

Putting the E- in E-nsemble

With Alex Shapiro

www.alexshapiro.org

COURSE SYLLABUS AND CURRICULUM

For University and College Students

September 2020

Overview

Due to the outbreak and overall concern of COVID-19, the University of Washington moved all Spring 2020 courses and ensembles online in mid-March 2020. This sudden and dramatic change led Professors Timothy Salzman and Kevin Weingarten, along with the UW conducting studio (Chris Mathakul, Dan Fischer, Corey Jahlas, and Gabriel Velasco), to reach out to composer Alex Shapiro for her insight and assistance in developing a creative and fulfilling musical learning experience for all of the UW Bands. Ms. Shapiro designed a syllabus and unit of study that, after some collaboration and editing, allowed all of the students of the UW Bands to experience a collective music-making project of composing pieces of music via online transmission.

Ms. Shapiro's intent was to offer a worthwhile course to ensure that the students would continue to play their instruments, would remain engaged with each other through an ongoing collaboration despite not being able to physically gather, and would open their minds to additional musical skills of composition and improvisation that they may have yet to experience. The program also serves as an introduction to musical form and analysis studies, as students are presented an object lesson for which their own composition is the object. Additionally, the program gives students an opportunity to delve further into technology and develop skills in digital recording and audio editing.

Given the current technological limitations, students cannot play their instruments synchronously during an online class. These circumstances provide the prime opportunity for an exploration into digital forms of large-group music-making.

This course continues to evolve, thanks to the wisdom and insights of composer Brian Balmages, and music educators and ensemble directors Glenn C. Hayes (University of Wisconsin-Whitewater), and Daniel Belongia (Arkansas Tech University).

University of Washington featured this unusual and successful program in its May 2020 newsletter, while it was still underway. To read about the experience, [click here](#).

Project Goals

Students will experience collectively composing pieces of music via online collaboration and file transfer. Through this process, they will not only continue to play their instruments, but will more clearly understand the many elements that go into creating a piece of music. By the end of this unit, each student will have progressed from composing a **15-second passage** to producing a **two minute or longer piece** of music using their own material combined with that of their fellow students. After achieving that first longer section, each student will continue to develop their musical ideas by incorporating their choice of one of the similar sections composed by the other students. As they explore the composition concept of *motivic development*, each student will create an even longer and musically cohesive piece. Of additional and significant value are the skills developed in audio recording and editing, and the ongoing sense of community among peers. Although the curriculum will result in the creation of many new pieces of music, the emphasis is on the *process*, rather than the *product*.

Materials, Software, and Hardware Needed

This syllabus is accompanied by a copy of the *CBDNA COVID-19 Response Committee Report* published May 21, 2020. Alex Shapiro is a member of that committee, a co-author of the report, and was among those who compiled the extensive list of the report's resource links, several of which will be useful here.

Students and faculty will need a **web-based central coordination site** (such as Canvas or Google Docs) to use as a portal for downloading and uploading audio files and other class-related information and tools.

Consistent internet access is necessary, and as fast a connection as possible will be ideal, because classes are conducted over **Zoom** and files are going to be uploaded and downloaded. Connecting via a physical ethernet cable will be faster and more reliable than using a wireless connection.

Audio quality for Zoom meetings as well as for creating recordings will be greatly enhanced if students are able to use a **USB external microphone** rather than the internal mic found on a phone or laptop. **Headphones or earbuds** will be necessary for recording, as will having a **laptop** or a **smart phone**, and ideally, both. There are many **free music recording and editing software applications** such as Audacity, Garage Band and Reaper, links and tutorials for which can be found in the CBDNA Report and are ubiquitous online.

This course is designed to run synchronously at a scheduled class time via Zoom. It does not attempt the currently impossible by having musicians play simultaneously, but

students will be sharing their screens and computer sound as they demonstrate their work during the classes.

It is helpful to record the Zoom class sessions. The recording will capture the presenter's audio, video and computer screen. Student audio and video will be recorded if they share their computer audio and video during the recorded session. The recordings will only be accessible to students enrolled in the course to review materials. These recordings will not be shared with or accessible to the public, but will be useful to the students, particularly if there is a scheduling conflict and a student needs to see a session after the fact.

Many schools, as well as Zoom, have FERPA-compliant agreements in place to protect the security and privacy of Zoom accounts. Students who do not wish to be recorded should:

- Change their Zoom screen name to hide any personal identifying information such as their name or numerical ID
- Avoid sharing their computer audio or video during their Zoom sessions, and instead, upload the files for individual access by others during the online class.

Project Overview

Each existing ensemble will initially be divided into small groups of ten or fewer students each, or "Sound-Teams." Each Sound-Team will have a supervising guide who is either an ensemble director, faculty member, or advanced student. This leader will help facilitate the process, answer questions, and discuss basic composition and technology concepts, and ensure that assignments are completed on schedule. The creative process and resulting product, however, should be largely driven by the shared vision of the students within each Sound-Team.

For the initial use of this syllabus at the University of Washington, the size of each Sound-Team was limited to six people, and a decision was made to comprise the teams of mostly homogenous instruments: flutes and oboes together, low brass together, etc. The reasoning for this was that it was more likely that these students knew each other in person, and thus would feel more at ease with each other online. The human connection and camaraderie are notably positive aspects of this program. That being said, it will be musically more interesting to vary the instrumentation within the Sound-Teams.

Suggestion: Consider starting the program off with homogenous teams for the creation of the first 2-minute piece, after which new Sound-Teams can be formed with mixed instruments.

Another reason to keep the groups small is that the first part of the syllabus involves each student creating a 15-second original recording against an A-flat drone. These

short recordings in turn become part of a collaborative and growing “sonic quilt,” as students upload their creation and download those of their teammates as well, to create their next, longer iteration of the piece. Should any of the students choose to use the motives entirely linearly rather than work with some of them in vertical harmony, it’s most efficient to keep the resulting duration of the piece under three minutes.

Recording the first track

Each Sound-Team member will be given a link to an .mp3 file of a 15-second, undulating A-flat drone, via an online portal (such as Canvas, Blackboard, Google Docs, etc.) or class email. Their first task will be to record a short original passage over the drone, whether on their main instrument (preferred), on another instrument, or using their voice, or found sounds. The recorded musical passage can be composed or improvised; **no notation is required**. These 15-second recordings will then be used as part of an additive, collaborative composition.

When recording, musicians should play back the drone sound solely through their headphones. This way, the recording sent to the team leader only contains the student’s sound. It is necessary for the student to find as quiet a spot as possible in which to record, so that background noises are not picked up by the microphone.

The drone, which does not include a third and can be interpreted as major, minor, atonal, etc., ensures that recordings are based on the same tonal center. The slightly microtonal elements in the track also assist in smoothing over tuning variations found in the motive recordings made in a solo environment, as opposed to one in which musicians tune to each other.

Specific rules for the musical content of the first recording are listed below.

Once the first track is recorded

Each team member will either directly upload their 15-second recording to a designated folder within the group online portal (Canvas or Google Drive, etc.), or send their recording to their team leader, who will, in turn, upload it. The file will be accessible to all Sound-Team members.

Composing a piece

Each individual will then download all of the audio files submitted by everyone on their Sound-Team, and be asked to compose a short piece by organizing every one of their Sound-Team’s audio files however it pleases them—but adhering to the first-round parameters listed below. No two results will be alike!

Online group reflection

Prior to and during the following class session, every team member will be asked to listen to each of the short co-compositions submitted by their teammates, and discuss the [subjective] elements in each one that make it succeed to greater or lesser degrees as a composition. There is no “wrong” way to compose, but these conversations serve as very effective object lessons in composition! Students will be asked to consider why certain musical elements sound especially compelling, and why others are less so (or achieve a different effect). This sets the musicians on the valuable path of score analysis.

Compositional Parameters for the First Round: The initial :15 motive

The initial assignment for each Sound-Team will have strict parameters—some of which, like instrumentation, duration, and delivery format and date, mirror those of professional composing commissions. Oftentimes, composers find inspiration and creativity from greater restriction, and for first-time composers, a framework of rules and limitations is helpful in preventing the assignment from feeling overwhelming. Subsequent rounds will allow for increasing amounts of creative freedom. Below is a list of elements (and possible alternatives) to consider.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation of the first round will be limited to the instruments played by the team members. If a team member does not have access to their principal instrument, they may play a different instrument, or use vocalization, or ‘found sounds’.

Tonality & Texture

The composed recordings should be related to the A-flat drone tonally, but do not necessarily have to *be in the key* of A-flat. Musicians are encouraged to create a recording that could fulfill various compositional purposes. A 15-second clip may be perceived as a melody, a harmonic texture, a counter-melody, or offer a percussive or sound design element. The choice is completely up to the student.

Suggestion: Consider beginning the course with some limitations that will offer a framework and make the concept of “composing” less intimidating: assign a strict pitch group of 6 notes— including chromatic ones that release team members from a distinct key center— from which the students must create their first motive. Each of the Sound-Teams could be given the same 6 notes, or different Sound-Teams may be assigned different pitch groups.

Notation

Notation of the music will not be required, and improvisational passages are allowed.

Suggestion: After the first round of motives have been recorded and shared, consider asking students to notate them in one or both manners: graphically, using their imagination and a sense of creative freedom to draw what they hear, and/or traditionally using western notation.

Duration and Tempo

Each initial motive recording must be between 5 and 15 seconds long. There will be no prescribed tempo, but the motive or phrase should fit into the time parameters.

Suggestion: Consider assigning a tempo, and/or a meter, in which case a click track will need to be created (this is not difficult). Tempo and meter do not necessarily need to be the same for each Sound-Team.

Recording Techniques & Audio Delivery

Using a prescribed count-off of beats before their entrance (for sync purposes, with or without an optional tempo), each team member will be asked to record themselves playing their segment on their chosen instrument, with the drone (and optional metronome) playing in their ear, and not audible on the actual recording.

Each team member will upload or email their brief audio file to their team leader by the determined due date. Audio files should be titled with a pseudonym of the student's choice, not their own name, and ideally, titled with two or three words that describe the nature of the recording, making it easier for Sound-Team members to identify as an element in their subsequent creation. The team leader will place all the audio files in an online repository that every team member can access.

Detailed Class Protocols

Please note: Every school has different schedules and approaches its trimester or semester differently. Below are ideas for each class, but these concepts can easily be expanded across more classes, or if necessary, condensed to fewer. Ms. Shapiro has laid out details for seven classes, as described below.

Overview:

CLASS ONE: syllabus overview, and introduction to basic compositional concepts.

CLASS TWO: discussion of the software and hardware that will be used in the course, as well as composition techniques.

CLASS THREE: discussion of first round of drone-based, 15-second motives, plus tech questions.

CLASS FOUR: discussion of 2-minute, drone-based “sonic quilts” created within the Sound-Team.

CLASS FIVE: discussion of more complex “sonic quilts” created from additional Sound-Team materials, possibly with a guest composer.

CLASS SIX: discussion of more complex “sonic quilts” created from multiple Sound-Team materials and instruments, possibly with a guest composer.

CLASS SEVEN: discussion of more complex “sonic quilts” created from multiple Sound-Team materials, with original bass line and chord progressions, possibly with a guest composer. General discussion and feedback about the course.

Here is one possible iteration of the process, that can be adjusted to incorporate easily into a school schedule:

To begin:

The course leader creates homogeneous Sound-Teams comprised of musicians who play in the same sections. Each Sound-Team is assigned a faculty or TA leader. First session(s): leaders give the students the "map and compass" to navigate basic concepts of composition and audio recording and editing. They are asked to download the two A-flat drone audio tracks, and to watch tutorials to become familiar with multi-track digital audio editing.

Cycle 1: *Version 1 of Sound-Teams: 6 notes, homogenous, over the A-flat drone:*

There are two rules for this opening round: Each leader assigns 6 notes from which their Sound-Team members will create the first motive. And motives must remain intact, and not be chopped up.

Each student takes X number of days to record and upload a 15-second motive.

Each student takes X number of days to build a sonic quilt from all the motives created by their Sound-Team members, combining the phrases vertically and linearly.

Each Sound-Team meets to discuss the resulting individual sonic quilts, and each team will select their favorite one or two for future discussion.

Cycle 2: *Version 2 of Sound-Teams: no limitations, mixed instrumentation, over the A-flat drone:*

The cycle repeats, but new Sound-Teams are created that are comprised of mixed instrumentation, and instead of only using 6 notes, students do not need to adhere to any compositional limitations. Each student creates a second sonic quilt.

Cycle 3: *Version 3 of Sound-Teams: no limitations, mixed instrumentation, creation of bass lines:*

The cycle repeats, and yet a third iteration of mixed instrumentation Sound-Teams is created. There are no compositional limitations. After uploading the third set of motives, each student creates a third sonic quilt, and instead of composing against the A-flat drone, each student creates a bass line and changes the harmonies.

Cycle 4: *Version 4 of Sound-Teams: no limitations, mixed instrumentation, creation of bass lines, and choice of any of the motives or longer sonic quilts from any of the Sound-Teams, against which they will record an entire new track on their instrument.*

What follows is another approach to the same syllabus, with more details.

CLASS ONE

This first class is an overview of the syllabus, and an introduction to basic **composition** concepts such as the one on which this class hinges: the idea of a motive and its many possible iterations. Each ensemble will meet via Zoom (recorded for those that cannot attend) and discuss the nature of the assignment, the goals of the assignment, and the starting parameters.

Discussion Points:

- Briefly walk through the technology required (the next class will focus on it)
- Walk through the concept and scope of the project
- Teach basic terminology: what is a motive? What is a longer phrase? What is counterpoint? What is development?
- Discuss parameters: duration/limits, etc:
 - Discussion of how to work within limitations
 - Demonstrate examples of motives from literature
- Get “creative juices” flowing and discuss myriad composing possibilities

CLASS ONE, ASSIGNMENT 1

Students should identify at least three examples of motives or phrases in three different genres of music, to help center their thought process as they plan their own creative approach and consider the basics of musical structure. They can upload these examples (audio excerpts and/or sheet music excerpts) for class discussion during the first part of Class Two.

CLASS ONE, ASSIGNMENT 2

Students are asked to watch software application tutorials, in preparation for Class Two. Below are links to three very helpful tutorial videos created by University of Wash-

ington's Chris Mathakul, and students should be encouraged to search for additional ones.

Basic Audacity setup

Audacity multitrack tutorial

Garage Band tutorial

Please note: There are quite a number of free DAWs available. Some only work on Macs, others only on PCs, and several are very limited in the number of audio tracks that can be worked with in one file. Some are also limited in the availability of built-in plugin effects. This project is designed to expand with each student's creativity, and as such, Ms. Shapiro— who has no connections whatsoever with any software or hardware company— suggests considering the open-source, free, and very sophisticated Audacity as a common tool for all the students to use. It works on both Mac and PC and offers many editing and effects possibilities, as well as a robust manual and an on-line support community. And, if everyone is using the same software, it makes the tech discussions go a little more smoothly. This being said, audio files behave the same way across all platforms and applications, and there is nothing wrong with allowing each student to choose the DAW they prefer.

CLASS TWO

This class will be about art as well as **technology**.

- First half: students begin by discussing motivic examples they've selected
- Second half: students will be instructed in the basics of using the necessary hardware and software tools for the assignments:
 - Tutorials for basic tasks in sequencing and audio editing applications
 - Techniques for using click tracks and earbuds
 - Tutorials for microphone placement and use
 - How to make a good quality recording in a quiet environment
 - How to mix down audio files and bounce tracks

CLASS TWO, ASSIGNMENT 1

Tutorials on the applications and hardware discussed during class will have been uploaded to the online portal by the faculty, as well as the two A-flat drone audio accompaniment tracks. Students are asked to download the tracks, and watch the tutorials to become more comfortable with the technology:

- Working with Audacity, Garage Band, etc.
- Recording tips
- Mixing sound files
- Bouncing a project to .mp3

CLASS TWO, ASSIGNMENT 2

Here is the first opportunity to compose a motive! This second e-class features the assignment for each individual to be given X amount of time to create and record their **15-second** contribution (as described above on page 5), against the 15-second A-flat drone audio track. Students will be given a deadline by which they must upload their .mp3 file, or submit it to their team leader.

Students **may never use pre-recorded samples** of any existing music. This is for two reasons: #1: copyright! #2: the entire point of this class is to create and play original music.

The resulting .mp3 audio snippet (solo; not mixed with the drone track) should be titled with a few descriptive keywords that identify the nature of the passage. For instance, “pulse-based” “aleatoric” “quarter-120” “uneven_pulse” “melodic” “loose_improv” “slow_and_ugly” “medium_tempo” “chaotic-fast,” etc. This will make it easier for the students to then assemble their co-composition, because they’ll be able to discern the sound elements in the file names.

For those with no instruments at hand:

- Vocalizations
- “Found” sounds
- Percussive sounds

CLASS TWO LEADER FOLLOW-UP

Having received everyone’s .mp3, the leader invites all team members to download all the audio files from their teammates, listen to them, and jot down ideas for each recording as to how they might fit into a larger texture, which they will discuss in Class Three.

CLASS THREE

This class will be about composition and also address any technical questions and concerns, as the students become comfortable with the software.

- Each student will have absorbed their teammates' 15-second audio files, and talk with each other about the different musical approaches.
- Students will discuss methods used for working with DAWs, having seen tutorials and downloaded software they will now be using more robustly beginning with the next assignment.

CLASS THREE, ASSIGNMENT 1

Here is the first opportunity to compose a longer work! Working in a basic free audio application/DAW (Audacity, Garage Band, Ableton Live, etc.), each team member will make use of **every 15-second audio file** from their team as well as their own, and arrange each of the audio segments in a way that pleases them against the drone audio track. This could be solely linear, one passage after another, or the passages could be stacked and interwoven on multiple tracks. A student may opt to mute the drone in parts of their piece, and they may opt to use small sections of it in various places, to further enhance the piece.

Devoting a separate track in the DAW to each motive will offer the student the greatest flexibility as they develop their piece.

There are a few rules for this particular assignment:

- **Each Sound-Team member's passage/motive must appear at least once in its entirety**, because the lesson revolves around many people manipulating the same material, and the resulting variations. Smaller portions of motives may be included as well.
- **Recordings for this round may not be sped-up, slowed-down, reversed, or mixed in a manner that alters the integrity of the original recording.** Adding some reverb to make a dry recording sound better with the addition of room ambience is acceptable, because the motive will still remain intact and recognizable.

A longer (about 2 minutes) undulating A-flat drone that includes a few instances of E-flat, has been provided as the backing track against which the students will compose their pastiche. Should the piece run longer, or shorter, the student may edit the accompaniment track accordingly.

Once a student has created their **2-minute** (or so) version of the collaborative piece, they will bounce (mix down) their tracks to a stereo audio file and send the resulting composition — a mix of multiple .mp3 motives plus the drone—to their team leader, who will upload the file and invite all team members to download all the “final” compiled audio files of their teammates' co-compositions.

CLASS FOUR

In their next group online class, team members will each play their **2-minute** versions for each other and discuss their choices. This promises to be a lively conversation, because everyone will be familiar with the source material, and it is guaranteed that no two arrangements will be alike!

- Consider ways in which the sounds were brought together
- What roles do the recordings serve in respect to the greater composition? How do these “roles” vary from one version to the next?
- What were some challenges of using the prescribed instrument groupings? What were some benefits?
- Discuss challenges of the technical process (recording/sound quality/etc). Discuss the challenges of the creative process (improvising 15 seconds of musical material; mixing the recordings into something meaningful, etc).
- What makes some pieces more compelling than others?
- What did anyone do that was unexpected?
- How can we learn from one another?

CLASS FOUR, ASSIGNMENT 1

Having discussed and dissected the handful or two of longer pieces in this “sonic quilt,” and by now familiar with all of the motives, each student is now given more leeway for creativity. Each musician is asked to choose one of any of the longer pieces from their Sound-Team, and is instructed to select one of the existing motives within that piece to use as source material to add to the piece they have been building, thus further developing that composition. They will compose or improvise on their instrument of choice, and record new material based on the newly added motive on one or more additional tracks, **further adding to their existing 2-minute (or so) piece**. The student will record creative impressions, variations, counterpoint, or rhythmic ideas, etc, based on the motive that they select.

In this round, students are given the freedom to do any kind of audio editing they wish to the files and motives. Those adept in audio editing are welcome to use plugins and effects, while others may opt to keep the task as simple as possible. Filters and effects may be added on top of the recordings (for those that feel comfortable with that technology), but the intention of the initial musical material must still be maintained.

This is a lesson in creative thinking and expression, as well as a listening exercise as they experiment with the extremes of density and subtlety. Students will be given a deadline by which they must upload or submit their .mp3 to their team leader.

CLASS FOUR, ASSIGNMENT 2

Each team member should post a short description of their mix (why they made the choices they did, etc.), and listen to the results from their Sound-Team-mates.

CLASS FOUR LEADER FOLLOW-UP

Having received everyone's .mp3 and description, the leader invites all team members to download all the new audio and text files from their teammates, listen to them, read the concepts behind them, and jot down impressions of how the additional uses of existing motives further altered the piece, in preparation for discussion during Class Five.

CLASS FIVE

This class session will include discussion about the newly expanded pieces, with a focus on form, structure, and motivic development. In preparation, everyone will have listened to each new iteration, and read the descriptions. Faculty may choose to invite a guest composer to participate in the discussion, or may choose to share examples from established works to illustrate overall concepts.

CLASS FIVE LEADER FOLLOW-UP

The team leader now invites all team members to listen to ALL of the audio files from ALL of the Sound-Teams and their varied instrumentation, and to select one of ANY of them (whether the 15-second motives, or the longer co-compositions) to use as source material for yet another iteration of a more involved piece, to which the student will add an entirely new, additional track, ideally recorded on their instrument.

CLASS FIVE, ASSIGNMENT 1

Each student will now creatively infuse the latest iteration of their 2-minute (or longer, at this point) piece with this new material which includes a fresh set of instruments.

Having a greatly expanded creative palette from which to further develop a piece of any duration, students will record and edit new tracks to add to the composition they create from their own Sound-Team audio and that from another audio file from another Sound-Team. Any files can be manipulated in any way.

Each submission should be titled. Along with the submission of the final mix, each student should submit short program notes which explain the title of the piece, the compositional thought process behind the piece, and any other relevant narrative explanations.

CLASS FIVE LEADER FOLLOW-UP

Having received everyone's .mp3 and program notes, the leader invites all team members to download all the new audio and text files from their teammates, listen to them, read the program notes, and jot down impressions in preparation for discussion during Class Six.

CLASS SIX

This class session will finally shift its focus from **linear phrases** to **vertical harmony**. Students will share and discuss their latest, more complex pieces which now include broader instrumentation, each of which have been built upon the A-flat drone. Afterward, the team leader or a guest composer will demonstrate the emotional power of changing a bass line progression under otherwise identical motivic and thematic material. Using one or more Sound-Team members' existing pieces, they will mute the drone track and begin an object lesson of improvising various bass notes and possibly chords underneath the composition.

CLASS SIX, ASSIGNMENT 1

Each student will now revisit their latest, most complex composition and replace the A-flat drone with a composed bass line and, if desired, a chordal progression.

CLASS SIX LEADER FOLLOW-UP

Having received everyone's latest .mp3s, the leader invites all team members to download all the new audio files from their teammates, listen to them, and jot down impressions in preparation for discussion during Class Seven.

CLASS SEVEN

This final class session will be two-fold: a show-and-tell of some of the latest, far more complex and harmonically adventurous pieces from various Sound-Team members, possibly with an invited guest composer, followed by a group feedback session about their experiences throughout the course, whether positive or less so.

Note: If scheduling allows, classes six and seven will be even more powerful if all the Sound-Teams could attend and interact with each other. At this point they will have heard each other's music and worked with some of it, and they will no doubt benefit from sharing the feedback with their peers about the entire process!

Additional Ideas

- Schedule Zoom master class sessions with non-performing and performing professional composers working in different genres, to give the students insight into the compositional process.
- Schedule larger Zoom sessions in which the various Sound-Teams can meet and share ideas and experiences. This could be a good preparation for Class Five and the assignment to use any of the music from any of the Sound-Teams.
- Encourage Sound-Team members to check in with each other between classes and discuss their processes.
- Rather than each student using the DAW (Audacity, Garage Band, etc.) of their choice and uploading and downloading stems (the audio files) back and forth, consider having everyone using the same online web-based DAW platform (such as BandLab).
- Consider adding additional rules, like “compose and record one major-sounding motive, and one minor-sound motive, and one percussive motive”, etc.
- Consider having students notate some or all of the resulting recordings, for future live electroacoustic performance.

Suggested Additional Techniques

Consider beginning the course with some limitations that will offer a framework and make the concept of “composing” less intimidating: assign a strict pitch group of 6 notes— including chromatic ones that release team members from a distinct key center— from which the students must create their first motive. Each of the Sound-Teams could be given the same 6 notes, or different Sound-Teams may be assigned different pitch groups.

Consider assigning a tempo, and/or a meter, in which case a click track will need to be created (this is not difficult). Tempi and meter do not necessarily need to be the same for each Sound-Team.

Anticipated Benefits to Students

It will motivate students to keep playing their instruments and to remain engaged with each other.

It will connect their love of playing their instrument with a newfound self-confidence of personal expression.

It will be a lesson in how different choices in vertical harmony and linear direction have significantly varying impact on otherwise identical source material.

It will be a lesson in compositional decisions and “flow”: some passages will naturally work better next to each other than others, and this will be an object lesson in that phenomenon.

It will be a lesson in using technology to create art, and in recording in a professional manner with accompaniment and click tracks.

It can even be a lesson in copyright: working with co-writers, and, should they choose to publish the resulting piece, learning about registering for performing rights.

If the Sound-Teams are comprised of similar instruments, this will encourage the students to compose for the entire range of an instrument, for a more compelling piece. It will be a lesson in homogeneity: section members will compose for themselves and create a piece specifically for their section.

It will be a lesson in perseverance and attention to detail, as students strive to play well on their recordings, which will often require multiple takes.

It will offer a journey in self-discovery, as students who had not previously thought that they could compose take pleasure in creating new music!

Available Consultants

For General Music:

Composer Alex Shapiro is available as a consultant, and/or as a guest lecturer for one or more Zoom sessions with students. She is also available to help customize this course to match the needs of any school. She can be reached at alex@alexshapiro.org.

Composer Brian Balmages is available as a consultant, and/or as a guest lecturer for one or more Zoom sessions with students. He can be reached at brian@brian-balmages.com.

Glenn C. Hayes, Director of Bands and Professor of Music Education at the University of Wisconsin - Whitewater, is available as a consultant or guest conductor. He may be reached at hayesg@uww.edu.

Timothy Salzman, Director of Bands at the University of Washington, is available as a consultant or guest conductor. He may be reached at salzman@uw.edu

For Technology Assistance, along with General Music:

Chris Mathakul, D.M.A. conducting student, University of Washington, is available as a consultant. He may be reached at mathakul@uw.edu

Daniel Fischer, D.M.A. conducting student, University of Washington, is available as a consultant. He may be reached at dfisch@uw.edu