Let’s Create a Song!!!

— by Kevin S. Camilleri

Seven Simple Principles to Creating a Song

Using Percussion

and the Ostinato

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BANG A GONG, Let’s Create A Song!!!
Seven Simple Principles to Creating a Song Using Percussion and The Ostinato

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Overview for BANG A GONG, Let’s Create A Song

BANG A GONG, Let’s Create a Song presents seven simple principles or mini lessons that can be used to teach and create music through the use of ostinati and percussion instruments. What better way for children (and adults) to learn music than through the concept of creation by composing simple repetitious rhythms (ostinati) and performing them for their class and school?

Regardless of the teacher’s ability, using percussion instruments proves to be one of the most sought after means of teaching music to children. Percussion instruments can be purchased inexpensively, or students can make their own out of found objects, emulating percussion groups such as Stomp. Through using percussion instruments, children enjoy learning about music, and teachers enjoy teaching the curriculum.

New trends in education stress exploration, creation and hypothesizing. Children learn best by doing. This thematic unit provides a new music program that is easy to follow and fun to learn. It is based on several ideas and concepts derived from my experience teaching Orff and Kolday, as well as my own percussion methodology. Included in this package are visual resources, teacher assessment tools and suggestions for students that require extra help or more of a challenge.

BANG A GONG, Let’s Create a Song is intended to be taught as a sequential, thematic unit; although, an experienced music teacher may wish to focus on a specific lesson or concept. This unit can be used as the primary teaching source for a music class, or as a supplement to other curriculum based music units. Depending on the teacher/student experience the timeline will vary.

A final musical composition and group performance completes the unit as a summative assessment.

Learn & Create & Enjoy!!!

Kevin S. Camilleri
Using Ostinati

The ostinato (ostinati -pl.) is a pattern of notes, rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic patterns which are repeated over and over e.g. singing a round with *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* or *Three Blind Mice*. Children find security in repetition. This is one reason ostinati provide the basic framework in Orff-Schulwerk* and is the premise for the unit *BANG A GONG, Let’s Create A Song*.

There are many benefits in teaching music through the use of ostinati. Due to the tension and rhythmic independence between ostinato parts, the children become familiar with:

1) The fundamental principals of composition
2) Aural awareness
3) Musical memory
4) Rhythmic independence
5) Developing coordination

The application of the ostinato in *BANG A GONG, Let’s Create A Song* offers students the opportunity to play and create music at any stage of their musical understanding and ability. For all of these reasons, the ostinato device pervades all media at all levels of instruction.

Note: In this unit we have decided to call the combination of several ostinati in a polyphonic form an “ostinato composition”. We realized that the composition is comprised of ostinati but the musical device used as the basis for the composition is the ostinato, therefore the ostinato composition.

* The term *schulwerk* is the German term for schooling or schoolwork. Orff Schulwerk, also known as the Orff-Method is an approach to Music Education geared toward children. It was developed by the German Composer Carl Orff (1895-1982), while he was Music Director at Günther-Schule in Munich. While at this school of dance and music, he also collaborated with Gunild Keetman to fully develop his method.

Using Percussion Instruments

Students are fascinated by sound, especially something that is percussive. What better way to learn, create and play music then by introducing percussion instruments into the music class? With a little knowledge of beat and rhythm (as taught in this unit), teachers can easily lead a music class of percussionists. From the very start of this unit, percussive sounds are performed using the body. As the unit progresses, students are introduced to non-pitched percussion instruments such as shakers and drums. A study of pitched percussion instruments follows with the application of glockenspiels, metalophones, and xylophones. Suggestions for the selection of percussion instruments are provided, as well as methods of substituting and creating your own instruments.

By using percussion instruments within class and group ensembles, students will learn to listen, to appreciate and to help one another in collective musical endeavors, providing them with an ideal medium for texture and colour exploration. It will be the motivational basis for the students as well as the teacher.

The Pentatonic Scale

The frequency of the notes in a given scale is usually related to mathematical law.

The ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras (approximately 500 B.C.) is generally credited with having discovered the concept of musical intervals and the like, thus creating a musical scale.

Scales in traditional Western European music consist of eight notes, starting on one given note and working their way up to the first octave of the starting note.
C major scale

\begin{align*}
\text{e.g.} & \quad C & D & E & F & G & A & B & C \\
(\text{do}) & (\text{re}) & (\text{mi}) & (\text{fa}) & (\text{sol}) & (\text{la}) & (\text{ti}) & (\text{do})
\end{align*}

Pentatonic Scales on the other hand, are scales formed of five notes, deriving its name from the Greek word \textit{pente} meaning five. In many pentatonic scales, the 4th and 7th notes of the Western Scales are removed to form the scale.

\begin{align*}
\text{e.g.} & \quad C & D & E & *F & G & A & *B & C \\
(\text{do}) & (\text{re}) & (\text{mi}) & (\text{fa}) & (\text{sol}) & (\text{la}) & (\text{ti}) & (\text{do})
\end{align*}

The 4th note F and the 7th note B in the C major Western scale, are removed to form the C major pentatonic scale below. The 4th and 7th degrees of The Western scales are called half steps or sharps and flats.

\begin{align*}
\text{e.g} & \quad C & D & E & G & A \\
(\text{do}) & (\text{re}) & (\text{mi}) & (\text{sol}) & (\text{la})
\end{align*}

Teachers need not be an expert in musical theory for this unit, although further exploration on whole and half steps is encouraged.

The ostinato compositions taught in \textit{BANG A GONG, Let’s Create a Song}, allow students to explore the use of the C major pentatonic scale. By using this pentatonic scale, students will be able to create simple ostinato compositions.

Pentatonic scales have been used quite frequently in the folk music of various countries, including the music of China, ancient Scotland, and more recently in Western 20th Century music by Carl Orff, Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel.

In \textit{BANG A GONG, Let’s Create a Song}, students will not only learn how to play music using the pentatonic scales, but will also have the opportunity to explore the cultural heritage of the scale.

\textit{Composition}

A musical composition is defined as being a piece of musical work that has been created.

Throughout \textit{BANG A GONG, Let’s Create a Song}, several mini culminating tasks are included throughout such as students having to compose simple short musical works consisting of body and non-pitched percussion and the ostinato.

When the concept of pitched percussion and the pentatonic scale is introduced, student compositions are expanded into melodic form, yet still keeping the simple concept of ostinati.

The summative or main culminating task of this unit combines everything learned into one major composition thus becoming The Grand Composition. A Grand Performance of the students compositions completes the unit.

\textit{Group Participation And Performance}

There can be much joy in creating and performing music in cooperation with others.

Group participation and performance remains consistent throughout \textit{BANG A GONG, Let’s Create a Song}.
Group collaboration builds up performance confidence. Together, the children see and hear their musical creations come to life when it is performed for others. Students become aware that they possess this creative ability and nothing is more self-affirming or contributes more to a growing desire to learn then tapping into the talents that we possess.

**Music and Literacy**

Through countless studies, there appears to be a relationship between musical development and language skills development. This connection seems to exist regardless of age or the presence or absence of language disabilities.

Music study appears to aid language development. Students who have studied music have better perception as well as better articulation skills.
The following pages are taken from *Bang a Gong, let’s Create a Song*. They are not consecutive pages but selections to give the viewer an idea of the progression of the program and quality of the material.
20) Ask: Do you notice anything different about this side of the cards?
(There are symbols at the beginning and end of the cards.)

(card #1)

21) Explain that these are called repeat signs. When these signs are placed at the beginning and at the end of a musical passage, it means that whatever is between them is repeated. This is called an ostinato.

22) An ostinato is a short musical pattern that is repeated. The plural of ostinato is ostinati. These special rhythm cards that you see are called speech ostinati. A speech ostinato is a group of words combined together and repeated.

23) Sometimes an ostinato may have a number above it to tell you how many times it is to be repeated. Below is an example of a speech ostinato that is to be said 3 times.

(repeat three times)

24) Tell students that they are now going to perform something fun together. They will be putting on a class performance of speech ostinati. There will be no set number of times the ostinato will have to be repeated.

Group Work
1) Divide the class into 3 or 4 large groups and give or display the following ostinato cards to each group.

Group 1 will be Ostinato #1

Group 2 will be Ostinato #2

Group 3 will be Ostinato #3

Teacher or a fourth group will recite the poem Hey Friend.

2) The entire class starts off by patting the beat on their knees (beat can also be played on a drum).

3) Count group one in by saying (1-2-ready-play). Group one repeats their ostinato over and over without stopping.

4) While group one is still repeating their ostinato, count group two in by saying (1-2-ready-play). Group two repeats their ostinato over and over without stopping.
Beat: a steady pulse
The beat in music is like our own heartbeat. If the music or song gets faster, the beat gets faster and if we run or move around quickly, our heartbeat becomes quicker too.

Conductor
A musical conductor is someone who can control the tempo of a musical piece, therefore making the beat get faster or slower. The conductor is the leader of a band, orchestra or chorus, who makes sure that everyone is playing or singing the right thing, in the right way, at the right time. The conductor can do this by using something that looks like a stick, called a Baton, or simply using his/her hands. The conductor stands in front of the group and directs them throughout the performance.

Repeat Signs
When these signs are placed at the beginning and at the end of a musical passage, it means that whatever is between them is repeated.

Ostinato: a short musical pattern that is repeated
An ostinato figure may have a number above it showing how many times it is to be repeated.

Ostinati: more than one ostinato

Speech Ostinato: a group of words combined together (plural: speech ostinati)

*An example of a speech ostinato that is to be said 3 times

(repeat three times)  \[\boxed{\text{Slurp \ Slurp \ Slurp \ Crunch}}\]

Musical composition: when a musician creates (composes) music in his or her own way

Speech ostinato composition: the creation of an original ostinato using only words
1) The beat in music is like our own heartbeat, if the music or song gets faster, it gets faster and if we run or move around quickly, our heartbeat becomes quicker too.

2) A conductor is someone who can make the beat in music get faster or slower by using something that looks like a stick, called a baton.

3) These are called repeat signs. When these signs are placed at the beginning and at the end of a musical passage, it means that whatever is between them is repeated.

4) An ostinato is a short musical pattern that is repeated. It may have a number above it showing how many times it is to be repeated.

5) The plural form of the answer in question 4) is called ostinati.

6) A group of words combined together and repeated is called a speech ostinato. More than one would be called speech ostinati.

7) When a musician creates (composes) music in his or her own way, it becomes a musical composition.

8) The creation of an original ostinato using words only is called a speech ostinato.
8) Ask: What did you notice about the beat? (It got slower and faster)

9) Explain to the students that there is a word in music called tempo.
The word tempo comes from the Italian word meaning time, and refers to the pace or speed of the piece of music.
Tempo markings are in Italian and range from adagio meaning very slow to presto meaning very fast. The musical conductor controls the tempo. Tempi is the plural of tempo, meaning more than one tempo or speed. The musical conductor controls the tempo.

10) Tell the students that they are now going to learn something called body percussion.
Body percussion is the term for percussive sounds that are created by using parts of our body.

11) Go over and demonstrate with the class the body percussion sounds at the bottom of the overhead and student page (for now, disregard the shapes).
• Clap (clap hands together one time)
• Patsch (pat knee one time)
• Hand Slide (rub hands together in one motion one time)
• Snap (snap fingers one time)
• Stomp (stamp foot one time)
• Trample feet (continuous, rapid stamping of feet)

12) Explain that the different shapes around the words represent a body percussion sound that is going to be placed around certain words in Tubby and Bones.

13) Tell students that we are going to put each body percussion shape around the words that have the heartbeat above it. By doing this, we can hear the beat better.

14) Teacher and student do the following on the overhead and student sheet respectively:
• Each time you see the word “Tubby” and “Snow”, draw a square around them. Have the children say the poem while patsching on the words “Tubby” and “Snow”.
• Each time you see the words “Bones” and “Down”, draw a circle around it. Have the students include clapping on the word “Bones” and “Down” while continuing to patsch on “Tubby” and “Snow”.

Continue throughout the poem adding the following symbols to each word. Remember to start the poem and perform the actions after each shape is drawn.

• Underline “out” and “they” (Handslide).
• Draw a Triangle around the words “sneakers” and “it” (Snap).
• Draw a Squiggly Line under the words “shivering” and “shaking” (Trample Feet).
• Draw a Diamond around the words “walk”, “socks”, “cold” and “home” (Stomp).

Once every beat is covered with the symbols it should look like this:
6) Hand out the following instruments to students (or substitute instruments for others):
   - Student #1 - wood block or claves/rhythm sticks
   - Student #2 - cowbell
   - Student #3 - guiro or cabasa
   - Student #4 - triangle or finger cymbal
   - Student #5 - hand drum
   - Student #6 - maraca or shaker

7) Explain that these 6 students will now play their instruments in place of the body percussion symbols on the word.
   - Student #1 - plays wood block or claves/rhythm sticks instead of clapping
   - Student #2 - plays cowbell instead of patsching
   - Student #3 - plays guiro or cabasa in place of handslide
   - Student #4 - plays triangle or finger cymbal in place of snapping
   - Student #5 - plays hand drum in place of stomping
   - Student #6 - plays maraca or shaker in place of trample feet

8) Have the six students perform *Tubby and Bones* with the new instrument parts. You may choose to have the students without instruments continue with the body percussion and then switch parts with the students who do have the instruments. Have students practice with and without saying the words as well.

   Observe that the students are playing the instruments properly.

**Group Work**

1) Students assemble in their percussion ensembles.

2) Distribute each group with several non-pitched percussion instruments.

3) Hand back charts of their lesson 3 group poems.

4) Explain to the students that they are going to do the same thing to their own poems as we did to *Tubby and Bones*.

5) Have the students substitute their body percussion parts in their poems with the non-pitched percussion instruments they have in their possession. Include the parts in the legend.

   You may want to split up the group so some are using the instruments while the others are still using body percussion. Make sure the students try their poems with and without saying the words at the same time as playing.

6) Have groups practice. The teacher, or a different student from another group, may want to conduct or use a drum to keep a steady beat for each of the ensembles. Have them play at various speeds (tempi) for more of a variation and challenge.

7) Once all percussion ensembles have practiced, have them perform for the class.

8) Have them hand in charts for assessment.

9) Hand out Lesson 4 Activity Review Sheet (B.L.M. #4b) for homework or further class work.

**Homework / Class work Extension**

- Lesson 4 Review Sheet: Fill in the blanks (B.L.M. #4b)
4) Review by asking the students what these are called (ostinati).

5) Turn cards over to display Side B of each card.

6) Ask students what differences they notice between the one-syllable words compared to the two-syllable words. If they have never been exposed to these notes before, a typical response may be, “The one-syllable words have a hockey stick over them and the two-syllable words have two hockey sticks attached at the top.”

7) Tell students that all of the one-syllable words have a symbol above them called a quarter note. Any time we see a quarter note we play our instrument one time, just like a one-syllable word. Notice that each heartbeat is played at the same time as each quarter note. Therefore, in the following example, a **quarter note equals one beat**.

8) For this unit we are only dealing with ostinati that have 4 beats, therefore 4/4 time. The time signature 4/4 tells us that there are 4 beats in each *measure* or *bar* (the number on top) and that each quarter note has the value of one beat (the number on the bottom). See the glossary.

Just like fractions in Math, $4/4 = 1$, one 4/4 measure has 4 beats. Using the Note Tree, observe how a whole note (4 beats), can be divided into 2 half notes (2 beats each) and then 4 quarter notes (1 beat each) and then 8 eighth notes (1/2 beat each).
Continue by asking: what if we want to play our percussion instrument two times for every beat as in a two-syllable word such as Slur-py? We would have to take the quarter note and split it in half to become two eighth notes. (Half of 1/4 is 1/8).

9) One quarter note cut in half becomes two eighth notes. It is still played on one beat:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{-quarters note} & \quad \text{eighth notes} \\
\text{cut in half becomes} & \quad \text{Slurpy}
\end{align*}
\]

10) We then draw a line connecting the two eighth notes at the top to indicate that it equals one beat.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{one beat} & = \text{two eighth notes attached together at the top} \\
\text{Slurpy} & = \text{two-syllable word}
\end{align*}
\]

11) If appropriate, challenge the students by asking them if they can think of anything else that can represent a quarter split in half, which becomes two eighths. You may want to draw them or list on the board.

12) Have students practice drawing quarter notes and two eighth notes on a piece of paper or in their notebooks (always use a pencil).

**Group Work**

1) Assemble students in their percussion ensembles.

2) Hand back their percussion portfolios with their individual speech ostinati that they created in lesson 2.

3) Once the students are able to draw a good quarter note and attached eight notes, have them draw with pencil the appropriate notes above the words in their speech ostinati.

**Remember:**

- **Quarter Note** = 1 Syllable words
- **Eighth Notes** = 2 Syllable words

**Card Example #1**

- **Theme/Topic:** Primary Colours
- **Percussion Ensemble Name:** The Percussion Monsters
- **Percussionist:** Joshua

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yum-my} & \quad \text{Yum-my} \\
\text{Yum} & \quad \text{Yum}
\end{align*}
\]

**Card Example #2**

- **Theme/Topic:** Primary Colours
- **Percussion Ensemble Name:** The Percussion Monsters
- **Percussionist:** Maya

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yellow} & \quad \text{Blue} \\
\text{Yellow} & \quad \text{Blue}
\end{align*}
\]

**Card Example #3**

- **Theme/Topic:** Primary Colours
- **Percussion Ensemble Name:** The Percussion Monsters
- **Percussionist:** Alexander

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Red} & \quad \text{Red} \\
\text{Red} & \quad \text{Yellow}
\end{align*}
\]
8) Give one card to each student and have them separately practice and play the notes of their ostinato while the class says the words (speech ostinati). Try to have the class match the pitch of the note while the student plays it.

9) With the class silent now, have all three students play their ostinati together. Teacher or student keeps the beat on an instrument or by conducting.

10) Turn over the card to Side B (or use your own example) and have the same group of three students (or another group) try the new example. For this example there are more pentatonic notes per word/beat always starting on the note C (tonic note).

- **Card #1**
  - C D E G
  - Slurp Slurp Slurp Crunch

- **Card #2**
  - C E C E C D
  - Mus-tard and Re-lish and

- **Card #3**
  - C C G G A G
  - Yum-my Yum-my Yum Yum

**Group Work**

1) Have students take their Student Ostinato Cards and assemble into their percussion ensembles.

2) Give each student a pitched percussion instrument, or 1 per group if you are limited. Make sure they take proper care of their instrument.

3) Have them choose notes from the pentatonic scale and with a pencil draw them underneath or over the quarter and eighths notes like the example.

   Remember: every quarter note will have one note (1-syllable words) and every pair of eighths notes will have two notes (2-syllable words).

4) Have them practice independently and then as a group, repeating their rhythms together.

5) Teacher monitors groups as they practice together.

6) Have each group perform for class.

**Note:** If the teacher or another student is able to play a melodic instrument such as the guitar or keyboard, it works well as an accompaniment to the C pentatonic ostinato. Just strum or play the chords C (tonic) and G (dominant) throughout each pitched percussion ostinato. This helps keep time and provides a nice accompaniment to the ostinati. The three examples below indicate what beats the two chords can be played on by a guitar or keyboard. Try varying the rhythms.
The Ostinato Grand Composition example (OHM #7a)

1. Combine all three ostinati from the rhythm cards into one composition.
2. Assign each ostinati a different instrument.
3. All ostinati are to be played a total of 4 times (optional).
4. Ostinato #4 is left blank because there are only 3 members in this ensemble.
5. Speech ostinati can be left out (optional).

Percussion Ensemble Name: The Percussion Monsters
Teacher: Mr. Camilleri
Grade/Class: ________

Ostinato #1: Percussionist: Joshua                Instrument: Body Percussion / Patsching
Ostinato #2: Percussionist: Alexander            Instrument: Non-Pitched / Cabasa
Ostinato #3: Percussionist: Maya                 Instrument: Pitched / Xylophone
Ostinato #4: Percussionist: ______               Instrument: ________________