



music studio

LESSON PLAN

storytellers

VH1 Storytellers: Wyclef Jean

A VH1 Save the Music Special

VH1 Music Studio

Cable in the Classroom

Lessons for High School School Music Classes

Lesson 2 of 4

(Note to teachers: Please view this videotape for appropriateness for your classes. Some of the lyrics have sexual innuendo and others mention a violent end to the life of a drug dealer.)

Objective

Students will arrange an accompaniment to a folk song, preserving or reinterpreting the song's original intent.

National Standards: Content Standard 4--Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines: Students arrange pieces for voices or instruments other than those for which the pieces were written in ways that preserve or enhance the expressive effect of the music.

Materials

Videotape of VH1 Storytellers Wyclef Jean.

- Television and VCR
- Worksheet printed out from the end of this lesson
- Collection of folk songs [Note: Avoid choosing songs that must be transposed because the chords may be too difficult for students.]
- Recording of the selected music (optional)
- Audio-playback equipment.
- Manuscript paper

Prior Knowledge and Experiences

Students can play first-position major, major-seventh, minor, minor-seventh, and dominant-seventh chords and their barre-chord counter-parts.

Students can play several beginning-to intermediate-level accompaniment patterns.

Students can compose and notate simple melodies using conventional music notation.

Students can notate chord progressions using "slash" notation.

Procedures

1. Have students view and listen to the first segment of the video Wyclef Jean: Storytellers. In this segment Wyclef reinterprets a song from hip-hop tradition to country.
2. Discuss with students what an accompaniment in, as Wyclef says, the style of Johnny Cash does to the expressive effect of the music. Lead students into a discussion of what the song might sound like in another style, for example, surf, 1950s rock, or Gregorian chant. Discuss the reasons for creating an arrangement different from the original.
3. Explain to the class that they are going to create a new accompaniment for a familiar song.
4. Present a number of folk songs to the class and help them arrive at a consensus about which five or six songs to use. Have each student select one of the songs. If recordings are available, play and discuss the styles they hear in the five or six selected songs.
5. Have students, working individually or in groups, develop scratch lead sheets for their songs. Explain that they should write the treble clef and key signature, lyrics under the staff, measure bars, slashes for beats in each measure, guitar chord symbols above the slashes, and metronomic marking.
6. Review with students the chords of each of the five or six songs. Help students simplify any chords that are too complex for them.
7. Ask students to choose accompaniment styles for their songs that meet these two criteria: (1) they can play the accompaniment acceptably; and (2) the new accompaniment either preserves the original style of the song or a given recording of it or creates a new interpretation of the song. Explain that they might explore accompaniment styles such as Carter-style strum, Travis-style finger-picking, thumb-brush strum with alternating bass, and reggae strum, or they might create an original strum.
8. Have students write final copies of their lead sheets, including an indication of the chosen style, as well as the title, composer, lyricist, and copyright information.
9. With the class singing, have each student perform his or her accompaniment and explain whether the purpose was to preserve or to change the original song.

Indicators of Success

Students create arrangements that either preserve or reinterpret the song.

Students accurately perform the new accompaniment and explain how it is appropriate.

This lesson is adapted from *Strategies for Teaching Middle-Level and High School Guitar*, Compiled and Edited by William E. Purse, James L. Jordan, and Nancy Marsters (MENC, 1998).

VH1, in partnership with Cable in the Classroom, collaborated with MENC: The National Association for Music Education to develop this series of lessons.



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.