IMAGINATION BEFORE NOTATION:
INCORPORATING AUDIATION-BASED COMPOSITION IN THE
ELEMENTARY GENERAL MUSIC CLASSROOM

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MUSIC EDUCATION
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY MUSIC EDUCATION EMPHASIS

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MAY, 2017
Abstract

This paper explores the importance of audiation in musical composition, the history of the Very Young Composers (VYC) program, and various methods for implementing audiation, i.e., musical thinking, in composition within the elementary music classroom. The methods are based on the National Standards for Music Education and the basic tenet of VYC, which is that children do not need to be taught how to compose; rather, they need a developmentally appropriate way to document their compositions. To address the disconnect between creativity and notation, three different audiation-based techniques explored in this paper are the Arioso method, the VYC Classroom Adaptation, and the Group Collaboration method. These methods vary in their strengths, and the choice of method will depend on the teacher’s goals and unique classroom circumstances. However, all three techniques emphasize audiation by requiring musical imagination first and notation second.

Keywords: audiation, composition, elementary general music, Very Young Composers
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Imagination Before Notation:

Incorporating Audiation-Based Composition in the Elementary General Music Classroom

Chapter 1: Introduction

What does children’s music sound like? Not music written for children, but by them. Many children at the elementary school level experience composition as an exercise in notation, with directions such as, “Compose four measures of music using quarter note and eighth note rhythms and end on Do.” Such a notation-based approach is an excellent way to assess students’ ability to write rhythms and pitches on the staff, but often does little to engage them in musical thought, known as audiation. In a notation-based approach to composition, the notation itself, rather than the sound and affect of the music, becomes the driving force behind the composition.

According to Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, musical intelligence is a discrete entity, not dependent on other non-musical skills or knowledge. Thinking music engages this intelligence in a way that writing it down does not (Gardner, 1983). It is only logical that activities in music classes should strive to engage the use and development of that intelligence, just as other classes seek to develop other intelligences. The Very Young Composers (VYC) program was created to provide a structure for children to compose original music without needing the knowledge of musical theory required to notate it. It provides an excellent framework for engaging children’s musical thinking in composition. This thesis will explore the importance of audiation-based composition in elementary music education, provide a brief history of Very Young Composers, and examine three different practical approaches for incorporating the VYC philosophy of composition in the elementary general music classroom.
Chapter 2: Definition and Benefits of Composition

Defining Composition

Musical composition, as a classroom activity, can vary greatly depending on how the assignment is constructed, especially at the elementary level when students are in the early stages of learning how to create their own music. For the purposes of this thesis, *musical composition* refers to the act of students inventing and organizing sounds into a particular form.

Given this definition, imagine that a teacher assigns a class of sixth graders to create an original piece of music that is eight measures long, in 4/4 time, in the key of C, and using a combination of specified rhythmic values. The students are to write the entire piece down on staff paper using standard notation. Such a task clearly meets the definition of *compose*, in that students invent music and write it in a prescribed format.

Now suppose a teacher gives a class of kindergarten students a variety of classroom rhythm instruments and then has the students create a rhythm or sound effect with each instrument. The students assign each instrument to a particular word in a storybook and perform their sounds on those instruments when the words come up in the story. The students are not writing music in the literal sense of the word and the finished result is not a traditional composition, but this is still a form of composing. The students are inventing when they come up with a sound effect or rhythm for their instrument, and they are employing formal organization when they assign those instrumental sounds to words.

While the first task mentioned above may be more commonly found in today’s music classrooms, the reality is that composition need not be limited to such specific, traditional exercises. Indeed, the latter example and other similar activities may be even better suited to engaging the musical intelligence of students. Researcher and music educator Edwin Gordon,
who coined the term *audiation*, writes, “The power of audiation is best understood through analogy. Audiation is to music what thought is to language” (2012, p. ix). In order to engage in audiation, classroom tasks must be designed in such a way as to require the composer to *think* the music, rather than simply read and write it. These tasks would include vocal and instrumental improvisation; arranging non-pitched percussion instruments to tell a story in logical order; melodic compositions using instruments such as recorders and xylophones; rhythmic compositions using non-pitched percussion instruments, found instruments, or body percussion; and creating an accompaniment for an existing piece of music. Students can create compositions by themselves, in small groups, or in large groups. The compositions can involve memorized performance, non-standard written notation, or traditional notation. As defined above, the art of *musical composition* is the act of conceiving and combining sounds. The complexity of the task to invent and organize those sounds can vary tremendously depending on the musical level of the student composers and the ultimate goal of the task.

**The National Standards and Composition**

The National Standards for Music Education address composition under the artistic process “Creating.” This standard is broken down into four steps: *Imagine, Plan and Make, Evaluate and Refine*, and *Present* (Shuler, et al., 2014).

The first step, *Imagine*, involves improvisation and generation of new musical ideas, which can be done instrumentally or vocally. Audiation is particularly important during this phase of composition, regardless of whether the audiation takes place internally or externally. More advanced students may be able to hear the music in their heads, but less experienced students may have more success singing or playing their ideas aloud. To maintain musical thinking as the primary drive behind the compositional task, it is best not to incorporate notation
until the *Imagine* process is well underway. Writing an idea down immediately before playing with it, modifying it, or considering other options often limits creativity and inhibits musical thinking. The first idea tends to become permanent, not because it is the best, but because it is already down on paper and takes extra effort to replace. The second step, *Plan and Make*, involves creative decision-making. The composers must develop their musical ideas, organize them, and usually document them in some way. The documentation may involve iconic notation, standard notation, or recording technology. The third step is *Evaluate and Refine*. In this phase of composition, students evaluate their own work and determine what revisions they will make while applying teacher-provided feedback and criteria, such as time limits and form. Criteria will vary depending on the classroom situation. During *Present*, the final step, students share their completed compositions and their expressive intent with others (Shuler, et al., 2014).

Naturally, each of these steps will differ based on the grade level of the students. In the National Standards rubric for the kindergarten level, *Imagine* is described as, “With guidance, generate musical ideas (such as movements or motives)” (Shuler, et al., MU:Cr1.1.Kb, 2014). For sixth grade, the step reads, “Generate simple rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic phrases within AB and ABA forms that convey expressive intent” (Shuler, et al., MU:Cr1.1.6a, 2014). As students become more proficient at audiating and expressing their musical ideas, their compositions become more sophisticated.

**Benefits of Teaching Composition**

In addition to its inclusion in the National Standards, educators choose to incorporate composition into their curricula for several reasons. Katherine Strand (2006), Professor of Music Education at Indiana University, published a survey of 339 music educators in the state of Indiana. One of the purposes of the survey was to determine why educators choose to use or not
use composition in their teaching. The answers to the open-ended questions were sorted into categories, and the survey found that teachers used composing tasks to:

(a) rehearse musical skills (rhythmic duration and pitch reading, sight reading, dictation, and listening), (b) teach or apply musical concepts ... (c) encourage sound exploration and improvisation, (d) help students appreciate famous composers, (e) address individual learning needs, (f) teach students how to compose, (g) develop critical and creative thinking skills, (h) promote self-expression and give students personal ownership over musical experiences, and (i) help students learn how to use software or technology (pp. 161-162).

Several of these answers, including (c), (e), (f), (g), and (h), address composition from the perspective of engaging students’ musical intelligence. These reasons are the focus of this thesis.

**Creating.** Composition benefits students in ways that performance alone does not. Creativity is one of the most significant gains. According to the revised edition of Bloom’s Taxonomy (Anderson, et al., 2001), the cognitive process *Create* is a higher-order thinking skill that involves combining elements into a “coherent or functional whole” (p. 84), whereas the cognitive processes *Understand*, *Apply*, and *Analyze* refer to work with elements that are part of an already established whole:

In *Create*...the student must draw upon elements from many sources and put them together into a novel structure or pattern relative to his or her own prior knowledge.

*Create* results in a new product, that is, something that can be observed and that is more than the student’s beginning materials (Anderson, et al., 2001, p.85).

Learning music for performance requires memorization and decisions about dynamics, tempo, articulation, and other expressive qualities. In contrast, creating new music requires mental
manipulation of the actual pitches or rhythms in addition to decisions about expressive qualities. Because composers start from a blank slate, they have a greater degree of control over the finished product and engage with the music on a deeper level than the performer, for whom structure already is given. The composer decides how to string pitches together into melodies, how to blend voices together to create harmony, and how to structure the overall form of the piece. These sorts of decisions take place even at the elementary level, although often using a simpler approach. Composers are required to reflect on their own musical tastes and preferences while demonstrating the ability to turn the many musical components into a new, unique composition - something greater than the sum of its parts. Studying the lives and techniques of famous composers, learning to read and write notation, and practicing to perform a piece of music accurately and expressively are all important musical experiences, but none of them draw upon the process of Create as composition does.

**Demonstrating mastery.** As a higher-order thinking skill, Create is part of how children demonstrate mastery of many different proficiencies. A common comparison to the acquisition of musical capabilities is that of first language acquisition. During the latter, infants spend the first months of their lives listening to everyone around them talk. They take in the syllables, vocabulary, intonation, and phrases common to their language. As they develop, they begin to imitate what they hear, from babbling at seven to ten months old to producing recognizable words another six to twelve months later. At about age two, they begin to combine words together. Eventually they demonstrate mastery of these words by using them to create complete sentences to express their own ideas (Clark, 2003).

A similar process applies to music. Children grow up listening to music in the world around them. In addition to the age-old tradition of parents singing to their children, the advent
of recording technology means that music can be found seemingly everywhere in modern life: playing in the background at a store or restaurant, on the car radio, on television shows and commercials, and on the stereo at home. Children listen to these sounds around them and learn to recognize and internalize the steady beat, rhythmic patterns, and common tonalities of the music they hear. Eventually they begin to copy them as well. As observed by psychiatrist Peter Ostwald (1973):

The second half of the first year of life witnesses a marked increase in a baby’s capacity to ‘carry a tune’. The growing child wants the sound he hears to continue. He sets about achieving this by repeating his own self-produced sounds more frequently, and by imitating the sounds made by others (p. 368).

As children develop, they continue to reproduce these musical patterns and eventually can demonstrate mastery of them by creating their own music, whether by humming a new tune, making up a rhythm, or composing a full-fledged song.

It is common for small children to create spontaneous song by singing about what they are doing or just by playing with their voices. As children get older, this impromptu composition often decreases in favor of singing familiar music from the world around them. As Gardner states, “By the age of three or four, the melodies of the dominant culture have won out, and the production of spontaneous songs and of exploratory sound play generally wanes” (1983, p. 115). Rather than allowing this creativity to die away, music educators should encourage improvisation and composition from an early age in the music classroom to harness these innate skills and foster a comfortable relationship with composing. As students progress in their education, they can demonstrate their mastery of new musical concepts through composition just as children demonstrate mastery of new language arts skills through creative writing.
**Autonomy and self-expression.** Composing is also an important experience in elementary school because it gives children a chance to take control and express themselves. Because composition involves making so many decisions, it is natural for the composer to feel a sense of ownership in the process. Although the need for assessment requires teachers to set forth some specific criteria for composition tasks, enabling the composers to make as many independent decisions as possible allows them to discover their own voices throughout the process. Through the expression of their ideas and preferences, students have the opportunity to celebrate what makes them unique. No two compositions will be alike. For some students, the ability to take control of their music and alter it as they see fit may have much more appeal than performing someone else’s music does. While some may be content to perform and interpret music, others will derive more satisfaction from creating and dissecting it (Gardner, 1983).

Another benefit to audiation-based composition is its eminent adaptability for many developmental levels. Because it is not based strictly on reading and notating music, it is much more accessible for students with special needs who may struggle with traditional notation but are perfectly capable of creating new music. The student composer is in control, so the difficulty of the music should be tailored to fit the student’s own musical ability levels, whether composing vocally or instrumentally.

**The Notation Problem**

With such benefits as utilizing higher-order thinking skills, exhibiting mastery, and promoting self-expression, it is surprising that composition so often is left out of elementary music classes or turned into an activity that sidesteps creative musical thinking and becomes an exercise in notation. One explanation for this may be the belief that compositions must be written in traditional notation. In a typical class with 30 students and one teacher, it is highly
unlikely that the teacher will have the time to listen to and transcribe every student’s composition individually. This leaves the students to write down their own pieces. With that being the case, the students first must consider what they know how to notate and then construct a composition based solely around those rhythms and pitches. Given the typical timeline of musical literacy in a general music classroom, such an arrangement will limit creative composition significantly.

For example, the music textbook series *Share the Music* presents one standard approach to introducing rhythmic notation in an elementary music curriculum. Work on notation readiness begins in kindergarten with pictorial and iconic representations of rhythms. The first grade book introduces reading and writing quarter notes, sets of two eighth notes, and quarter rests. Half notes and dotted half notes are introduced in second grade. Sets of four sixteenth notes, unequal rhythms in compound meter, and whole notes are introduced in third grade, etc. (Bond, Davidson, Goetze, Lawrence, and Snyder, 1995). It takes years for students to learn all the aspects of rhythmic and melodic notation, which can create barriers that prevent children from putting their more advanced ideas onto paper. Young students can conceive of and perform much more complicated music than they are yet capable of writing down. For example, first grade students can easily perform the song “Pop! Goes the Weasel” but few have learned to read and write rhythms in compound meters by that age. Consider language again: if a student is writing a story and uses a word appropriately but cannot spell it, she should not be prevented from including that word in the story. She simply needs someone to help her spell it, or perhaps she does not need to write the story down at all and can communicate it orally. The same is true for composing in the elementary classroom: when creativity and expression are the primary goals, composition does not have to be put into traditional notation. In fact, the expectation of notation is likely to inhibit composition.
The Origins of Very Young Composers

The idea of children composing music based on their own creativity and musical thoughts is showcased internationally through the Very Young Composers (VYC) program. The heart of VYC is the belief that musical thought and the ability to compose already are present in every child. Jon Deak, a professional composer, retired member of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and current Artistic Director of Very Young Composers with the New York Philharmonic, was first inspired to create the program during a visit to a Brooklyn elementary school in 1993. As he walked down the hallway, he saw the students’ creativity displayed through visual art projects covering the walls, but he saw no sign of their musical creations:

What struck me was not that these children…may have been inspired by professionals, but precisely the opposite: that so many of the great Artists of the 20th Century were inspired by children…But HERE was the real thing! Not Art that needed to be interpreted or legitimized by elite professionals, but Art completely on its own, pure, beautiful, from the soul, and eloquent.

So this was Children's Art. Where then, was Children's Music? Surely not ‘Mary Had a Little Lamb’ or ‘Three Blind Mice,’ as fun as these tunes may be. It has long been known that Music happens at a very early age, so why not creativity - I mean deep creativity?

Here I was a composer looking for the source of a New Music, and I had just had a vague glimpse of a distant shoreline. I became seized by the quest (personal communication, January 1, 2017).

Deak began experimenting with ways to help children compose authentic music during his three-
year residency as a composer with the Colorado Symphony beginning in 1994. He introduced his program to the Denver Public Schools in 1995 and eventually moved it to New York, where it gained sponsorship from the New York Philharmonic and became known as Very Young Composers (Deak, personal communication, January 1, 2017).

VYC exists to enable elementary school-aged children to compose original music without needing to know how to write it in traditional notation. It allows children to work one-on-one with adult musicians who serve as Teaching Artists: essentially, scribes. The young composers generate all the musical ideas and make all the decisions. The Teaching Artist is there to facilitate the composition process and transcribe the music into traditional notation.

Since its inception, the Very Young Composers concept has spread to over 25 locations in the United States and 12 countries worldwide. Each location utilizes its own unique format, built to fit the resources and needs of the community. Anyone from major symphony orchestra musicians to University undergraduate students to the Young Composers themselves may perform the completed pieces (Deak, personal communication, January 1, 2017).

**Very Young Composers of Central Wisconsin**

Very Young Composers of Central Wisconsin is based in Stevens Point, WI, and runs cooperatively with the public schools and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Robert Rosen, Professor Emeritus of Percussion at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, founded the Central Wisconsin program in 2010 after being inspired by his long-time friend Jon Deak’s work with VYC. The mission statement of Very Young Composers of Central Wisconsin is “to provide an interactive pathway for children to listen, explore, and reveal the essence of their own voice through the creation of original music” (2017). According to Rosen, who serves as executive director of the program, the underlying assumption is the same as that of the VYC
New York program, i.e., children already know how to compose music. The teachers and Teaching Artists can demonstrate various aspects of music, but children do not need lessons in composition to make decisions as composers. Rosen explains that another key component of the VYC mindset is that the students deserve respect as composers. Teachers and Teaching Artists must not attempt to edit their music or make any decisions for them. The composer’s ideas are honored, even if the Teaching Artist disagrees with an idea or thinks it is a mistake (personal communication, September 6, 2016).

The classes meet for two hours at a time after school over the course of three weeks. General music teachers from the Stevens Point Area Public School District lead large group exercises exploring expression, harmony, rhythm, melodic contour, form, tempo, dynamics, and adding detail during each lesson. The Teaching Artists who work one-on-one with the young composers are University student musicians. During the first few classes, Teaching Artists demonstrate their primary instruments for small groups. The composers have the opportunity to ask questions about the instruments to become familiar with their characteristics and capabilities. During the demonstrations, known as instrument interviews, the composers are encouraged to compose a sound or melody for each instrument, and the Teaching Artists work with the composers to perform their sounds as authentically as possible. This practice prepares the composers for the scribing process that begins when the interviews are complete.

During the scribing process, composers meet individually with their Teaching Artists to get their musical ideas onto paper. The composers communicate their ideas by singing, playing the piano, drawing, writing, moving, or any other way of expressing themselves. The Teaching Artists are tasked with faithfully transcribing the music into traditional notation and entering the final compositions into music notation software (Finale, 2017) (see Appendix A). Through this
software, the composers have the ability to hear their pieces played back to them during the composing process and to experiment with instrumentation.

At the end of the three weeks, the program culminates with a concert for family, friends, and the community. The Teaching Artists and composers hold a dress rehearsal the day before to prepare for the performance. The rehearsal is an important experience for the composers as they give direct feedback to the ensemble of Teaching Artists about how their compositions should be performed. Expressing their musical intent to a group of adults by refining dynamics, tempo, and phrasing requires a great deal of musical thought and confidence. It is an important step in the development of the child’s self-image as a composer.

At the final concert, the Teaching Artists perform all of the completed compositions after the composers have introduced their pieces on stage in their own words. The introductions allow them to share their inspirations for their compositions with the audience. The poise and preparation exhibited by the composers for this final step are further indicators of the social development that takes place throughout the program.

Elizabeth Menard, Associate Professor of Music Education at Bowling Green State University, administered a survey to the composers at the beginning and end of the VYC program. The results of the survey clearly demonstrate the effect the experience has had on their attitudes about composing. Answers were scored on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the most positive. The mean responses to Statement 1, “I am sure that I can write a good composition”; Statement 3, “I would like for people to hear the music I compose”; and Statement 4, “Composition is a good way to express my feelings through music,” increased positively from the beginning of the program to the end. The response to Statement 2, “I think I can learn to compose,” remained consistently positive, with a mean of 4.46 at the beginning and end of the
program (Menard, 2015, pp. 5-6). Statement results can be viewed in Tables 1-4 below (reproduced from “Very Young Composers of Central Wisconsin 2015 Project Evaluation Report,” p. 6).

Table 1: Attitude Statement 1 – I am sure that I can write a good composition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pre Comp Mean</th>
<th>Post Comp Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>-3.261</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>* .003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Attitude Statement 2 – I think I can learn to compose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pre Comp Mean</th>
<th>Post Comp Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Attitude Statement 3 – I would like for people to hear the music I compose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pre Comp Mean</th>
<th>Post Comp Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>-3.434</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>* .002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Attitude Statement 4 – Composition is a way to express my feelings through music.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pre Comp Mean</th>
<th>Post Comp Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>-1.193</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>.244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to social development, an exploratory case study of VYC of Central Wisconsin (Menard and Rosen, 2016) found that benefits to the young composers included promotion of musical learning and pride in accomplishment. Additionally, “Data revealed that participating undergraduate preservice music teachers were amazed at what musically untrained fourth and fifth grade students were capable of and they perceived great personal value in
mentoring the young composers” (p. 77).

The VYC philosophy of treating students as capable, autonomous composers empowers them. They gain the independence and confidence to trust their own musical ideas. VYC allows students to make their own decisions without the barriers of traditional notation. The result is music that is authentically theirs, rather than something that they believe is expected of them. *There is no right answer, and therefore there is no wrong answer either.* In the age of standardized testing this is a rare and liberating experience for students.

While this organization’s approach to audiation-based composition is certainly effective, its reach is nonetheless limited. The availability of the required resources determines the number of students who can participate each year. Some of these factors include the number of Teaching Artists who volunteer, the number of accessible computer stations equipped with music notation software, and the amount of time available for the performance of the final pieces. Because these resources are currently limited, the program is only open to fourth and fifth grade students. However, VYC’s philosophy and basic practices can be adapted for the general music classroom, allowing students at all levels to experience composition based in musical thought.

**Chapter 4: Requisite Resources**

There is a wide array of useful equipment and materials available to teachers and students interested in creating an audiation-based project, but the list of essential resources is minimal. In fact, there are only two mandatory elements: musical instruments and time.

**Musical Instruments**

Anything that makes sound and can be manipulated safely by students can be used as a musical instrument for composing. The instruments available will affect the parameters of what the students realistically can compose, so it is best to bear this in mind while planning.
Rhythm instruments. For rhythm compositions, almost anything can be used as a sound source. Standard classroom instruments like hand drums, tambourines, rhythm sticks, maracas, and triangles are all excellent materials for a rhythm composition. Lacking that, the instruments simply can be students’ bodies and the materials around the room. Patting, clapping, drumming on chairs, and tapping pencils on metal surfaces all provide interesting options for contrasting timbres. Students often enjoy the process of exploring the sounds they can produce from the everyday materials around them, which broadens their understanding of what music is.

Mallet instruments. If the teacher’s goal is a composition that includes melody and/or harmony, the options are more restricted but still numerous. Classroom mallet instruments such as metallophones, xylophones, and glockenspiels are well suited for melodic compositions for several reasons. First, it is simple for the composers to produce sounds on these instruments. No complicated fingerings or embouchures are necessary; they simply tap the bars with their mallets to play. This makes these instruments particularly accessible to younger students and students with special needs, whose fine motor skills may not be well developed. Mallet instruments with labeled note names are especially helpful. Seeing the physical bars and letter names as a visual representation of the music can help students remember what they have played in order to recreate and build on it. In addition, if the students are transcribing the composition into notation, being able to see the note names eliminates a mental step of translating sound to letter name, simplifying the notation process. Mallet instruments also allow the performer to play multiple notes at once, enabling the composer to include harmony easily on a solo piece if desired. The limited range of middle C to A’ can make writing the composition in traditional notation on the staff more manageable, if that is to be part of the project.

Electronic keyboards. Electronic keyboards and pianos possess many of the qualities of
mallet instruments, including the visual aspect of one key per note and the ability to perform harmony on a solo piece. The much larger ranges of keyboard and piano either can be assets that allow more freedom for the composer or challenges when it comes to notation, depending upon the grade level and goal of the composition.

**Recorder.** While soprano recorder does require more specialized knowledge to play than a mallet instrument, such as hand positions, fingerings, and tonguing, it has several benefits that percussion instruments do not. For one, it enables students to compose music with sustained rhythms like half notes and whole notes more easily. On a xylophone, students must be able to perform a roll or tremolo to sustain notes longer than one beat. On recorder, the students simply need to sustain their breath. Another consideration is that recorders are inexpensive and easy to store. It is more economical and practical to provide 30 students with their own recorders than with mallet or keyboard instruments. However, recorder can be more difficult for students with fine motor skill issues or other developmental delays.

**Voice.** Even very young students are capable of utilizing their voices as instruments to compose. No extra equipment, gross motor skills, or fine motor skills are required beyond normal vocal development. Students can improvise melodies vocally using neutral syllables such as “la” or “ba.” They also can use lyrics to tell a story. Recreating improvisational ideas with the voice to develop or notate them is less concrete than when performed on an instrument. The visual and tactile elements that make it easy to identify specific pitches on keyboard and woodwind instruments are not applicable. Keeping improvisations short and immediately repeating them can aid the composer’s memory. Composers also can utilize recording technology to document vocal ideas to which they can return later.
Time

The other absolute requirement for composition is sufficient time. Composing involves extensive decision-making at every step of the process, and time is necessary for the composer to give adequate consideration to each decision. Composers need time not only to generate ideas but to reject them as well. Teacher availability also will affect the parameters of the project. Guidance and oversight are important throughout the process. During an individual composition project, one teacher may need to check in with 30 different composers each class period to give feedback, answer questions, and differentiate instruction. Once the composing and decision-making are done, considerable time still is needed for composers to perform their finished compositions. Rushing through any step of this undertaking is a disservice to the composers and may result in final compositions that do not reflect the composers’ authentic musical desires.

Other Helpful Resources

While the above list includes the bare minimum of what classroom composers need, many other resources can prove helpful to the composing process. If following the Very Young Composers model, assistants or Teaching Artists who can work one-on-one with students to serve as scribes are invaluable. These assistants could be local retired music teachers, college music majors, advanced high school students, or any other individuals with the necessary level of musical training to take down rhythmic and melodic dictation accurately. Having assistants for this role frees the teacher to facilitate the overall project while potentially allowing students to compose more complicated music than they would be able to write down by themselves.

Recording equipment is another helpful resource for composing. Any technology that allows students to record themselves playing or singing their ideas is useful both during the composing process and for keeping a record of the finished piece. With recording equipment,
composers are able to save ideas to come back to later, enabling them to recreate more accurately what they have played or sung before.

Music notation software is valuable if transcribing the compositions into traditional notation. Not only does it allow the composers to print final, professional-looking versions of their compositions, it also enables them to experiment with instrumentation without the need for physical instruments and performers. Additionally, this software allows the composers to create music with rhythms and harmonies more intricate than they can perform alone. While a computer version of a piece is no replacement for live musicians, it still is better than nothing at all. Without this software or a group of designated performers, the composers must be physically able to perform their own pieces.

Chapter 5: Practical Approaches in the Classroom

There are many ways to approach composition in a general music classroom using the materials outlined in the previous section. Each teacher can tailor the exact design to his or her unique situation, bearing in mind the goals of the project, the students’ abilities and needs, and the resources available. The following are several different approaches that vary in style and method, but all place the emphasis on thinking musically with notation as a secondary consideration.

Arioso Method

The Arioso approach to composing is based in American Kodály music educator John Feierabend’s curriculum *First Steps in Music* (2006). Arioso is essentially vocal improvisation; these are melodies that children create spontaneously. “Just as children develop a repertoire of words and are able to create original sentences to express themselves based on those words, children should be invited to make up original tunes and songs” (Feierabend, 2006, p.66). This
can be accomplished in a fairly unstructured way or with a few guiding cues. Older students may not feel comfortable trying Arioso without having done so from an early age, but younger students, particularly kindergarten, first, and second graders, often are free of the self-consciousness that prevents older students from enjoying the process. Arioso is a worthwhile activity to use with the youngest students as a way of extending the spontaneous singing that occurs naturally in early childhood.

Prompts. The teacher can guide an initial introduction to Arioso by contrasting talking and singing voices, alternating between, “This is my talking voice,” and “This is my singing voice.” The teacher leads, speaking and singing the sentences differently each time with students echoing (Feierabend, 2006, p. 66). Once the idea has been firmly established by spending a few minutes on it over the course of several class periods, students may begin performing their own Ariosos, singing the phrase, “This is my singing voice,” in different ways. It is best to have students volunteer and take turns. If a student feels pressured to create in front of other students when not ready, the process can backfire and cause that student to avoid creating rather than embrace it.

As students continue to practice singing Ariosos, the teacher can use a succession of prompts to encourage more sophisticated creations. Improvising a song on a neutral syllable, such as “ba” or “la” is a helpful second step (Feierabend, p. 247). As there are no words or specified rhythms to think about, this technique allows students to focus on exploring their singing voices.

At the next level, students can create melodies for a familiar nursery rhyme, such as “Humpty Dumpty” or “Jack and Jill” (Feirabend, p. 67). This technique is more complex than neutral syllables, as the lyrics dictate the rhythm of the Arioso. However, using familiar lyrics
still allows the singer to focus primarily on melodic creation. To practice, the teacher should model for the students first, and then all students can try singing their own melodies for the same rhyme simultaneously. The resulting sound is organized chaos but gives students a chance to experiment with their voices in a low-pressure situation. Afterward, students who feel comfortable may volunteer to take turns singing phrases as solos.

At the final level, students create Ariosos using their own lyrics, with prompts such as, “Sing three things about your family” (Feierabend, p. 247); “Sing three things about your clothes” (Feierabend, p. 233); or even just, “Does anyone have a song to share?” Puppets are a useful tool for this exercise, as students who may not feel comfortable or inspired to sing themselves may be eager to have a chance to make the puppet sing. Puppets also can have conversations back and forth with each other in singing voices.

**The teacher’s role.** To have success with Arioso, a supportive environment is vital. The teacher should always demonstrate the Arioso technique before calling on volunteers to sing their own creations. When students share their Ariosos, the rest of the class should listen respectfully and applaud, either at the end of each Arioso or when all Ariosos have been performed. The teacher should acknowledge each melody in a positive way and emphasize that as long as the students are creating unique Ariosos, there is no wrong answer. Students who know that their ideas will be treated with respect will be more willing to take risks, allowing them to grow creatively.

**Benefits.** Arioso certainly is closer to improvisation than traditional composition, but it can be used as a starting point toward more formal composition. The practice of creating original melodies frequently and informally lays the foundation for more advanced creative work later on. Students will progress through their musical education with the knowledge that anyone
can create a melody. If composition based in musical thought does not occur until students are mature and educated enough to write it down, they may be led to believe that composing is a daunting or unrealistic task simply due to lack of exposure.

**Limitations.** As mentioned above, Arioso works well with younger students, but older students often feel more self-conscious about singing their ideas in front of others. This technique works most easily for temporary creations, as Ariosos are performed spontaneously. If the teacher’s goal is to use Arioso to create a formal, permanent composition, then recording technology can be very beneficial. For example, during the nursery rhyme exercise, students can create melodies for each phrase of a rhyme, repeating and refining them until they have a melody they enjoy and want to keep. Once that is accomplished, the students can record their melodies using an app on a smartphone, iPad, or other device to create a permanent copy.

**Group Collaboration Method**

If the teacher’s intent is to create compositions with a large group through collaboration, the process still can involve independent musical thinking on the students’ part. The technique outlined by music educator Ben Bolden (2007) uses full-class collaboration to create original songs with first, second, and third graders. Though this approach does require a significant amount of teacher guidance and influence, it still employs multiple techniques that utilize audiation.

**Composing lyrics.** Bolden’s process, having the goal of composing songs with lyrics, begins with the selection of a topic. It is wise to select a topic that all the students in the class will be familiar with so that everyone can contribute ideas. As one example, Bolden notes that his classes chose subjects that they were studying in their science classes at the time, such as animals and the water cycle. Once the topic has been selected, the class works together to create
lyrics about the topic in the form of a poem. First, the students brainstorm words associated with their topic, such as names of animals and their characteristic actions. Once the class has created a list, the students take time to think about those words and arrange them into short phrases, such as, “Dolphins swimming in the ocean” and “Lions hunt for food” (Bolden, p. 44). The class votes to select which phrases to use for their lyrics. In Bolden’s case, the students received guidance from their teacher to help select rhyming words and phrases that fit the rhythmic scheme of the previous lines.

**Composing a melody.** Once the class establishes its poem, the students use what is essentially the Arioso technique to create possible melodies. Everyone simultaneously sings the first line of words to themselves to “find a melody” (p. 44) and then shares their different ideas with the class. The teacher can have students share their ideas by singing them aloud, but they may have difficulty faithfully remembering their own ideas while listening to other students sing. In Bolden’s experience, many of the ideas sounded rather similar because of this issue. To aid their memories, students can outline their melodies using iconic notation on paper or individual whiteboards. While students share their ideas, the teacher can act as the scribe and write them down. Once all students have shared their melodies, the class votes for its favorites. As in Bolden’s case, students may have difficulty remembering multiple melodies in order to choose a favorite (p. 44). To remedy this, the teacher can notate the melodies on a whiteboard or visualizer using iconic notation to approximate the pitches and rhythms. If using this composition technique with older students, traditional notation would be appropriate as well. Once the first line’s melody is established, the class should practice singing it several times to become familiar with it. The class then repeats the Arioso process for each subsequent line of text.
The teacher’s role. The teacher serves the central role as scribe in the collaborative method, recording students’ ideas and the decisions the class makes. The teacher also facilitates decision-making by presenting options and leading the voting process. Throughout the project, Bolden maintained a significant influence over the outcome of his classes’ compositions, primarily for logistical reasons. He predetermined the general structure and length of the songs to keep them manageable, and he had their future use in mind. He wrote,

I kept the songs in the key of ‘C’ so that I (and the students) could play them on the Orff mallet instruments. I jotted down my perceptions of the ideas they sang to me . . . occasionally I guided them toward traditional (western) compositional structuring devices (p. 45).

Bolden also chose to create chord progressions for the songs on his own and then present them to his classes for approval, rather than attempting to incorporate class collaboration on that step. To collaborate on harmonizing the compositions with younger grades that are not yet familiar with the concept of chords and chord progressions, the teacher will need to present a limited number of chord options from which to choose. As a result, a certain amount of teacher influence will be inevitable. If the teacher has chordal instruments such as keyboards or guitars available and uses this method with more advanced classes, the students could experiment independently with harmonic possibilities and submit ideas for the full class to consider. Doing so, however, requires an advanced level of musicianship that not all students reach during elementary school.

Benefits. While his influence means that the finished songs were not purely the “Children’s Music” that Jon Deak set out to find in 1993, Bolden’s classes did use their audiation skills to compose. When creating lyrics, the students needed to audiate in order to choose words that would make sense rhythmically and syllabically. Using the Arioso method of vocal
improvisation to create melodies also involved musical thinking, especially when students listened to their classmates’ ideas while trying to retain musical ideas of their own. As the songs developed, the composers demonstrated that they still were engaged with the music by revising their work and modifying the text to fit the music when it seemed musically necessary (p. 44).

**Limitations.** Despite a teacher’s best intentions to draw upon everyone equally, some students will naturally contribute more than others to this style of composition. Some children may not feel comfortable volunteering original ideas in front of their classmates. Others may work better at a different pace than the majority of the class. However, working together to create something original can foster a sense of community among the students, as well as a feeling of real accomplishment when their song is complete and they are able to perform it together. The communal experience also may be a more comfortable introduction to composing for students who are not yet confident enough to share their ideas alone.

**VYC Classroom Adaptation**

Every elementary music classroom has a unique assortment of instruments and technology, different student/teacher ratios, and students with diverse strengths and weaknesses. In the same way that Very Young Composers has spread around the globe in a variety of permutations, the VYC classroom adaptation aims to allow teachers to make the most of what they have available. This method is based on a unit plan created by music educator Pam Rezach for her 7th and 8th grade general music classes at Roberts Middle School in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, for the purpose of bringing VYC’s audiation-based approach to composing into her classroom (personal communication, 2011). The basic steps of the composition project generally follow the National Standards: *Imagine, Plan/Make, Evaluate/Refine, Present.*

**Imagine.** When beginning this unit, it is important to stress that composing by thinking
the music is the primary goal. To that end, each student will need an instrument of some type. As stated earlier, recorders and mallet instruments work well for melodic compositions. The students will have time to improvise and create sounds on their instruments without any writing utensils available at first. Their goal during the first lesson of the unit is to have students improvise on their instruments to create short motives or phrases that they each enjoy. Once they have ideas they like, they must be able to repeat them accurately for their teacher three times in a row. This proves that they have their ideas firmly in their minds and are engaging their musical intelligence through audiation (Rezach, personal communication, 2011).

The teacher should model this process for the class before they begin and emphasize the value of trying out many different ideas before settling on one. Without this example, some students may choose to settle for the first idea they play without considering any others they might like better, which does not engage the decision-making aspect of composing. Additionally, composers revise their work as they go, so it is important to remind the students that they can and should make changes to their compositions when they think it will improve them. It is also important to emphasize that they should be concerned with creating music that they themselves enjoy rather than music they think their teacher will like.

**Plan and Make.** Once the students have created their initial phrases and repeated them accurately for the teacher three times, they may begin to write them down on paper so that they are able to remember them in the future as they add more material. Some students may find this step unnecessary, but others will have difficulty remembering their progress from class to class without writing it down. This is especially true if the class does not meet on a daily basis.

One way to approach the notation aspect is to write down note names using capital letters. Since classroom mallet instruments are labeled with note names and recorder fingerings
are associated with letter names as they are learned, this process is easy to do. Notating the rhythm generally is a much more difficult process for students. Many students struggle with accurately determining the subdivision of their rhythms without assistance; their compositions may include rhythms more complex than they know how to read or write. Unless the teacher’s goal is to practice rhythmic dictation, notating the rhythm is not strictly necessary. Students who engage in musical thought and repeat their ideas as they compose should be familiar enough with their own pieces to remember the rhythms. They may choose, sometimes unconsciously, to write their note names in groupings that show the rhythms of the pieces, e.g., two letters written close together for two eighth notes, letters written farther apart or separated with a line for longer values, such as half notes (see Appendix B). Beyond letter names, students also may choose to document their ideas with less traditional methods, including drawings, iconic notation, or recordings.

*Evaluate and Refine.* Once the process of active composing has gotten a solid start, the teacher needs to introduce the parameters of the final composition. Typical requirements may include a minimum length or time limit, a particular form, and how the composition will be documented. The teacher also needs to make it clear that the students must be able to perform their own compositions as written. Without explicitly stating this, some students may disengage from audiation and end up writing down compositions they cannot remember accurately or reproduce reliably. Knowing well ahead of time that they will be performing their completed pieces helps avoid this problem. Once students know all the requirements for their final compositions, they are able to progress through the process of composing more material, evaluating what they have, making changes as necessary, and finalizing their compositions.

*Compositional strategies.* During the composing process, some students may begin to
feel frustrated and unsure of what to add to their pieces after the initial phrase or two. A video lesson entitled “Teaching Composition” from Classical MPR (Minnesota Public Radio) in the Classroom explores a list of strategies that students can use when creating new material. Along with musical examples for each, these strategies can be a helpful resource for students who feel unsure of their own ideas. The strategies include straight line motion, back and forth, opposites, copy/pattern, sequence, and repeated notes (Martino, 2013).

When sharing these strategies in the MPR lesson, teacher Chris Martino has his students identify and experience each of them through different modalities, including listening, moving, reading, singing, playing instruments, improvising/creating, notating, and performing (Martino, 2013). This approach is very thorough and gives students with diverse learning styles many ways to experience the information; however, the process can be time consuming. Depending upon the time constraints of the composition project, the teacher may choose to present the different strategies by demonstrating examples of each in a more condensed form, excluding some modalities. The primary objective is to provide the students with creative strategies they can refer to when they are in need of inspiration.

Present. The final step, performing the composition, is important for both the composer and the teacher. The composers gain a sense of completion in sharing their finished pieces. Music is a sonic medium, so without performance, the compositions are incomplete. For the teacher, having students play their own compositions can be a useful tool for assessing their instrument skills. More importantly, the performance clearly demonstrates whether the students have a strong memory and understanding of their own compositions. If they are able to play their pieces smoothly and musically with a consistent steady beat and intelligible rhythm, it suggests that they have engaged in audiation throughout the composition process. Many
hesitations, mistakes, and inconsistencies suggest that the student is only reading the notation, not audiating the music. As Gordon explains, “Unless one can audiate what is seen in notation before he produces sound on an instrument as dictated by the notation, what he is reading will have only theoretical meaning for him [rather than musical meaning],” (1989, p. 76).

There are many options for presenting the completed compositions. The performance can be anything from a small, informal group presentation during class to a formal concert for families and the community. Compositions often are deeply personal to the students who wrote them, and children will react differently to the idea of sharing their creations with others. Some students will take great pride in their pieces and be eager to perform them for a large audience. Others will be terrified by the idea of playing in front of other people and sharing their work. A hybrid approach that offers students alternatives can help alleviate some of this anxiety. For instance, the teacher may offer students the choice between performing their compositions for the entire class or for a small group. If the teacher wants to exhibit some compositions at a larger concert, he or she can ask for volunteers. These choices help provide the most positive experience possible for the most students while still fulfilling the requirements of the Present standard.

No matter what the performance setting is, it is vital to establish clear expectations for a respectful environment. The teacher must emphasize that all compositions are unique and worthy of appreciation for the hard work and creativity that went into their formation. Audience members must provide complete attention for the performer, silence during the performance, and applause when the piece is over.

In addition to the performance of the final composition, part of the presentation is the final documented form, whether it be traditional notation, iconic notation, or a recorded
performance. The teacher should provide students with a checklist of expectations for their completed compositions so they can be sure they are meeting all the requirements for the project (see Appendix C). The checklist also serves as a useful tool for the teacher in assessing the finished pieces.

**Structure.** The composing process can be chaotic if not carefully managed. Elementary music classrooms usually consist of one room with one teacher, and the students cannot be split up due to supervision requirements. Unless multiple teachers and multiple rooms are available, the teacher may have 30 students working on instruments in the same classroom. The sound can be overwhelming without certain restrictions. If the teacher is able to have students compose on keyboards while wearing headphones, the problem is avoided. If composing on acoustic instruments, students must have consideration for others and be sure they are playing only as loudly as necessary. Students can spread out around the room, and the teacher should have noise-canceling headphones available for those with sound sensitivity or other special needs that may make the sound overwhelming for them. In addition, students who work with an educational assistant may be able to work in the hallway outside the classroom to reduce stress further.

Another strategy for controlling the volume is to divide students into two or more groups and have them take turns playing aloud rather than all at once. While a group is waiting its turn, the students write down their ideas or practice their compositions silently by using the stick ends of their mallets on keyboard percussion or practicing their fingerings on recorder. The noise level will decrease dramatically throughout the process as students progress from improvising and composing to notating their pieces, but at the beginning it will require some strategic planning to maintain order.
The teacher’s role. Teacher support for students throughout this process is crucial for success. During the initial phase of composing, the teacher circulates throughout the classroom, checking on students individually to help keep them on task, answer questions, and give support and encouragement as needed. Some students will be very comfortable improvising and creating new ideas, while others will find it to be a more difficult process. Students who struggle often say things like, “I don’t know what to play,” or, “I can’t think of anything,” because they lack confidence in their ideas. Again, it is vital to emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer. Their ideas are valid. They can play literally anything they want. Yet, while it is important for students to like their own compositions, at a certain point it sometimes is more beneficial to select an idea and move on, even if they are not sure about it. This will help regain momentum, and the students can go back and make changes later if they so choose.

While the teacher may support students by giving strategic suggestions and encouragement, it is important that he or she not make value judgments about the compositions or give specific musical suggestions. In order to allow the students to compose authentically, it is important that only they generate material, decide whether to keep an idea, or determine when the composition is finished. When asked, “Is this good?” teachers can respond with questions of their own, such as, “Does it sound complete to you?”, “Do you think it needs anything else?”, and “Do you like the way it sounds?” Some students may struggle with making independent decisions, but with consistent encouragement and support from the teacher, over time they should become more comfortable taking ownership of the composing process.

Benefits. The VYC Classroom Adaptation is an excellent way to provide students with the proper balance of freedom and structure necessary to develop and share their musical ideas. The method is flexible enough to be adapted to fit a wide variety of classroom resources and
IMAGINATION BEFORE NOTATION

circumstances, and it encourages independent composition through exploration and decision-making. Students who have not felt engaged in music lessons previously may discover a new interest when they are able to be in control of the music they are making.

**Limitations.** Despite these benefits, this method can be a challenge to implement. Large class sizes and limited teacher availability can draw out the time frame of the process, as it is important for the teacher to check on every student at each step to make sure they are on the right track. The volume of a classroom full of instruments playing different pieces at the same time also presents difficulties. In addition, composers work at different paces, which can result in some students finishing their compositions several class periods early, while others struggle to finish in time. The teacher’s organizational efforts can help keep students on track, and when planning, the teacher can tailor the activity to fit the available time period and student ability level.

**Chapter 6: Conclusions**

Although leading audiation-based composition may initially seem daunting to the teacher lacking experience in the process, the benefits for the students can be substantial. Students develop their musical intelligence through audiation and the higher-order thinking skill *Create*. As demonstrated in the Very Young Composers program, autonomous decision-making leads to development of self-confidence and the ability of student composers to express themselves through music. The Arioso method fosters the natural tendency of young children to create spontaneous music and builds a foundation for more complex composition as they mature. The Group Collaboration method of composition further utilizes Arioso and audiation with teacher guidance to develop musical decision-making skills. It also produces a concrete final song that students can perform themselves. The VYC Classroom Adaptation expands upon the early
improvisation skills and decision-making practiced in the other two approaches, while giving students more autonomy in their compositions.

These three methods are by no means the only ways of utilizing audiation in composition, but they provide a strong foundation for teachers to approach the subject in their own classrooms. All students are capable of creating original music. All teachers are capable of providing the necessary structure and support to facilitate audiation-based composition in their classrooms. No matter the individual circumstances, if a teacher pairs imagination and exploration with student-led decision-making, authentic Children’s Music will follow.
References


Appendix A

Excerpt of Final Composition from Very Young Composers of Central Wisconsin,
Composed by Fifth Grader Tate Bruckhart (2016)

This score is from VYC Phase Two, which follows the standard month-long program, Phase One. In Phase Two, students continue to meet individually with their Teaching Artists to re-orchestrate their original compositions for full band or orchestra, rather than the chamber ensemble instrumentation available during Phase One. The Stevens Point Area Senior High Band and Orchestra perform the newly orchestrated pieces at their spring concerts.
Appendix B

Student Work Examples of VYC Classroom Adaptation

Appendix B1: Recorder Composition by Fifth Grade Student Olivia Yang (2014)
Appendix B2: Xylophone Composition by Sixth Grade Student Nevyn Klessig (2017)
NAME: ____________________________  HOMEROOM: _______

Mallet Instrument Composition
Final Copy Checklist

____ My composition is at least 30 seconds long.
____ My composition is in ABA form.
____ I am able to play my composition smoothly without hesitations.
____ Everything I wrote and drew was done as neatly as possible.
____ My final copy has a title written neatly on the title line.
____ I neatly wrote my first and last name on the “composer” line.
____ I drew a treble clef at the beginning of each line of staff that I used.
____ My note heads are completely filled in.
____ My letter names are neatly written in CAPITAL LETTERS underneath each note.
____ My letter names and note names match each other.
____ My letter names and notes are lined up with each other.
____ I drew a double barline after the last note of my piece.
____ I found the beat to my piece to figure out the tempo (Largo, Moderato, or Allegro) and I wrote the tempo on the tempo line.
____ I drew an illustration in the blank space on the bottom of the page that goes with the title of my piece.
____ My illustration fills the empty space on the bottom of the page.
____ My illustration is colored in with colored pencil.
Appendix D
Template for Final Copy of VYC Classroom Adaptation Composition

Tempo _______________________
Composer _______________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

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___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

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Appendix E
Resources for Educators

Gordon Institute for Musical Learning: Audiation
http://giml.org/mlt/audiation/

National Standards for Music Education

Very Young Composers, New York
https://nyphil.org/education/learning-communities/very-young-composers

Very Young Composers of Central Wisconsin
http://www.uwsp.edu/conted/ConfWrkShp/Pages/VYC/default.aspx