



Lesson: Creating a Music Composition with an Audio Accompaniment

OVERVIEW

A composition assignment in which students create original music that is accompanied by a prerecorded audio background.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

1. Combine sounds to create an audio accompaniment track.
2. Use technology to create music.
3. Present a live performance along with the accompaniment track.
4. Create an original music composition for one or more performers.
5. Use either traditional or graphic notation to represent musical sounds.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- A recording device that has a program capable of layering audio tracks and looping recorded sounds (e.g. GarageBand)
- Instruments or voices to perform music created for live performers
- (Optional) Manuscript paper, music notation software, or paper to create graphic scores
- Student copies of the [Using A Prerecorded Soundtrack with a Live Performance](#) reading
- Three audio examples to play to students – these can be found in the Audio Examples folder within the Lessons for Creating Music folder of this curriculum.
 - Abstract Saxophone Example
 - Rhythmic Percussion Example
 - Recorded Speech Example

PROCESS

1. Read the introduction and project description as a class.
2. Play audio examples to demonstrate several approaches to the project.
3. Determine what instrument(s) or voice(s) the live performers will use.
4. Guide students in creation of an original prerecorded track and live composition.
5. Rehearse and perform the pieces.

INFORMATION ABOUT HOW THE AUDIO EXAMPLES WERE CREATED

1. The alto saxophone solo accompaniment was created using the sounds available in the Garage Band program. The sounds were entered using the on-screen keyboard and additional effects were applied to enhance the sounds.
2. The accompaniment for the snare drum solo was created by using the Finale music notation program to create a percussion score using the provided marching percussion sounds. The score was saved as a Smart Music accompaniment. Smart Music was also used to record the solo part along with the accompaniment.
3. The solo flute accompaniment was created by recording, looping, and adding special effects to speech, whistling, tongue clicks, and breath sounds using the Garage Band program. The solo flute parts was improvised and included techniques such as tone distortion and pitch bending. Garage Band was also used to record the solo flute.

Using A Prerecorded Soundtrack with a Live Performance



Alex Shapiro's *Paper Cut* requires the band to perform live music with a prerecorded audio soundtrack. Although combining live and prerecorded sounds is rare in classical concert halls, there have been musical works created that do just that – combine live and recorded sounds. For instance, as early as in 1924, Ottorino Respighi used a recording of a nightingale that is played during a live performance of the third movement, *The Pines of the Janiculum*, in *The Pines of Rome*.

Prerecorded audio tracks used to accompany live performers can set a rhythmic pulse, provide a harmonic background, or add special effects to a performance. The process used to create original music varies from one composer to the next. One composer may start with the solo part or parts first and then create the background after. Other composers may start with a solo melody and then figure out an accompaniment later. Some may work on both at the same time. You can use whatever process works best for you.

Your teaching is going to play three examples that will allow you to hear various kinds of prerecorded musical backgrounds.

1

The first example is more abstract. It does not have a steady pulse and the background creates a mood or atmosphere that sounds more random and improvised. The musical notation that the solo saxophone plays is shown here:



2

The second example uses rhythmic percussion sounds to accompany a drum solo.



3

The third example takes human speech and “loops it” to create a rhythmic background.

CREATE YOUR OWN!

Using a recording program, you are going to create an original piece that either accompanies you on your instrument or with your voice, or accompanies a group of instrumentalists or singers.

The prerecorded accompaniment can be rhythmic or free rhythmic, traditional or contemporary. Solo parts may be written out in traditional music notation, represented with graphic notation (shapes and forms that don't represent specific pitches or rhythms, or improvised and not written down. Have fun creating!

