

**MUSIC THROUGH THE AGES -IMPROVISATION/COMPOSITION THEME 2008-09
ASSIGNMENT - SEPTEMBER 2008
Our first assignment begins with ELEMENTAL SOUND**

1. Practice letting your body do more than one thing at a time (just like the sounding of a string makes many tones at once) **HOW MANY DIFFERENT THINGS CAN YOUR BODY DO AT ONE TIME?** _____

2. Make a piece using only the “**C**” below Middle C (the Fundamental Generating Tone & 1st partial) and the “**C**” one octave above which would be Middle C itself (the first Overtone & 2nd partial). How many different sounds can you make on that one key? Can you hear any other tones sounding with that key?

SOME SUGGESTIONS:

You can play soft (p).

You can play LOUD (f).

You can make a short sound (staccato).

You can play as smoothly as possible (legato).

You can slowly get louder (crescendo).

You can slowly get softer (decrescendo).

You can play an accent or SFZ (one tone louder than all the others).

You can rest between tones.

You can use the damper, sostenuto or the una corda pedal.

You can combine these sounds.

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU WISH using “C” BELOW MIDDLE C & “ MIDDLE C”.

AND/OR

CREATE A CHANT using only a ONE NOTE DRONE OR RHYTHMIC OSTINATO in the LOWER LEFT HAND while the UPPER RIGHT HAND SINGS A CHANT.

OR

CREATE AN IMPROVISATION about something you experienced this Summer.

**MUSIC THROUGH THE AGES
IMPROVISATION/COMPOSITION THEME 2008-09
ASSIGNMENT #2 - OCTOBER 2008**

**You may build on your first assignment with ELEMENTAL SOUND
TO CREATE A SHORT PIECE ABOUT MUSIC IN ANCIENT TIMES**

Some suggestions:

a drum beat piece with a warrior chant over it

a song based on an animal cry

a bagpipe drone with a dance

a poem set to the music of a lyre

a bamboo flute piece

a lullaby (mother or father singing their child to sleep)

or any sound you wish to make about music in the very earliest of times.

or CREATE A HALLOWEEN PIECE

**MUSIC THROUGH THE AGES
IMPROVISATION/COMPOSITION THEME 2008-09
ASSIGNMENT 3 - NOVEMBER 2008**

Create a piece about THE MIDDLE AGES (from the 5th to 15th century)

SOME SUGGESTIONS:

A harper telling a story

Townspeople processing in celebration

Artisans building a cathedral

Bells ringing from the steeple of a cathedral

Pilgrims climbing the stones steps of a cathedral

Monks chanting

King Arthur boating through the mists of Avalon

Sir Lancelot rescuing Queen Guenevere

Joan of Arc leading the French into battle

Kinghts jousting

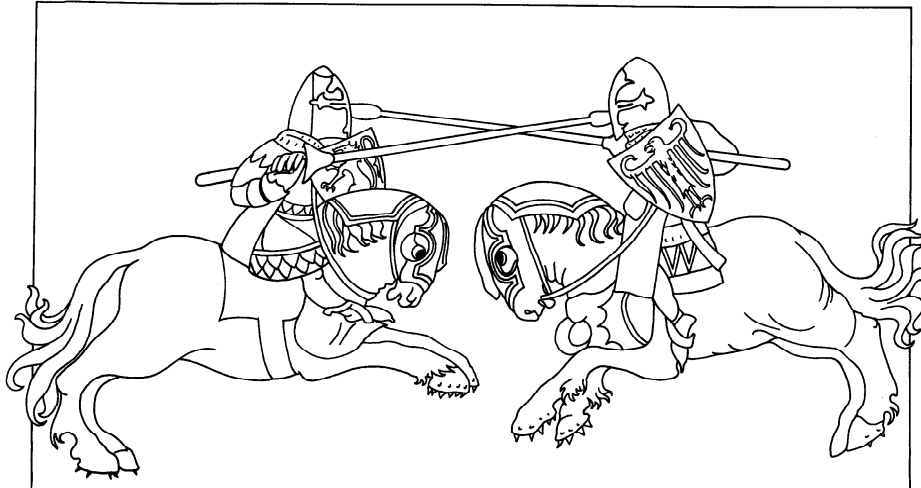
A farmer sowing seed

Marco Polo in the court of Kubla Khan

Hildegard of Bingen composing her beautiful music

YOU CAN CREATE ANYTHING YOU WISH ABOUT THE MIDDLE AGES

From the Romance of Alexander.
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. 264.
f. 92. Bruges, 1338-1344



A JOUST

**MUSIC THROUGH THE AGES
IMPROVISATION/COMPOSITION THEME 2008/09
ASSIGNMENT - DECEMBER**

Create a piece about THE RENAISSANCE (roughly about 1450 to 1600)

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR IMPROVISATION OR COMPOSITION:

Music for a ceremony for a great king or queen.

Music for one of the court dances held in the palace.

The first ballet was written. You could write music for a ballet dancer.

Take a tune you know and write variations on it as was done in this period.

The sound of the printing press that was invented at this time, making it possible for many people, instead of a few, to read music and books.

Music making by a family gathered around a harpsichord (ancestor of the piano) singing from this new music available to them.

Write a hymn. In this period, people began to write their own hymns for people to sing in church.

People wrote love songs, story songs and dance songs. You could create one of these.

Instead of everyone singing unison(the same notes), people began to sing different parts all at the same time.

Great organs were heard in the churches and cathedrals.

Harpers, pipe and drummers and bagpipers continued their music in the streets as they had in the Medieval Period.

Bells still rang from the steeples of churches and cathedrals.

YOU CAN CREATE ANYTHING YOU WISH ABOUT THE RENAISSANCE.

**MUSIC THROUGH THE AGES -IMPROVISATION/COMPOSITION THEME 2008-09
ASSIGNMENT - SEPTEMBER 2008
Our first assignment begins with ELEMENTAL SOUND**

1. Practice letting your body do more than one thing at a time (just like the sounding of a string makes many tones at once) **HOW MANY DIFFERENT THINGS CAN YOUR BODY DO AT ONE TIME?** _____

2. Make a piece using only the “**C**” below Middle C (the Fundamental Generating Tone & 1st partial) and the “**C**” one octave above which would be Middle C itself (the first Overtone & 2nd partial). How many different sounds can you make on that one key? Can you hear any other tones sounding with that key?

SOME SUGGESTIONS:

You can play soft (p).

You can play LOUD (f).

You can make a short sound (staccato).

You can play as smoothly as possible (legato).

You can slowly get louder (crescendo).

You can slowly get softer (decrescendo).

You can play an accent or SFZ (one tone louder than all the others).

You can rest between tones.

You can use the damper, sostenuto or the una corda pedal.

You can combine these sounds.

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU WISH using “C” BELOW MIDDLE C & “ MIDDLE C”.

AND/OR

CREATE A CHANT using only a ONE NOTE DRONE OR RHYTHMIC OSTINATO in the LOWER LEFT HAND while the UPPER RIGHT HAND SINGS A CHANT.

OR

CREATE AN IMPROVISATION about something you experienced this Summer.

**MUSIC THROUGH THE AGES THEME FOR 1996-1997
IMPROVISATION/COMPOSITION ASSIGNMENT - FEBRUARY, 2009**

Make a piece using ideas from THE CLASSIC ERA (1750-1825)

The term "classical" as used to describe the music of this era refers to its emphasis on balance and a clear structure. This was a time of renewed interest in Greek and Roman art and literature, and the music reflected this. It was called "The Age of Enlightenment."

Classical music used contrasting moods, unlike Baroque music's single mood.

It introduced gradual changes from soft to loud instead of the sudden dynamic changes Baroque music.

Many different rhythmic patterns were introduced as well as sudden pauses, syncopation and many changes from long notes to shorter ones.

One melody would be heard with a simple accompaniment (that is called homophonic music) instead of the (polyphonic) music of the Baroque period with two or more melodies sounding together.

The phrases of Classical music are often of the same length. This makes a balanced symmetrical sound.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: Create a piece that uses one or more of the characteristics of Classic Period music:

a. CONTRASTING MOODS: sad to glad, anxious to calm, etc.

b. GRADUAL CHANGE OF DYNAMICS : loud to soft or soft to loud, crescendo and decrescendo.

c. RHYTHMIC CHANGES FROM LONG NOTES TO SHORT ONES, SYNCOPATION and SUDDEN PAUSES IN THE MUSIC.

d. A MELODY WITH A SIMPLE ACCOMPANIMENT.

**e. A COMPOSITION WITH PHRASES OF EQUAL LENGTH 4, 4 ,4 or 8,8,8 or 16,16,16
OR**

2. Compose a piece that describes something from the life of Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven, the three greatest composers of the Classical Period:

a. Haydn involved in one of his mischievous pranks

b. Mozart riding in a carriage on his way to perform for the Empress, Maria Teresa.

c. Beethoven walking through the Vienna woods.



**MUSIC THROUGH THE AGES THEME FOR 2008-09
MARCH IMPROVISATION/COMPOSITION ASSIGNMENT**

SOUNDS OF THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

Romanticism in the nineteenth century stressed individualism, nationalism, emotion and imagination. It found inspiration in all aspects of nature and tried to encompass the entire human experience.

Create a piece using one or more of these characteristics of Romantic music:

TELL A STORY

DESCRIBE A SCENE

PAINT WITH SOUND (use altered chords and a broad range of dynamics)

EXPRESS EMOTION THAT REFLECTS YOUR INNER FEELINGS

USE ALL TWELVE TONES OF THE SCALE (chromaticism)

USE FOLK MUSIC, DANCES AND LEGENDS OF YOUR CULTURE

Make a melody for this ditty about the Romantic period composers:

Romantic composers in the 19th century:
Painting with sound, expressing emotion.
Schubert, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann.

Romantic composers in the 19th century:
Chromaticism, altered chords and lyrical melody.
Liszt, Brahms, Grieg, Tchaikovsky.

Or compose a piece about something from the lives of one of the composers:



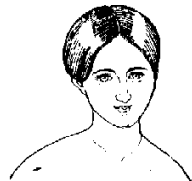
Franz Schubert and his dog



Franz Liszt in his Magyar national costume



Clara and Robert Schumann in conversation



Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn playing and making music together



Chopin giving a piano lesson



Dance music by Tchaikovsky

MUSIC THROUGH THE AGES

APRIL IMPROVISATION/COMPOSITION ASSIGNMENT

SOUNDS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1900-2000)

Object of Activity: Create a piece that uses one or more of the characteristics of Twentieth Century music or a piece that describes something from the life one of its composers

Materials and preparation needed:

Slips of paper with the suggestions for creating music with characteristics of music of the Twentieth Century and/or scenes from the lives of Twentieth Century Composers.

1. Create a piece using one or more of these characteristics of Twentieth Century music:

- A. **USE POLYTONALITY:** notes of one key played in one hand while the other hand plays in a different key.
- B. **USE POLYCHORDS:** two different chords played at the same time. For instance, play a C chord in the bass while playing a G chord in the treble.
- C. **USE QUARTAL HARMONY:** chords made of fourths
- D. **USE TONE CLUSTERS:** adjacent keys played with fist or forearm.
- E. **USE THE ATONAL TWELVE-TONE ROW SYSTEM :** each of the twelve chromatic tones receives equal prominence in the piece.
- F. **USE FOLK MUSIC, DANCES AND LEGENDS OF YOUR CULTURE.**
- G. **USE INTRICATE AND VARIED RHYTHMS.**

2. Create a piece about something from the lives of one of the composers:



Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)



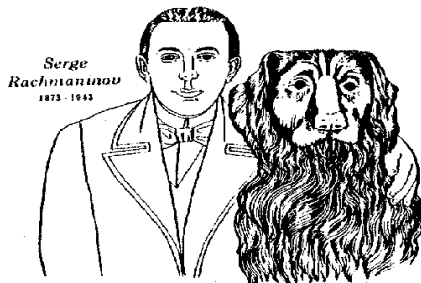
Serge Prokofiev
1891-1953



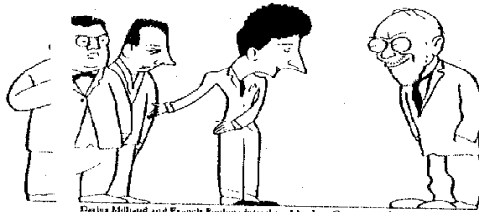
Copland



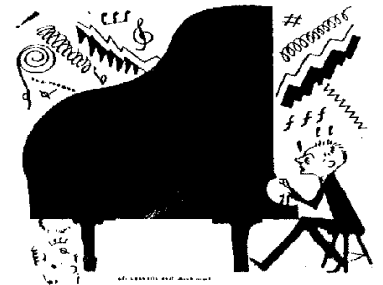
STRAVINSKY after Picasso 1917



Serge Rachmaninoff
1873 - 1943



Darius Milhaud and Francis Poulenc. Introduced by Jean Cocteau to Eric Satie



of 1930s and 40s

Directions:

If used at the lesson, suggestions listed could be copied and a handout given to the student to choose from for her/his improvisation assignment of that lesson. At a subsequent lesson, the student would share the improvisation and see if the teacher or class can guess which suggestion he/she choose. If used at an Improvisation Celebration, suggestions could be placed in a grab bag). Alternative: Place suggestions on a poster and let each improviser choose one to perform.

Optional Suggested prizes: A picture or statuette of a Twentieth Century Composer. A cassette or CD of Twentieth Century music. A book about a Twentieth Century composer.