



# Teaching Theory Through Online Composition



# Agenda

1. Get everyone into [Google Classroom](#) and [Noteflight](#)
2. Introductions
3. Activity 1: Compose a Sight Reading Exercise
4. Discuss Noteflight and other notation options
5. Activity 2: Compose an Eight-Measure Melody
6. How to make students successful
7. Project/Assignment ideas

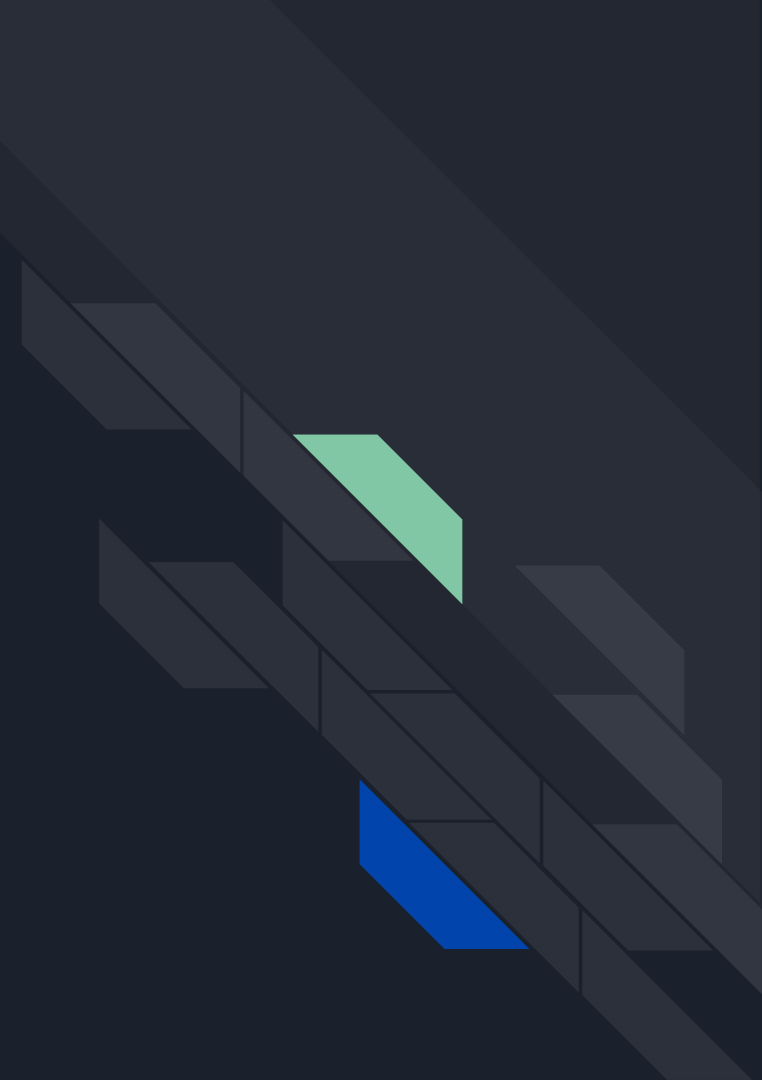
# Introductions:

Name

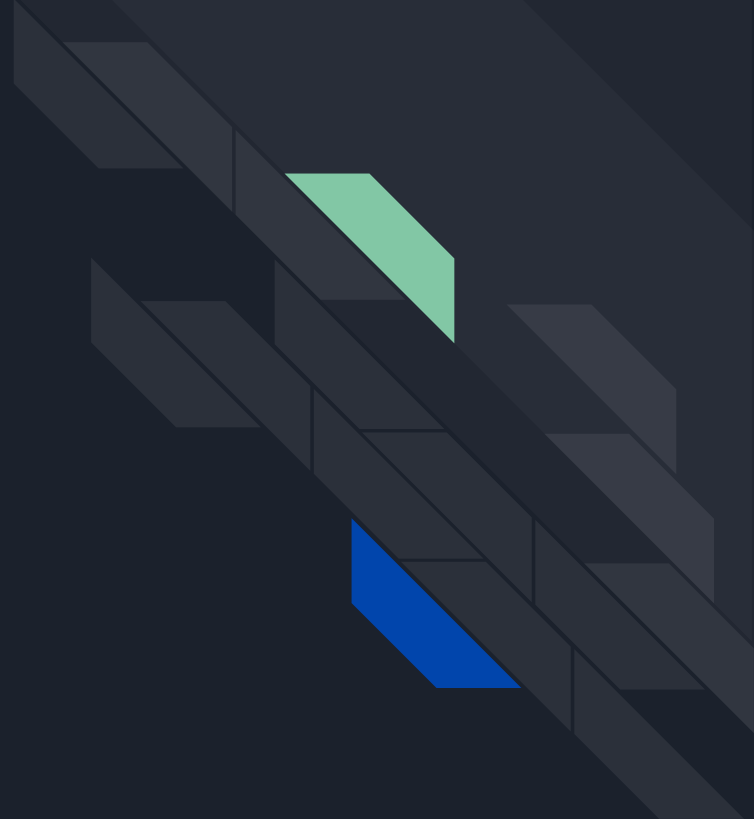
School

Grades

Instrument



# Activity 1: Sight Reading Exercise





# Why Digital Composition Tools

- Hear what's happening
- SEE what's happening
- Teacher can easily frame
- Little knowledge required
- Shows what students CAN do
- So many ways to get the right answer



## Cons

- Doesn't auto save
- Learning curve to access features
- Requires computers (iPads stink for Noteflight)
- Some weird glitches



# Pros

- Students will discover
- Students will create the questions
- Students want to create
- Students can DO without KNOWING
  - Time Signature
  - Key Signatures
  - Symbol Names
  - Harmonic Structure



# Why Noteflight

- Web based
- Relatively affordable
- COPPA Compliant
- Integrates with Google Classroom
- Students can access from anywhere
- Teacher can create specific assignment templates



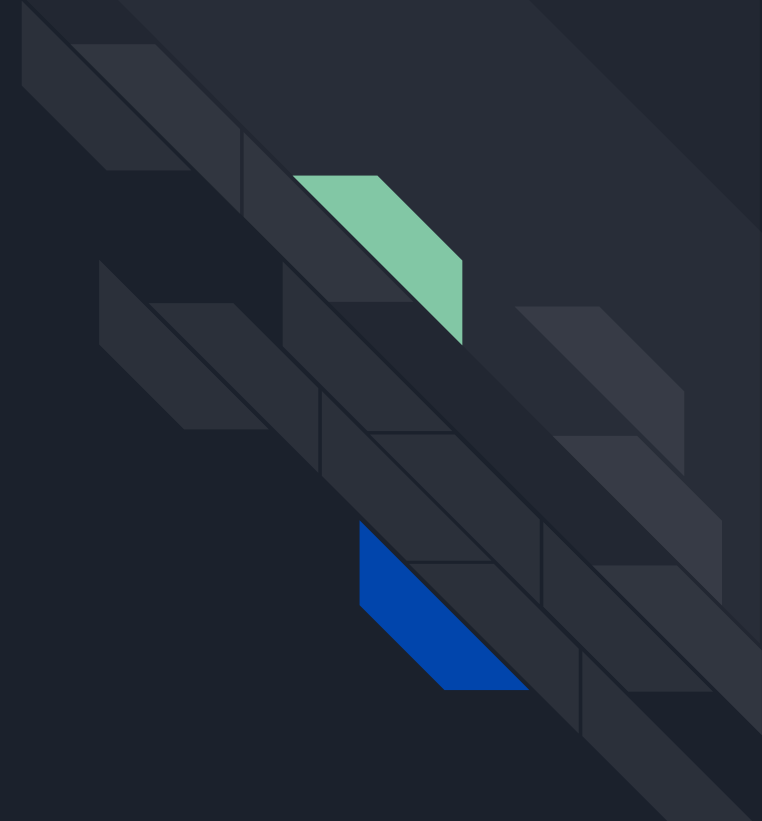


# Other Possible Options

- Flat.io
- Muse Score
- Score Cloud
- Finale Notepad
- Sibaleus First

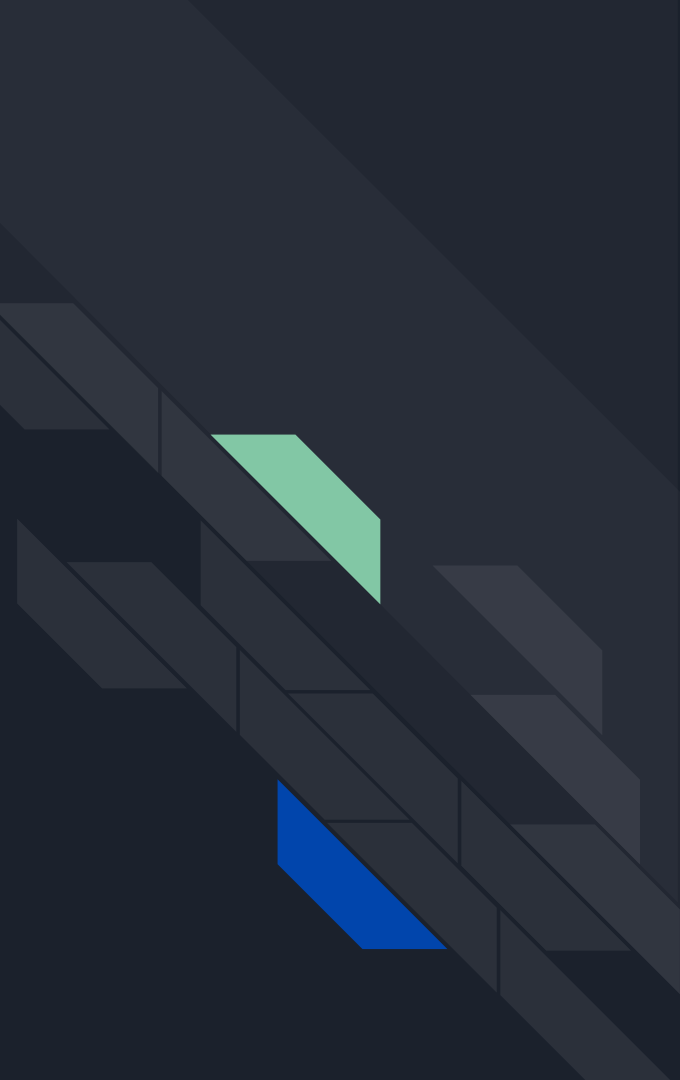
BUT: can we use these and still be COPPA Compliant?

# **Activity 2:** Compose an 8 Measure Melody

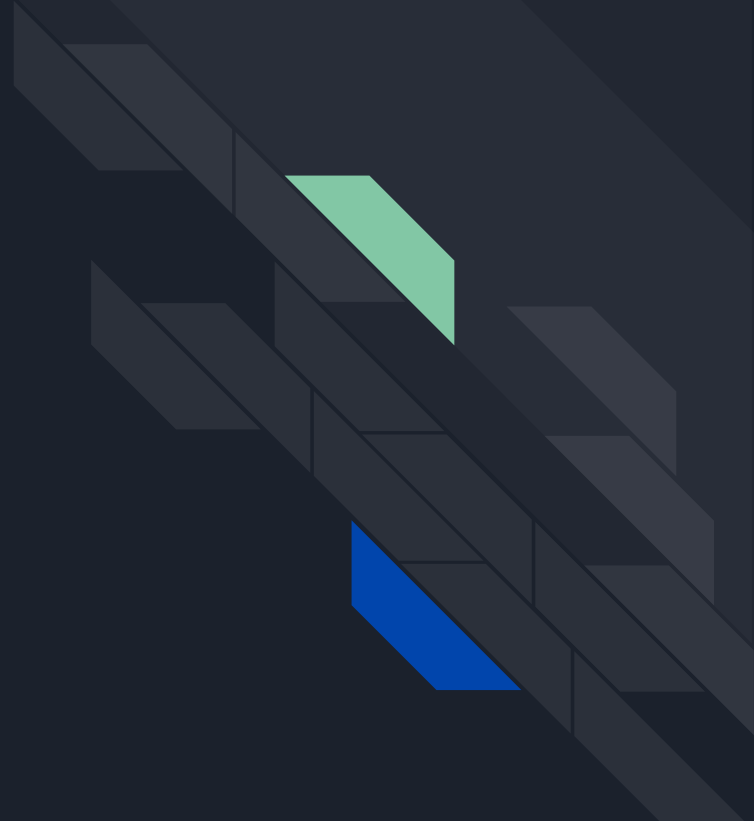


# It doesn't have to be good to be useful

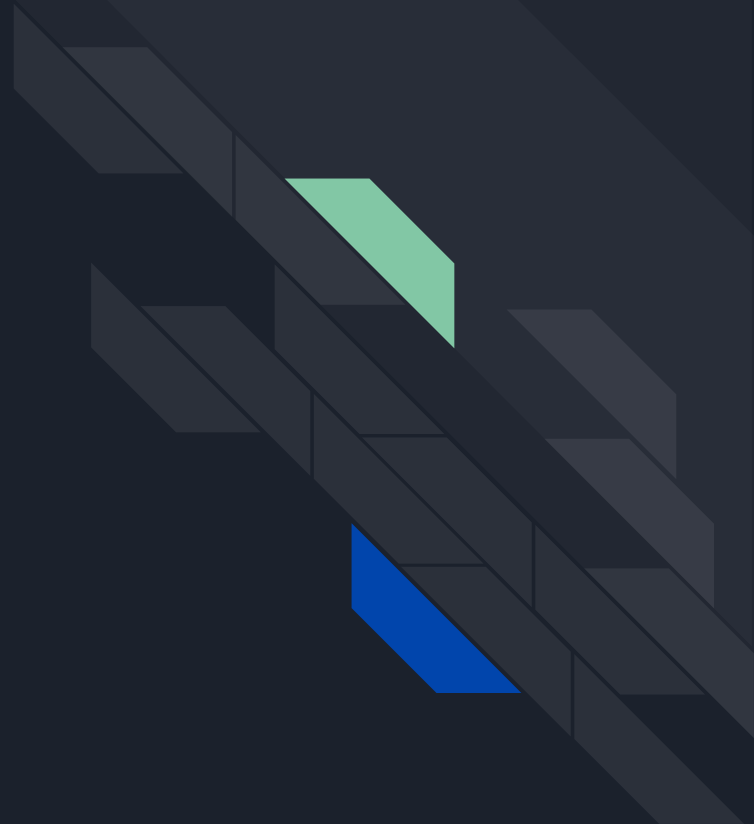
- Rachel Mason  
Second City



**What makes a good  
composition?**

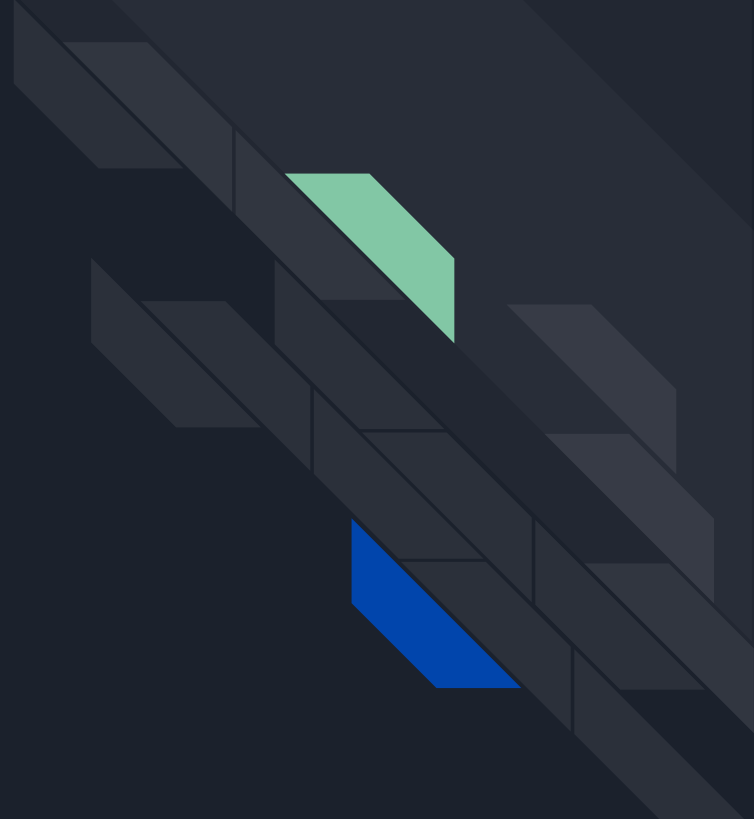


that it  
exists.



# How to make students successful

- Give them a lot of framework for the things they can't handle
- Give them a ton of FREEDOM for the things they can





# “Grade it” in front of the whole class

- Shows that EVERYONE’s is worth hearing
- 2 compliments/excitements to every critique
- Have peers make comments
- Have peers ask questions
- Compliment their potential

Even if the student didn’t do the specific task assigned, their composition has merit and value! Tell them!



# Things the teacher learns

- What the student already knows - outside knowledge
- What the student **DOESN'T KNOW** they know
- How creative they are
- What they like to hear
- How they deal with technology
- What else they want to be able to do





# Things the student learns

- They are innately musical
- They have musical ideas that are worth expressing
- Their ideas have value
- They know so much more about music than a quiz can ask them

**People surely skeptical of Schoenberg and Cage when they heard the compositions.**

The work your students do does NOT have to sound good or appeal to you, especially at the beginning



# Idea 1: Practicing duration

- Learn names of rhythm symbols
- Understand the relative relationship rhythm symbols have (halves/multiples of each other)
- Write in counts/takadimi using “lyric” function
- What else?



## Idea 2: Practicing Pitch Names

- Student input pitches using ABCDEFG keystrokes
- Figure out how octaves work
- Write in both clefs (see difference/similar)
- Use lyric function to name the pitches
- Make students label the SOLFEGE!
- What else?



## Idea 3: Form

- Have students create two 1 measure patterns
- Repeat each 4x
- Now you have an A B song.
- Expand - tiny a b c d, BIG A B C D, Prime?
- Coda, Repeats, First/Second endings, etc
- What else?



## Idea 4: Ostinato

- Onion peel layering (also form!!!!)
- Create complex harmonic structure
- Complementary Rhythms
- Homophonic Rhythms, Polyphonic pitches
- What Else?



## Idea 5: Rounds

- Students write a round
- Tell them which solfege compliments (I, IV and V)
- Have as many sections as they want



## Idea 6: Arranging a Pop Song

- Let them use chords that someone already figured
- Tell them what notes go in those chords
- Let the kids figure out how to make it happen





## More Ideas

- Different types of piano accompaniment (chords, broken chords, alberti bass, etc)
- Compose warm-ups for the class - demonstrate a specific skill (articulation, long legato lines)
- Key Signatures
- Parallel/Relative minor keys
- Intervals (incorporate a 3rd in each measure, color it blue so I can find it)



## More Ideas 2!

- Harmonic analysis (I, IV, V)
- Write a Chorale
- Put the hard part of the music into Noteflight, practice it from there
- Record student vocal/playing assessments
- What else?



# Final Thoughts

- Show kids they are composers and musicians
- Make it easy to be successful
- You're teaching writing skills
- Your students will start writing their own music
- They'll start asking questions about stuff you haven't covered in class

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The background features a series of dark gray, parallel lines that create a sense of depth and perspective, receding towards the right. Overlaid on this is a grid of squares. Two squares in the grid are highlighted: one is a light green color and the other is a bright blue color. The overall aesthetic is modern and technical.



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University of Illinois / Little Kids Rock Trained

## Schools

Jones College Prep

Whitney M Young Magnet High  
School\*

Cameron Elementary\*

Fort Collins HS

Darwin Elementary\*

Simeon Career Academy

Northside College Prep\*

## Courses Taught

Choir

Piano

Guitar

Modern Band

K-8 General

HS General

\*TAT positions or Part Time

# Noteflight Keystrokes Cheat Sheet

If you're using a MAC in most cases you will replace "Control" with "Open Apple/Command" key

## Universal Keystrokes - work in most computer programs!

Undo	Control + Z
Redo	Control + Y
Cut	Control + X
Copy	Control + C
Paste	Control + V
Select All	Control + A
Select Some (bigger)	Shift + click on the beginning & end of what you want to select
Select Some (more specific)	Control + click on each individual piece you want to select
Save	Control + S
Print	Control + P
Find	Control + F
New Incognito Window	Control + Shift + N

## Noteflight Specific Keystrokes

Increase duration	[
Decrease duration	]
Add pitch	Use letters A B C D E F or G
Change pitch	Up and Down arrow keys
Move between pitches	Left and right arrow keys
Add "lyrics"	Control + L
Staccato	.
Tie	,
Slur	s
Accent	>
Sharp	Shift + +
Flat	- (minus symbol)
Natural	=
Jump up/down octave	Control + up arrow / Control + down arrow (works for a selection or an individual pitch!)
Enter	Formats new system

## For help using Noteflight

- Within the app - the available keystrokes are listed to the right of each function
- Within the app - use the HELP icon in the upper right hand corner
- Vandercook offers a 4 week Noteflight Certification
- Many Many YouTube Videos available
- Excellent customer support
- Email me and we can set up a time to talk through it! [ktcolby@cps.edu](mailto:ktcolby@cps.edu)