

Band Instruments: Module 1

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The instructional hours indicated for each unit provide guidelines for planning, rather than strict requirements. The sequence of skill and concept development is to be the focus of concern. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these suggested timelines to meet the needs of their students.

To be effective in teaching this module, it is important to use the material contained in *Band Instruments: Curriculum Framework* and *Band Instruments: Appendices*. Therefore, it is recommended that these two components be frequently referenced to support the suggestions for teaching, learning, and assessment in this module.

Icons Used in this Module



Formative
Assessment



Summative
Assessment



Listening



Key Point



Extension



Cross
Curricular

Band Instruments: Module 1

Suggested Grade Level: Beginner Band (26 Instructional Hours)

Overview

Rationale

The expressive language of every art form relies on the creator or participant to master technique. Regardless of how it is defined, in any genre, technique is a foundational element that must be developed over time. There is no quick fix or fast track to success. Even those who master one aspect of performance will quickly find other aspects challenging. Developing technique involves patience, repetition, imagination, and a clear aim to cultivate sought-after qualities — qualities the performer-artist must struggle to achieve. Repetition is a key component in developing technique, especially with young performers. One of the artful abilities of the master teacher-performer is the ability to lead a class ensemble through repetitions without allowing monotony or boredom to invade the classroom atmosphere. By carefully communicating daily learning targets, educators set the stage for success at every step in the developmental process. When balanced against long-range goals for student achievement, gifted music educators lay the foundation for future success on the instrument.

Music requires a significant investment of time and resources to be successful within the culture of the school. Much has been written and published about connections between high test scores in math and science and musical instruction. While this is true in a statistical sense, it alone cannot justify the investment of time and resources for a successful band program in the curriculum. There is an intrinsic value in connecting our students to great art and culture by immersing them in the process of creating beautiful sounds.

Communicating student achievement (e.g. report cards) is only one of many ways in which music educators can emphasize the success of their students and impress upon a community that music holds a position of significance in their students' overall intellectual development. Teachers are encouraged to communicate with parents and the school community on a regular basis and call upon their creativity and resourcefulness to advocate for the arts while celebrating student achievement. The arts, by their nature, rely on sharing and communication. Take full advantage of all opportunities to perform, inform, and explore this curriculum in an open forum.

Introduction

In this first band instruments module, students are largely concerned with engaging in the music-making process on their musical instrument. Here, they develop techniques which set the stage for understanding music through performance in the wind band. With this foundation, students will meet the full range of learning outcomes in future modules.

Tips for Teaching Success

To be effective, assessment must be part of the teaching and learning process. Teaching, learning and assessment work best when informed decisions are made based on how well the students are progressing. If left to the end of a unit or at the end of this module, teachers will find themselves making subjective decisions, and students will find the actual assessment meaningless. Therefore, to be able to arrive at a final mark at the end of this module, teachers must include an assessment activity every day. For examples of assessment instruments, see Appendix D, *Band Instruments: Appendices*.

Outcomes Addressed

- Learners will analyse how rhythm, meter, and tempo communicate meaning.
- Learners will analyse the role of melody and harmony in the communication of meaning.
- Learners will evaluate the role of texture and form in communicating meaning.
- Learners will evaluate how composers and performers synthesize the elements of music to communicate meaning.
- Learners will analyse how the cultures of local and global communities are expressed through music.
- Learners will create original musical works reflecting personal, social, and cultural contexts.
- Learners will perform music in ensembles to communicate meaning.
- Learners will implement appropriate technique.

Unit 1: Foundations of Band Instrument Musical Instruction

(4 hours)

Introduction

This unit of study will focus on building the foundations of band instrument instruction. Topics covered will include instrument selection, posture, air, and sound production.

Prior to the first lesson, teachers must engage students in an instrument selection process. For many, this will take place in the spring of the previous year. Teachers may wish to consider the following as a guideline for the selection procedure

- Inform students and their parents/guardians of the benefits of the program and describe the selection process and criteria.
- Provide a demonstration of all available instrument choices.
- Establish due date and collection process for instrument selection forms.
- Bring students together to perform aptitude tests, interviews, instrument try-outs etc.
- Notify students and parents of instrument assignments, procedures for procuring the instrument and date/time of first instructional class.

See Appendix A, *Band Instruments: Appendices* for helpful guidelines in facilitating an instrument selection procedure.

Key Concepts/Musical Building Blocks

- Proper posture and breathing foundations
- Basic elements of quality sound production
- Concept of the pulse in musical sound
- *Legato* articulation

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Process

BASIC SKILLS COMPONENT

Part A: Posture and Breathing Foundations

It is impossible to overstate how important posture and breath are for wind instrument performance. Teachers should refer to the DVD and book *The Breathing Gym* for accurate demonstrations of posture and air exercises which will benefit every woodwind and brass performer. Be sure to include percussionists, as breathing becomes an important concept to solidify ensemble playing, even among percussionists. Students should be comfortable with these concepts *before* holding an instrument in their hands.

After covering the fundamentals of posture and breathing with the students, teachers may consider having students pair off and take turns coaching each other on the main points. Reciprocal teaching is a very effective means of reinforcing new concepts as students find it necessary to rephrase and internalize the main ideas. Consider using an exercise such as holding a thin piece of paper against the wall using a steady column of air from approximately 2 feet away to encourage a steady air stream. Repeating this activity with large straws has the added benefit of establishing a positive concept of embouchure. Some students are highly motivated by making this activity a contest.



In a large group, students can review key points for posture and breathing. These can be recorded in large print to be displayed on the classroom wall. These points will form the basis for future review and formative assessment.

As students are leaving the class, they might complete an Exit Card (see Appendix D, *Band Instruments: Appendices*) to demonstrate their learning about posture and breathing.

Appendix D: Exit Card

EXIT CARD

List 2 main points you remember about today's lesson on posture and breathing:

- 1.
- 2.

(Pass in as you leave the class)

Part B: Review Posture and Breathing Foundations (with mouthpieces/sticks)

Distribute mouthpieces, reeds, drumsticks, and practice pads — do not introduce the complete instrument currently. Set posture, holding position and embouchure for each instrument. Students should initiate the first sounds on mouthpiece and drum pads alone.

By using a call and response methodology, teachers can model the desired approach, paying attention to breath and posture. Students should be encouraged to stay focused on the creation of a rich, sustained sound.



As soon as possible, begin to construct a word bank of good descriptors of quality sound. Discuss the words at length with students to ensure comprehension. Encourage their use on student constructed rubrics and during peer and self-assessments.

Students can pair off by like or similar instrument and repeat the call and response activity previously modeled by the teacher. Students can use descriptors from the sound word bank to assess each other.

Group Share: Based on peer-feedback and self-assessment, students can be encouraged to share a goal for their home practice.

Tips for Teaching Success

Maximize use of instructional time by establishing procedures that will lead to positive and consistent rehearsal routines. Teachers may consider establishing procedures for the following:

- Instrument storage and case placement (removed from the seating area)
- A carefully constructed seating plan and assigned duties for set-up upon entry to the band room
- Instrument assembly and guidelines on when to assemble
- Providing appropriate storage and playing space to percussionists to encourage organization and reinforce preparedness
- Rehearsal protocols such as when to play, concert rest, breath on the upbeat, etc.
- Listening protocols for peer performances and recorded examples
- When music stands are required (Module 2), sufficient stands are used to avoid distractions and poor posture because of twisted bodies

Part C: Concept of the Pulse (Beat) in Musical Sound

Using a straw in a glass of water is one of the best ways to teach air support through legato articulation. Provide each student with a plastic straw. While moving throughout the classroom with a glass of water (1/3 filled), teachers should ask students to place their straw in the bottom of the glass and blow a continuous, unbroken stream of bubbles. Instruct students to place tongue on the end of the straw and pull it away quickly, without changing air speed. If the student can perform this task while keeping the bubbles constant, they have grasped the air concept required for legato tonguing.

Teachers may consider extending this activity by moving from a straw to the mouthpiece. While producing any pitch, maintain the airstream to hold a small piece of paper against the wall (need to be close). The next step would be to try to hold the paper while legato tonguing to an established pulse.



Using the word bank of descriptors of quality sound, students can discuss each word added to the bank to ensure comprehension. Teachers should encourage students to use these words when completing listening assignments.

Part D: Introduce the Instruments

While coaching a sustained, rich mouthpiece/drum pad sound, remind students of posture and breathing. As well, continue to remind students of desired sound using descriptors from previous lesson.

It is now time to introduce the complete instrument to the students. Teachers should consider the following:

- Set instrument use protocols
- Teach how to open cases, put instruments together (note: woodwind instruments take longer than brass to put together; trombones longer than other brass)
- Establish holding position of instrument
- Make first pitch — F-concert
- Introduce legato articulation, playing with air-patterns (“whisper-tonguing”)
- Introduce a sustained F-concert pitch

Tips for Teaching Success

If the F-concert pitch presents a challenge for some brass players, encourage students to find success by sustaining any pitch, then work toward the F-concert pitch through prompts for embouchure focus and breath support.



Success during performance tasks, assessments, and ultimately mastery of the instrument will depend a great deal on the student’s ability to engage in a self-assessment and diagnostic process during individual practice sessions. In these early days of their instrumental music experience, students will need continuous guidance and specific learning targets. Consider helping students develop diagnostic charts that can be used during home practice. Together, the teacher and students might discuss the language of the chart to confirm understanding and make the chart specific to the current tasks. See sample of a Diagnostic Chart in Appendix D, *Band Instruments: Appendices*.

Appendix D: Diagnostic Chart

HOME PRACTICE – DIAGNOSTIC CHART	
Performance Task: Sustained Concert F Pitch	
When I sound like this:	I can try this:
My sound is “wobbly”, and the pitch goes flat after a few beats.	Think about my breath support Keep steady air flow (straw and bubbles) Think of moving the air stream faster and support from my belly.



Most performance tasks will be assigned with mastery as the only acceptable standard. Rubrics should be used to guide learning and skill development — not as a marking tool. Every assessment is to be considered for learning (formative) until students demonstrate performance at the acceptable standard. At that point, acknowledge their accomplishment and record as a demonstrated skill of learning (summative).

There should be no limit placed on the number of attempts a student is permitted over time. Students’ progress will vary in quality and rate, but the standard remains constant.



Design a rubric which allows students to assess their progress and identify next steps in the learning/skill development process (see sample in Appendix D, *Band Instruments: Appendices*). Begin with like-instrument groups performing their F-concert sustained pitch. Have each group assess their performance based on the criteria. Encourage other students to offer their assessment, and if appropriate, offer advice. The teacher may contribute comments to model appropriate responses. Repeat the process articulating 4 quarter notes on F-concert pitch.

Move to individual performances. The rubric can be used to record individual student progress. When students have achieved the learning goals, record their progress as a *summative* source of evidence.

In addition, students can share the following responses as an opportunity to assess their current level of understanding. Ask students to be as specific as possible, as it will help them improve. Suggestions include:

- “What I like about my sound”
- “What I need to improve about my sound”
- “What I like about my articulation”
- “What I would like to improve upon with my articulation”

Consider extending the challenge to other pitches for those students who are progressing more quickly.

ACTIVE LISTENING COMPONENT



To provide an excellent model of quality sound on the instrument, teachers can select a band instrument performance that might also provide reinforcement of *legato* articulation. After listening to a complete performance, encourage student responses on what they heard. Teachers may consider playing the excerpt a second time, stopping frequently to discuss what is being seen and heard. This process can serve to model the type of focused listening required of students. This also provides opportunity to continue building the word bank of descriptive language.



At this point, teachers may wish to assign a task such as an Instrument Review and Inventory Assignment. Students can observe and listen to a recorded performance of their instrument and provide comments on what they observed. Teachers are encouraged to use internet resources such as Naxos Online and CBC Canada Live, or YouTube, to find excellent live and pre-recorded performances of band instruments. See Appendix D in *Band Instruments: Appendices* for a sample master chart that students can use to record their observations.

Appendix D: Instrument Review and Inventory Assignment

Quality Inventory	What did you observe this performer do (in each category)?	How can this observation be appropriately applied to how you play your own instrument?
Posture		
Hand position and body alignment		
Use of air		
Sound quality		
Pulse/tempo		

EAR TRAINING/IMPROVISATION COMPONENT

Consider an opportunity to use an improvisation activity from the Jeffrey Agrell resource to encourage full participation and build a positive and supportive class climate. Select an activity that will reinforce steady pulse and encourage active listening.



Throughout the activities and classroom assessments discussed, much of the dialogue should be encouraging a positive and collaborative process of peer assessment and collective problem-solving.

Active participation in these activities provides the teacher with ongoing opportunities to acknowledge students' demonstrations of outcomes.

Unit 2: An Introduction to Melodic Structure (3 hours)

Introduction

Wind band instruments are, by and large, melodic instruments. Instrument performers share this single-voice heritage with the human voice; indeed, much of what we ask students to do on the instruments mimics the human voice. Singing in the instrumental classroom is strongly encouraged throughout every unit and module of the *Band Instruments* curricula. In this unit students will begin to learn more about melody through a variety of musical behaviours (editing, performing).

Self- and peer- assessment will continue to play an important role in students' musical development and will strengthen the potential for future ensemble. Creative use of digital recording equipment as a tool for immediate reflection, analysis and goal setting is strongly encouraged.

“To enjoy a melody, we need to be able to hear it more than once. A melody that vanished forever after one hearing would remove itself from the sphere of regret or indifference. It might not make sense to call such a thing a melody at all. Melody lives by defeating the necessity by which music must vanish in the act of being made. Melody arises as something that lingers and lives as something whose fate is to be restored.”

Lawrence Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters*, page 37

Key Concepts/Musical Building Blocks

- First 5 notes of the B-flat concert scale
- *Legato* and slurred articulations with proper attack and release
- Blending quality sound production with ensemble
- Identify names and sounds of all wind band instruments
- Master 4-8 melodies from memory
- Maintain steady pulse in performance

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Process

BASIC SKILLS COMPONENT

Part A: First 5 notes of the B-flat concert scale

In the beginning, teachers are encouraged to refer to every note in the mixed instrument class by its solfege name, adding concert pitch names later. Notes should be introduced downward in a stepwise pattern from F-concert to B-flat:

F	sol
E-flat	fa
D	mi
C	re
B-flat	do

Students will learn the first 5 notes of the B-flat concert scale using the solfege system. Encourage students to produce a robust, rich *mezzo-forte* dynamic. Experiment with *legato* and slurred articulation patterns.

Teachers may wish to consider the following:

- Always initiate sound with a breath up-beat, one beat before making a sound.
- Encourage that the breath be in time and in the character of the sound which follows.
- Avoid counting a full measure before the class plays as much as possible.

Once these basic notes have been introduced and played, fluency becomes the main goal. The teacher will lead the class in call and response games, coaching students to refine technique, attacks, releases, and to create an ideal ensemble balance.

The key to success is to teach students to listen to and respond to the sounds of other players while they themselves are playing on their own instrument. Once this is achieved, students are ready to develop fluency of expression and colour and are ready to approach various simple melodies. Quarter note = 60 is suggested as a steady, stable tempo to assist the development of fluent facility.



Technology can be used to enhance students' ability to self-assess and guide home practice. Using a simple digital recording device such as an Edirol, students might record the 5 notes of the scale or simple melodies. Students can save these mp3 files as part of a portfolio. In addition, students can use a simple reflective tool to self-assess their progress and set a goal for home practice.

The internet provides a rich repertoire of public domain folk songs and renaissance melodies that are free of copyright, from a kaleidoscope of cultural sources. The teacher is encouraged to explore a range of melodies and to select and teach 4-6 melodies to the class ensemble by rote. Some suggested websites are:

- MUN website – MacEdward Leach and the Songs of Atlantic Canada
<http://www.mun.ca/folklore/leach/>
- [CJTM: Canadian Journal of Traditional Music](http://cjt看.icaap.org/)
<http://cjt看.icaap.org/>
- Helen Creighton was Nova Scotia’s pioneer in the collection of traditional folk songs. Visit her archives at <https://novascotia.ca/archives/creighton/>
- To see and download free music by Tylman Susato - The Dansyre; and Michael Praetorius – Tersipchore; plus others, consult the Werner Icking Music Archive
<http://icking-music-archive.org/>

The above sites represent a small sample of the copyright-free web-based melody resources available to the teacher. Many of these melodies will fit into the range and key restrictions required by the students at this level of ability. The teacher is encouraged to prepare and teach a melody repertoire of 4-6 compositions, by rote, to suit their class and personal preferences.

Part B: Extending the range

Teachers should introduce the leading tone (note 7, below note 1, A concert) and the 6th degree of the scale (G concert, above note 5) to students, to expand the range of possible songs.

EAR TRAINING/IMPROVISATION COMPONENT

Students will seek out a melody of their own choosing to play for the class. After providing students with a short period of time to think of a melody and explore its composition through trial and error (by ear), pair up students and allow them to assist each other in documenting their melodies for practice purposes.



Co-construct a rubric to establish the expected standard for performance of the students' melodies and encourage student input in developing descriptors for stages of progress. See Performance Skill Rubric sample in Appendix D in *Band Instruments: Appendices*.

Appendix D: Performance Skill Rubric

PERFORMANCE SKILL RUBRIC				
Stage of Progress	Developing the Skill			Achieved Skill



Students can be asked to compile answers to the question:
 “What are the important features of melodies?” Answers may include:

- Single line of notes
- Infused with rhythm
- Derives meaning from the combination of pitches
- Like a musical sentence – one idea, several notes
- Each note is like a word
- Smooth (stepwise) or jagged (sudden leaps)
- Repetition patterns (rhythmic motifs and melodic sequences) may occur

Students should record their answers, as they will provide the basis for in-depth classroom discussion on the nature of melodies.



Progress Summary

At this point in the module, students should be demonstrating considerable progress towards the key concepts of Units 1 and 2. Students should be fluent in or able to:

- Identify the names and sounds of all the wind band instruments
- Contribute as a member of the class ensemble, demonstrating established protocols for class rehearsal and performance, and various strategies for beginning and ending notes, on the breath, using *legato* and slurred articulations
- Play a repertoire of 4-8 melodies, (one of their own choosing), from memory, with a beautiful sound (note: these melodies are very important, as they will provide a foundation for the first full class band arrangement in Unit 4)
- Maintain a steady pulse while playing
- Appropriately balance and blend their sound into the class ensemble

See Unit 2 Progress Report sample in Appendix D in Band Instruments: Appendices.

Appendix D: Unit 2 Progress Report

UNIT 2 STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT			
Checklist			
SKILL	ALWAYS	USUALLY	AREA FOR FOCUSSED IMPROVEMENT
Contributes positively as a member of the music ensemble			
Follows the proper classroom procedures for rehearsal and performances.			



Guide students' home practice by following any progress reports with a brief conference in which you can help students identify practical strategies to meet next goals in their learning and performance skill development. See Personal Goal Statement sample in Appendix D in *Band Instruments: Appendices*.

Appendix D: Personal Goal Statement

PERSONAL GOAL STATEMENT	
Name:	Date:
I plan to develop my music skills with a focus on	
My "before" picture-evidence used to choose my goal was	
My teacher and I have discussed these solutions:	

Unit 3: Taking Ownership of Melodic Performance

(5 hours)

Introduction

In this unit, students will take ownership of melodic performance and continue to build on their foundation skills through creative projects in smaller ensembles. Improvisations and compositions built on the notes of the pentatonic scale will form the basis of this musical exploration.

Key Concepts/Musical Building Blocks

- Improvisations within the pentatonic scale
- Create and perform simple compositions
- Perform call and response
- Perform with dynamics
- *Staccato* articulation, accents
- Perform at a variety of tempos
- Introduction to music notation

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Process

MUSIC LITERACY COMPONENT

Once students have achieved fluency using a limited set of notes and have formulated a basic musical context on their instruments, they will be ready to encounter traditional notation. In the teaching of music literacy, pitch is usually introduced first. Students will begin to learn about notation by naming and drawing notes in the treble and bass clefs.

There are five instructional hours allotted to the completion of tasks in Unit 3. It is suggested that 10-15 minutes during each of 5 instructional hours be devoted to written notation. The *ApRo Music Theory* worksheets provide a simple, progressive framework for introducing notation in small cells during each class. The teacher may use any method or computer software they choose, and even a slightly different sequence of topics, provided systematic instruction begins during this unit. It is expected that music notation instruction will be a part of every instructional hour through to the end of module one.

As is the case with theoretical content in many subject areas, relevance (the teachable moment) should dictate when and how much content is to be introduced during any one class. While traditional notation is being explored as a new concept it should not be part of the performance class at this point in the curriculum.

Tips for Teaching Success

Teaching Music Literacy from the Start - A Crucial Planning
Consideration for Instrumental Music Teachers

The main premise of the beginning instrumental music module is "sound before sight". However, music literacy is a key component required for success in future modules. It cannot be completely ignored, or the students may develop the wrong idea about instrumental music instruction. Improvisation and non-traditional notation make up only a small part of the full spectrum of music. Traditional notation is virtually universal – using it, a student will be able to connect and interact with and even perform music from Japan or Romania or Iceland. Musical notation is like a "universal-translator" for the music and culture of most countries in the world.

Teachers must stress that reading music notation is a goal of the course and take steps to teach the rudimentary grammar of music. At this stage, music literacy is best taught in relative isolation from classroom performance activities. Once again, think about the teaching of reading and writing in schools. Are grade one students judged on their ability to write everything they can say in class? No, they are not. The grade one teacher understands that spelling, grammar, even penmanship will gradually improve and eventually catch-up to the spoken word. Music literacy needs to be carefully and sequentially presented alongside rudimentary performing activities in this module. Notation will allow the student to explore the fullest range of music in the future.

Module 1 suggests that time be devoted to music literacy every day, to ensure readiness for notation later. Failure to do this will jeopardize the future success of the students.



As pitch notation is introduced, consider daily formative assessments where 10 to 20 notes within the current range of performance are randomly displayed on small handouts. Students could be timed (try 1 second per note which would be quarter = 60 as a starting point) as they label the pitches. Have students pair and share to determine % of correctness and allow them to individually track progress. Increase degree of difficulty as accuracy increases.

* This may eventually lead to a summative event. Teacher will determine readiness for this event by monitoring progress of daily routines.

BASIC SKILLS COMPONENT

Staccato Articulation/Accent/Dynamics

Use warm-ups to introduce *staccato* articulation, accent, and dynamics on a passage of steady beats. These concepts will be added to the repertoire of colors available to student composers. These concepts will require the same dedication of self and peer assessment opportunities, leading to diagnostic home practice for skill mastery.

EAR TRAINING/IMPROVISATION COMPONENT

Part A: The Pentatonic Scale

The pentatonic scale is very common and is found in folk music all over the world. The Orff-based system of teaching music to elementary students places a strong emphasis on improvisation using the pentatonic scale. Students should learn how to play the B-flat concert pentatonic scale.



When students have gained facility with the pentatonic scale, have them perform the scale in progressively challenging routines, using a variety of articulations, in like-instrument groupings. Students might begin by using 2 or 3 notes of the scale. Suggestions include 4 beats per pitch, 2 beats per pitch, single beats ascending and descending, etc. At each level of difficulty, a rubric like that co-constructed for F-concert and subsequent performance skills might be used. Have each group assess their performance, based on the criteria.

If progress supports the idea, consider raising the standard of the criteria. Encourage other students to offer insights and comments. Perhaps responses can be recorded on a diagnostic practice chart to assist with skills such as staccato articulation and dynamics performance using the pentatonic scale during home practice.

Group Share

Based on peer-feedback and self-assessment encourage students to share a goal for their home practice.

Tips for Teaching Success

Depending on students' eagerness to take risks and their relative progress with the technical demands of the instruments, the teacher may need to create a safe environment with parameters that set the stage for success. Such considerations might include:

- Limitations on tempo
- Vary rhythm only as step one, and later move to scalar exercises, then melodic variations, as confidence and melodic dexterity progress
- Ask that the response take place in character and in time
- In each group of 3-4 players, assign one student as the coach. The coach will listen to the ensemble improvisations and shape them according to the desired type of response.

Part B: Melodic Improvisation

Arrange the class in small ensembles, with 2-4 players. Students will engage in creative improvisational experiences by imitating, elaborating, paraphrasing, and embellishing melody ideas. Typically, one player will present an improvised or existing melodic phrase as a question, in a steady tempo, and other players will respond to the melody. Before this exercise begins, the teacher can demonstrate some of the possibilities for the class.

Some common types of responses to musical questions include:

- Imitation
- Contrast with colour, dynamics, and articulations
- An answer that paraphrases the question
- An answer in contrast to the question
- Elaboration and embellishment of the question

Start with a known melody as the question and ask students to try the different styles of responses. If students find this to be challenging, consider using 3 notes only (doh-re-mi). Students can also experiment with c minor improvisations using re-mi-fa on a concert C drone.

Refer to *Improvisation Games for Classical Musicians* by Jeffrey Agrell, p. 115 for a One-Measure Melody Invention that may establish a very safe starting point for this project.



If time and facilities permit, allow groups to record improvisational exchanges and then play back while analyzing in relation to the explained criteria (maintenance of tempo, contrast, elements of imitation, similarity of character, etc.).

Have each group stop and reflect on their performance and ideas to this point. Encourage them to record any melodic responses they consider especially successful. These motifs may prove to be helpful as future thematic material for a composition and provide a wonderful teachable moment for theoretical notation.

Tips for Teaching Success

Students' willingness to explore their creativity will only thrive in a climate where reflection is always forward thinking and assessment is focused on growth, not marks. Acknowledgement of attempts and small progressive steps will be critical to continued growth.



Use self- and peer-assessments (informal verbal responses and/or exit cards) to encourage growth.

During class improvisations, identify exemplars that can be used to set the current standard for the projects' criteria and develop a tracking chart to record each student's successful demonstrations of these criteria or skills. A basic criterion tracking chart may resemble the following where there is no mark, only checks when a successful demonstration is acknowledged either by teacher or teacher and peers. Students will be encouraged and engaged by the concept that they continue to work on their musical responses meets the established standard. Note: See Improvisation Project – Tracking Chart in Appendix D, in *Band Instruments: Appendices*.

Improvisation Project – Tracking Chart

IMPROVISATION PROJECT – TRACKING CHART										
CLASS:							TERM:			
NAME:	Successfully improvised response using imitation	Successfully responded in contrast with colour, dynamics, articulation	Successfully responded with a paraphrase of the question	Successfully responded with in contrast to the question	Improvised response by elaborating or embellishing the question					
1.										
2.										
3.										



Teachers may wish to introduce an activity such as the Improvisation Activity (see next page) contributed by pilot teacher Barb Hopkins.

Improvisation Activity

Group member names _____

During the next class, you will work in pairs to create melodies. One student will begin the musical phrase and the other will finish it (call and response). Each time you complete a melody I would like you to respond to what you have played (try a few practice runs first before you begin to record your responses). Have fun with this. Try everything - nothing is wrong!

If you find a couple of melodies that you particularly like, write them down in solfege and rhythm (the best that you can). Soon, we will be composing melodies and you might like to use some of the material you come up with today.

Describe characteristics of improvisations that you really liked, and feel would make a good melody.	Describe the characteristics of improvisations that you did not like OR did not work well as a melody	Describe the characteristics of improvisations you thought were "cool" but not good melody material. Would this be good for another situation? (a movie advertisement or TV show)

Record here any of the melodies that you would like to remember and perhaps use for another composition.

COMPOSITION COMPONENT

Part A: The first composition

Teachers can divide the students in groups to form small ensembles. Each ensemble will compose and perform an original melody. This allows an opportunity to teach and contrast improvisation and composition. The procedure can begin with improvising ideas as a group, using the improvisation methods previously explored, then choosing and editing selections for performance.

Together, teachers and students can develop guidelines that will help ensure a successful experience by considering the following:

- Limitations on pitch choice
- Rhythmic patterns and time signature (beat groupings)
- A specified length for the melody

For this first composition, student ensembles will perform their melodies for the entire class, from memory, without use of traditional or graphic notation.



To extend their learning, students can repeat the process to compose a second melody. In this instance, students can be encouraged to record their melody, either aurally or written in their own notation style.

Teachers can use this activity as a vehicle for an early introduction to a recital. Move from partnered performances to solo performances for the peer group. Take every opportunity to celebrate their willingness to share in this format and ensure that the atmosphere is safe and supportive.



Involve the students in a discussion of positive attributes of a “good” melody. Use these descriptors to co-construct a rubric. Organize the lesson(s) so that students have opportunities to provide peer feedback on melodies “in progress” using the rubric.

Mirror the assessment format of articulation skills by moving from self-, to peer-, and finally to teacher-assessment feedback. Teachers should remember to focus assessment on process and growth as the technical demands of performance will still be very much in the developmental stages.

Part B: Expanding Compositions

Students should have opportunity to explore ways to perform and edit melodies previously learned, with new insight. In this activity, *interpretation* of learned melodies is key. Teachers should encourage students in their use of dynamic colour range (*pp-p-mp-mf-f-ff*), accents, *staccato*, and *legato* and slurred articulations. Students might also experiment with trying the learned melodies at a variety of tempi (slow, medium, fast).



Expand upon the rubric co-constructed for the first composition. Consider creating a composition idea bank on the wall like a word bank to assist students in generating new approaches to their melodic creations.

Make use of recording technology to allow students to hear their creations and make critical decisions for final versions.

Unit 4: Canvas and Colour (6 hours)

Introduction

Beginning students are now at the point in the curriculum when a co-curricular band experience should begin, if indeed it is not already in place. There are many reasons and purposes for this type of program. Chief among them is to reinforce what is going on in the classroom, and to expand on the protocols and procedures that have already been introduced while playing in a full band setting. It is also important to create ensemble contexts for melody performance.

“Children are motivated to learn when they can be creative, because creativity is the most natural state of mind for a child.”

Michael Colgrass, *Composers and Children - A Future Creative Force?*

Key Concepts/Musical Building Blocks

- Extend range to full B-flat concert scale
- Introduction to rhythmic notation
- Increase musical “palette” (tempo, dynamics, articulations, A-B-A form)
- Understand functional elements of compositions (pedal point-drone, ostinato,
- Background, middle ground, and foreground
- Make musical decisions and perform elements of ensemble performance including balance, matched style, and function
- Make creative decisions in a collaborative environment
- Introduction to graphic notation

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Process

BASIC SKILLS COMPONENT

Part A: Functions of Melody



Teachers can design a 20-30-minute lesson exploring ideas about foreground, middle ground, and background in visual arts. This is an excellent vehicle to initiate discussion by drawing parallels between foreground, middle ground, and background in art and music. Teachers may choose to use examples of great paintings to develop ideas about composition in visual arts. Another example would be to study visual examples of wedding photographs. Students instinctively grasp that the bride and groom are usually in the foreground, the middle ground often changes, with different members of the family in the photos, and there is use of a beautiful setting to provide the background for the photos. This can serve as an introduction to the types of

choices an artist makes as arranger and composer of specific elements. Teachers may consider approaching this concept by first using the idea of “melody” and “accompaniment” and then moving to foreground/middle ground/background.

Teachers should also spend time to introduce/review the following ideas to students:

- The use of pedal-point or drone as a common tension-building, background device in arranging and composing
- The concept of ostinato as a common background or middle ground device in arranging and composing (ostinati should be a familiar concept from students’ elementary music experiences)
- Equally recognizable to students should be the concept of A-B-A form.



The concept of foreground/middle ground/background can be reinforced by moving from visual examples to a series of listening excerpts. Teachers should select examples with distinct voices in the various roles to make initial listenings accessible to the untrained ear. Teachers can also include listening examples that demonstrate pedal-point, ostinato, and A-B-A form.



Successful application of these concepts will rely on students' degree of understanding. Teachers might use a series of listening examples to introduce each concept, taking the time to stop the recording, discuss elements, and then replay to reinforce.

During a second set of excerpts, students can be prompted to signal (by raised hands), the moment they hear the element that teachers describe. Teachers should make careful note of any individuals who appear to require additional support with the concept.

Students can complete an Exit Card (see Appendix D in *Band Instruments: Appendices*) to demonstrate their level of comprehension. See below for a sample wording.

EXIT CARD

1. Describe in your own words, an element of composition you feel confident in using
2. Name an element of composition you find less clear and try to say what confuses you.

(Pass in as you leave the class)

As learning in this unit progresses, students should be continuing to develop the technical aspects of performance. Teachers can use the students' ensemble to reinforce new concepts such as background, middle ground, and foreground. The ensemble can be divided into three voices. Assign notes and roles to student groups. Experiment with the sound and discuss the balance. Students can change roles and repeat the exercise.

Part B: Full B-flat concert scale

Students should be taught the remaining notes in the B-flat concert scale. Appropriate octave-breaks can be used for French horn and clarinet. The scale can be used to practice maintaining a steady pulse at a variety of tempos.



Teachers might consider extending the challenge of the B-flat scale by introducing dynamic range while maintaining pulse. Early recognition that *piano* does not mean slow and *forte* does not mean fast, will serve the performers well in the future.



Teachers should encourage the use of self- and peer-assessments for each performance skill requested of the ensemble.

COMPOSITION COMPONENT

Graphic Notation

In this learning experience, students will use graphic notation to create a full-class arrangement of a simple renaissance melody, such as *La Mourisque* by composer Tylman Susato. This melody is only 8 measures long, and like most renaissance melodies, it works well when set against a drone, or a single-chord harmonic backdrop like a repeated ostinato. It is important to note that a melody from any source can be substituted – the teacher is encouraged to use a melody which is meaningful to them (perhaps select a melody taught to the class using a rote procedure in Unit 2).

“The magic of musical creativity has intrigued writers, critics and musicologists for centuries. How do composers write music? Are they endowed with a divine gift from the gods, or is creating a symphony a skill that certain people have been willing to put in the time and effort to acquire?”

I have never heard a satisfactory answer to these questions, but, having composed symphonic music all my adult life, I do know there is much about the process of writing a piece of music that can be understood.”

Michael Colgrass, *Composers and Children - A Future Creative Force?*

A tremendous source for how to use graphic notation is the article *Composers and Children – A New Creative Force?* by Canadian composer Michael Colgrass. This article is freely available online at <http://www.michaelcolgrass.com/>; it is also reprinted in *The Music Director’s Cookbook*.



Elements of composition within renaissance music are generally accessible to most listeners. Be sure to reinforce each concept with sufficient opportunities to hear real examples.



Students can research the nature of the renaissance consort.

Tips for Teaching Success

Before moving to melody on instruments, students can try humming or singing a short melody to an ostinato. Ostinato might initially involve only percussion on a rhythmic motif, later to be replaced or accompanied by pitch.

The following is a very simple, graphically notated arrangement created during a band workshop led by Mark Hopkins with the Bert Church Junior Band in Airdree, Alberta. This arrangement is based on *La Mourisque* by Tylman Susato.

intro **A** **B** **A** **coda**

mf *f* *mf* *f*

clarinets add oboe, trumpets, flutes, alto saxes low brass + woodwinds

Everyone improvises one phrase, on cue from conductor

"THE MOMENT"

pp *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *mf* *n*

Bass Drum, tuba, trombones (add French horn) (switch ostinato to flutes + clarinet) on cue (switch ostinato back to original)

Legend main melody
 ostinato: (repeat over + over)
 improvisations: (using first 7 notes of Bb concert)
 * The teacher-conductor cues + conducts each entrance + transition.

Full Band Arrangement
 La Mourisque
 Tylman Susato
 4 - 7 minutes, depending on improvisating

Three composition elements are used to construct this arrangement:

1. Ostinato – it is repeated, persisting throughout the work, and provides the musical material that “bookends” the piece (introduction and coda)
2. Main melody – while this arrangement is based on *La Mourisque*, any melody previously rehearsed and memorized may be substituted. Secondary melodies can be added, possibly selected from student improvisations.
3. Improvisations – students can experiment using notes of the B-flat concert scale. The improvisation games in Unit 3 will provide a basis for exploring new, student-generated, improvised melodies within an ensemble context

As the piece is rehearsed, students should discuss and decide how to create bridge material (to transition from section to section and from soloist to soloist in the improvised section). Different combinations can be suggested and explored by the students, until the group determines the best solutions for the class.

In order to be successful in this venture, every student in the class should answer questions about their role in the full ensemble performance (balance, entrance preparation, releases, matching articulations, maintaining a steady tempo, function of their part in the context of the full ensemble, and intonation and colour matching within the group). Students will decide how to ensure that “the moment” is decisively presented for the listener.

See Appendix E: Creating Music Using Graphic Notation in *Band Instruments: Appendices* for ideas on teaching graphic notation in this and all band instruments modules.



Students’ contributions to the musical conversation and composition process should be acknowledged and tracked for future reporting in relation to the outcomes.

MUSIC LITERACY COMPONENT

It is recommended that students be introduced to rhythmic notation at this point in the curriculum. Over the course of this unit, teachers can dedicate 10-15 minutes of each instructional period to combine continued work on performance skills, with an introduction to rhythmic notation.

Depending on the students' prior knowledge, the Kodaly method of ta's and ti's may be the obvious choice. Another standard method is count-saying with numbers. For example, in 4 time a full measure of each common note value can be expressed as:

Quarters: one two three four
Eighths: one Ann two Ann three Ann four Ann
Triplets: one tri - plet two tri - plet three tri - plet four tri - plet
Sixteenths: one e Ann a two e Ann a three e Ann a four e Ann a

Tips for Teaching Success

Introduce rhythmic notation first by rhythm only, clapping without use of the instruments. Gradually incorporate use of the instrument and extend complexity to include pitch, tempo, and scale passages.

At each developmental stage in the rhythmic dictation process described above, provide students with a reasonable challenge to work on during home practice.

A further aspect of music literacy study in this unit can focus on form. Students who can successfully identify repeats and contrasting sections as they pertain to form, will find it easier to learn, understand, and perform their repertoire. Teachers should encourage study of the music literacy components that directly relate to students' playing.



Students can pair off by like or similar instruments. Have pairs take turns playing rhythmic patterns written on the board. Encourage peers to clap while their partners play. Peers can identify any performance issues and provide constructive responses for the performer.

Group Share

Based on peer-feedback and self-assessment, encourage students to share a goal for their home practice.

Make use of recording technology to allow students to hear their creations and facilitate conversations in which the students learn how to make critical decisions for editing purposes.

ACTIVE LISTENING COMPONENT



Students will listen to a musical ensemble (of the teacher’s selection), and answer questions about:

- Melody vs. accompaniment
- Colour – instrumentation
- Colour – shaded dynamics and articulation styles

Encountering great models to compare their own playing is a crucial part of any artist’s development. Live concert observation is ideal, but not necessary. CBC Live offers amazing concert experiences with Canadian performers and composers, free, to any class or individual.



When students do have opportunity to hear a live performance, teachers may take opportunity to have students reflect on their experience. Pilot teacher Ken Howatson, asked his students to respond to these questions, following their attendance at a Stadacona Band Concert.

- What were your expectations before the concert began?
- What was your favorite song and why?
- What was your favorite part of the concert?
- What instrument or section interested you the most and why?
- Musically, what did you learn from this concert?

Students’ contributions to the musical conversation and composition process should be acknowledged and tracked for future reporting in relation to the outcomes. Teachers can use a chart like the one outlined here. See Appendix D in *Band Instruments: Appendices* for the complete chart.

Appendix D: Ensemble Performance Observation Chart

Ensemble Performance Observation Chart									
CLASS:						TERM:			
NAME:	Successfully identifies melody vs. accompaniment	Successfully contributes to musical decisions for performance	Successfully follows directions of a conductor	Successfully reads a musical score	Successfully uses graphic notation to express ideas				
1.									
2.									
3.									

Unit Benchmarks

In this unit of study, students have encountered all the hallmarks of ensemble music performance that they will study through repertoire over the next six years. These hallmarks include:

- Following the directions of a conductor (cues, dynamics, balance, tempo)
- Striking a balance between repetition and contrast in arranging and performing
- Exploring function in music (melody, countermelody, background)
- Cultivating an awareness of form, as musical events unfold over time
- How to convey “the moment” to a listening audience
- The function of bridge material to transition between musical events
- Improvising within the limits of technique and the class ensemble context

Unit 5: Mastery of Foundation Elements (8 hours)

Introduction

In this unit, students will engage in culminating composition and performance projects, in small groups, full class, and in full band. At the same time, the class ensemble will rehearse and refine previously learned music, aiming for a structural mastery of the melodies and full band repertoire introduced in all prior units.

The concert performance speaks directly to the achievement of the class group by providing an appropriate showcase for student work. In a painting unit, an exhibition would provide the best means to demonstrate learning within the visual arts context. Music is a performance art — performing for an audience is a capstone event for every developing musician. Performing for an audience, at this point, without the aid of written music, allows students to reflect on what they learned over 25 instructional hours, and points them towards the next module where they will link sight and sound with traditional and non-traditional notation. Bringing students to the public as performers early in their musical development is a critical component of ensuring future success.

Key Concepts/Musical Building Blocks

- B-flat concert scale and patterns in various rhythmic patterns using quarter notes and eighth notes.
- increase musical “palette” (2 characteristic sounds/effects)
- rhythmic dictation using quarter notes and eighth notes
- make musical decisions for composition and performance of an original piece
- make creative decisions in a collaborative environment

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Process

EAR TRAINING/IMPROVISATION COMPONENT

Kick start the creative process by beginning each class in this unit with a warm-up on instruments which use a call and response routine between teacher and students or student and students. Teachers can also explore various suggestions by Jeffrey Agrell in *Improvisation Games for Classical Musicians* and lead students in a variety of activities throughout the unit.

MUSIC LITERACY COMPONENT

Pace the creative process by inserting important music literacy lessons into each instructional period. Teachers can consider rhythmic dictation exercises using quarter and eighth notes, beginning with 8 beats, and progressing to 16 as students demonstrate success. Students can then play these rhythmic patterns on their instruments, using the B-flat concert scale.



ACTIVE LISTENING COMPONENT

Nurture the students' creativity and foster listening skills by introducing short listening excerpts during each instructional period. Choose examples that introduce a new sound and guide the students' listening. Assess their ability to hear what you are describing using simple indicators such as raised hands when the sound occurs.

COMPOSITION COMPONENT

Part A: Small Group Compositions

Organize the students into larger groups of 6-8 players. Provide them with large newsprint to create a graphic score. In this collaborative arranging project, students will be asked to use the following procedure:

- Choose a melody to form the basis of the arrangement. This melody can come from existing repertoire studied in class, a separate source, or it can be composed by the group. It must be selected by group consensus, fostering interpersonal skills. Each player must memorize the selected melody.
- Each member of the group will experiment to discover 2 characteristic sounds, motives, or ostinato figures which can form the background and middle ground of the arrangement. Each player should also design a symbol which will represent these discovered sounds on the score. The background and middle ground should be designed to suit the overall context of the selected melody.
- Edit the background and middle ground ideas as a group. Select the best musical ideas and distill them into a form that can be played by all members of the ensemble.
- Using the large paper, select a pattern for how the arrangement will unfold.
- Create a legend to explain which symbols match specific sounds.
- Decide on patterns of repetition and contrasts (form).
- Rehearse the arrangement. Refine the bridge sections. Decide where “the moment” is. Add or adjust dynamics and articulations.
- Perform the arrangement for the class.

Part B: Full Band Arrangements

Adapt one, two or all the chamber ensemble arrangements for the full class ensemble. Each group will take responsibility for editing and rescoring their chamber piece and will plan how best to teach it to the class ensemble. The band class will rehearse and perform the piece, in class and possibly in concert.



Together, teacher and students can develop a checklist or rubric which will allow groups to self and peer assess the compositions based on the criteria the class has discussed during the creative process. Allow them to use this feedback to fine-tune their compositions as they are arranged and rescored for full band.

CUMULATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students are now ready to participate in a concert. They have accumulated melodies, chamber, and full class/band arrangements, all from memory, with graphic scores as visual aids. These ensemble and full class works can be showcased in the concert, at the teacher's discretion. Teachers must use their own instincts and musical values when deciding what is suitable for concert performance, remembering that students always want to sound great when they perform. Indeed, it is safe to say that all musicians want to present only their finest work in public.

Another possibility for a public presentation is an *Informance*, rather than a *Performance*. The goal is to communicate the learning process, celebrate current successes and inspire students (with the generous support of parents and community) towards next goals.



Teachers are encouraged to reinforce specific performance protocols and procedures for the concert. Every aspect must be addressed, including:

- concert attire
- warm-up locations and times
- warm-up procedures
- lining up to enter stage
- stage protocols (no waving to parents, etc.)
- seating arrangement of the ensemble
- announcing of works, concert order
- appropriate response to applause
- exiting the stage

Professionalism is a learned behaviour. A dress rehearsal can alleviate the stress of performance, especially in younger ensembles. If the teacher pays close attention to detail in the first concert, so will the students, and the stage will be set for future successes.



Assessment of the performance should emphasize reflection for the students. Students can use a rubric that incorporates language which has been used throughout the module. Bring focus to the goal setting aspect of reflection and help students direct their attention to strategies for improvement during home practice and successful participation in future modules. Be sure to review a recording of the performance. Teachers may consider adapting a rubric like the one indicated here. See Appendix D in *Band Instruments: Appendices*.

C O N C E R T P E R F O R M A N C E R U B R I C		
Performance Criteria		
Stage of Progress	Developing the Skill	Achieved Skill

The Final Word

The concert at the end of this module appropriately represents the culmination of the first term of instrumental music instruction and involves full band performance without traditionally notated music. Richard Bennett wrote this enthusiastic response following the first concert.

Highlights of last night's junior high band concert (packed to the roof)!

Beginner Band (GRIN). These kids, who have been playing a mere 6 weeks, brought the house down. I told the audience about the new curriculum. Smiles and nods from the audience.

Then the performance...

- 1. Warm-up, including breathing, mouthpieces, SINGING, and playing concert F*
- 2. "Mountain Climbing" A little exercise I devised and drew (cartoony) in which the students play doh through la (4 beats, tapping feet, L-R-L-R, on each note). Rest after the top note ("the summit") and then descend back down to doh.*
- 3. Good King Wenceslas (they call it Good King "Miscellaneous"). Played tutti and then section by section. Flutes, Clarinets, Saxes and Horns (got one girl with huge sound up to high D already...I've never seen that before), Trumpets (two little treasures have already been revealed), Low Brass and Bassoon (who can be clearly heard!!!), percussion (all bells, no drums yet) and Tutti again.*
- 4. Jolly Old Saint Nicholas. Twice through. SUNG in its entirety in solfege and then played.*
- 5. Jingle Bells. Played twice. First time in unison, second time in harmony (simple bass line) and full triad at the end.*

Standing ovation and off to dessert intermission. At the intermission and after the concert 90% of comments were about the beginner band. As you can imagine, there are many seasoned parents and grandparents (some of whom had kids in the program in the 80's and now are watching grandchildren...I am old!). The trained AND untrained ears clearly heard the difference in comparison with previous beginner bands. They all talked about full, confident sound and no squeaks. The positive difference is astonishingly obvious to all!

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