



Eclectic Styles: A Tool to Motivate and Teach Creativity and Technique

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Why include alternative styles of music in your teaching, both in and out of the curricular day?

Alternative styles of music such as fiddling, jazz, mariachi, Latin and rock are particularly effective in addressing the following National Standards:

- Creating/improvising/composing
- Evaluating and refining
- Performing a varied repertoire
- Listening to, analyzing and describing music.
- Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
- Understanding music in relation to history and culture.
- Invite the participation non-traditional instruments (guitar, banjo, electric strings etc.)
- Stimulate alternative educational/social environment for multi-age, mixed-ability, and heterogeneous instrumental group instruction. That's a fancy way of saying kids love it, everybody can participate, and the music is really cool.
- Students are more thoroughly engaged by active creation than in flawless replication.
- The form and traditional performance practice of playing these tunes invites but does not necessarily require repetition, improvisation, stylistically specific ornamentation, speed variation, bowing variation, ear-training, and other pedagogical elements critical to string teaching.
- Invites students to engage in cooperative, cross-cultural, national heritage, interdisciplinary, exploratory, self-directed, and other learning experiences. Leadership is encouraged and nurtured.
- Traditional music making is participatory, and invites a sense of community.

Fiddling

- Fiddle groups need a solo instrument, a bass line, and a harmony instrument.
- Fiddle tunes can and should be taught by ear.
- An arrangement simply means deciding the order of the tune and the breaks and then which instrument will play the tune, harmony and bass lines in each section. Students can arrange music.

Mariachi

- The traditional instruments: Modern Mariachi ensembles often consist of six violins, guitar, guitarron, vihuela, singers and two or three trumpets.
- The violins normally play in harmony with the first violin playing the melody. Bowing patterns are always uniform as they would be in a classical orchestra.
- The guitar and vihuela often play synchronized rhythms. Sometimes the vihuela adds varied rhythmic patterns to create forward motion.
- Guitar and vihuela players serve both a harmonic and rhythmic function in the ensemble. The guitarron plays the bass line in octaves, most often on the beat but sometimes off. Guitarron, guitar and vihuela players make up the rhythm section known as the armonia.
- Trumpets can double the melody but often provide rhythmic and melodic fills to add color and interest to the music.

Latin

- Latin music is characterized by the “clave” or groove. These rhythmic patterns are established in the rhythm section and form the basis of the music. The music is often layered and forms a rhythmic jigsaw puzzle.
- The tunes are very melodic and intuitive for classical players. Syncopation is dominant. The tunes are often easier to learn by ear than by reading. This is dance music and styles include, Merengue, Tango, Mambo, Cha Cha Cha, Boléro, Samba, and others.



Jazz

- Swing is difficult to define in words or in exact musical terms, but when it is played, swing can be heard and felt. Part of the swing feel is in the way eighth notes are played. Traditional eighth notes are played as even divisions of quarter notes. Two swung eighth notes still equal a quarter note, but the first one is a little longer and the second a little shorter.
- Syncopation also plays a part in making jazz “swing”. Phrases often begin by anticipating or delaying the downbeat by an eighth note.
- The rhythm section and the beat are of utmost importance.

Rock

- Rock is a great way to teach part function and chamber music concepts.
- It works with large groups or small.
- It is also a great way to teach how to read and use lead sheets to create component parts.
- Student composing and arranging works well in this genre.

Teaching Improvisation

- Echo rhythms or melodic patterns in mass. Then individually (1/2/4)
- Echo rhythms or melodic patterns in a conversation in mass then individually. (1/2/4)
- Play follow the leader with rhythms or melodic patterns and then with variation parameters. (1/2/4)
- Play 12 bar solos with each student playing 1 bar or rhythm or pitches then progress to 2 and 4 etc.
- Half the group plays every other bar while the other half improvises rhythm or melody then (1/2/4)
- Play every other bar of tune and improvise alternate bars then progress to 2 and 4 etc.
- Students Improvise with rhythms or melodic patterns (1/2/4)
- Ideas include - articulation, rhythm, rests, dynamics, slurs, pitches, upper/lower neighbors, fills, double stops, string crossings, bowings, interval skips, riffs/ostinato, drones, harmony.

Tunes in order of presentation

Fiddling Old-Time - “Boil Them Cabbage Down”
Rock - “Frere Rock-A”
Jazz/Blues/Rock – “De Blues”
Mariachi – Cielito Lindo
Latin - “Señor Samba”
Rock - “Great Balls of Fire,” “Wizards In Winter”

Resources

Jazz Philharmonic and *Jazz Philharmonic: Second Set*, Sabien and Phillips
Fiddlers Philharmonic and *Fiddlers Philharmonic Encore!*, Dabczynski and Phillips
Basic Fiddlers Philharmonic: Old Time, Dabczynski and Phillips
Basic Fiddlers Philharmonic: Celtic, Dabczynski and Phillips
Mariachi Philharmonic, Nieto and Phillips
Sound Innovations, Phillips, Sheldon, and Boonshaft
Latin Philharmonic, Phillips and Lopez
Rock Philharmonic, Phillips and Silberman
String Alternatives Series of performance music for strings, Alfred Music
Belwin Pop Series of performance music for strings – rock arrangements, Alfred Music