

Creating Ostinati to Accompany a Canon

Level: Intermediate (Grades 9 or 10 Vocal)

Connection to a Culminating Activity:

This lesson will help students develop their improvising and harmonizing skills in preparation for the culminating activity:

In a group of 4-6, sing a simple canon in 2-3 parts with two accompanying ostinati thereby creating a small ensemble piece to perform for the class.

Overall Expectations:

A1. The Creative Process

Apply the stages of the creative process when performing notated and/or improvised music and composing and/or arranging music

A2. The Elements of Music

Apply elements of music when performing notated and improvised music and composing and/or arranging music

B3. Skills and Personal Growth

Demonstrate an understanding of how performing, creating, and critically analysing music has affected their skills and personal development;

Specific Expectations:

A1.2: Apply the creative process when composing and/or arranging music

A2.2: Manipulate the elements of music and related concepts appropriately when improvising melodies and rhythms

B3.3: Demonstrate an understanding of how performing, creating, and critically analysing music has affected their skills and personal development;

Identify and describe some of the interpersonal skills and work habits that contribute to the successful completion of individual and collaborative musical tasks (e.g., the importance of punctuality, active participation, and active listening, team-building, and leadership skills when participating in ensembles; the importance of preparation and perseverance.

Learning Objectives:

1. To further develop the ability to sing an independent vocal part within an ensemble (polyrhythmic singing) ex. keeping pace with the rhythmic pulse of the group and maintaining good intonation and pitch accuracy
2. To further develop the ability to add/improvise (melody, rhythm, and harmony) individually ovetop of a group accompaniment.
3. To further develop collaborative skills while working with peers

Success Criteria:

1. Students will sing their part in a 3 part canon ensemble demonstrating good intonation and rhythmic accuracy. This will be observed as the teacher circulates from group to group or at the end of the rehearsal time. *HINT: Students who are at the beginning stages of development may feel more confident with a second singer singing along with them initially.*
2. Students will participate in improvisation and demonstrate their progress as the teacher observes and circulates throughout the classroom.
3. Reflection:
 - a. Students will offer encouragement and feedback to their peers respectfully and will suggest their own ideas to the group. This will be observed by the teacher while circulating from group to group.
 - b. At the conclusion of the activity, the teacher will lead a class discussion regarding the collaborative process with specific questions geared to what they observed. Ex: Did leaders emerge? How difficult was it to share ideas? How difficult was it to stay on task? What would you do differently next time with a similar collaboration? etc.

Prior Student Knowledge Required:

1. Confidently and independently sing the major scale:
 - a. With solfege, ascending and descending
 - b. In canon 2- 4 parts (teacher leads the class)
 - c. In thirds thirds with the whole class/with a canon partner/individually ex. D M R F M S etc.
2. Confidently by ear, add pitches to create a triad on the final note of a scale or canon sung by the entire class.
3. Experience improvising short ostinati to accompany a two-bar bass line provided by the teacher (improv song or circle song). Teacher sings a two bar ostinato using neutral syllables, repeating many times inviting students to join in with an improvised ostinati. Opportunities abound here for discussion of form, harmony, dynamics, melodic variation, and rhythmic accuracy, for example.
4. Confidently sing a canon in unison or two parts. For the purpose of this lesson, the canon "[Hey Ho, Nobody Home](#)" from [Rounds and Canons by Beth's Notes](#) will be used. You may use any canon you wish!

Lesson Outline

Instruction #1: Warmup

~ 10-15 minutes

- Use physical warmup exercises that are in your repertoire. ~ 1 minute
- Use vocal warmups in your repertoire. ~ 1 minute
- Include various scale exercises confidently known by students, including the scale in canon ~5-8 min
- Finish with singing the canon, *Hey Ho, Nobody Home* which would have been introduced at least 3 lessons prior to today's lesson. ~3- 4 min

Instruction #2: Terminology Recap and video

~ 15 minutes

Teacher Prompt:

- “Who can tell me the actual musical term for how we sang the major scale or the *Hey Ho Round*?” Answer: *Canon*
- “How would you describe a canon in words?” Ans: *An initial melody is imitated at a specified time interval by one or more parts* (canons at other intervals could be introduced in grade 11).
- “Who knows in what other context besides music the term canon is used? “
Ex. Ans: in literature (collection of books regarded as authentic), religion (a leader or a rule in the Catholic church), medicine (encyclopedia of medical books).

Teacher plays video: [What is the Canon?](#)

~8 minutes

Brief wrap up of the video with observations/comments from the class.

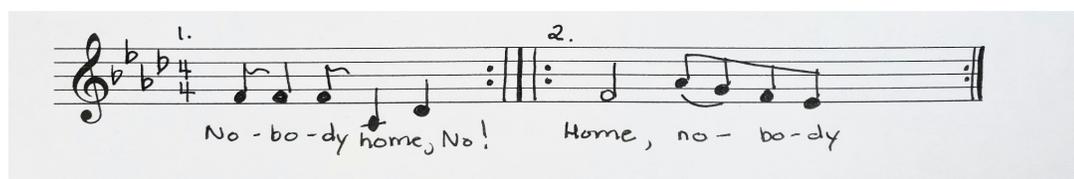
[Continued on next page]

Instruction #3: Principles of improvising effective ostinati ~ 10 minutes

Teacher:

- “All of the canons we will sing this year will be rounds (vs. crazy canon at the 5th or crab canon!) Today we’re going to create ostinati to accompany our round/canon, *Hey Ho*,” in a similar fashion to how we create our improv songs.”
- “Who can tell me some of the principles we’ve used when creating our improv songs?” *ex. Answer: “Ostinati are in the same key and style, rhythm different than the original, ostinati enters when there is ‘space’ in the original, melody moves in a different direction than original and has pitches that harmonize generally well with the original.”*
- “Since our canon has text, we can also use snippets of the text in our ostinati.” Teacher invites a small group of students to sing the melody in unison then sings a sample ostinati to demonstrate (see below).

Teacher invites students to share how the demonstrated ostinati works with the melody and/or provides interest (see above bullet ex. Ans).



ACTIVITY: This part could easily take the rest of the period. You may want to split the rehearsal time between two days if you wish to do another activity on this lesson day.

Teacher: Divide students into small groups. **HINT:** Have groups arranged beforehand to expedite the process and to have a record of group members. It also allows you to choose each group to optimize success for all students.

STUDENT TASK: In a group of 3 or 4:

- Improvise and then choose one ostinati to work as accompaniment for the canon *Hey Ho* to present to the class.
- Sing the canon in parts determining the order of performers. (Students who are at the beginning stages of development may feel more confident with a second singer singing along with them initially.)

STEPS:

1. Group members decide who will first sing the melody while others improvise. Alternate this so everyone has the chance to sing the melody as well as improvise. Teacher circulates to hear improvisation in progress, guiding and providing feedback as needed.
2. Group members choose which ostinati to present to the class.
3. Group decides the order of the entrances for the canon.
4. Group rehearses both the canon in 3 parts and the ostinati. Teacher circulates to offer guidance and feedback. Teacher makes notes regarding students' demonstration of the success criteria.

At the conclusion of the rehearsal time:

- Groups will present their ostinati to the class and their 3 part canon for feedback from the teacher
- Teacher leads the class so that some are singing the canon in 2 parts and others are entering with their ostinati. The teacher can stagger the entrances and the exits to the point of only one ostinati left.

WOW!! WE DID IT!

Extension/Next Steps

1. Class works in groups using CURRENT CANON to compose/improvise a second ostinati, an introduction, and a coda creating an unique composition. Groups present to the class. Teacher evaluates based on a rubric created with the students.
2. Class learns a NEW CANON. Groups created by the teacher. Groups improvise/compose two ostinati, an introduction and a coda to create an unique composition. Groups present to the class. Teacher evaluates based on a rubric created with the students.

This lesson plan on Canons and Ostinati was developed by Tammy Rogerson (B.Mus.Ed., B.Ed, OCT) with Bandology Canada, Inc.

www.bandology.ca

Edited by Alexander Wright (BMus, MA²), Music and Education Co-ordinator

For comments and inquiries, please reach out to info@bandology.ca