

Beyond Rote Learning: An Audiation Approach to Piano Repertoire

Alberta Piano Teachers Association

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APTITUDE <https://giml.org/mlt/aptitude/>

1. Not visible
2. Everyone has music aptitude—approximately 84% of the population is born with average or above average music aptitude¹
3. Highest at birth therefore preschool years are vital for learning music

AUDIATION <https://giml.org/mlt/audiation/>

1. Forms the foundation for music literacy
2. Process of thinking music
3. Benefits include:
 - a. Understanding not just imitating; not only inner hearing
 - b. Listening with understanding: hearing differences and changes
 - c. Reading and writing notation while hearing it in your head
 - d. Active participation in music (Music becomes your “property”)
4. Audiation can be learned at any stage of life

CONTEXT AND CONTENT

1. Context forms the foundation for audiation and is comprised of meter and tonality
 - a. Rhythm: feel the macrobeat and microbeat
 - b. Tonality: sing the “resting tone” or tonal center
2. Content:
 - a. Tonal and rhythm patterns form the smallest unit of meaning in music
 - b. Learning is most efficient when these are separated initially and later combined
3. Context and Content together lead to musical comprehension

LANGUAGE AND MUSIC

Language—the result of need to communicate *Music*—the subject of communication

Speech—the way we communicate

Performance—the vehicle for communication

Ideas/Thoughts—what we communicate

Audeas/Audiation—what we communicate

ROTE REPERTOIRE

- Promotes: audiation and technical development
- Not dependent on reading ability (greater range of keyboard used)
- Deepen learning through creativity and improvisation
- Explore critical information to move beyond imitation:
 - tonality and keyality
 - pulse and meter
 - essential patterns (pitch rhythm, harmony)
 - musical interpretation connected to flow and weight

MOVEMENT

- Audiation of movement is essential for rhythm development—must be felt inside:

¹ (Gordon: *A Music Learning Theory for Newborn and Young Children* p. 14)

- o Students need to find and develop their “thinking” sense of rhythm
- o Flow is the key for moving and breathing freely
- o Builds physical coordination which is necessary for rhythmic and musical performance
- o Prepares for stylistic interpretation/comprehension increasing musical expression
- o Students love to move and it relieves tension

Edwin Gordon: “...rhythm cannot be pushed into the brain; it must be guided in emerging from the body.”²

RUDOLF VON LABAN: (1879-1958)

- 1. TIME** is sustained or quick (slow or fast)
- 2. SPACE** is flexible (indirect) or direct.
- 3. WEIGHT** Weight is gentle or light and strong.
- 4. FLOW** is free or bound.

Movement for Rhythm

- All motions use gravity
- Three layers of rhythm
 1. Macrobeats in feet (heels)
 2. Microbeats in hands (spider fingers)
 3. Melodic rhythm patterns chanted

GUIDELINES FOR MOVEMENT IN STUDIO SPACE

- ✓ Use mats for space definition—stay on the mat unless directed
- ✓ Keep self space (avoid allowing touch of objects or other people)
 - o “Touch only the floor (mat), the air and yourself”
- ✓ Many activities happen with feet “glued” to the mat or floor

PATTERNS ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF MUSIC

Rhythm patterns:

- Classified according to meter (duple, triple) and function (macrobeat, microbeat, division etc)
- Three layers audiated at the same time (macrobeats, microbeats and melodic rhythm)

Tonal patterns:

- Teaching in arpeggiated form fosters audiation
- Classified according to tonality (major, dorian etc) and harmonic function (ie dominant, tonic etc.)

BUILD A VOCABULARY OF RHYTHM AND TONAL PATTERNS

- o Look for common patterns and repeated patterns within pieces
- o Have students learn to make up their own patterns
- o Teach “same and different”
- o Give special attention to triple meter and minor tonality

² Gordon. “Clarity by Comparison and Relationship” page 42

SEPARATE RHYTHM AND TONALITY

- Teach rhythm first
- Establish context

PREPARE PATTERNS AURALLY

- Use both “neutral” syllables and solfege for verbalizing rhythm and tonality
- Use a rhythm solfege based on beat function (not note value) as it improves audiation
- Look for symmetrical patterns of 2-4 beats and 2-4 pitches
- Use rhythm patterns from pieces to make up short improvisations
- Encourage the use of random keys for freedom and rhythm continuity

FOCUS ON FLOW

- Find motions that use continuous fluid movement
- Experience the extremes of the continuum (eg bound vs free)
- Combine aural activities with movement (freeze and sing resting tone)

WHOLE PART WHOLE

WHOLE: Experience listening and moving—identify tonality, find macrobeats/microbeats

PART: Patterns (rhythm, tonal, melodic), keyboard orientation, using the playing mechanism, coordination develops, explore harmonic function,

WHOLE: Playing through (student or teacher), listening for changes or interpretive elements, student develops individual interpretation, student returns to the whole with a new understanding of the context

TEACHING REPERTOIRE USING AUDIATION

TITLE _____ COMPOSER _____

ACTIVITIES: Usually will take place over several weeks.

PLAY (SING) PIECE TWICE (in activity time—try to aim for 1-2 minute in this preparatory stage)

1. Free flow movement _____
2. Find the macrobeats and microbeats (show student how to move)
3. Identify meter _____
4. Identify tonality _____

MOVE

1. Free flow movement _____
2. Find the macrobeats and microbeats (show student how to move)
3. Identify meter _____
4. Identify tonality _____
5. Freeze Game: Play the whole piece (or part if it's long) and stop frequently for students to freeze their movement and sing the resting tone on DO or LA.

CHANT

- How many rhythm patterns? _____
- Chant rhythm patterns for the student—chant first on a neutral syllable “BAH”
- Identify if the rhythm patterns are “same or different”
- Student echoes Rhythm patterns on BAH and the with rhythm solfege syllables
- Move for rhythm patterns: three layers (macrobeats, micobeats and melodic rhythm)

IMPROVISE with rhythm patterns (Musical version of speaking)

- Play a rhythm pattern on one key
- Improvise: play using any fingers on any keys or give specific instructions (only black keys, lower register, like a mouse etc)
- Ensemble improvisation: Teacher or another student could lead or answer with the contrasting rhythm pattern (switch parts)

SING: (will not always apply when teaching “keyboard geography” pieces)

- Sing resting tone and identify starting and ending pitches for each phrase
- Sing tonal patterns from the piece (arpeggiate, indicate to student when to come in after a slight audiation pause) Sing on BUM and then solfege.
- Identify patterns as tonic or dominant or other

IMPROVISE with tonal patterns

- Use tonal patterns to sing, play and improvise
- Establish meter and help students develop skills to use a rhythm pattern for improvising with a tonal pattern or patterns.

MELODIC PATTERNS AND CHORD ROOTS

- Sing/play melodic patterns (combined rhythm and tonal patterns)
- Improvise with melodic patterns
- Sing/play the melody or phrases in small sections
- Sing/play the chord roots

- Improvise rhythmically with chord roots
- Improvise with root harmonies (ie when C is DO, improvise with tonic and dominant chords (C and G))
- Create new melodies using the harmonic patterns

TRANSPOSE: To new tonalities and new meters (ie minor and triple)

EXPERIMENT: with different tempos, dynamics and articulation

References

Quotes from:

Dweck, Carol S. (2016). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Ballantine Books.

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Gordon, Edwin. (2007). *Learning Sequences in Music: A Contemporary Music Learning Theory*. Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc.

Kreader Skalinder, Barbara. (2016). *The Music of Teaching: Learning to Trust Students' Natural Development*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard.

Lowe, Marilyn. (2010). *Keyalities and Tonalities*. Music Moves LLC.

Other Resources:

Bluestine, Eric. (2000). *The Ways Children Learn Music: An Introduction and Practical Guide to Music Learning Theory*. Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc.

Gordon, Edwin. (2010). *Essential Preparation for Beginning Instrumental Music Instruction*. Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc.

Murray, Shirley C. (2007). *The Magic of Movement: Aesthetic Movement Principles for Sport and Dance*. Calgary: Alligator Press.

Online resources:

Ron Malanga's blog: www.mindmusclemyth.blogspot.ca

Marilyn Lowe's material www.musicmovesforpiano.com

The Gordon Institute for Music Learning: www.giml.org

Music Learning Academy: <https://www.musiclearningacademy.com>

Everyday Musicality: <https://everydaymusicality.com>

Repertoire Examples:

TITLE	COMPOSER(S)	SOURCE(S)	PUBLISHER	LEVEL*
Deep Blue Sea	Marilyn Lowe Michael Brill	Boogies and Blues	Music Moves LLC 2004	Prep/Beginner
Salt Water Taffy	Janet Gieck	Olde Tyme Candy Shoppe www.gieckmusic.com	Red Leaf 2018	Prep/Beginner
Musette in D major	attr. J.S. Bach	Various	various	3
Polonaise in G minor	F. Chopin			7
Cadences/arpeggios	M. Lowe	Keyalities and Tonalities	Music Moves LLC 2004	