

Composition with Handchimes - It's Elemental

A Lesson Plan with Animated
PowerPoint Examples

by Paul Weller



a resource for members of
Handbell Musicians
OF AMERICA



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Introduction

Elemental music is music in its most unadorned state. It employs patterns, simple forms, ostinati, and sequences. Carl Orff, the visionary of this musical style, describes elemental music as, “near the earth, natural, physical, within the range of everyone to learn it and experience it and suitable for the child...” Even though this elemental music is basic, it is far from boring or simple. How then does one compose using handchimes, a classroom full of students or a handbell/hand-chime choir, and elemental music? Here is one example:

Lesson Plan

Objective: Compose a 16 beat melody using the pentatonic scale

Level: Depending on the variables, any grade level, for the purposes here: 3rd Grade

Process – Stage One: Rhythmic Elements

- Decide on a form. Choose from elemental form guide.
 - aaab; aaba; abab; abba; abac
- Students improvise a 4 beat rhythmic phrase for the a-section
- Students improvise a 4 beat rhythmic phrase for the b-section
- Students improvise a 4 beat rhythmic phrase for the c-section (if applicable)
- Perform rhythm together with claps and rhythmic language

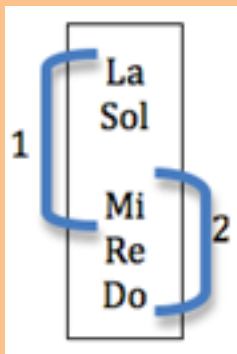


Click [HERE](#) to download accompanying PowerPoint Slides.

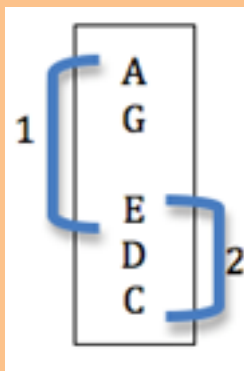
(Please note that the PowerPoint slides included with this lesson have multiple options for a single slide view and they are not intended to be used as a sequence in their entirety.)

	1	2	3	4
a	♪	♪♪	♪	♪
b	♪♪	♪♪	♪	♪
a	♪	♪♪	♪	♪
c	♪♪	♪♪	♪	♪

Rhythmic Final Product



Solfege Pitch Ladder



Letter Name Ladder

	1	2	3	4
a				
	G	AA	G	E
b				
	CC	DD	E	E
a				
	G	AA	G	E
c				
	EE	DD	C	

Melodic Final Product

Process – Stage Two: Melodic Elements

This can be accomplished with either solfege or letter names or solfege transfer to letter names

- Echo sing patterns from a pitch ladder
- Students improvise a melody from the pitch ladder from "chunk 1" (mi/sol/la) to add to the rhythm of the a-section
- Students improvise a melody from the pitch ladder from "chunk 2" (mi/re/do) to add to the rhythm of the b-section
- Copy the melody for 3rd phrase (a-section)
- Students improvise a melody from the pitch ladder from "chunk 2" (mi re do) to add to the rhythm of the c-section
- Sing entire melody on solfege or clap with rhythm and letter names
- Transfer to handchimes. Saying letters/solfege while playing
- All students should be involved either by ringing the chimes or clapping and saying the rhythm

Process – Stage Three: Accompaniment/Larger structure

- Play the created melody with just the upper octave chimes
- Add a chord or broken drone for the accompaniment.
- Add an introduction using the bordun for 4 or 8 beats
- Have the students improvise the larger arrangement of the song form
 - i.e.: introduction (4 beats) play melody alone 1x; add bordun and play melody again 1x; end with 4 beats of bordun alone.



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