

The Technology Institute for Music Educators

In my humble opinion...



Make TI:ME in your Classroom

by Bob Tozier

It almost goes without saying that musical concepts should be the foundation and starting point of music classes. Once the concepts that are to be covered have been determined, then and only then should the appropriate software and other technological tools be chosen to support musical learning. Music technology is a means to an end, with the goal being to further the students' music education. TI:ME is in the process of creating lesson plans that will help teachers combine musical concepts and technology in their classrooms, lesson plans that are designed to emphasize the importance of music while recognizing and utilizing the technology available.

In order to continue to interest students in music, teachers need to meet them on their own ground. This is a technological, information-based society. Research suggests that current students see and process things more quickly than the students of twenty years ago. These students are exposed to "information bytes;" they like and understand flashy presentations that use a medium with which they are familiar and are excited by teaching tools that use multiple senses. These students are comfortable in front of a computer screen and tend to learn technology quickly. Music technology has the advantage of providing instant feedback and allowing students with varying levels of ability to succeed. The students are able to see and hear their work immediately. They are able to compose for different ensembles and see how all of the pieces work together. However, their work may often be substandard because the lessons may have focused on the technology but have failed to teach the musical concepts that

would utilize the technology to the fullest extent.

An advantage to focusing on musical concepts first is that it is easier to remember how the technology functions if you understand the precepts that motivated its creation. Students (and teachers as well) remember how to use the software if they comprehend the reason behind its use. The programs are complex; to take advantage of everything that they offer, one must have background knowledge of the musical concepts. By first knowing the musical aspect, it is easier to learn the programs and to remember how they function.

Music software programs take time and effort to learn, but once they are learned they are well worth the effort. I use several programs as a base for my web-based AP Music, Music Theory 1-4, Songwriting, and Electronic Music classes (examples of this can be seen at www.tozier.net). I have even expanded my site to include online assessment and ear training. I use a computer notation program to enhance composition techniques and to reinforce note-reading skills. A program like Reason, which is a software based studio in a box, is used when I am teaching form and rhythm., and basic concepts become interesting and fun. The students are able to build patterns and have them change based on learned forms. Students and parents both enjoy the results from MIDI sequencing software; students write original compositions and record themselves; they are able to use their own instruments to record their work and then create a CD. Students often use this program to record audition tapes, enabling them to see practical uses for the skills that they are learning.

Digital audio and looping software programs are used to practice sight singing; the students record themselves singing, then I record the files to a CD and listen to them when my schedule allows. I do not have to spend class time listening to individual students and I am also able to test the students more often because the process is easy and quick. All of these musical skills and concepts can be taught in an interactive manner when using technology. The students are able to see their work immediately and they learn to self-correct more than they are able to do with traditional class plans. Students of different levels are able to practice as much or as little as

they need whenever they need to do it. Even when the students are absent, they are able to keep up with the classes. The music is the goal and the primary focus of my classes; it is the basis for everything that I do and I use the technology to support that goal.

The ultimate purpose of the lesson plans on the TI:ME website is to encourage all teachers to integrate some technology into their music education courses in ways that enhance their programs, interest more students, and to keep pace with our ever-changing technological society. No matter your ability, level, or knowledge of computers and programs, there is probably a plan that you can use. TI:ME continues to update, revise, and augment the plans in an attempt to encourage more teachers to use them and all of the plans document which MENC National Standards in the Arts are being met.

If you have questions or comments about this article, you can contact me at bob@tozier.net or you can post a message in the TI:ME discussion group.

Bob Tozier received his Bachelor's Degree from Duquesne University in 1992. In 2000, he received a Master of Music Education from Duquesne University. Bob has taught band from 4th grade through 12th grade, Music Theory levels 1 through 4, Electronic and Advanced Electronic Music, and Songwriting. He currently teaches Multimedia Arts and A.P. Music, which are Internet-based classes.

Currently, he is the webmaster for the North Allegheny School District's Music Department, the North Allegheny Senior High School's Website, and Tozier.net. In May of 2000 Bob was named Sam's Club Teacher of the Year for Innovative Internet-Based Teaching. Nationally, Bob received honorable mention for Internet Educator of the Year through Classroom Connect.

In order to help the North Allegheny School District's Community Program, Bob teaches computer classes to community members each Spring and Fall. He also teaches advanced computer classes to middle school students.

For more information about Bob and his classes, visit
www.northallegheny.org/academics/art/multimedia
and www.tozier.net

In my humble opinion...



Home