

Composition in the Elementary Music Room

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BIG IDEA FOR THIS WORKSHOP:

The most effective way to birth students who can compose well is to integrate composition into the life of your classroom. Begin with very small opportunities to compose that are integrated in with singing, instrument playing, and movement play.

Jelly in the Bowl

From Purposeful Pathways, Book 1

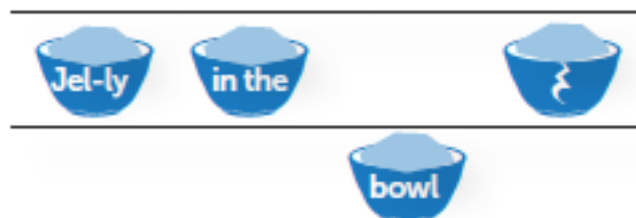
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PATHWAY to PITCH: so mi la

- Lead **solfa echo patterns** using the **solfa tone ladder**.
- Teach the song through **echo imitation**.
- Sing:



- Using visual icons, ask the students to identify which bowls move down into the *mi* space.



- Repeat process for each phrase

PATHWAY to FORM: a a b a form

- Students identify which 4-beat pattern is different.
- Label the motivic form.

PATHWAY to LITERACY: ♩ ♪ ♪ ♪ so mi la

- Transfer jelly bowl icons to ♩ ♪ ♪ ♪ on the staff. Students sing rhythm using **solfa** syllables.
- Students read rhythms one measure at a time, using rhythm syllables.
- Students sing melody using rhythm syllables
- Sing melody with text.

Jelly in the Bowl

Traditional/arr. Sams

The musical score for 'Jelly in the Bowl' is written in 4/4 time and consists of five staves. The first staff is the vocal melody with the lyrics 'Jel - ly in the bowl. Jel - ly in the bowl.' The second staff is labeled 'GL' and contains a graphic line with a dashed line and a dot. The third staff is labeled 'BX/BM' and contains a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes. The fourth staff is labeled 'GL' and contains a graphic line with a dashed line and a dot. The fifth staff is labeled 'BX/BM' and contains a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes. The score ends with a double bar line.

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PATHWAY to ENSEMBLE: Utilizing word cues to create timbre & texture

- Students pat the steady beat while singing song.
- Transfer the steady beat to **chord bordun**.
- Prepare **GL** part with pat-clap on the word "bowl." Transfer.

- Prepare maracas by clapping on the words “wiggle, waggle.” Transfer.
- Put all parts together with singers.
- Rotate parts as time permits.

PATHWAY to COMPOSITION: a a b a form from 4-beat patterns

- Class creates two different 4-beat patterns using “jelly” and “bowl” icons.
- Class experiments with creating *a a b a* pieces by rearranging our patterns.
- Students notate the rhythm of the patterns, if developmentally appropriate and time permits.
- Transfer one pattern to woodblock and the other to hand drum.
- Perform in ABA form with the song.
- Small groups create their own rhythm compositions following this model.
- Perform a **Grand Rondo**, giving each group an opportunity to share their composition as a contrasting section in the rondo. NOTE: This is a perfect opportunity for assessment.

PATHWAY to CREATIVE MOVEMENT: High, middle and low levels

- Teacher leads exploration of shapes in high, middle and low **levels**.
- Students “strike a pose” in high, middle and **low levels** at the beginning of each a phrase on the word, “jelly.”
- Students explore different ways to **locomote** during the b phrase on “wiggle, waggle.” Teacher leads discussion about what kind of movement qualities might work best for this phrase.
- Put together dance in *a a b a* form.
- Small groups work together to set their dance, based on our exploration.
 - What do you want your group formation to be?
 - Do you want the levels to all match or to be varied on the *a* phrases?
 - What do you want the **locomotor movement** to look like?
- Small groups show their dances to each other.
- Put two groups together. One group plays their rhythm composition while the other performs their dance.

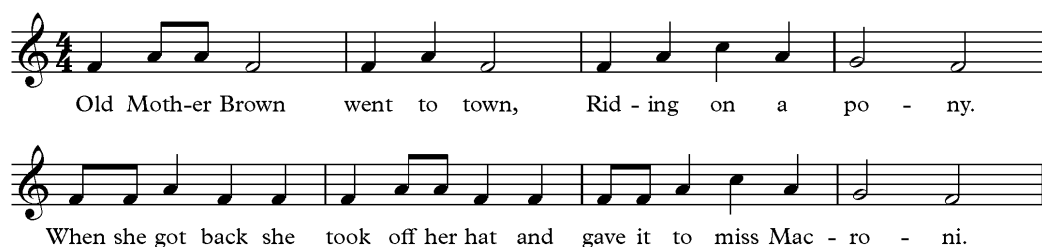
Old Mother Brown
From Purposeful Pathways, Book 1
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PATHWAY TO Pitch: Echo patterns using *do re mi so*

- Lead **solfa** echo patterns using *do re mi so*.
- Be sure to emphasize the *do-mi-so* patterns found in the song.
- As always, use student leaders as they are ready and time permits.

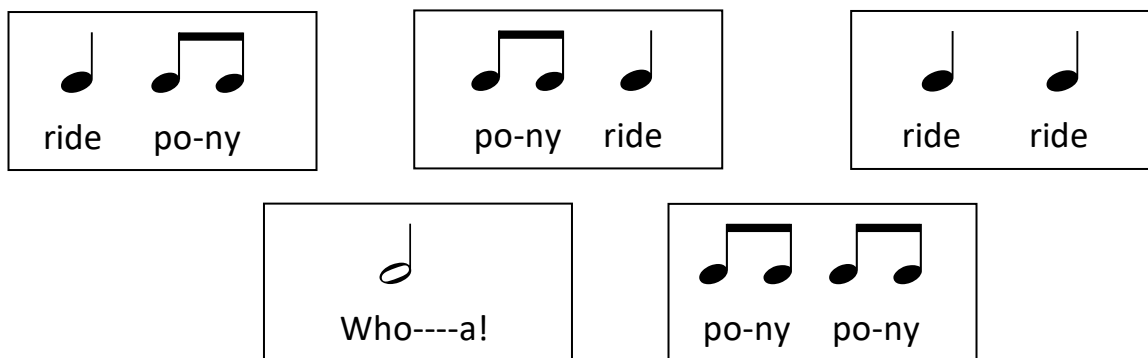
PATHWAY TO Literacy: and *do, re, mi, so*

- Read the rhythm. These rhythms are very familiar. Expect the students to read them without your help.
- Read the melody from stick notation using **solfa** and hand signs. Be prepared to use the **solfa tone ladder** for remediation when the students need some extra support.
- Read the melody from the staff using **solfa** and hand signs.
- Add the text



PATHWAY TO Composition: 8-beat rhythmic ostinato

- The class composes an 8-beat rhythmic **ostinato** by selecting and arranging four **building block cards**. For the half note “whoa” have the students clap and then pretend that they are pulling on reins for the second, sustained beat.



- Clap the **ostinato** together. (Make sure the students are showing the sustained half note by pulling on the reins.)
- Divide the class in half. Half sings the song. Half performs the **ostinato** on **WB** or **UTP** instrument of choice. Regardless of what instrument you choose, you'll probably need to use a special instrument, like the suspended cymbal, to provide the sustained sound of the half note on “Whoa!” Trade jobs.
- Small groups of students compose their own 8-beat **ostinati** using **building block cards** then perform on **UTP** timbre of their choice.
- Each group shares the **ostinato** they created, first alone and then with the remainder of the class singing the song.

PATHWAY TO Ensemble: I-V with **UTP** ostinato

- Model the **BX/BM ostinato** (mirroring) and sing either the text, absolute pitch names, or **solfa**. Students join in when they are ready (**simultaneous imitation**).
- Divide the class in half. Half sings the song. Half practices the **BX/BM ostinato**. Trade parts.
- Transfer to **BX/BM**.
- Combine singing and **BX/BM** with some of the student created **UTP ostinati**.

Old Mother Brown

Traditional/arr. Sams

The musical score for 'Old Mother Brown' is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a vocal line and a BX/BM ostinato line. The music is in 4/4 time. The first system contains the first line of the song, and the second system contains the second line. The lyrics are written below the vocal line, and the BX/BM notation is written below the ostinato line.

Old Moth-er Brown went to town, Rid-ing on a po - ny.

(Go rid - ing. Go rid - ing. Go rid - ing. Ride to town.)

When she got back she took off her hat and gave it to miss Mac - ro - ni.

Go rid - ing. Go rid - ing. Go rid - ing. Ride to town.)

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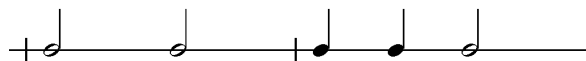
Yangtze River Chantey

From Purposeful Pathways, Book 1

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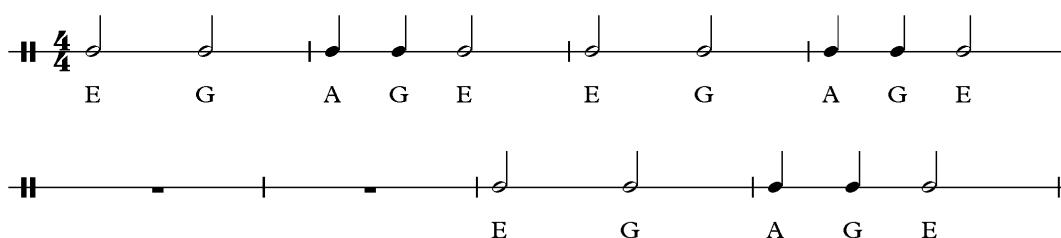
PATHWAY TO Composition: From recorder improvisation into composition

- Lead **4-beat echo patterns** on recorder using B, A, G, and E.
- Students read the following rhythm, clapping and saying rhythm syllables.

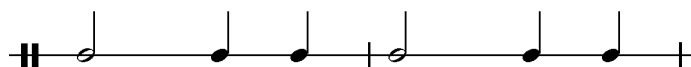


- Students play this rhythm on the recorder on the note E.
- Students play this rhythm on the recorder on the note G.
- Students play this rhythm on the recorder on the note A.

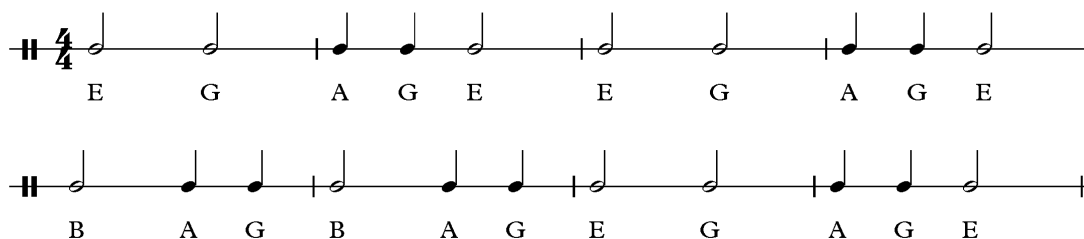
- Students improvise on this rhythm, using E, G, and A. Tell them that they must start and end on E. Give them several opportunities to improvise. Ask them to keep improvising until they find a pattern they really like and then keep practicing it. We are using this improvisation as an opportunity to explore patterns and then setting the patterns in concrete compositions. In other words, we are using improvisation as a technique to lead students into composing.
- Give students an opportunity to play the **phrases** they composed for the class. Ask the class to echo each composer on their recorders.
- It is likely that one student will play a phrase that is close to or identical to the first phrase of “Yangtze River Chantey.” Have the class play that phrase four times. If you do not have a student who has composed the **a phrase**, take the example that is closest to the desired phrase and ask the students permission to slightly change their **phrase**.
- Students play the **a phrase** two times, rest for eight beats, and then play the **a phrase** a third time. (**a a b a** form – resting on the **b phrase**)



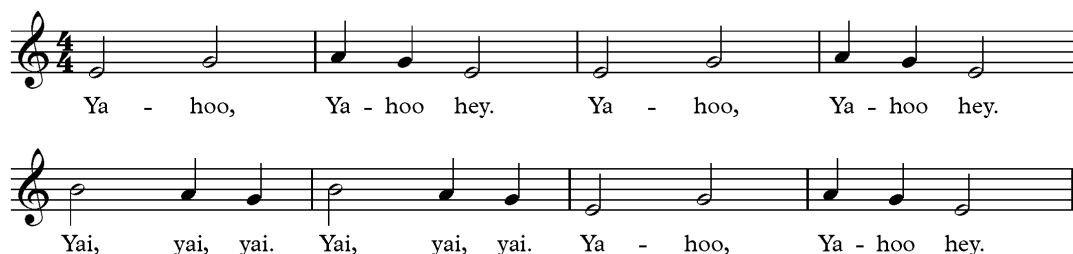
- Students read the rhythm of the **b phrase**, clapping and saying rhythm syllables.



- Students play this rhythm on the recorder on the note B.
- Students play this rhythm on the recorder on the note A.
- Students play this rhythm on the recorder on the note G.
- Students improvise on this rhythm, using B, A, and G, until they have composed a **phrase** that they like. Repeat the sharing process, with the class echoing each composer after they play their **phrase**. End with the appropriate **b phrase**, the third phrase of the song. Students play the entire piece that they composed.



- You could feign surprise that the melody the class has created is the exactly same melody as a Chinese song that you know. Teach the students the text through **echo imitation**.



- Students sing the song, with text.
- Students perform in ABA form: sing, play recorder, sing

PATHWAY TO Choreography: Creating a dance with working motions

- Explain that this is a work song - a song that the men who work on flat bottom cargo boats sing as they work. Explain that they used poles to create forward movement if the water was shallow. Workers would stand and push the pole down into the riverbed to propel the boat forward. Explore with the class what that movement would look and feel like. Encourage the students to use the whole note as the pulse for this movement, placing the pole into the riverbed on beat 1 and then slowly moving slightly forward on beats 2, 3, and 4.

Example:



- Ask the students what other kinds of work they could do on these flat-bottomed boats. Create a movement motif for each idea. Use different rhythmic values and rhythms for different motions.

Examples:

Raising the sail



Loading cargo on the boat



Scrubbing the deck



- Break the students into small groups to compose dances based on work movements. The dances should:
 - be in **a a b a** form.
 - have both **locomotor** and **non-locomotor movement**.
 - include a **level change** or **body facing change**.
- Small groups share their dances with the class.

PATHWAY TO Ensemble: Broken bordun with color part and rhythmic ostinato

- Students sing the song as you clap/snap on the first “hoo” in each **phrase** to prepare the **GL** part. Ask the students to determine what you are doing and then join you a second time.
- Transfer clap/snap to low/high E’s on **GL** and perform with the song.
- Mirror the **BX/BM ostinato** and ask the students to join you when they have figured out the pattern. (**simultaneous imitation**) This is a more challenging example of an **arpeggiated** bordun. Transfer to **BX/BM** and perform with the song.
- Put song, **GL** color part, and **BX/BM broken bordun** all together.
- Teach the temple block part (the challenging part in this arrangement) using the following text:

1 2 3 4 5 6 Work so hard today. 2 3 4 5 6 Work so hard. (2X)
- Put all three instrumental parts together with singers and/or recorder players. Consider performing with the student created dances.

Yangtze River Chantey

China/arr. Sams

GL

Ya - hoo, Ya-hoo hey. Ya - hoo, Ya - hoo hey.

TB

(Work so hard to-day. Work so hard.)

BX/BM

GL

Yai, yai, yai. Yai, yai, yai. Ya - hoo, Ya-hoo hey.

TB

(Work so hard to-day. Work so hard.)

BX/BM