Production Through Performance Course Sequencing Guide

The sequencing of this course is most effectively determined by the instructor, considering factors such as term length, student age, and baseline knowledge. Sample durations are provided for each project's completion, excluding the teacher introduction. Projects marked with an asterisk (*) next to their titles are essential and should be prioritized if the term is shorter or if students require additional time. The course can be condensed to conclude after the second songwriting prompt, a recommendation particularly suited for first-time users, shorter class periods, or instructors aiming to allocate more time for the songwriting prompts.

To expedite the course's pace, any project following 3.3 can be accomplished by incorporating elements from the preceding project. Students would introduce new elements to the existing project, avoiding the creation of an entirely new project each time.

Project Deadlines

It is most effective to give a hard deadline to students to show when each element of a project is due and to leverage preparation of performance elements for time at the DAW.

Example:
- *The organizer is due at the end of the period (Monday)*
- *Perform your drum groove in front of the teacher to get to the DAW (Tuesday)*
- *Project is due for peer review by the end of the period by (Wednesday)*

It is also beneficial to help students learn from the walkthrough and resource videos on The Shed by discussing and modeling note-taking tips as a class.

Skill Building Projects VS Songwriting Prompts

The majority of the course is designed around enhancing musicianship knowledge and keyboard dexterity via skill-building projects. In these projects, students craft components to complement pre-recorded project templates. Although creativity plays a role in creating these components, the primary aim is to assess comprehension and mastery of new concepts and skills. The songwriting prompts provide a greater scope for creative expression, enabling students to apply skills and concepts in crafting complete songs. Collaborative completion of songwriting projects in small groups is ideal, as it capitalizes on diverse skill sets within the group and eases pressure for those less inclined to record their voice.

Allocate more time to the songwriting prompts, affording students the chance to bridge connections between the music they enjoy listening to and the skills they acquire in the course. Regularly check in with groups during the composition process and establish well-defined deadlines for various sections of the prompt. Upon completion, share group work by making the recording accessible through QR codes posted outside the classroom, on social media, or by playing the music in hallways or for other classes.

Core Curriculum

Unit 1: Steady Beat, Subdivision, Time

The aim of Unit 1 is to capture students' interest in the notion that fundamental musical concepts can be comprehended and perfected through deliberate practice. Each project in this unit can be undertaken individually or as a collective class effort, with the option of incorporating formal assessment or not. Make this unit fun by integrating student and teacher-selected music selections, using them to put into practice the concepts of steady beat and subdivision. Transcribing rhythms from songs chosen by students establishes a personal connection between these concepts and their individual interests.

1.1 // Steady Beat (1-2 days)
1.2 // Subdivision (1-2 days)
1.3 // Beat Map Reading (1-2 days)*
1.4 // Beat Map Performing (1-2 days)

Unit 2: Drum Beats

By the conclusion of this unit, students should have the capability to mentally perceive an original drum groove and translate it onto the MIDI keyboard. Prior to recording their composed drum patterns on the DAW, take a moment to review and assess them. This provides an opportunity to discuss the intricacies of their beat, while also addressing any errors that might prove challenging to rectify later. Encouraging students to vocalize drum grooves they hear can aid in facilitating the creative process. Take time to listen to recordings selected by the students and draw connections between what they're listening to and the concepts being taught. This unit is the most physically demanding, requiring students to master three-way finger independence. Help build student confidence by celebrating their successes

2.1 // Basic Backbeat (3-4 days)
2.2 // Reading Grooves (3-4 days)*
2.3 // Drum Groove Writing (3-4 days)*

Unit 3: Bass Lines

The bass line unit is less demanding in regards to finger independence compared to unit two. The importance of this unit is to get students to start thinking about the connection between the bass and the drums, releases of notes, chord progressions, bass line creation, and pitches on the piano. Take time when students start playing pitches to focus on proper playing technique with the left hand. It is a good idea to have students help each other maintain good technique by assigning practice partners, they can watch each other's hands share accountability. Listen to examples of student and teacher selected songs to demonstrate bass line rhythm, chord progressions, and moving bass lines.

3.1 // Bass Rhythm (1-2 days)
3.2 // The Piano Keyboard (1-2 days)
3.3 // Original Progression (3-4 days)*

Songwriting Prompt 1 // Sample Based Hip Hop (5-7 days)

Have students manipulate samples using the included public domain project templates individually to check for understanding before starting the songwriting portion of the project. Assign students into groups and have them work through the songwriting steps together. Be mindful of the language that students use in their rap, remind them to keep the content school appropriate- no diss tracks, foul language, or references to gangs or violence.

Unit 4: Chords

This unit starts with having students play through chord progressions using shapes for root position, first inversion, and second inversion triads. The goal is to have students play these chord shapes without having to think about the notes in the chord, not only making it easier to play, but also helping students hear chord progressions. Model inverting chords in a progression with direct instruction and check the organizers closely before students go to the DAW. Continue to play student and teacher selected examples of music to demonstrate chord progressions and the different roles of chordal rhythm.

4.0 // Pop Piano Primer (2 days)

4.1 // Root Position Triads (2-3 days)*
4.2 // Inversions (2-3 days)*
4.3 // Chordal Texture (2-3 days)

Songwriting Prompt 2 // Verse/Chorus Pop Song (5-7 days)

The second songwriting prompt is centered around developing phrases to create the repeated sections in the verse/chorus pop song form. The drums, bass, and chordal recordings are then used as a back drop for students to top line melodies with lyrics. Cover song form as a class and then assign students in groups to write a pop song. Have them follow the steps on the project page and check in with each group regularly. To make it more comfortable for singers, show them how autotune can be added to alter a vocal performance.

Unit 5: Melody

Ultimately, students should be able to auralize original melodies over chord progressions and write/play them- but this is not the case for all beginning producers. The method presented in Unit five facilitates the creation of singable melodies without having acquired the aural skills necessary to do so. This unit starts with simple melodies for students to play using augmented notation, giving them a reference on what it feels like to play a well constructed melody. Listen to student and teacher selected examples to demonstrate the elements of melodic rhythm. Analyze melodies of student and teacher selected pop songs for non-chord tones and voice leading.

5.1 // Playing Melodies (1-2 days)
5.2 // Melodic Rhythm (1-2 days)*
5.3 // Melodic Pitch (2-3 days)*

Songwriting Prompt 3 // EDM Dance (7-9 days)

Go over melodic development as a class by using the animations and videos on the page. Complete the question and answer and motivic development Soundtrap templates as a class or in small groups. The songwriting portion of this prompt is best done in partners. Have students share their reference songs to the rest of the class. Check in with groups intermittently throughout the work period and give deadlines for checkpoints throughout the project. Encourage students to take time in crafting the different sounds they are using in their track to make it sound as close their reference as possible.

Other Implementation Notes

Co Producing

Assist in the songwriting and recording process for the songwriting prompts by assuming the role of a producer for each group. Engage in discussions with groups during the writing phase and offer suggestions to guide them out of lyrical and musical challenges. Encourage students to vocalize the lyrics along with the track to ensure the rhythmic alignment of words with the music. When the time comes for vocal recording, verify the accuracy of the song's structure and confirm that students are prepared with their lyrics and melodies. If only one recording station is available in the room, allocate a specific time period for students to record. Aid them in achieving their best possible recording in the studio, providing constructive support and encouragement throughout the process.

Submission Options

Employing diverse submission methods for each assignment will contribute to maintaining a seamless flow within the course.

1. **Student Presentations:** Allowing students to showcase their work to the class cultivates a stronger sense of ownership and pride in their compositions. This practice need not be implemented for every proje**ct, but it is beneficial to incorporate a few times throughout the term.**
2. **Teacher Check:** Arrange brief one-on-one conferences with each student upon their project's completion. These conferences can be conducted either at the student's station using a headphone splitter or at the teacher's station by accessing student projects from the admin homescreen on Soundtrap. Provide immediate and constructive feedback on the project, along with additional suggestions for enhancement. During these conferences, other students can either be finalizing their own projects or engaging in supplementary activities.
3. **Peer Feedback:** For shorter projects or as part of progress checkpoints within a project, encourage students to provide feedback to one another. Demonstrate the process of delivering and receiving feedback to ensure collaborative work unfolds in a positive manner.

Additional Creative Activities

Most projects in the Production Through Performance curriculum are four measures long, representing the length of a standard pop song phrase. Writing and playing music of this length allows students to start hearing and feeling common phrase durations. New material is added to

projects in a cumulative manner, adding new knowledge and skills while fortifying existing ones. It is important to allow students the freedom to work on compositions using the skills they are acquiring throughout the course in addition to the structured sequence of the course materials. The following activities can be used to help "break up" the standard curriculum and apply the skills that are being learned to creative use.

1. **20% Day:** Allow one day in a five day work week for students to create whatever they want using the skills that have been covered in the class. Students can work independently or in small groups to start working on songcraft in the form of their choosing. These projects can be formally or informally assessed, but creative freedom should be the paramount concern. These days also help get other students who were not in attendance or who need extra time caught up to the rest of the class. 20% days are best used after project 3.3.
2. **Against The Clock:** Based on the video series by FACT Magazine of the same name, the Against The Clock activity tests content mastery by using a set time limit to complete a project. Give the class ten to fifteen minutes to complete an assignment that has just taken days to complete in class. Discuss what skills students wish they were better at after the time has stopped. These assignments are great to align focus to the skill acquisition element of the course.

Remediation and Enrichment

There are some strategies for remediation and enrichment that work on almost every project and haven't been included in individual lesson plans.

Remediation
1. Supply a partially filled out organizer.
2. Single track drum instruments recording. (use sparingly)
3. Partner students up in mixed ability groups.
4. Assign instrument choices with a template.

Enrichment
1. Require projects be done in a key other than C.
2. Add a second phrase to the project with a drum fill separating the two.
3. Quantize to a higher level of subdivision during grading.
4. Transcription projects can also be given to students who complete projects early.