has made when playing a piece of repertoire that the student studied during class.	This is a good place to start because every other learning outcome requires students to understand the concepts dealt with in this unit

2. Practice improvising on a familiar melody with accompaniment	Making small changes to a melody is easier than strait improvisation because there are fewer choices to be made early on.
3. Differentiate between pitches and rhythms that fit or don't fit with a piece of music during improvisation.	Having a good understanding of keys is crucial to improvisation because even the untrained ear will be able to detect off-key notes.
4. Compose a cadenza for a piece of repertoire that they studied during this class.	A Cadenza is equivalent to a notated improvisation. The students can use their experience in improvising to compose a short 'improvised' section.
5. Evaluate their own interpretation of artistic elements in a piece of music using a recording.	A review of everything they have learned and the conclusion of their repertoire study.

Development Chart

Part I: Presentation

Expository

Hello everyone! Welcome to the first day of Improvisation and Interpretation for Instrumental Students. If you will all look at the syllabus, you will see the activities planned for each week. Everyone thing we do, starting with this class, builds upon what we have already done, so it's crucial that each of you stay engaged throughout so that you don't fall behind. This week we are going to do a basic skills assessment for your instrumental playing, and you will select a piece of repertoire based on that. You will research an authoritative recording of this piece of repertoire as well. At the end of the week, you will each submit a short rationale summarizing your decisions and findings from those assignments.

Narrative

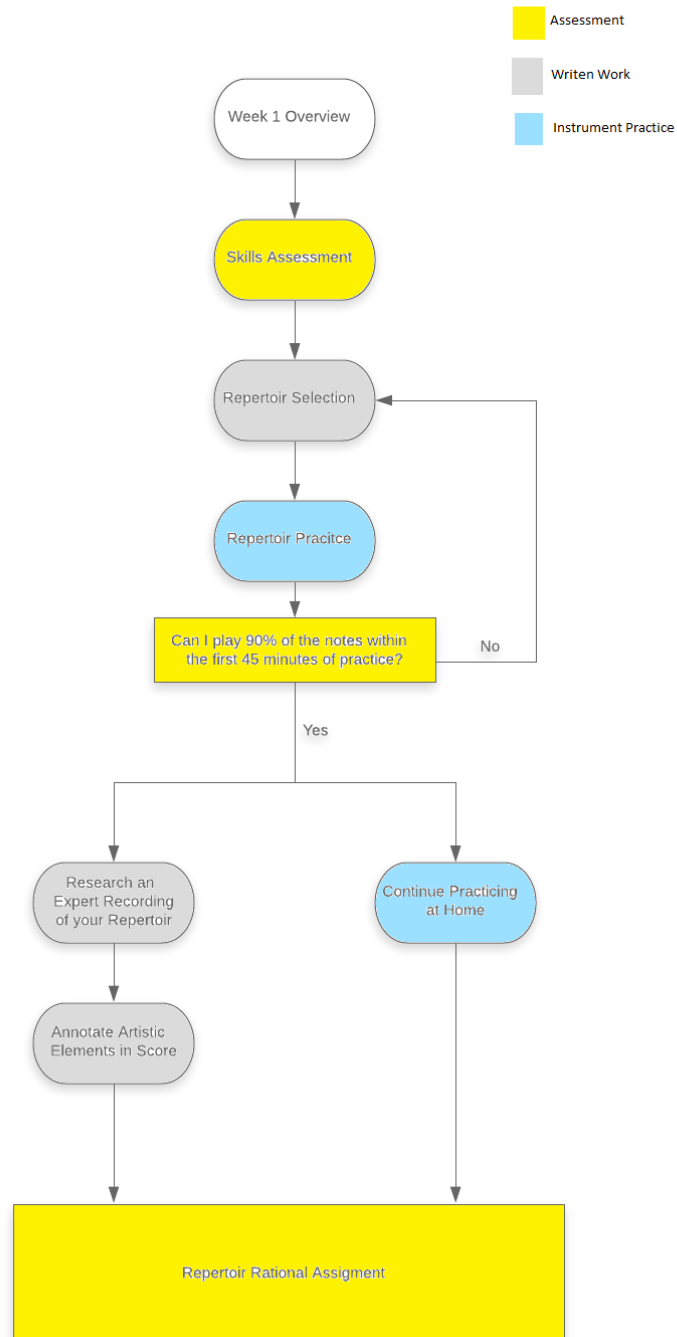
How often have you been in your ensemble and just played the notes on the page? Sometimes we struggle just to play the notes on the page, especially in those times, it's easy to learn the black and white then stop. What should a musician practice once they have the notes under their fingers? (Allow students to answer) This whole unit is about this step of the process. Once you can physically play the notes of a song, you then need to make artistic choices about the dynamics, articulation, tempo, and phrasing. For this class, you will each be picking a piece of repertoire to study. The piece you choose should be one you can get under your fingers somewhat easily. Once we do the skills assessment, you will have an easier time picking an appropriate piece. Unlike in your private lessons, the purpose of this is not to advance your technical skill, but to allow you to craft your own interpretation of a piece of music, as if you are a professional soloist. While most repertoire does have some markings

that guide our interpretation, they don't account for every note and phrase of a piece, leaving you room to interpret as you see fit. A good first step to this is listening to an expert recording. You will find at least one recording and listen carefully to see how that musician plays your piece. At the end of the week, you will submit a summary of all of this to me to approve. I want to make sure you are set up for success for the remaining 11 weeks of this unit.

Graphical Organizers

This chart shows the steps the student will need to take to accomplish the tasks for week 1. Trial and error will be done with the repertoire selection as they find the right piece to study. Once the repertoire is selected, the students will find a professional recording to annotate while practicing. Each part of this class builds upon what they have learned linearly; therefore, it is essential not to fall behind.

Week 1 Graphic Organizer



Part II: Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction

Instruction Event	Description
1. Gain attention	At the beginning of Each class, students will be presented with a critical thinking question on the board about interpretation and practice, then will conduct a brief discussion of their thoughts on that question. ⁴⁷
2. Inform learners of objectives	Use the reflection on the daily critical thinking question to explain the daily lesson. ⁴⁸
3. Stimulate recall of prior learning	Students' past experiences in private lessons and ensembles will be connected to in-class performances. ⁴⁹
4. Present the content	The teacher opens a composition program, such as Musescore, and has it play a piece of music. Then the teacher plays that same piece of music on an instrument and asks students to reflect on the difference. ⁵⁰
5. Guide learning	Independently research recordings of repertoire after the demonstration by the teacher. ⁵¹
6. Elicit performance (practice)	Students will be given 15 minutes to sight-read their selected repertoire in class, then play a section of it for a partner. Both students reflect on whether or not the student will be able to learn the rest of the song in the required amount of time. ⁵²
7. Provide feedback	During independent practice times, the teacher will go around the room and check in on students and provide feedback. ⁵³
8. Assess performance	At the end of the week, students will submit a rationale that summarizes their work over this week to select a

⁴⁷ Linda B. Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 19-85.

⁴⁸ Thomas A. Regelski, *Teaching General Music in Grades 4-8* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 31-75.

⁴⁹ Nilson.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Regelski.

⁵² Nilson.

⁵³ Ibid.

	piece of repertoire and why they think it's a good fit for them. ⁵⁴
9. Enhance retention and transfer	At the end of each class, the teacher will give the students a quick 'ticket to leave' with one or two comprehension questions. ⁵⁵

Implementation Chart

Part I: Required Classroom Supplies

Physical Item	Rationale for Use
Chrome Books	Students will need access to a computer to research recordings and articles about their repertoire. They will also need them for the key recognition game on musictheory.net
Repertoire Library	Have a variety of print music for students to choose from to view and play immediately without going to a store
Basic Classroom Equipment	Chairs, music stands, desks, and whiteboards are needed for the basic execution of the class. This equipment will be arranged for a lecture-based class, with room for students to work in small groups.
Improvisation Lead Sheets	Lead sheets are needed for students to read off of when they are improvising. Lead sheets include basic information such as chords, key signature, and tempo.
Projector and Quality Speakers	Being able to display information on a board through a projector is important for efficiently displaying information for

⁵⁴ Nilson.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

	the students. It's also essential to play recordings for students in a music classroom to model exemplar performances.
Instrument Storage Solution	Students must bring in their instruments from home to participate in this class, but they don't have to carry them around all day. Having a safe place to leave the instruments, preferably one that locks, is helpful because it prevents the teacher from burdening the students with another object to carry around all day.

Part II: Six Necessary Tasks Rationale

Task	Rationale for Task
Prepare Repertoire List for Each Instrument	Students need to have a large amount of repertoire available in the world trimmed down to a smaller list of pieces to choose from. Sorting them in order of technical difficulty will help the students efficiently find a piece that is appropriate for them.
Prepare Skills Assessment	The skills assessment will be an ungraded assignment where students answer honestly about how proficient they are playing different techniques. This will include the range of notes they can play, rhythmic patterns, articulations, and playing techniques specific to each instrument.
'Decorate' Classroom	Make the classroom feel welcoming to walk into by being colorful, well organized, and full of informative posters and

	word walls. Students should be able to refer to information on the walls to help them with their classwork.
Prepare ‘Ticket to Leave’ Worksheets	At the end of some of the lessons, students will have to answer one or two questions before they leave. These questions should be prepared to assess what the student has learned during the lesson.
Prepare Example Repertoire	The music teacher is usually the musician a young person gets to know best. Observing this teacher making music sets an example for music-making, even if the teacher isn’t a top-end professional. The performance should demonstrate a high level of interpretation and expression.
Find Example Videos	The teacher will find examples of people modeling the same or similar activities to what we are going in class for the students to watch before doing it themselves.

Part III: Formative Assessment

Formative Assessment Type	Assessment Details
Repertoire Rationale	At the end of the first week, students will submit a rationale that summarizes their work over this week to select a piece of repertoire and why they think it’s a good fit for them. They will need to reference their skills assessment to identify their strengths and weaknesses and which ones are present in their selected piece. They

	<p>will also have to identify an exemplar recording they found and identify why they think this recording is authoritative. This will demonstrate that the student has thought critically about this piece and their own ability, which are both necessary for them to have a productive time studying it.</p>
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Evaluation Chart

Part I: Evaluation Plan

Learning Outcomes	Formative Assessment Plan	The Rationale for Formative Assessment Type
<p>1. Identify artistic choices that a professional musician has made when playing a piece of repertoire that the student studied during class.</p>	<p>Students submit a short rationale for why they selected their repertoire and why their recording is an excellent example of the repertoire.</p>	<p>This rationale forces the student to listen carefully and make observations identifying artistic choices in the recording. The student will have to describe these events in their own words, allowing the teacher to evaluate their ability.⁵⁶</p>
<p>2. Practice improvising on a familiar melody with accompaniment</p>	<p>Students will perform at the end of the week in quartets, taking turns improvising a melody on top of a harmony provided by the other tree.</p>	<p>Different students learn at different speeds, but if a student cannot completely do something, that usually means they have not put in the work at home. A performance like this highlights any skills the student has developed over the week so the instructor can</p>

⁵⁶Nilson.

		acutely observe.
3. Differentiate between pitches and rhythms that fit or don't fit with a piece of music during improvisation.	Students will take a quiz where they answer questions about notes in a key signature. This quiz will also include a section where they must improvise a very short melody in 3 different key signatures.	This is a blended assessment that requires both theoretical and practical knowledge. Students will need to know how to determine notes in a key signature on paper and how to play those notes on their instrument to fit the theme of the class.
4. Compose a cadenza for a piece of repertoire that they studied during this class.	Students will write a cadenza for their piece.	The cadenza demonstrates the student's understanding of the piece they are studying and their ability to create new music. By this point in the unit, the student should know the piece very well because they have studied it and be able to take elements from the piece and add their own sections in the same compositional style.

<p>5. Evaluate their own interpretation of artistic elements in a piece of music using a recording.</p>	<p>Self-Assessment after their end of unit performance</p>	<p>Self-reflection is very important for musical development. This assessment requires students to listen critically and assess their own performance, which measures their ability to be introspective and objective about their musical ability and choices.</p>
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Formative Assessment:**Improvisation and Interpretation Quiz**

TRUE or FALSE

- 1) The cadenza of a piece of music is always played the same way. *FALSE (5 pts.)
- 2) Improvisation was a part of classical music in the Baroque and Classical Eras. *True (5 pts.)
- 3) Only instruments that play in a Jazz Band can be used to improvise. *FALSE (5 pts.)
- 4) Improvisation is a learned skill that can be developed with practice. *True (5 pts.)

MULTIPLE CHOICE

- 1) Which book addresses the psychological elements of performing and training our minds to be better performers? *D- Inner Game of Music (5 pts.)
 - a. Improvise for Real: The Complete Method for All Instruments
 - b. Sight Reading for Beginners
 - c. Suzuki Method Books
 - d. The Inner Game of Music
- 2) Which musical element is not open for interpretation by the performer and needs to be played as written? *C- Phrasing (5 pts.)
 - a. Dynamics

- b. Phrasing
- c. Pitch
- d. Tempo

3) How many musicians are in a Quartette? (5 pts.)

*D- 4

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4

Matching

Match the key signature with the melody that is written in that key signature



Answers

1 2nd

2 3rd

3 1st

Improvisation and Interpretation Exam

TRUE or FALSE

- 1) When listening to a Jazz band perform live, it is customary to clap in the middle of the piece after a musician has finished their solo. * TRUE (5 pts)
- 2) When listening to a concerto, it is customary to clap after the soloist finishes a cadenza. *FALSE (5 pts)
- 3) Any type of instrument can be used for improvisation. *TRUE (5 pts)
- 4) The best way to learn a new skill is to do it a little bit every day for a long period of time. *TRUE (5 pts)
- 5) It is the musician's responsibility to keep their instrument serviced and in tune throughout a performance and their career. *TRUE (5 pts)
- 6) The person playing the melody in an ensemble is more important than a person playing harmony. *FALSE (5 pts)
- 7) There is usually more improvisation in classical music than in folk music. *FALSE (5 pts)

MULTIPLE CHOICE

- 1) When improvising in a group, each musician must be aware of: *D (5 pts)
 - a. The key they are in
 - b. What rhythms the other musicians are playing
 - c. What dynamic levels the other musicians are playing
 - d. All of the Above

- 2) Usually the slowest movement in a Concerto *C (5 pts)
 - a. 1st Movement
 - b. 2nd Movement
 - c. 3rd Movement

- 3) What practice routine is the best. *A (5 pts)
 - a. 6 days a week, 30 minutes a day
 - b. 1 day a week for 8 hours
 - c. 3 days a week, 45 minutes a day
 - d. 5 days a week, 20 minutes a day

- 4) Dynamic contrast is. *B (5 pts)
- a. The difference between fast and slow in a piece
 - b. The difference between loud and soft in a piece
 - c. The difference between high and low pitches in a piece
 - d. The difference between short and long notes in a piece

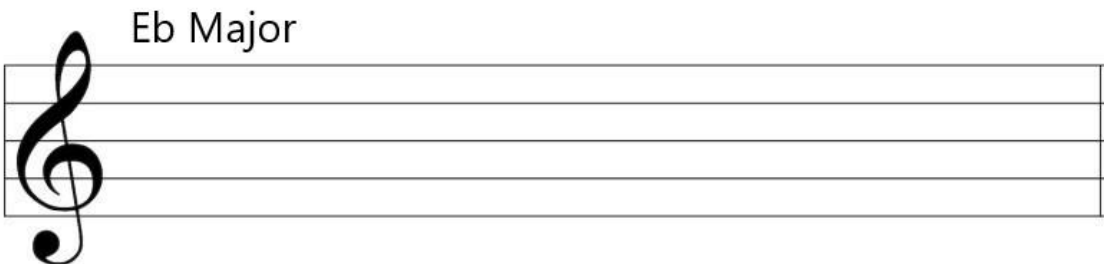
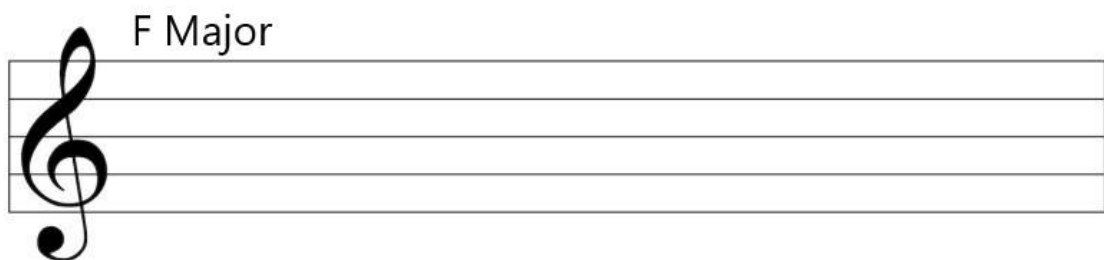
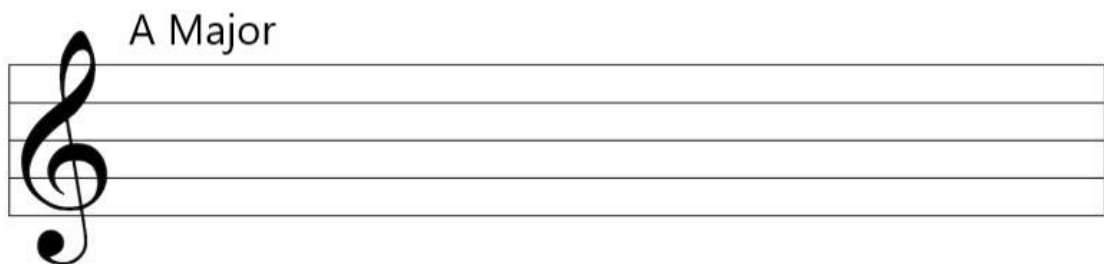
MATCHING

DIRECTIONS: Match the following key signatures with a melody in their key (5pts. Each)



SHORT ANSWER *Answers will vary, but the notes they have to choose from won't (10pts. Each)

DIRECTIONS: Fill in the key signature, and write a 2 measure melody in the correct key.



ESSAY QUESTIONS *Answers will vary (10 pts. Each)

DIRECTIONS: After listening to your repertoire performance, answer the following questions with 1 or 2 paragraphs.

- 1) What portion of your piece do you think is the strongest in terms of accuracy and interpretation? Why?

- 2) What section of the piece was the most difficult to prepare. What challenged you about it?

- 3) What section of the piece do you think you were least successful with? How would you change?

Listen to the assigned recording of your classmate performing their repertoire, and answer the following questions with 1 paragraph.

- 1) Which part of their piece do you think was the most successful? Why?

- 2) Which part of their piece do you think could have been different? How?

3) Did their cadenza fit the overall style of the piece? Why or why not?