

Production Through Performance Course Sequencing Guide

Sequencing this course is best done at the instructor's discretion based on term length and the age level and baseline knowledge of the student body. Sample day lengths are given for the completion of each project, not including teacher introduction. Essential projects have an asterisk next to their title and should be given time precedent if the term length is shorter or if the student body needs extra time to complete projects.

In order to hasten the pace of the course, any project after 3.3 can be completed using elements from the previous project. Students only add new elements to the project instead of creating a new project each time.

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.

Unit 1: Steady Beat, Subdivision, Time

The purpose of Unit 1 is to get students hooked on the idea that basic musical concepts can be learned and mastered with purposeful practice. Each project in this unit can be completed individually or as a class with or without a formal assessment. It is important to spend time applying the concepts outside of each assessment using student and instructor selected songs as examples and backing tracks.

1.1 // Steady Beat (1-2 days)

1.2 // Subdivision (1-2 days)

1.3 // Beat Map Reading (2-3 days)*

1.4 // Two Handed Beat Map Reading (1-2 days)

Unit 2: Drum Beats

Take time and check composed drum patterns before having them record them on the DAW. It gives you an opportunity to talk about the craft of their beat in addition to catching any errors that will be difficult to unlearn in the future. Require students to perform drum beats on paper pads as entrance tickets to get to computers. Listen to student-selected recordings and make connections between what they are listening to and what you are teaching them. This is the most difficult unit physically, requiring students to use three-way finger independence.

2.1 // Basic Rock Beat (3-4 days)

2.2 // Drum Grooves On A Beat Map (3-4 days)*

2.3 // Composing A Beat (3-4 days)*

2.4 // Drum Fills (2-3 days)

2.5 // Beat Transcription (2-3 days)

Unit 3: Bass Lines

The bass line unit is less demanding in regards to finger independence compared to unit 2. The importance of this unit is to get students to start thinking about the 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 // One Note Bass Line (1-2 days)

3.2 // Bass Note Identification (1-2 days)

3.3 // Bass Line With A Given Progression (2-3 days)*

3.4 // Bass Line With An Original Progression (3-4 days)*

3.5 // Moving Bass Lines (2-3 days)

Unit 4: Chords

It is important for students to continue to use quality technique in unit 4. Have practice partners check that all inversions are played with the correct fingers with the right hand and that there is no "buckle in the knuckle" when playing more than one note at a time. Model inverting chords in a progression with direct instruction and check the organizers closely before students go to the DAW for 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4. Continue to play student and teacher selected examples of music to demonstrate chord progressions and the different roles of chordal rhythm.

4.1 // Root position triads with IV V vi vi progression (2-3 days)*

4.2 // Triad inversions with original progression (3-4 days)*

4.3 // Pads and Punches (2-3 days)

4.4 // Ostinatos and Riffs (2-3 days)

Unit 5: Melody

Ultimately, students should be able to hear their own melodies over chord progressions and write/play them. The method presented in Unit 5 facilitates the creation of singable melodies without having acquired the aural skills necessary to do so. 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 // Melodic Rhythm (1-2 days)

5.2 // One Voice Melody (2-3 days)*

5.3 // Multi-Voice Melody (1-2 days)*

5.4 // Multi-Voice Melody W/ NCT's (2-3 days)

5.5 // Free Voice Melody W NCT's (1-2 days)

Unit 6: Song Form

Students get to apply their four measure phrases to popular song form in Unit 6. Transcribe the form of songs together including phrase lengths in class to help students hear how their four measure phrase is used in a larger context. It is a great time to have students present their final project for the class. The melodies written in 6.5 can also be given words. Students can record a vocal performance of the song in Soundtrap using a USB interface to create a finished product that articulates across academic subjects.

6.1 // Song Form Transcription (2-3 days)

6.2 // Song Form Composition (1-2 days)*

6.3 // Drums For Pop Song (3-4 days)*

6.4 // Bass + Chords For Pop Song (4-5 days)*

6.5 // Melody For Pop Song (3-4 days)*

General notes on the curriculum

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.
- 3. Student Presentations:** Allowing students to present their work to the class creates a greater sense of ownership and pride in the composition. This should not be done for every project, but it is good to do a few times during the term.

Blanket 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.

Mixing

While not specified in the curriculum, it is important to be aware of balance and blend in student compositions. Some common errors are

1. Some notes being either too loud or too soft in a single instrument. (sounds like notes drop or pop out)
2. An instrument being either too loud or soft in the mix.
3. Too many instruments using the mid-range frequencies. (sounds muddy or busy)

It helps to talk about these problems when introducing new material to make conscious of their presence.