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## Composing Together: The Development of Musical Ideas with Students and Teachers

By

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### Abstract

*Contemporary Canadian pieces are performed and studied infrequently in school music programs due to their complex nature. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and the Canadian Music Centre commissioned 18 composers to compose a piece of educational music during a multi-year, multi-site research project entitled Making Music: Composing with Young Musicians. The musical pieces were written in collaboration with teachers and students. The following research question was addressed: How can musical ideas be conceptualized and developed with students and teachers? In their composition reports, the composers emphasized the importance of listening to students. Listening helped the composers understand the types of music students were familiar with, and to discern students' instrumental abilities. Musical ideas were developed when students worked individually and in groups. Furthermore, composer-teacher feedback, as well as teacher facilitation, facilitated a healthy exchange of musical ideas. These findings may be of interest to music teachers, post-secondary music educators, composers, and Canadian music publishers.*

**Keywords:** educational music, music composition, music creativity, music pedagogy

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## Defining the Problem

There are numerous music composition programs and courses in Canadian post-secondary institutions and conservatories. The fundamental problem is that these programs approach music composition at the professional level rather than on creating educational music for young musicians (Andrews & Carruthers, 2004; Carruthers, 2000; Colgrass, 2004). In other words, these programs focus on contemporary Canadian works designed for professional-level musicians who have a wider range of playing abilities. The primary reason is that educational music (works that amateurs can play) is often viewed as subordinate to music composed for professionals (Camphouse, 2004, 2007; Colgrass, 2004; Gershman, 2007; Hatrik, 2002; Ross, 1995). Because of this perception, teaching strategies and parameters for writing educational music are virtually non-existent (Andrews, 2012; Cox & Stevens, 2010; Swanwick, 1999). As a result, many composers do not know how to write using a musical language that is comprehensible for students and amateur musicians (Andrews, 2004; Bowden, 2010; Hatrik, 2002).

One of the primary reasons that contemporary Canadian music (new music written by Canadian composers) is inaccessible to students pertains to complexity. Music changed dramatically during the twentieth century. Atonality and serialism were introduced (Adorno, 1980; Viera de Carvalho, 1999; Walker, 1997). Moreover, composers were influenced by world musics that incorporated intricate nuances such as alternate modalities, vocalizations, and non-traditional tuning systems. Electro-acoustic music practices were developed (Frisius, 1981).

Due to the complexity of modern music combined with limited instrumental abilities, young musicians often find it difficult to play contemporary pieces (Andrews, 2004). At the same time, they are bored and disinterested playing traditional Western-European pieces that they find culturally insignificant (Andrews, 2004). Consequently, educators have difficulty

finding educational music for young musicians; music that is accessible and relevant. To solve this problem, Hatrik (2002) suggested that Canadian composers learn how to write educational compositions.

Previous studies have been conducted regarding contemporary educational music and how composers might write this type of repertoire (Andrews, 2012; Duncan & Andrews, 2015; Rusinek, 2011; Soares, 2011; Wendzich & Andrews, 2017). The purpose of this study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of how composers worked collaboratively with student musicians and their teachers to compose educational repertoire. Eighteen composers were commissioned by the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board to write eighteen new pieces. The project was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

During school visits, composers commented upon how musical ideas were conceptualized and developed in collaboration with both students and teachers. Data were collected over three years in the form of composition records (formative) and composition commentaries (summative), which were completed by the participating composers. A pragmatic lens revealed the importance of listening to students. By listening to the students, the composer became aware of their musical preferences and abilities. The composers, in turn, used this information to help students to conceptualize and develop their musical ideas. Creative thinking expanded when students worked individually and in groups. Receiving composer and teacher feedback, as well as teacher scaffolding, generated a healthy exchange of musical ideas.

### **Musical Ideas: Conceptualization & Development**

The compositional process often begins with a musical idea (preparation) and is transformed into a brief sketch (incubation). The process of elaboration and refinement of a first draft (illumination), evolves from a final set of revisions to an ultimate copy (verification) (Bennett, 1976). These stages are not necessarily linear; they may be cyclical, non-linear or non-

sequential (Freed-Garrod, 1999; Katz & Gardner, 2012). According to Mazzola, Park, and Thalmann (2011), music composition is often non-sequential. They argued that it is both “artistic and scientific expression and that such extensions can be achieved by following a general process of creative exploration” (p. 3).

When creatively exploring ideas and concepts, one engages in creative thinking (Carlisle, 2011; Menard, 2013; Webster, 1990). Webster (1990) defined creative thinking as a “dynamic mental process that alternates between divergent (imaginative) and convergent (factual) thinking, moving in stages over time” (p. 28). Creative thinking transpires when coupling internal musical skills with outside conditions that elicit problem-solving.

To encourage creative thought in music classrooms, it is important to implement activities in which students explore, inquire, reflect and express their musical ideas (Menard, 2013; O’Neill, 2014; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Students can explore rhythmic patterns on an instrument by echoing patterns played by the instructor or by improvising their patterns (Menard, 2013; O’Neill, 2014). While engaging in creative activities, students may listen to music recordings (Menard, 2013). After listening, a discussion of melodic elements and musical concepts has been found to help groups of children create original melodies. Once short melodies have been completed, scaffolding can help children expand upon and refine their musical ideas (Menard, 2013).

While collaborating with students and teachers to create musical compositions, the composers in the project frequently listened to the students rehearse prior to leading music sessions (Boysen as cited in Camphouse, 2007; Duncan & Andrews, 2015; Forrest, 1996; Hazo as cited in Camphouse, 2007; Wendzich & Andrews, 2017; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019a). When composers listened to the students’ preferences and playing abilities, this knowledge influenced the creation of creative musical prompts (Colgrass, 2004; Hazo as cited in

Camphouse, 2007). By conversing with the young musicians, music instructors gauged students' performance levels (strengths and weaknesses), as well as their musical likes and dislikes (Duncan & Andrews, 2015; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019a). This knowledge was then applied to the creative compositional process. The composers accommodated students by integrating familiar musical rhythms, tempi, and cadences for weaker players and more challenging sections for advanced players (Duncan & Andrews, 2015; Wendzich & Andrews, 2017; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019a; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019b). By discerning what students enjoyed and what was relatable or applicable to the learners' lives, composers assisted with the conceptualization of new musical ideas (Andrews, 2012; Duncan & Andrews, 2015; O'Neill, 2014; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019a; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019b). In most cases, composers found it helpful to incorporate music activities that were relevant or related to real-world experiences (O'Neill, 2014).

By listening to the students, composers provided an opportunity for young musicians to have their artistic ideas heard (Alcock, 2008; Naughton & Lines, 2013). Their ideas were often expressed individually. According to O'Neill (2014), individual artistic work enables students to act independently and make decisions based on a variety of options that are open to them. Consequently, learners' "agentive musical lives are focused intentionally and intensely on the process of musical creation" (p. 20).

During the project, the composers ignited students' imaginations through narrative prompts (such as movie scenes, a short story, or photographs), thereby inspiring the young musicians to begin a composition (Naughton & Lines, 2013; Stauffer, 2013). Teachers and composers often use narrative prompts to inspire musical ideas, but visual art may be used as well (Riley, 2013).

Musical ideas are conceived of and developed when teachers facilitate creative thinking in the classroom (Wendzich & Andrews, 2017). This facilitation takes place when students are encouraged to engage in and critique the musical process (O'Neill, 2014; Parker, Marturano, O'Connor, & Meek, 2018). Teachers assist when they manage the use of time and resources during a lesson (Berkley, 2004). Facilitation takes place when teachers model, demonstrate and ask students questions to extend musical understanding and comprehension (Lau & Grieshaber, 2010). In some cases, teachers have encouraged students to explore self-generated, graphic notation (Colgrass, 2004; Lau & Grieshaber, 2010). Facilitation takes place when teachers introduce instrumental improvisation on specific phrases for a familiar song (Lau, 2007; Lau & Grieshaber, 2010), and promote risk-taking and decision-making behavior in classrooms (Berkley, 2004).

Creative compositional ideas are generated when teachers provide input. According to Lau & Grieshaber (2010), providing a variety of feedback helps young children develop musical ideas. The input may be in the form of musical images, pitches, and melodies, and feedback may be in the form of compliments and applause (Parker et al., 2018; Swanwick, 2008). Input enables young musicians to refine creative ideas and engage in critical and reflective practice during composition (O'Neill, 2014; Swanwick, 2008; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019b). Verbal feedback helps students develop competence and confidence while creative problem-solving (Berkley, 2004).

During the project, teachers provided feedback for their students and the composers too. In turn, composers sought advice from the instrumental teachers to determine whether certain compositional notions were at an appropriate level (Duncan & Andrews, 2015). Previous studies have substantiated the benefits of feedback, particularly when teachers facilitate artistic sessions and/or provide feedback to artists (Andrews, 2016; Carlisle, 2011).

## Methodology

Integrated Inquiry was employed during the Making Music Project. This research strategy substantiated data analysis. The analysis included multiple data collection protocols from the same or different groups of participants, or alternately, the same protocols from different time periods (Andrews, 2008). The blending of multiple data sources has been encouraged in the literature for similar field-based studies (Creswell, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

## Theoretical Framework

Four dimensions of creativity; *place*, *process*, *product*, and *person* were adopted as the theoretical framework (Amabile & Tighe, 1993; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1989). Concerning music composition, these four dimensions refer to

- pre-requisites for composing; training, emotions, and context;
- compositional process; strategies, techniques, sequencing;
- musical piece; features, style, and impact;
- person; characteristics, pre-dispositions, and motivation (Andrews, 2004).

During the Making Music Project, which took place over three years, different protocols were employed for each dimension of creativity to address the following secondary questions:

1. Pre-requisites: How can musical ideas be conceptualized and developed in collaboration with students and teachers? (composer record);
2. Process: What musical knowledge and skills are developed when students and teachers co-create music with composers in schools? (teacher learning report);
3. Piece: What aspects of the new compositions reflect the teachers' pedagogical input? (composition commentary);

4. Person: What do students and teachers learn from collaboration with professional composers? (teacher questionnaire).

This paper focuses solely on the first question regarding pre-requisites. Consequently, the question we will address is: How can musical ideas be conceptualized and developed in collaboration with students and teachers?

### **Participants**

Participants in the study included 18 composers from across Ontario, 18 associate teachers employed by the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), and instrumental students. The composers commissioned by the OCDSB were nominated by their peers (snowball technique) based on professional reputation. The music teachers were invited to participate by an Arts Instructional Coach, who was the Contact Person for the partnership with the OCDSB. All teachers had similar backgrounds in music education and requisite certification to teach in schools. The students were enrolled in urban, suburban, and rural middle (grades 7-8) and comprehensive high schools (grades 9-12) within the OCDSB.

The Canadian Music Centre composers who were invited to participate had obtained membership as associates based on a juried process, thereby ensuring similar levels of expertise. The three women and fifteen men had all received Western-European music training and earned higher music education degrees. All of the composers had previous experience composing educational music. Many had experience studying, teaching or composing in various genres such as jazz and classical music. Several were employed as arrangers, conductors, educators, and/or clinicians.

As the project unfolded, composers collaborated with students and teachers to write new educational music for school-based programs (Andrews, 2017). Although this interaction occurred in grades seven through twelve, the majority of sessions transpired within a high school

setting. The composers and teachers kept notes on their experiences within one of three time periods: the 2012-2013 school year; the 2013-2014 school year; or the 2014-2015 school year.

### **Data Collection**

Data for the Making Music Project were collected through composition records. The composers kept detailed records regarding student and teacher contributions. Students contributed musical ideas, their creativity, and instrumental knowledge. Teachers mainly facilitated band sessions and ensured deadlines were met. One composer wrote, “During the large full-band rehearsal ... Andrea (pseudonym) demonstrated a warm-up that she uses to get the players to work on their tuning and following the conductor ... I intend to use this effect for the introduction of the piece I am composing for them.”

Data were collected through a pragmatic lens because the study was concerned with process rather than product; what worked in the classroom and solutions to problems (Patton, 1990). In other words, problem-solving was more important than the pedagogical approach. To address and understand each problem in a manner that is deemed most appropriate, researchers who employ a pragmatic lens often verify information from multiple data sources, a technique known as triangulation (Creswell, 2011; Rossman & Wilson, 1985). Trustworthiness was achieved when participants and partners reviewed the interpretation of the project’s data in the form of member checks. The same protocol, administered during different time periods, assisted the researcher to obtain multiple perspectives on the object of inquiry and provided for an extended engagement in the project (Andrews, 2008).

### **Analysis**

All composers began the project by entering a traditional band classroom. They were greeted by a music teacher along with approximately twenty-five students who were accustomed to playing traditional band music. The students had limited, if any, experience composing music.

The composers approached their creative responsibilities with an open ear; most listened to the students' playing ability and to their musical likes and/or dislikes before the composing process. As one composer claimed, "I showed them one method of creating melodies by combining quotations from familiar music, based on song suggestions I had the students e-mail me the previous week." In many instances, listening to and incorporating the students' suggestions helped composers determine the direction of subsequent classroom activities. Musical ideas flowed, especially when the students had input regarding music genres and rhythm patterns they enjoyed playing. By listening, composers were able to determine the style of repertoire students would enjoy performing.

During their first classroom visit, many composers listened to the young musicians rehearse existing repertoire, noting their playing abilities (instrumental ranges, strengths, and weaknesses), and the music with which students were familiar. In a few instances, composers recorded the rehearsals. They commented on the young musicians' techniques while discerning rhythms, meter changes, and accidentals that were accessible or too challenging for students. One composer claimed that he coupled this knowledge with the school's mascot—a hawk—to generate musical ideas. He said, "In the last part of the rehearsal, I asked students to tell me about red-tailed hawks they had seen in the wild, and to describe the sound the hawks make. I played some recordings of hawk calls and they described the musical attributes of the call; raspy tone, loud dynamic and a high pitch that falls." Hawk sounds the students created on their instruments were integrated into the final composition.

Not only were animal sounds considered when conceptualizing musical ideas, but other realistic, applicable and relatable sounds were also incorporated. As one composer noted, "Students were instructed to think about... non-musical apparatuses in the real world that

similarly make sound [to musical instruments].” Some young musicians volunteered to imitate environmental sounds, which were then incorporated into the finished product.

The composers listened to student ideas before drafting musical themes and then considered their input throughout revision stages. The young musicians suggested their ideas about texture, rhythm, form and emotional content during the composition stages. Students provided the composer with suggestions “for rhythmic support under each [of the three proposed main] themes” and suggested various sequencing for those themes and “how they relate to each other to create a holistic piece of music.” The students’ playing ranges, ideas about the general mood of the composition, and timbral preferences were considered as the composers, teachers, and students elaborated on ideas.

The revision process involved e-mailing students PDF and MP3 files of compositional sketches. After looking at and listening to the sketches, the young musicians “commented on their likes/dislikes and offered suggestions as to what could be added and/or altered.” By working collaboratively, students and composers were able to identify “errors and ... specific notation issues that could be improved or corrected.”

Although student-composer conversations were frequent, most composers iterated that students’ main contributions “were by their playing, rather than their verbal comments.” While students played, the composers assessed their playing level and modified areas where students struggled. For example, one composer stated, “I worked with two of the percussionists to slightly simplify rhythmic notation.” By listening, composers encouraged and enabled students to “get a feel for the musical material to be used in the final score.”

Additional musical ideas developed when students worked creatively in groups and independently. After listening to the hawk call audio-recording, the composer ensured “... each group came up with its way(s) of imitating or interpreting the hawk call on their instrument.”

This process enabled the young musicians to experiment with sounds and use their instruments creatively. Students experimented with dynamics for balance, melodies, motives, duets, and trios, and they explored various ways of rehearsing their work.

Some of the composers provided students with a rough outline of the final compositional piece to facilitate student input. One composer explained, “I provided students with a 46-bar outline with harmonies, time signature changes, and rough ideas (brass chords, fast percussion, and a woodwind melody) and had them start to compose their own parts.” Having an outline enabled the young musicians to experiment with musical ideas using a variety of instruments. Using their ideas, the students edited what the composer provided.

Group work enabled students to brainstorm titles and create melodies based on selected melodic motives, which were incorporated into the final composition. According to one composer, small group work helped students produce ingenious and unforeseen sounds: “The clarinets, for instance, had discovered an interesting vocabulary of breath sounds by blowing into the keyholes.”

Composers provided prompts in the form of keys, chords, and harmonies. These prompts encouraged students to modulate to new keys and create new harmonies that would comprise “the rest of the middle section.” Following a discussion regarding how composers manipulate melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture, groups of student musicians brainstormed how certain concepts might contribute to their musical piece. Additional prompts involved playing a theme for the students while narrating a story. This helped the students imagine ways they would like to illustrate a story or game. As one composer reported, “[students] decided on ‘Attack, Hide, and Seek’ ... and how we might turn that into music.”

Students were presented with lessons designed to foster their understanding of how and why music evokes certain memories. To help the learners recall past events, composers guided

music classes through vivid memory exercises. Improvisation exercises helped the students generate musical ideas. Group work enabled groups of learners to develop musical memories. After developing their ideas, the students refined them by receiving peer-composer-teacher feedback. One composer claimed, “We spent the first half of the class [composing], then the second half performing and refining.”

Alluding to benefits associated with creativity in a collaborative environment, one composer observed, “Students were asked to come up with various unconventional sounds on their instruments – these were shared. When students were shy about developing sounds of their own, more confident students peer-mentored them, sharing said sounds.” It was also found that “tone color, improvisation, and extended techniques always come ‘after’ learning to do things properly ... but [it seems] that cultivating a practice and method around exploration can be tremendously useful at even early stages of learning an instrument.” These observations, among others about the collaborative creative process, were described as “hugely rewarding.”

Some young musicians worked independently, providing composers with short musical ideas; a few notes or an entire phrase. One student submitted a sheet containing an idea that “represented the kind of music” they desired to play in the whole-group piece. The composer explained to the student how to transform their idea into music using the “composer’s toolbox.” Musical ideas derived from the toolbox—in this case, motivic development and inversion of a melody—helped comprise the final composition. Other young musicians interpolated parts based on repertoire they enjoyed, improvised on melodies, and experimented with ambiance by expanding on the materials provided by the composer. Some young musicians contributed their skills by adding guitar parts and chord changes during band rehearsals.

The composition process involved expanding on a theme that the composer wrote. Sometimes, individuals or groups of students composed a middle section to compliment the

theme. To help them create, the composer and teacher taught students about freely borrowing certain aspects of a piece such as the introduction or a melodic fragment and developing them. The young musicians were taught how sound effects and melodies determine the mood and feeling of a piece. This advice prompted students to create their themes and musical bridges. According to one composer, “The way that the students took to simple exercises that were designed both for them to explore and for me to get auditory feedback for my creative process was reassuring, and for me gave me the sense that writing for pedagogical contexts holds some really interesting possibilities.” This particular composer observed, “Students were more receptive to unconventional instrumental ideas than some professionals are and more eager to collaborate rather than just play what’s on the page. They were also more comfortable going through the material and varying it spontaneously through verbal instructions.”

Composer-teacher feedback, as well as teacher facilitation, inspired a healthy flow of musical ideas. Teachers identified interesting sounds and provided specific pedagogical suggestions to assist the composer, who then tweaked the composition. For example, one composer stated, “Today Ms. Stewart pointed out a recurring passage in the flutes where I hadn’t taken into account the cumbersome fingerings.” As a result, the composer revised the notation in certain passages.

Most teachers alerted composers to band balance (i.e., the importance of writing familiar music, yet challenging) as well as the instrumentation and range issues that typically face public-school band educators. One teacher suggested some “ways to overcome instrumental balance issues” to ensure the score was feasible for the teacher and students to execute. Moreover, teachers conveyed “some conceptual concerns expressed by particular students.” This input enabled composers to “simplify parts of the piece while maintaining its character, structure and melody/harmony.” In some cases, teachers and composers discussed integrating additional

“breathing” places for students and pedagogical strategies to navigate the notation of unmetered transitions.

Even with scaffolding, students had difficulties executing some rhythms. One composer noted, “[m]y first sketch of the piece [was] too advanced in terms of rhythmic complication.” Consequently, the composer introduced rhythmic concepts that were too easy for the students. With teacher-feedback, the composer adjusted his composition in a manner that made the piece age- and ability-appropriate. Teachers provided feedback to such an extent that they were able to tweak the dynamics and doublings of the composition.

To support the composers, teachers provided samples of a proven repertoire. This familiarized composers with the students’ technical abilities and called attention to inherent pedagogical considerations. In one instance the composer noted, “She [the teacher] reminded me though that it was important for them [the students] to understand where this [composition process] was going and recommended I bring something resembling a score for the next visit.” Sometimes the composer and teacher consulted via e-mail. One composer stated, “I sent her a PDF file of the revised score, and she sent back comments allowing me to make good parts for today’s rehearsal.” Teachers assisted with technical issues (e.g., repairing keys and tuning) and made suggestions regarding dynamics, articulations, and tempo modifications. One teacher provided the composer with techniques for engaging shyer musicians. Sometimes, the teachers recommended percussion color choices and rhythmic ideas for the main theme. In all, teachers scaffolded composers with “strategies to best address the class” which, in turn, enabled composers, teachers, and students to fully develop musical ideas.

Musical activities flourished when teachers acted as facilitators. All teachers facilitated the compositional process to some extent, whether it was leading or conducting the band, photocopying worksheets, or ensuring students completed musical tasks in a timely fashion. The

teachers encouraged students to remain on task and engage in creative exploration within the allotted time frame. Students were provided time for “individual and group creations as well as a timeline for accomplishing the overall piece.” To ensure completion of the final piece, teachers rehearsed the band, working on “weak spots and [doing] some run-throughs” when the composer was not present. During composer-teacher-student sessions, teachers “tuned up and warmed up the band with some scales,” made a list of instruments in the class, and divided students into groups. Groups were often based on similar instrumentation or musical preferences. Many teachers assigned creative tasks to individual students or groups, which as one composer noted, “which I think [was] fun for the students.” These creative tasks helped the young musicians conceptualize and develop musical ideas which were later integrated into the final composition.

Although the project was fun for students, the creative process presented some challenges. Students improvised on their instruments which was a fun way to develop musical ideas. However, executing these activities in a band setting was not always easy. The composers found it necessary to adjust their compositional drafts because the students had difficulty sight-reading. Other challenges pertained to time constraints and facilitating the completion of individual compositional parts. Although many students completed their music compositions on schedule, there were times when teachers had to continuously encourage students to submit their finished work. Sometimes musical sketches the composers created were unsuccessful. In one case, even after learning about students’ interests and playing abilities, a composer provided a sketch that was too difficult. He found, “Thirteen-year-old students can be tough critics in a way.”

## **Discussion**

The Making Music Project was an enterprise in which students engaged in creative thinking (Carlisle, 2011; Menard, 2013; Webster, 1990, 2011). Composers and teachers used a

broad range of pedagogical strategies to elicit musical ideas that eventually comprised the final composition. Because creative thinking transpires when internal musical skills are coupled with outside conditions (Webster, 1990), the composers and teachers engaged directly with students within the learning environment. Composers listened to students (Abrahams, 2005; Beatty, 2004; Low & Sonntag, 2013) by paying attention to their musical practices, musical preferences, and playing abilities (Boysen as cited in Camphouse, 2007; Duncan & Andrews, 2015; Forrest, 1996; Hazo as cited in Camphouse, 2007; Wendzich & Andrews, 2017; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019a). The inclusion of popular music techniques and providing accessible materials is an effective strategy when encouraging creative ideas (Duncan & Andrews, 2015; Leung, 2004; Swanwick, 1999). Jenkins found that listening to students' preferences and building off those preferences can be a valuable pedagogical technique (as cited in Camphouse, 2007). As a result, composers were able to determine what was relevant to students.

To facilitate musical ideas during the preparation stage of the compositional process (Bennett, 1976), all composers adopted a pedagogical strategy known as *student-centered learning* (Armbruster, Patel, Johnson, & Weiss, 2017; Lebler, 2007). Contemporary research into student-centered learning builds on precepts derived from William James (1890) and John Dewey (1913). The approach emphasizes the need for immediate student interest and participation to be followed by a reflective process in which learners step back and assess their aims. According to Hazo, when students are creating a composition, it is paramount that instruction is student-centered (as cited in Camphouse, 2007).

Using student-centered pedagogies, composers engaged young musicians in all stages of the compositional process. To encourage creativity, and utilizing problem-solving (Andrews, 2016; Isaksen, Dorval, & Treffinger, 2011; O'Neill, 2014; Teffinger, Selby, & Isaksen, 2008), composers utilized prompts such as hawk calls, relatable sounds, or familiar musical selections.

The use of narrative prompts (as music, a short story, or photographs) proved useful for facilitating musical ideas (Naughton & Lines, 2013; Riley, 2013; Stauffer, 2013).

During the drafting stage of the compositional process (Bennett, 1976), all of the composers listened to the young musicians' musical suggestions and music preferences. In many instances, the students' preferred moods, styles, playing ranges, and timbres were considered. In all instances, the young musicians' playing abilities were examined. These considerations have been reported as successful strategies in previous studies (Andrews, 2013; Duncan & Andrews, 2015; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019a).

During the illumination and verification stages (Bennett, 1976), both composers and teachers were able to identify specific notation or balance issues that challenged the students. As a result, the composers and teachers collaborated to ensure that the overall sound from a particular section did not exceed or throw off the overall balance. In some cases, to address balance, additional edits were required to bring out a melody, single note, or moving inner line (Countryman, 2013). Addressing band balance has been referred to in other studies (Wendzich & Andrews, 2017; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019b).

The conceptualization and development of musical ideas transpired when teachers provided composers with feedback. For example, teachers provided specific pedagogical suggestions concerning age-appropriate repertoire (Duncan & Andrews, 2015). Helping composers understand effective pedagogical strategies has been detailed in previous research (Andrews, 2016; Lebler, 2007; Millican, 2012). In this study, teachers facilitated learner-centered activities, which enabled students to focus on creative tasks. Andrews (2016) and O'Neill (2014) claimed that facilitating student-centered projects motivated young learners to such an extent that they became fully engaged in learning.

To maintain student engagement, the composer or teacher played rhythms that required a spontaneous and playful response. Improvising and experimenting individually and in groups on musical instruments was reported as a successful creative strategy in the Making Music Project's composition records and is supported in the literature (Andrews & Giesbrecht, 2014; O'Neill, 2014; Wendzich & Andrews, 2017; Wendzich & Andrews, 2019b). Students not only improvised and experimented, but had opportunities to inquire, reflect upon, and express their musical ideas (Alcock, 2008; Menard, 2013; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

During the project, young musicians explored and generated their creative opportunities rather than merely adopting the teachers' and composers' musical ideas. This resonates with findings by Camphouse (2007). It was important for the composers to allow sufficient time for musical ideas to germinate and to accomplish each task in a timely fashion (Berkley, 2004). Teachers helped composers find a balance between too much time and not enough time, and to be flexible rather than rigid. The Florida Education Association (2018) and Shah (2018) have supported the use of these pedagogical approaches.

Dewey (1933) suggested that students learn to be creative when they are "playful and serious at the same time" (p. 286). The challenge for educators is to employ these two elements simultaneously. During the project, teachers encouraged students to engage in (be playful) and critique (be serious about) the musical process (O'Neill, 2014; Parker et al., 2018). To foster creativity and musical understanding, both teachers and composers modeled, demonstrated, and asked guiding questions (Lau & Grieshaber, 2010). By so doing, they promoted risk-taking and decision-making behavior (Berkley, 2004).

The teachers facilitated music sessions by dividing the students into groups. Small group work enabled students to create, articulate, and share musical ideas (Carlisle, 2011; Menard, 2013). Musical notions were encouraged by peer mentors. Jenkins elaborated, "Each marvelous

combination of brainpower and imagination must be nurtured with consistent care, wisdom, and devotion” (as cited in Camphouse, 2007, p. 123).

### **Coda**

Although this research study involved three groups of composers over three years, the findings might be strengthened by replicating the study within a different setting. Future inquiry is needed to identify specific aspects of composition resulting from the collaborative input from teachers and students.

This inquiry was based on a single research question: How can musical ideas be conceptualized and developed with students and teachers? Because of their involvement in the Making Music Project, composers learned the importance of listening to students. Listening enabled composers to gain knowledge about the students’ preferences and abilities. Musical ideas were developed when students work individually and in groups. The results of this study suggest that composer-teacher feedback and teacher facilitation can encourage a healthy flow of musical ideas. Furthermore, engaging in collaborative, creative processes related to music composition can be hugely rewarding.

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