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
Katie Colby
ktcolby@cps.edu
University of Illinois / Little Kids Rock Trained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Courses Taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jones College Prep</td>
<td>Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitney M Young Magnet High</td>
<td>Piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School*</td>
<td>Guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron Elementary*</td>
<td>Modern Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Collins HS</td>
<td>K-8 General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin Elementary*</td>
<td>HS General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simeon Career Academy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northside College Prep*</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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*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!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Keystroke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undo</td>
<td>Control + Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redo</td>
<td>Control + Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Control + X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy</td>
<td>Control + C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paste</td>
<td>Control + V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select All</td>
<td>Control + A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select Some (bigger)</td>
<td>Shift + click on the beginning &amp; end of what you want to select</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select Some (more specific)</td>
<td>Control + click on each individual piece you want to select</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save</td>
<td>Control + S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>Control + P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find</td>
<td>Control + F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Incognito Window</td>
<td>Control + Shift + N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Noteflight Specific Keystrokes

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