

ENGAGING GROUP PIANO

IDEAS TO ENRICH & SUPPLEMENT GROUP LESSONS

As teachers, musicians, and learners, we have our own prior knowledge and experiences to draw upon when creating activities for our classes. By implementing ideas that embody the following three elements, the activities are more valuable to the music making experience and are effective in equipping learners to better integrate class content with how they encounter music in their daily lives.

ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING IDEAS

- ✓ Incorporate Prior Knowledge
- ✓ Intrigue Their Inner Musician
- ✓ Inspire Musical Growth

Examples of Activities Incorporating the Three Elements

Active Listening

Almost every musical concept can be introduced with inspiring repertoire that will be meaningful to a student. For example, instead of introducing the students to rests by simply labeling them, we had them listen to the opening of Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* so that could experience and feel the power of silence in music. The beginning of this piece is full of poignant pauses that significantly contribute to the dramatic trajectory of the opening passage. The listeners, though beginners, were able to correctly identify the importance of the silences and how they related to the emotional content. They *felt* the silence instead of just notating or labeling it and were therefore more likely to listen for it in music they experience outside of class. We then, of course, examined the full score and taught them how to notate rests.

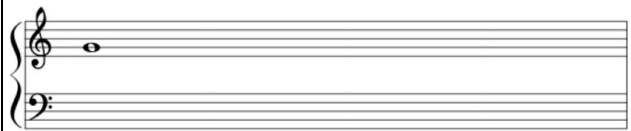
Connecting Music Making with Staff Notation

We set our learners up to figure out the tune of Happy Birthday and discussed intervals as a way of developing connections between the keyboard and the grand staff. The next worksheet involved Ode to Joy in 4/4 (C Major) followed by exploring key signatures through transposing the melody to D Major. Learners will be more successful when activities are based on experiential learning and are scaffolded in order to not overload concepts. Musescore is a free software you can use to create materials.

Happy Birthday

Use the given starting pitch to figure out the melody of Happy Birthday.

1. Jot down the letter names above the grand staff
2. Notate the letter names on the treble staff using whole notes



Movement & Meter

We naturally understand rhythm and meter through movement. To experience 6/8 meter, we swayed, clapped, and snapped to Elvis Presley's *Can't Help Falling in Love*. After a discussion of duple meter versus triple meter, our learners brought in song titles for the class to further explore meter. As a class, we compiled a playlist on YouTube that the students could access at any time. Connecting musical concepts with prior knowledge will intrigue their inner musician to inspire musical growth!

Remember that simple ≠ boring!