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4. M.A.S.T.E.R.ING THE ART OF MUSIC INTEGRATION

INTRODUCTION

Integrating musical composition and performance into core classroom study is essential to maximize student learning and develop both musical and literary talent. With little or no musical training, teachers and students can use music to respond to and analyze texts; to think critically about specific components of stories, poems, or content area informational texts; and to create original, powerful responses to classroom content. While several chapters in this volume have demonstrate how teachers can pair literary texts with music or access historical and cultural movements through contemporary popular songs, this chapter focuses on a method for engaging students in the process of creating original music and words to respond to texts.

Teachers who incorporate music in their classrooms will be joining a centuries-old tradition (Armstrong, 1999). Students who read *The Odyssey* today may not know the epic poem was originally told with the accompaniment of the lyre (Storr, 1992). The mathematician Pythagoras was known to employ musical strings to demonstrate the connection between the conceptual world of mathematics and the physical world. The medieval scholar Peter Abelard, a teacher of logic, was known to sing secular songs with his students (Waddell, 1934). The ideal of the integrated liberal arts is evident in the shared vocabulary applicable not only to music, but also to art and literature. Words like composition, texture, phrasing, unity, proportion, and form are shared across these disciplines. Ironically, although music gained a firm footing in the general curriculum in the United States around the turn of the 20th century (Brubacher, 1947), its use in the general curriculum as a tool for learning is limited (Duggan, 2003a).

Teacher-scholars have demonstrated how music can be used in elementary grades to represent characters in children's books (Gilles, Andre, Dye, & Pfannestiel, 1998; Kersten, 1996), build phonemic awareness (Towell, 2000), and to acquire new language (Livo, 1975). At the secondary level, however, involvement in music tapers, and content area teachers, sequestered from each other by classroom walls and the demands of subject curriculum, find few occasions to sing with their students or to involve students in original music production in response to their core learning.

Researchers have noted that studying music aids in the total development of the brain (Jensen, 1998; Sousa, 2001). According to Jensen (1998), music is useful as a tool for learning due to its ability to stimulate students, its role as a carrier of

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words, and its function as a primer for neural pathways. While Sousa (2001) showed the advantages that listening to music provides in the learning of new material, he claimed that creating music is even more beneficial because it increases spatial-temporal reasoning. Connecting learning in music with learning in language helps students to recognize the deep connection between the arts, and it illuminates an integrated view of how we can approach interpretation (Goering & Strayhorn, 2016).

M.A.S.T.E.R. FRAMEWORK

Based on work I have done with students of all ages and teachers integrating music into their English classes, I developed a framework to aid teachers in helping students think about how they can craft musical responses to literature and other materials from the classroom. The M.A.S.T.E.R. framework described here provides teachers with specific prompts for students. The letters stand for the following musical manifestations:

M – Mnemonics
A – Adaptations
S – Settings
T – Themes
E – Explorations/Extensions
R – Recital

Below are descriptions of each strategy with example classroom texts and ideas for how to make the strategies work in English language arts classrooms.

M = MNEMONICS

Using musical mnemonics to remember lists of words or concepts has been a staple of early instruction for many years. Think of "The Alphabet Song." No one questions its value in helping children to memorize letters, but the basic nursery rhyme melody, once used in variations by Mozart, can serve equally well for memorization of poetic devices. Here is an example:

Verse 1:

Metaphor and simile
Euphony, cacophony,
Alliteration, assonance,
Meter, rhyme, and consonance
These are terms you're going to see,
Come and learn some more with me

Verse 2:

Paradox, synecdoche
Irony, metonymy,

Antithesis, hyperbole,
Pun and Onomatopoeia, "Whee!"
Personification, Allusion, too,
These are terms useful to you.

Another way to use music mnemonics is to pull character names, settings, and other important story elements and make a list, then construct a song that uses the list as its text. As an example, many teachers use Sandra Cisneros' enduring book, *The House on Mango Street* (1989) in their classrooms. In the vignette, "My Name" (http://theliterarylink.com/mangostreet.html), the narrator, a young girl named Esperanza, reflects on her feelings about her name. If students want to jog their memories of key terms from that vignette, perhaps to prepare for a quiz, they can generate a list such as the following: hope, sadness, Esperanza, great-grandmother, great-grandfather, sack, window, Magdalena, Nenny, Lisandra, Maritza, Zeze the X. Students can use a tune already familiar to them or create their own, even a simple melody of two notes could be used.

Using music to memorize terms can work in any content area, addressing key concepts and helping unclog students' minds prior to assessments. Historical events, math functions, steps in a process to perform a physical feat in gym class all can be remembered through simple melody. Such activities might be especially helpful when students are reviewing in any class for a test that will require them to recall and define a list of terms or recall principles.

A= ADAPTATIONS

To create an adaptation of a text means essentially to retell the story or, in the case of an informational or argumentative text, to represent the main ideas, remaining faithful to the themes of the original text but creating original language and music to tell it. Adaptations may involve changing settings, adjusting or excerpting plot elements, or even changing names of characters. Great stories have been adapted to song by opera composers and popular musicians for centuries, and your students can produce their own musical adaptations of the stories and the informational texts they read—if you give them the opportunity.

You may need to teach basic song structure, such as 1-4-5 chord progressions in folk or blues music, or use your musically-inclined students to lead groups in developing melody, but the benefit is in the verses they compose to retell the story (or concept, or argument) and the mood the music helps to create. Doing so will compel students to think deeply about the text they are adapting, to pay attention to key details they want to include in the adaptation, and to justify their choices of a specific musical mood and structure.

Students may be inclined here to adapt the original text to an already-familiar tune, and that is fine, though my own preference is that they compose original music in order to activate more of the brain and to take true ownership of the finished product.

As an example, over the past several years, I have adapted many of Shakespeare's tragedies to song (Duggan, 2003b, 2008). Here is a sample of lyrics with chords, time signatures, and tempos:

From "Macbeth's Down Home on the Heath Bloody Villain Country Blues" (Duggan, 2003b)

Key of D, 4/4 time, up tempo,

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D                                 G
Double, double, toil and trouble, fire burn and cauldron bubble
D                                 A                 D        A        D
Come here running on the double, listen to the tragedy of Macbeth
D                                 G
A long, long time ago in Scotland lived a king, his name was Duncan
D                                 A        D        A        D
He survived a bloody rebellion with the help of brave Macbeth
D                                          G
Duncan gave Macbeth great honors, land and title from the losers
D                                                   A        D
But Macbeth first heard that news from witches on the heath …
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The song lyrics students write may directly reference the original text or refer only obliquely to the original, as long as the roots of the original are somehow visible in the derivative work. Students may engage any kind of musical accompaniment, from guitar or piano to electronic keyboard apps, such as GarageBand™, or use no instruments at all, singing their melody a cappella. Prompts that may be effective in starting students on the road to musical adaptation might be, "What if this story were told today in a song? What would it sound like, and what words would be needed to tell it?"

The process of adaptation works well with long works that students are reading in English class, but would work equally well with short stories, poems, or vignettes. Paul Simon's (1966) retelling of E. A. Robinson's "Richard Cory" (1905) comes to mind. Using the example of the vignette "My Name" from Cisneros again, we can explore how students might work in small groups to retell the story of Esperanza's great-grandmother by creating a song. Perhaps students can focus on how the great-grandmother had refused to marry, how the great-grandfather abducted her, and how she sat by the window. Perhaps a good chorus for the story-song students create would use a connecting line like, "I would've liked to have known her" (p. 11), with the line repeating to make the connection that Esperanza makes in the story between their situations. Your students will have different ideas of how to approach the adaptation of this excerpt, which will, by necessity, involve them in analytical discussion with their peers. The peer conversations that take place in the creative process help students cite evidence from texts, determine main ideas and key details,

and examine different genre representations of a work—all activities aligned to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Students might also take risks with the adaptation, making changes in the setting or in the outcome of the story, but they will be in a good position to justify those changes based on the original text.

Having students collaborate in small groups in this process is important because different students will bring different ideas, abilities, and perspectives to the work that will inform the adaptation. Some students think outside the box, and some think well inside the box. Both perspectives are valuable. Certainly, some students will gravitate toward doing musical adaptations more than others, and having an adaptation assignment may be the first opportunity for musically-inclined students to recognize the potential value of their musical acumen in a content area classroom. Thinking of a problem through more than one lens, in this case the lens of a musical composer, allows us to see the problem in a novel way and come to a deeper understanding of it.

The musical adaptations students produce will inhabit different musical genres and song structures, such as hip-hop, folk, country, or rock. Students can tie musical elements to story elements, such as having a bridge or a key change at the turning point in the story. As a companion assignment, you may have the students write short explanations of their composing process and choices, referencing the original text as evidence to justify the choices they made, both for what to include and what not to include.

S = SETTINGS

Setting texts directly to music is one of the easiest and most rewarding ways to incorporate music into the classroom. Unlike the adaptation activity, which takes liberties with the language, the setting, and perhaps even the outcomes of the original text, when students do a musical setting, they do not change the words of the original text. Keeping the language the same allows students to focus on developing an appropriate musical "bed" for the text, and compels them to think about tone in a way they perhaps have not done before. The focus of this activity is primarily on the musical elements that are used to illuminate the text, as students simply create a way to sing and/or accompany the singing/reading of the original text with music. This is not to say students cannot manipulate the text at all. They can play with the order or the repetition of specific parts of the text to provide emphasis or to show relationship, but the words of the original are not changed. Students do not have to use the entire text of their source material, either. Music can also be produced as background to a reading of the text, as in a readers' theatre activity.

Sonnets or other short poems work well. Shakespeare's sonnets may be sung with several types of music. Imagine students setting the following text to music:

Sonnet 18, William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Requiring students to set this piece to music allows a teacher to teach sonnet form in a way that is relevant to what the students are asked to produce. Students will note that each quatrain is a statement, and could thus be cast as a verse. After two quatrains, or verses, the third quatrain marks a shift in emphasis and tone, from the unflattering descriptions of changeable summer weather to the positive portrayal of the poet's love. The beginning of the third quatrain may require a shift to a bridge or variation in the melody to mark the shift in tone. They may also take the liberty of repeating the last couplet in the song. Setting text to music requires the student composer to read and reread the text to make musical sense of it. The attention to specific lines in order to fit them into a musical structure will engender comprehension, and listening to the finished products will allow students to compare different musical versions of the text.

Returning to the Cisneros piece, students can pull specific lines from the story "My Name" and set them to music. The first lines of the vignette serve well to make a musical setting, not only because they reference the father's shaving song, but because they include a succession of short, beautiful clauses and phrases that might fit with any simple melody:

> In English my names means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing. (p. 10)

If we take those phrases and set them up as individual lines, making a musical setting will appear more accessible:

My name,
It means sadness

It means waiting
It is like the number nine
A muddy color

Choices of melody can create space for conversations about tone that lead students to analyze why the speaker, Esperanza, characterizes her own name as sad, hesitant, and muddy. In this case the creative act of setting text to music forces students to consider sonic characteristics of the author's word choices. Teachers who are concerned that integrating music constitutes a distraction or an avoidance of more legitimate, analytical work will, instead, have a vehicle for leading students organically to that analytical work. Musical response relates to the interaction between reader and text that Rosenblatt (1976) claimed made the *poem* and which she asserted provides a valid incubation point for analysis.

Another advantage of focused work on musical settings is that the exact language of the original text is preserved for students, so hearing the song becomes a form of rereading for the listener. Certainly for the composer, and potentially for the listener, this rereading is liable to provoke a referential reexamination of the surrounding text, even those lines that do not lend themselves well to musical setting. Students can consider why some prose is naturally musical and some requires a straight or non-musical reading. Perhaps students will conclude that no text defies the possibility of musical interpretation.

T = THEMES

Remember "Peter and The Wolf?" In that work, Sergei Prokofiev (1936) created unique musical signatures for each character, using different instruments in the orchestra.[1] Students who play (or who would like to play) musical instruments can compose mono- or multi-tonal themes (leitmotifs) for individual characters in stories, or to represent different events or actions. Teachers may have students develop these themes using their own musical instruments or using readily available music software. There are a number of great piano apps for the iPad, such as Piano!™, that allow anyone to plunk out a theme tied to a character or a situation in a text. Students can then write "artist statements" explaining why they made the various musical choices they made and how those choices reflect their understanding of the original text. Many online resources offer advice for writing effective artist statements. Reader's Theater readings with the theme music can be very powerful.

Students working together can create themes to serve as background music for different scenes in a story, or even overtures to introduce works. I once worked with a group of 4th–6th grade students in a summer program to produce an abridged version of *Hamlet* that included scenes acted out, backdrop painting, and musical interludes before and after scenes. Even students who were beginners on their instruments participated. The performance had a powerful effect on the parents and grandparents in attendance, and it helped the students to see they can develop interpretations of Shakespeare's text that are auditory, visual, and physical.

English Language Arts teachers who are directed by standards such as Common Core Anchor Literacy Standard #7 to “Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) have ample mandate to engage students in musical interpretations of text. Returning again to our example of the Cisneros vignette “My Name,” students can compose musical themes for Esperanza or for her great-grandmother. They can compose themes for the great-grandfather, the sister Magdalena, or for the imagined heroine, Zeze the X. Perhaps students would like to compose background music for a reading of the entire vignette. In that case, paragraph breaks provide logical transition points in the music they create, and teachers can encourage students to explain (again, through artist statements) why they made the choices they made. Think of a musical setting for the following section of the story:

> At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister’s name-Magdalena—which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza. (p. 11)

Notice the descriptions of how Esperanza’s name is spoken at school: “as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the mouth.” Perhaps cymbals or some cacophonous or dissonant instrument could portray that phrase. Then is Spanish, her name is “a softer something, like silver,” calling for euphonious melody and instrumentation, perhaps a strumming Spanish guitar or even synthesized strings. Depending upon the grade level of the students, teachers can expect them to articulate rationales for the musical choices they make. If different students musically interpret the same passages, a class can compare the choices made in making music and discuss how those choices affect their perception of the story.

Incorporating musical themes in the classroom in response to text can change the complexion of every activity. Remember that we have two parallel and equally important tasks as teachers: to address the skills and knowledge of our content, and to develop the talents of our students, which is important for identity formation and self-efficacy.

E = EXPLORATIONS/EXTENSIONS

Consider a character in a story at a critical moment. In a musical stage adaptation of a literary text, typically those moments are translated into songs that step outside of the storytelling to illuminate inner conflict or desire, such as when Dorothy, in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, steps away from the Kansas farmhouse and sings “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” (Arlen & Yarburg, 1939). Children today are familiar with the impact and role songs play in illuminating characters’ thoughts and feelings, as any child who has seen the Disney film *Frozen* can attest. English

teachers often ask students to journal on characters' emotions or to create diary entries from a character's perspective. Why not write a song to illuminate a moment or scene in a narrative, as a potentially more powerful evocation of that perspective?

Using the example of Dorothy, we can imagine how the songwriters, Harold Arlen and E. Y. Yarburg, drew inspiration from L. Frank Baum's original text (Hearn, 1983):

> When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else. (p. 8)

What girl wouldn't want to be "somewhere over the rainbow" if she were stuck in such a landscape? The song written for Dorothy to sing in this situation does not further the action of the story, nor does it recount previous action. It simply illuminates a state of mind. When the writers and producers of the movie were developing their adaptation of the Baum text, something in that moment just before the storm inspired the song. Now it is difficult to imagine the movie without the song, which so succinctly and powerfully illuminates Dorothy's desire to see a world different from the drab, lonely place she calls home. Such a moment exemplifies the function of musical exploration in the classroom. Granted, the movie version of Baum's tale takes many liberties with the original, as movies often do, but the point is that musical explorations bring students deeper into the original text.

This method of choosing a moment in a narrative text and turning it into song is at the heart of most musicals: the couple of lovers who break into song when they at last find themselves together; the disenfranchised, resentful would-be villain who sees an opportunity for revenge; the nun wishing to advise a novitiate in a convent who has fallen in love with her employer. Any story students are reading will present moments when a teacher in class discussion might pose the question, "What is (s)he thinking at this moment? What is his/her internal monologue?" Such a question can be the starting point for a musical exploration.

Using the Cisneros vignette from *The House on Mango Street*, think about how your students might harness, through song, Esperanza's sadness about her name, her wonder at the fate of her great-grandmother, or her desire for an exciting, mysterious moniker. Here is an example of lyrics that might result from such an exploration:

> Zeze the X is my name
> I am strong, but I'm loved just the same
> Not like "Magdelena" or "Nene" at all,
> Not like my great-grandmother's face on the wall,

A raider, a robber, a sweet mystery,
A flash in the imagination, that's me
Zeze, Zeze the X.

Character thoughts and feelings are not the only aspect of stories that can lend themselves to musical interpretation through exploration. A song can be written that comments upon the theme of a story. External events germane to the setting of the story can be represented through song, as can endings of stories. Teachers often have students write an extension of a story or a "next chapter" to a book they have read. Why not write a song, perhaps sung by someone in the story, looking ahead to the world brought on by the changes that occurred during the course of the story?

R = RECITAL

This last letter in the M.A.S.T.E.R. acronym reminds us that composing music in the classroom demands performance, even though a formal performance may not be necessary for achieving our objectives. When students construct musical mnemonic devices (M) to remember key terms, for example, it is not necessary that the students perform their songs for the entire class or for an outside audience, though that is an option. It may be they only use the songs to help themselves and their classmates remember, and nothing more. On the other hand, students enjoy hearing what their fellow students have created, and some mnemonic device songs with lists of terms can be very amusing to hear.

Musical adaptations (A), settings (S), and explorations (E) require some form of recital in the classroom, especially as such adaptations, settings, and explorations would typically be composed *following* the initial reading and study of a text. In these cases, we must crack open a space in our instructional unit to allow students to perform their compositions. Sharing the fruits of our students' musical labor is essential to building community. Teachers may follow the performances with reflective or critical conversations about how music communicates story or emotion and how the creative and analytical mind work together to produce artistic responses to learning. Technology allows us to record performance and to incorporate other modalities, such as animation, video, and sound editing to make performance permanent.

For students constructing musical themes (T), sharing the musical signatures they create in a less formal fashion than class recital would make sense, perhaps even as part of a discussion of text, or while they are working on the themes. Then, once the themes are completed, in-class readings with the music providing a background bed for the reading can be very exciting.

Many students are musically inclined and/or talented, but don't respond well to the spotlight. As you bring recital into your class process, try to create a relaxed atmosphere that treats the musical interpretations as part of the conversation that your class has in the course of studying the text, chapter, or unit. We are developing not

only reading and writing skills, but also speaking and listening skills, both of which are enhanced by frequent opportunities to be performers and audience members.

The M.A.S.T.E.R. framework provides a number of tools for teachers interested in bringing music into their classrooms to engage students as songwriters, composers, and performers. The results can transform a classroom into a laboratory for thinking about text in a variety of ways. The same can be said for combining music with visual art and media. The results will be something that students can carry with them out of the classroom and may even lead certain students to consider taking up a musical instrument or to see themselves as creative artists. At the very least, using the framework can foster the development of musical ability and the belief that musical composition is an accessible process for all students.

NOTE

[1] For a full discussion of the musical signatures in "Peter and the Wolf" see Phil Tulga's web page at http://www.philtulga.com/Peter.html

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LESSON PLAN USING "MY NAME" FROM *THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET* (CISNEROS, 1989)

Using Adaptation and Exploration from the M.A.S.T.E.R. Framework
Instructional Goal

1. Students will be able to collaborate to compose original melodies and lyrics to retell and interpret a story.
2. Students will be able to collaborate to compose songs to describe a character's thoughts and feelings.
3. Students will be able to explain their process of composing and how their understanding of the story affected their musical choices.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5
Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Teacher Input

Provide musical instruments, iPads, or computers with GarageBand, Piano, or a similar program with keyboard capabilities.

Introductory Hook

Ask students to write for 3–5 minutes in response to the following prompt:
Where do songs originate? How do songwriters use the world around them, historical events, and stories to create songs?

Discuss student ideas before introducing the day's main activity.

Activity 1

Have students read the poem “Richard Cory” by E. A. Robinson, then listen to Paul Simon’s song of the same name. Discuss the meaning of the term “adaptation.” Ask students how the musical elements of the song affect or contribute to their understanding of the poem.

Activity 2

Have students read the vignette, “My Name” from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. Read aloud the vignette, then discuss the story of Esperanza’s great-grandmother. Also discuss Esperanza’s ambivalent feelings about her own name.

Activity 3

Divide the class into groups of 2–3 students. Explain to them that they are going to work together to make an original song. Give them a choice of doing either an *adaptation* of the great-grandmother’s story or an *exploration* of Esperanza’s feelings about her name. Provide students the opportunities to use musical instruments or a computer keyboard program, such as Piano!™. Give students time to develop their musical responses.

Activity 4

Students will perform their songs for their classmates.

Activity 5

Class will discuss the musical choices made by their classmates and relate those choices to their understanding of the vignette.

Activity 6

Students will write short compositions explaining their musical choices and relating those choices to their understanding of the vignette.