

ASTA National Curriculum: The Creative Track

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During school residencies as well as the teacher training clinics I've presented for MEA and ASTA state conferences and at **Strings Without Boundaries** each summer at Duquesne, I've seen first-hand how uncomfortable many string teachers still feel about including improvisation or alternative styles in their curriculum. For most, these topics weren't offered during their years of training. The scores and books we now have available are extremely supportive, but there is still a high level of discomfort when it comes to incorporating creativity into the curriculum without visual aides.

When Steve Benham invited me to develop the **Creative Musicianship** section for the Curriculum, I had already begun advocating the incorporation of "mini-weaves" into my approach to teacher training; brief games and tasks derived from current repertoire that lead the student step-by-step into a comfort level with exploring and expressing creativity and leadership that don't devour major chunks of time from the school-year agenda because they are woven into that agenda in a complementary fashion.

Given the small role the creative curriculum section would take in such a comprehensive book, the invitation was a welcome, yet unexpectedly daunting task. How does one distill the essence of teaching creativity into a single haiku? We wove certain skills that are unique to American and world styles— like aural acuity—into the larger work, but the choices were overwhelming for the creative section itself.

Ultimately, I narrowed the chapter down to the development of the skills and knowledge base that can provide the building blocks for creativity and American and world styles: **rhythmic, tonal** —melodic and harmonic — **textural**, and **compositional**. In addition, I added a fifth element called **creative leadership** because I believe that when students are given the opportunity to experience the role of leadership, they are compelled to think for themselves, hone their communication skills, and experience creative empowerment. They also learn to appreciate and respect anyone else — student or teacher — who wears those shoes.

References:

The Creative Band and Orchestra (book) by Julie Lyonn Lieberman

Improvising Violin (book) by Julie Lyonn Lieberman

Alternative Strings: The New Curriculum (book & CD) by Julie Lyonn Lieberman

The Contemporary Violinist (book & CD) by Julie Lyonn Lieberman

Planet Musician (book & CD) by Julie Lyonn Lieberman

Creative Conducting (book) by Julie Lyonn Lieberman (due out by Fall, 2011)

See: www.JulieLyonn.com and click on "Upcoming Events" to see video examples of student conductors leading orchestral improvisations!

Category 2: Musicianship Skills and Knowledge (cont.)

Baseline

Developing

Proficient

Advanced

Content Area 2C—Creative Musicianship
*Students demonstrate **creative musicianship** skills at all stages of development, including the ability to improvise variations of rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic patterns, within the traditions and standards of a variety of genres and practices; arrange and compose melodies and harmonies according to specific criteria and guidelines.*

XVI. 1.1—Rhythmic: Students derive rhythm patterns from speech and environmental sounds and link them with the motion of the bow-hand
XVII. 1.2—Tonal (Melodic & Harmonic): Students create one-note solos against a class-generated accompaniment
XVIII. 1.3—Textural: Students reproduce sound effects from their environment on their instruments (exploratory focus)
XIX. 1.4—Compositional: Students invent scoring techniques based on common objectives
XX. 1.5—Creative Leadership: Students invent their own physical language for conducting

XI. 2.1—Rhythmic: Students teach each other short original rhythmic phrases through call-and-response
XII. 2.2—Tonal (Melodic & Harmonic): Students use the root, third, and fifth of a chord to solo over student-generated accompaniment
XIII. 2.3—Textural: Students translate a visual or experiential narrative into original sounds on their instruments (music as storytelling)
XIV. 2.4—Compositional: Students add traditional notation into their original scores
XV. 2.5—Creative Leadership: Students rehearse conducting the group with individually created hand signals

VI.3.1—Rhythmic: Students layer individual rhythmic phrases to create an original group piece
VII. 3.2—Tonal (Melodic & Harmonic): Students create solos using the notes of the scale as stepping-stones between chord tones
VIII. 3.3—Textural: Students translate a visual or experiential narrative into original sounds on their instruments and add rhythmic components (rhythmic focus)
IX. 3.4—Compositional: Students add a second instrument to their original scores
X.3.5—Creative Leadership: Student conductors lead extemporaneous sound stories using nonverbal

I. 4.1—Rhythmic: Students analyze rhythmic phrases for tonal content and improvise over class-generated accompaniments
II. 4.2—Tonal (Melodic & Harmonic): Students create solos using three scales over class-generated three-chord harmonic motion
III. 4.3—Textural: Students improvise descriptive stories, including melody and harmony (harmonic focus)
IV.4.4—Compositional: Students add third and fourth parts to their original scores
V. 4.5—Creative Leadership: Students combine original scores with student-conducted improvised sections