Building Well Rounded Student Musicians from Adolescence to Adulthood
Kaitlin Thomas

Description of the Project

I intend to compose a piece of music for 7th/8th grade band at a performance difficulty of no greater than the National Association for Music Education’s grade 3. This piece will be focused on contemporary composition techniques and concepts selected from the following, but not limited to: planing- using a series of chords in parallel motion, bitonality-utilizing two key centers at once, and inversion- flipping a melody upside-down. Accompanying the piece of music will be a teaching module for band directors. The teaching module will include lesson plans which detail the theoretical concepts used in the piece, the historical significance of each concept in relation to listening examples provided with the module, and a composition activity.

After the composition and revision process has been completed, I intend to gauge the musical and educational effectiveness of the work by providing it to several local middle school bands. I hope to accomplish this through the utilization of pre-program surveys and post-program surveys, given to the directors of each band. This will allow me to assess the success of the work and its educational module and make revisions to increase its educational effectiveness before being sent to publishers.

Purpose of the Project

Music education is at a turning point. Band directors are disproportionally focused on the performance and competition aspects of music due to many reasons. Some band directors may not have the time to construct lesson plans that further explore the conceptual side of music. Others may not know the best way to connect theoretical concepts and history to the music that is the focus of rehearsal. In addition, both beginning band literature and professional band literature use mostly 19th century tonal language.

The lesson module I intend to create will help to shift the balance in band rooms to a more Socratic approach to music by focusing not only on music performance, but also on music appreciation and composition. It is my hope that by making a balanced approach to music education more accessible to music educators, students will receive a more complete music education. By exposing children to more contemporary music at a relatively early age and making it fun for them, we can not only foster preferences for a wider range of music, but also promote greater understanding for and appreciation of the value of the arts in our society.

Student and Mentor Roles

My role as the student is to first, research various composers and contemporary techniques and then make artistically appropriate choices for the piece I compose using those techniques. I will also notate the music composed, and write the lesson module that accompanies the piece. My faculty mentor will advise me throughout the composition process, in order that my compositional choices are both educationally relevant and at an appropriate level of difficulty. Together, we will develop ideas for the lesson plans including listening examples, music theory lessons, music history lessons and composition activities.
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Timeline

The first fifteen weeks will be dedicated to the integrated process of researching and composing the pieces and lesson modules. I will compose for 12 hours each week. Each week, I will have a lesson with my mentor in order to guide the creative process. When the Spring 2015 semester starts, I will arrange sessions with local band directors for students to rehearse and possibly perform my music. I will then make adjustments to the project based on the feedback I receive from band directors. Only after this process is complete and the necessary revisions have been made will I make a formal proposal to a publishing company.

- Weeks 1-9 (07/07/2014-09/05/2014)- research and composition
- Weeks 10-11 (09/08/2014-09/19/2014)- wrap up any research and composition, begin work on lesson modules
- Weeks 12-13 (09/22/2014-10/03/2014)- work on lesson modules
- Weeks 14-15 (10/06/2014-10/17/2014)- make revisions, solve notation issues, polish product
- (10/20/2015-12/31/2014)- any other revisions that need to be made
- (01/05/2015-05/22/2015)- rehearsal, performance and feedback sessions with local middle school bands, small revisions and publishing efforts (20+ hours)

Compliance with Feedback

In order to demonstrate how I have complied with the feedback sent to me via email on November 27, 2013, I must extend the body of this proposal. On January 14, 2014, I met with Jennifer Cucera in order to better understand how to meet IRB compliance issues for this project. I have since submitted an Exempt Educational, Behavioral, and Social Science Research application with the IRB. I have also submitted a Request for Conducting Research with Omaha Public Schools. I am currently awaiting approval for both of these requests. As part of these applications, I developed a method for evaluating the success of my program. At this point, I am planning on conducting a pre-survey and a post-survey with each of the band directors who participate in my program.

Finally, I have contacted several local band directors informing them of my project. I have corresponded with four of those so far and I have email confirmation that three local band programs will participate in my project. An email transcript of these correspondences is attached following my budget justification.
Budget Justification

- $2,000 stipend to cover living expenses
- $150 to cover gas to and from local schools

References

Though I cannot know for certain which particular pieces and scores will be the source of my research and creative inspiration, I can assure that my final product will cite these sources. For now, I do know that part of my research will be inspired by the following texts:


Proof of Band Director Participation

Kaitlin Thomas kathomas@unomaha.edu Jan 28 (3 days ago)

to chiyo.kamada, sarah.stratton, amalone, kjanak, mirvin, courtney.baker

Hello!
My name is Kaitlin Thomas and I am a post-baccalaureate student in the music department at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I am applying for a grant that would enable me to compose three pieces of music for 7th/8th grade band at a performance difficulty of no greater than the National Association for Music Education’s grade 3. These pieces will be focused on contemporary composition techniques and concepts. Accompanying these three pieces of music will be teaching modules for band directors. Each teaching module will include lesson plans which detail the theoretical concepts used in the piece, the historical significance of each concept in relation to listening examples provided with the module, and a composition activity.

I intend to gauge the musical and educational effectiveness of the works by providing them to local middle/high school bands. I will also ask students and band directors to fill out two surveys regarding compositions and their accompanying modules. This will allow me to assess the success of each work and its educational module and make revisions to increase their educational effectiveness before being sent to publishers.

I'm extending this opportunity to you because I sincerely hope that you consider accepting my program into your band room for a short period of time and premiering one of my pieces during the Spring 2015 semester. Please feel free to email me if you have any questions, concerns or if you would like to accept this proposal.

Thank you for your time,
Kaitlin Thomas- kathomas@unomaha.edu
Jazz Librarian
UNO Department of Music

Kamada, Chiyo Jan 29 (2 days ago)

to me

Sounds good. We usually start working on the May concert literature in mid-March, so no hurry.
Sarah Stratton Sarah.Stratton-Babb@ops.org Jan 29 (2 days ago)
to me
Kaitlin,
That sounds like a great opportunity for the students! I would love to participate!
Thanks!

Sarah Stratton
Buffett Magnet Middle School
Band Director 5 - 8
(402)561-6160
sarah.stratton@ops.org

Janak Jr, Kenneth 11:46 AM (4 hours ago)
to me
Kaitlin,
I'm in. I'll look forward to receiving more information as you get the project going.
Thanks,
KJ

Ken Janak
Director of Instrumental Music
Papillion Jr. High School
Papillion, NE, USA
kjanak@paplv.org
October 15, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Kaitlin Thomas. I have known her since she was a freshman, both as an ensemble director and her professor of music theory, history and composition. As such I have been able to observe Kaitlin in both the practical and academic sides of music, and I can say that she has performed wonderfully in both areas.

She is most certainly one of the most talented young musicians with whom I have ever had the pleasure of working. She has distinguished herself as a performer and composer. The same level of excellence and care was exhibited in her academic work. She asks thoughtful questions that show that she delves more deeply into the material than was asked of her. Further, her level of scholarship and care taken in the completion of all assignments has been nothing short of exemplary. Indeed if anything impedes Kaitlin’s career in music it may be the plethora of choices available to her because of her incredibly diverse array of talents.

Kaitlin is passionate about music and about music education in particular which is why I feel that this project is uniquely suited to her. It will draw upon all aspects of her training and allow her to put them at the service of the profession in a way that has meaningful and lasting impact.

I, therefore, strongly recommend Kaitlin Thomas to you as a candidate for the FUSE grant as a top candidate. If there are any questions or doubts that you might have with regard to this missive, please do not hesitate in contacting me.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Barry M. Ford
Director of Orchestral Activities
Professor of Music Theory, Music History, Composition and Chamber Music
Strauss PAC 223
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Omaha, NE 68182