

Lesson: Assignment #1: The Disco Fingers® Project

OVERVIEW

Students will use an iPad with the Disco Fingers® application to create an original composition by integrating found sounds with preprogrammed sounds. This project provides fundamental experience in combining musical sounds to create a musical effect with no use of formal musical notation. The assignment requires students to make aesthetic judgments about alignment of rhythms, pitches and varying texture. The student compositions will be relatively short. The tempo of each composition is predetermined by the program.

LEARNING GOAL

Students will:

1. identify and record that nontraditional sounds in the environment (either in nature or manmade) can be used for musical purposes.
2. integrate the found sounds with the preprogrammed sounds using technology (the Disco Fingers application) to create a short musical composition

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

1. Assignment handout.
2. iPad with Disco Fingers application.

PROCESS

1. Assignment sheet is handed out and read together with the students.
2. A rubric is provided to the students so they are aware of grading criteria and standards of quality for their compositions.
3. Students experiment with the pre-programmed sounds in the Disco Fingers application.
4. Students seek out at least two rhythmic found sounds from the environment that have a repetitive rhythm and record them using the iPad and the appropriate Disco Fingers icon.
5. Students layer the found sounds with the pre-programmed sounds to create a short rhythmic composition.
6. The students photograph the screen to document the arrangement of the sound icons and submit them to the teacher as a part of the evaluation of their work.
7. The original musical composition is performed for the class.

8. Note to teacher: If the Disco Fingers application is being used for the first time, the user must complete the tutorial experience before the application will allow the user to select where and when sounds will play or record original sounds.

ASSESSMENT

SAMPLE RUBRIC FOR ASSESSING DISCO FINGERS® PROJECTS

Music - Composition : Disco Fingers Composition Project

CATEGORY	10	7	5	R - Redo
General Quality of Found Sounds	The recorded found sounds used in the piece were very unique, interesting, and compatible with the preprogrammed sounds. Appropriate effort seemed to be applied to seeking out the sounds.	The recorded found sounds used in the piece were somewhat unique, interesting, and compatible with the preprogrammed sounds. Evidence that some effort seemed to be applied to seeking out the sounds.	The recorded found sounds used in the piece were completed, but were not very unique or interesting. They did not seem to fit with preprogrammed sounds and there did not seem to be a lot of effort applied in seeking out the sounds.	No found sounds were recorded.
Length of Found Sounds	The recorded found sounds were a length that was well-suited for how they were used in the piece.	The recorded found sounds were a length that worked okay for how they were used in the piece, but one or more could have been edited to improve the length.	How the length of the recorded found sounds would work with the preprogrammed sounds did not seem to be considered. The length of some seemed random.	No found sounds were recorded.
Texture	The layers of both found sounds and preprogrammed sounds were balanced and mixed in interesting and highly musical ways.	The layers of both found sounds and preprogrammed sounds were mostly balanced and mixed in musically interesting ways. Some editing would have improved the piece.	The layers of found sounds and preprogrammed sounds still sounded like the composer was experimenting, but did not have a clear idea of intentionally created composition.	The combining of layers of sounds seemed completely random with little effort to create a cohesive piece.
Components of Assignment	The student submitted a composition and a photograph of the screen.		The student submitted just a composition.	The student did not submit any work.

COMPOSING WITH DISCO FINGERS®

In the band piece *Rhythm Stand*, composer Jennifer Higdon used the nontraditional sounds of tapping pencils on different parts of music stands to perform rhythmic sounds as an essential part of the piece. The effect added unique and distinctive sounds that were different from what we typically expect to hear in a band piece.

This project will give you the opportunity to find nontraditional sounds and mix them in with preprogrammed sounds that are provided in an iPad application called Disco Fingers®. The application is easy to use. Each of the “fingers” at the bottom of the screen represent a sound. You drag the sound up to as many locations as you would like to hear it occur. When you play the sounds, they occur in the place you dragged them in comparison to a steady beat. Note that some of the “fingers” are wearing a microphone. Use these “fingers” to find sounds and record them and then mix those found sounds in with the preprogrammed sounds to create a short rhythmic piece. Using Disco Fingers is a fun, easy way to express your creativity. Use the following steps to create your piece.

1. Have fun just playing around with the application to familiarize you with how it works. If you are the first person to use the application on your iPad, you have to finish using the tutorial before you can place the “fingers” where you want them. Also practice recording and deleting sounds using the “fingers” with the microphones.
2. Find short, interesting nontraditional sounds and record them.
3. Use the recorded sounds and the pre-programmed sounds to create your own original short piece. Decide what combinations make the best sounding piece. Is it better to have more or fewer sounds (dense or thin texture)? Will you combine pitches in some places in the rhythm to create chords? Will you use the different pitches that are available to produce a complete melody, especially when the piece is short? In addition to having fun, try to create a well-constructed piece of music. The teacher will provide a scoring rubric to guide you.
4. When you are satisfied with your final piece, take a picture of the screen to document your piece.
5. Play your piece for the class and your teacher.
6. If your found sounds are really unusual and hard to identify, see if anyone in the audience can guess what they are.

