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Introduction and Background

The development of empathy is a critical moment in the growth of a child. This is a trait they will need to use every day as they navigate the world. Felicity Laurence writes, "Above all, there is a recurrent conjecture that music can enable people, somehow, to "get inside" each other's minds feel each other's suffering and recognize each other's shared humanity...to have *empathy* for each other" (p 14). Music is a highly personal art, and interacting music from another culture can broaden horizons and build empathy for others. In this way, Laurence goes on to say that empathy can be a way of "*overcoming* perceptions of dissimilarity, and of *accepting* others' difference"(p 22).

However, this understanding of others is not accomplished without effort. "Creating feelings of affinity without doing the hard work necessary to challenge dynamics of oppression can add insult to injury for members of oppressed communities, and do little more than allay the guilt of those who are from more privileged groups." (Cohen, p 27). In order to fully appreciate the music of another culture, the trials and tribulations of that culture must be considered. Communication is key to finding this understanding and building a relationship. Truly, it is not the "universal" nature of music that makes it special; the distinctive histories and traditions surrounding the music we make is the real magic (ibid).

This Peacebuilding through Music project is to have students write duets as a team. Students are paired up randomly and tasked with writing a duet for their instruments. To do this, the students have to discuss the affordances and limits of their instruments, their own musical interests, and their individual strengths as musicians. Once the duet has been composed, the students can perform it at an Informance, where they can discuss how they created their duet alongside its debut performance. This project requires effective communication and problem solving through music.

Through this project, students develop empathy for someone they may not have known before. Partners should be randomly assigned so students do not gravitate to work with their friends. Instrument pairings across woodwind/brass/percussion divisions are also encouraged. For a fifth grade clarinet player, writing a duet with a tuba player may seem completely impossible. This project will bring students to the understanding that anyone can make music together. It is also important for the students to document their composing experience. In their Informance remarks, it would be enlightening for the community (and for later reflection of the students) to hear how the students were able to resolve conflicts using music.

In our first forum, I wrote about how my band students will come into the band room during their recess time to play their concert music as a "mini band". This gave me the idea that they already have an interest in playing music together. In any music class, students play music written by other people who do not necessarily share their background or experiences. This duet project will give them an opportunity to get to know someone new and create something personal.

Project Description

The peace-building element addressed in this project is "peacebuilding through the arts". I have noticed that in my school, 5th graders start to form cliques. Cliques can be harmful because they tend to exclude anyone who does not "fit in" and conflicts among cliques can cause many problems within a school community. To combat this issue, I designed the project to intentionally team up band students who may not know each other to write a duet together. During this process, each member of the team will need to learn about the other to fully understand their musical experiences and integrate their ideas into the duet. The students can take these ideas with them into their everyday lives and hopefully become less tied to the clique they may have valued before.

By the end of this unit, band students will be able to see themselves as creators of original music and understand how to effectively work with someone else who may be different from them. Students in elementary music spend all of their time playing and singing songs that are prescribed to them. Elementary students can be composers too, and they have many great musical ideas that may not be realized in the traditional music classroom setup. By writing a duet, students will need to come up with their own musical ideas and be able to hear and respect the ideas of a peer to create a collaborative work.

This project was designed for students to complete one part of the workshop in each weekly band lesson.

Time	Workshop Part	Description	Why?
Week 1	Virtual Machine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One student starts with a sound and a movement. ● Each student one at a time joins the machine with a sound and action that compliments the sound before it. ● The goal is not to have a chaotic mishmash of sounds, but instead, a thoughtful collaboration of musical ideas. ● Each student in the group has the opportunity to create the first sound which everyone else builds from. ● How can we use what we learned in this activity to inform our duet writing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students understand how different musical sounds work together ● Students develop a sense of safety in being creative ● Everyone's ideas are respected and important
Week 2	Composition 101	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students collectively consider the musical elements they already 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students analyze what they already know about

		<p>know (pitches they can play, rhythm components, how many beats in a measure, clefs, etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a homogeneous lesson group, students compose 4 measures of music keeping those components in mind. 	<p>music and consider how they can apply this knowledge to their compositions.</p>
Week 3	What is a duet?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students learn about how two different musical parts "work" together to create one song Students choose a duet out of their method book to play with a partner in their homogeneous lesson group After playing the duets, students share what they liked about playing duets, and what seemed challenging to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students understand the building blocks of a duet Students understand how each musician is integral to the successful performance of a duet
Week 4	Getting to Know your Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are randomly assigned a partner from another instrument group. Students are given an interview sheet with questions to ask their partner (what instrument do you play? What kinds of music do you like to listen to? What is your favorite song? What is your favorite thing about playing your instrument? Etc) Students begin to brainstorm ideas for their duet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students have a conversation with a peer they don't know to find commonalities and acceptance of differences Students learn about the affordances and constraints of another instrument so they can be informed in their duet writing
Week 5	Duet Composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students work together to write their duet using the compositional techniques learned in lesson 2 and the brainstorming session from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students use this time to write their duet Students problem-solve in real time, make sure everyone has a chance to shine, test out lots of

		<p>lesson 4 as well as the Virtual Machine exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duets should be at least 4 measures long, each instrument needs to use a variety of notes and rhythms (no one should be playing sustained Bb the whole time) • Students write about their experience composing. What was fun about writing the duet? What was challenging? When you came across a problem, how did you solve it? 	different ideas
Week 6	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a larger group, duet partners will play their duets for feedback from students and teacher • What is constructive criticism? • Students will use this feedback to make changes to their duet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn how to give and receive constructive criticism • All comments are made from a place of respect and should not be detrimental to the creative process • “Compliment Sandwich” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Structure comments this way: positive comment- area for improvement- positive comment
Week 7	Composition Part 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners discuss the things they like about their duet and which things they would like to change • They continue to document their experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students use their peers’ comments to improve their duet
Week 8	Showcase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students invite their family and friends to a Showcase Night, where they will perform their duets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students share their hard work and find a sense of pride in this team effort

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to performing, students will prepare 1-2 sentences about how they wrote their duet and their influences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have a new understanding of someone they did not know before
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The following criteria were considered in making this project a successful peacebuilding endeavor:

- 1) Safety: Students understand that everyone’s ideas are equally respected and considered. There are no “bad ideas”. When conflicts arise, students are expected to peacefully arrive at a solution that is beneficial to both parties. The teacher is always available to facilitate this process if necessary.
- 2) Equality: Every student is starting from a place of learning. Each student has a lot to learn from their duet partner. This understanding that we are all here to learn and make music is the backbone of this peacebuilding project.
- 3) Inclusion: While band students come from many different backgrounds, they share a love of music and playing their instruments. Students learn about their partners through the interview process, but the goal is to find common ground and not increase divides.
- 4) Creativity: Every band student has a specific set of musical skills to bring to this duet writing project. With this knowledge, the students can find ways to blend their skill sets together to create a project where both partners can shine and feel pride in their work.
- 5) Quality: Students have a set of criteria to meet when composing their duet. The purpose of this is to give them a “roadmap” to composing, as this is likely their first formal attempt. The criteria do not encroach on the students’ creative process, but instead allows them to feel confident that their finished product will sound organized and well-crafted.

This composition project gives band students an opportunity to express themselves in a musical context and learn to respect and collaborate with the musical ideas of others. Collective music making is one of the great things that humans do, and students can learn about peaceful problem solving through these activities. It is likely that the students will not agree on every musical decision, but the important thing is that they learn to work through the problem with listening ears and an open heart.

Appendix

This video is the creation of the duet by two elementary band teachers (myself and Nicole):

<https://youtu.be/kJzIWJbCufg>

This video is the final product: <https://youtu.be/cGXLnor1yoU>

Bibliography

Urbain, Olivier. (2008). *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics*. I.B Tauris & Co. Ltd.