

# Lesson: Assignment #3: The Found Sounds Imitation Project

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## STUDENTS WILL USE AN OVERVIEW

A computer with the Garage Band© application is used to create an original composition by recording found sounds, transcribing their rhythms (and possibly pitches) with formal musical notation, and creating an original musical composition written for instruments. This project provides an advanced experience in combining musical sounds to create a musical effect and demonstrates the ability to encode musical sounds with formal musical notation. Student compositions should be the length of a fully developed piece that demonstrate variety, unity, form, and consideration of both harmonic and melodic sounds.

## LEARNING GOAL

Students will:

1. identify that nontraditional sounds in the environment (either in nature or manmade) can be used for musical purposes.
2. record and combine found sounds using technology (with the Garage Band or other recording application) to create a short, cohesive musical composition.
3. listen to nontraditional sounds and transcribe them for musical instruments.
4. create a musical score and parts.

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

1. Assignment handout.
2. A computer with the Garage Band application or another recording application/device.
3. Garage Band tutorial videos, if needed.

## PROCESS

1. Assignment handout is distributed 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. The teacher may want to have a recording of a sound from the environment prepared in advance to play for the class and then demonstrate how it can be transcribed with formal musical notation (e.g. the sound of a cuckoo clock, an alarm clock ticking with the alarm suddenly going off, etc.)
4. Students use a recording device to record sounds in their environment. If the students are all using the same program (e.g. Garage Band,) the students may need to watch online tutorial videos or have the teacher demonstrate how the recording program works.

5. Students select the recorded sounds they like the best and then determine what rhythms they make. The rhythms are transcribed using formal musical notation. It is possible that the found sounds may have either relative or fixed pitches. If so, the students should determine those, as well.
6. Once the found sounds are transcribed, the student assigns each sound to a specific instrument that is similar enough to imitate the found sound.
7. Students map out a general description of the form and details of the piece they intend to create. The teacher may want the students to submit their maps of their pieces to review and provide feedback before they continue on to actual composing the piece.
8. An original musical composition is composed for the instruments using the found sounds as the motivic material. Depending on the students' prior experience writing music, the teacher may have to review how to correctly create musical scores and individual parts.
9. The students may also want to create a recorded soundtrack of the original found sounds to integrate with performance on instruments into the performance of their piece.
10. The piece is performed live or a recording of a performance of the piece is played for the class. The composer may want to also play the recording of the found sounds for the class to see if the audience can determine which instrument's part was imitating which recorded sound.
11. The recordings of the found sounds, the planning map, and the written original composition are submitted to the teacher for evaluation.

**ASSESSMENT**

**SAMPLE RUBRIC FOR ASSESSING FOUND SOUNDS IMITATION PROJECTS**

**Music - Composition : Found Sounds Imitation Project**

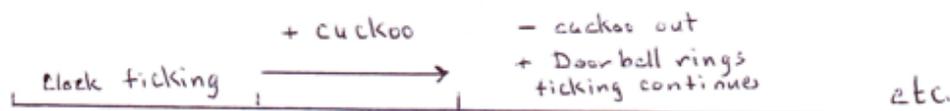
CATEGORY	10	7	5	R - Redo
<b>General Quality of Found Sounds</b>	Numerous recorded found sounds used in the piece were unique, interesting, and compatible. Appropriate effort was applied to seeking out sounds.	A moderate number of recorded found sounds used in the piece were somewhat unique, interesting, and compatible. Evidence that some effort seemed to be applied to seeking out sounds.	A limited number of recorded found sounds were completed and used for the piece, but they were not very unique or interesting. Little effort seemed to be applied to find sounds.	Only a couple of found sounds were used which limited the quality of the musical composition.
<b>Music Notation</b>	All of the found sounds were accurately and consistently reflected in the musical notation.	Most of the found sounds were accurately and consistently reflected in the musical notation.	Some of the found sounds were accurately and consistently reflected in the musical notation, but many were not.	There seemed to be little to no relationship between the found sounds and the musical notation.
<b>Music Score</b>	The musical score and parts were neatly done and followed the appropriate conventions of music writing.	The musical score and parts were mostly legible and followed most of the appropriate conventions of music writing.	The musical score and parts were sometimes difficult to read and did not always follow the appropriate conventions of music writing.	The musical notation was not legible and did not follow the typical conventions of writing music to the degree that it compromised a performance of the piece.
<b>Musicality</b>	The piece was cohesive, balanced, and well constructed. It was a proper length to be a fully developed piece and the form was clear.	The piece was generally complete and thoughtful, but could be improved with some editing of texture, length choice of combination of sounds, or form.	The piece seemed randomly constructed. Problems in texture, length, choice in combinations of sounds, number of sounds used, or form compromised the quality of the piece.	The piece did not reflect a deliberate intention by the composer to meet the requirements of the project.
<b>Components of the Assignment</b>	The student submitted a completed composition with score and parts, recordings of the found sounds, a planning map, and a live or recorded performance.	The student submitted a score and parts and a live or recorded performance.	The student submitted a score and parts.	The project was not completed.

## FOUND SOUNDS IMITATION PROJECT

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. The tapping on the music stands created a rhythmic ostinato used as a percussion sound that helped to establish a pulse. Think about sounds in your surroundings that have a naturally occurring rhythm. Now think about how those naturally occurring rhythms could be the inspiration for a composed piece of music. For this project, you will seek out sounds in your surroundings, record them, transcribe them, and then arrange them into an original rhythmic piece that assigns the rhythms to instruments.

Here are the steps:

1. Seek out sounds in your surroundings that produce a rhythmic pulse and seem unique and interesting.
2. Record the sounds using Garage Band© or any other recording program/device.
3. Figure out the rhythm that each recorded sound is making and transcribe it (write it down using musical notation.) If the found sounds have pitches in addition to rhythm, try to reproduce those as well.
4. Think about what kind of instrument can create a similar sound. You may also use nontraditional instruments, like body percussion or objects in the room. Remember in *Rhythm Stand* Jennifer Higdon used pencils tapping on different parts of a music stand.
5. Imagine different and interesting ways that the sounds could be combined in a piece of music.
6. Map out the general plan you have for your piece to help organize it. What is the form you want to use? Where do you want to have a thicker texture by applying more layers of recorded sounds? Where do you want the texture to be thinner by having fewer sounds occurring at the same time? You can create your map by making notes over a timeline. The purpose of the map is to guide your work, but you may make changes from your original plan as you are creating if you feel the changes will improve the overall musical effect of the piece. Mapping out an initial plan is a good way to get you started. Here is a brief example of how a portion of a map may look:



7. Write out a score and parts.
8. Rehearse your piece with other students and perform it for the class or make a recording of the piece to share.
9. When they listen to the performance/recording, see if the audience can figure out what the recorded sounds were that inspired your piece.
10. Submit your written piece, map of your original plan, and our recorded sounds to your teacher for evaluation.

