

Beethoven on Loops: Teaching Students to Think Like Composers Using Garage Band

Dr. Neal Smith

Assistant Professor of Music Education

Millikin University

nsmith@millikin.edu

www.musicedtech.com (under construction)

TI:ME/OMEA Conference

Columbus, OH

February 10th, 2007



What is composition?

- MENC National Standards
 - #3: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
 - #4: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.

Higher Order Thinking Skills

- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

Looping software

Garage band (Apple-part of iLife),

ACID Pro (Sony for PCs, \$129 for educators)

- Also, ACID Music Studio (\$45), or
- ACID Xpress (free, available for download at www.acidplanet.com)

Session (M-Audio) *brand new*

Also many Sequencers (Digital Audio Workstations) include loops

- Cakewalk, Reason, Albeton Live, Cubase

What it does

Uses pre-composed clips of music

Drop into piece and arrange

Can edit every element of the loop

What can students do with it?

- Create their own compositions
 - With little previous musical experience (or knowledge of musical notation)
- Create backgrounds
 - Add audio or MIDI tracks
- Share their compositions and receive feedback on iCompositions, or AcidPlanet.
- Record and edit audio

Elements of composition

Timbre

- What sounds do I like?
- What sounds go well together?
- Exploring Looping program
 - Sampling sounds
 - Experimenting with combinations

Texture

- How many voices do I want to have?
- Which voices are most important?

Variation/Repetition

- How can I create variety?
- How much repetition should I have?
- Play pieces: Beatles “Love me do” – harmonica

Form

- How do I structure my music?
- How do I give my pieces a sense of cohesion?

Tension and Resolution

- What should I use to create tension?
- How should I resolve the tension (if I want to)?
- Where should I place the most intense portions of my piece?

Resources

www.iCompsition.com

www.AcidPlanet.com

www.vtmidi.org

www.alexruthmann.com

Buzarovski, Dimitrije. *Teaching Music Composition in the 21st Century:*

The Kingdom of Loops

(www.mmc.edu.mk/IRAM/Conferences/Skopjeconf2/10Dimitrije.pdf)

Hickey, Maud (ed.) *Why and How to Teach Music Composition*. Reston (VA): MENC,

2003. (contributions from: Margaret Barrett, Maud Hickey, Peter Webster, Joyce Eastlund

Gromko, Sandra Stauffer, Jonathon Stephens, Jackie Wiggins, Magne Espeland, Brian Moore,

Sam Reese, Betty Anne Younker)