



VH1 Ultimate Albums Alicia Keys, Songs in A Minor

VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12

Lesson 3

Note to Teachers: The programs viewed in conjunction with these lesson plans may include references, consistent with the eras portrayed, to substance abuse, violent acts, and topics of a sexual and/or political nature. Because this may be considered inappropriate for classroom use in some communities, you are encouraged to review the programs before presenting them to your students, and if necessary, choose those sections that enhance your lesson and are acceptable for use in your classroom.

Objective

- Students will gain a sense of the music business field by creating a promotional plan for an artist.
- Students will discover a balance between marketing a person/product, while maintaining their/its integrity.
- Students will engage in co-curricular activities such as math and management.

NOTE: This lesson is co-curricular and may take multiple days to complete. The project is applicable to business skill development, since many students will likely be managing projects in their future employment. Strive for articulate and well-developed plans.

National Standards for Music Education

4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- Audio playback equipment
- VH1's *Ultimate Albums: Alicia Keys, Songs in A Minor*
- Web-based lesson materials
- Pencils/pens, colored pencils, notebook paper, and staff paper, three-ringed binders (students)
- Copies of Producer/Manager Checklist for students (included with lesson)
- Chalkboard, overhead projector, chart, etc. for brainstorming exercises
- Internet access and research materials
- Alicia Keys' albums *The Diary of Alicia Keys* and *Songs in A Minor*

Prior Knowledge:

- It would be beneficial for students to have completed Lessons one and/or two of this series, and to have watched the entire program.

Procedures

1. Show VH1's *Ultimate Albums: Alicia Keys, Songs in A Minor* in its entirety if students have not yet seen it. Encourage them to take note of the comments made by Alicia's producer and manager, and the various scenarios she has experienced in the music business.
2. After viewing the program, have students use their notes to discuss the music business side of Alicia Keys' career. What successful decisions were made? Were there any mistakes?
3. Have students suggest which elements concerning the management of her career would be most important to the singer (being true to herself, staying true to her music, etc.). How do they think they would represent an artist like Alicia Keys?
4. Divide students into groups of two to four, and tell them that they are now the producers for a new Alicia Keys' album. Assign the students in each group a specific job, such as visual director, economic director, and music director, or allow the students to divide project responsibilities on their own.
5. Distribute copies of the Producer/Manager Checklist, one for each group. Explain to students that the project of producing/marketing a singer's album can be broken down into the following core areas: Budgets and Contracts, Song Production, and Advertising. They will be responsible for all aspects of the new album, including booking support musicians and advertisers. Monitor students' work to assure they are considering/doing the following:
 - Establishing and/or updating contracts
 - Preparing performance lists to be placed at various locations
 - Communicating performance information, photos, resumes or entertainers to Public Relations

and Advertising Sub-committee

- Scheduling performances for approved venues
- Insuring performances start and end on time
- Reviewing performances for future bookings
- Creating confirmation of booking letters to be sent with two copies of contracts (one to be returned) for performance sites
- Creating letters to request budget manager to send deposit checks when signed contracts are received

6. Allow students sufficient time to research the elements of their projects. They should research their client by listening to her music, reviewing the VH1 program, and searching the Internet. They should also research information about music contracts, theaters/performance venues, etc. (See “Supplemental Resources” for helpful research tips.) Students should decide if they want to work on their specific “jobs” individually, and then report back to the group in a project meeting, or if they would prefer to work together as a group, researching the areas one at a time.
7. Have students begin their projects by creating the new Alicia Keys album. Allow them to use two songs from the artist as the basis (selected from any of her albums). Students must evaluate a number of Keys’ songs in order to decide which two belong on the album, and should then create at least ten more tracks to complete it. This could be done in a couple of ways, and can be adapted to suit the musical level of the students and/or the class schedule.
 - Have students relate the details about songs they would like to add, such as the title, tempo, basic lyrics/theme, and instrumentation.
 - Have students write a song or two for the album (others can be created using the above method). This can be done with staff paper or notation software.

Remind students to have variety among the selections, and have them create a final song list that would keep listeners’ attention.

8. Guide students in setting a budget for their production and marketing of the artist and album (a reasonable amount is \$500,000). By setting an initial budget, students will have a platform for spending and subsequently earning money. Remind students that Keys’ producers found performance platforms such as malls and bookstores to cheaply and effectively promote their artist. Students should use their research to help them estimate costs such as performance rental venues, travel, etc., and sources of revenue, such as ticket and album sales.
9. Using their Manager/Producer Checklists, students should work in their groups to complete their marketing and production packages, including information about the artist, her music, performance venues that have been arranged, performances, budget, etc. They should design these packages as if they are going to be presenting them to their “boss,” the CEO of the music studio for which they work. Remind students that CEOs want to see creativity, while also gaining a sense of the details, most importantly, the budget. If the school has a business teacher, consider asking them to come to the class to discuss the various aspects of production and promotion, such as general business practices and contracts, and to help the students create a professional presentation.
10. Have students submit their completed “proposals” in a three-ringed binder, with a title page and clearly marked sections for the different production elements. Ask each group to present their proposal to the rest of the class as if the class is the CEO, and have the class ask questions and comment on its effectiveness.

Producer/Manager Checklist

Directions: You are the producer/manager for Alicia Keys. Your task is to manage and produce her next album and subsequent launch concert. The following checklist will help in creating a complete production and marketing plan to be presented to the CEO of the music studio, but additional items may be added. Be prepared to present your plan, including all pertinent information, in a professional and easy to understand format for the CEO and potential investors.

1. Research the artist and her genre. Does she in fact fall into one genre?
2. Write a description of the artist for potential investors.
3. Create a budget plan for studio time and launch concert.
4. Research a basic musician's contract on the Internet.
5. Book support musicians for the CD and concert. What musicians will be needed and how much will it cost? Does it fit in the budget plan?
6. Research the types of investors who might be interested in backing the artist.
7. Book a location for the concert. Include information about stage and seating specifications, support staff and security needed, etc.
8. Design the costumes for the launch concert. (Use photos and magazine clippings to show examples.)
9. Design posters and invitations for the launch concert.
10. Design an album cover.
11. How will you market the CD (advertising techniques, promotional appearances, etc.)?

Supplemental Resources:

- Students can do the following Internet searches to aid in their research: Free music contracts, ticket master, specific theatre or hall names in the local area. Many theatres provide schematics of their stage layout and seating areas on their Web site, as well as rental costs. Other helpful search terms include: responsibilities of an entertainment manager and general business management.
 - MENC's Careers In Music Web site: www.menc.org/information/infoserv/careersinmusic.htm
 - www.musiccontracts.com
 - Click on Creating your Promotional Package, a free chapter of the book Music Business Made Simple. This chapter may help inspire some students as to how to approach the project.
 - Click on the description of a Personal Manager. Students can view real contracts for live performance, release forms, and management agreements.
- PLEASE NOTE: This site sells production materials - be sure to monitor the students closely.**

National Standards for Music Education

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.



These standards-based materials are provided through a partnership with MENC: The National Association for Music Education. This lesson plan was created by MENC member Patricia Wunsch, New Egypt High School, New Egypt, New Jersey.