



PO Box 101687
Denver, CO, 80250
720-641-2414

www.playgroundensemble.org
playground@playgroundensemble.org

Young Composers Playground Full Program Description

Young Composers is a one-of-a-kind multi-week music program focused on student artistic creativity! Using non-traditional methods students, regardless of back ground or musical training, will compose short chamber works.

Students begin by writing (and possibly illustrating) stories. **We work to make sure that these stories are in support of grade level and school wide literacy initiatives.** Whether it is using Colorado History stories for fourth grade, or writing prompts used in language arts classes, we try to align our creative efforts with the literacy goals of the school we are serving.

Early in the process the Playground musicians are brought in for “Instrument Demo Day” to give the students a better sense of the unique qualities of each instrument, and the wide array of sonic possibilities that can be used in their compositions. They will begin to formulate musical ideas related to their stories and the remainder of the sessions will be turning those ideas into musical notation.

As the stories are completed the children create a visual timeline of events. On this timeline they begin to make decisions as to what these events sound like and what instruments will play them. The story telling, visual art and time line segments are done concurrently with age appropriate music fundamentals lessons to help with notation and the translating of these musical events to something that can be performed by members of the Playground. Although music software is a great aid in this process each student should be require to create at least one page of hand written music notation.

At this point in the process the teaching artists, and notation team are brought in to help get the students' musical ideas into traditional notation. It is helpful if the classroom has a number of electronic keyboards for the students to experiment with and generate ideas. Sometimes students will sing their ideas. The teaching/ notation team will often record these ideas on laptops, iPads, or phones and then take them home and transcribe them.

At the end of the process the students' works are featured in a public concert. This concert is recorded so they all receive a copy of their musical creations. Often their stories are read before their piece is performed and their artwork is projected while their piece is performed.

The program can be implemented after school or as part of a teacher's daily curriculum. It has been done in as few as 9 weeks or as many as 14. A variety of scheduling options can be implemented to best serve the school or organization hosting the program.

Age Group: In the grade schools this program would be for 3rd to 5th graders. At this age the literacy needed to be successful would be in place. It is also very successful with middle and high school students. This program has a number of variations for adults and seniors as well and has been successfully implemented at the Academy for Lifelong Learning, one of our programming partners.



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Cross-Discipline Creativity: Because the musical compositions are based on stories the program incorporates a strong story-telling and literary element. Students will have the option to, and be encouraged to illustrate their stories to include a visual arts component. In appropriate cases some students will perform their pieces with the members of the symphony to incorporate a musical performance aspect.

Logistic Needs: Use of the school's music facilities, whatever they may be, would be necessary. A collection of small keyboards aids greatly in the creative process. Access to a computer lab and an open-source notation software called Musescore is also helpful.

The instruments used for these compositions will be determined ahead of time by the program director and members of the Playground. In most cases students will be restricted to a trio and may even choose to write for smaller combinations.

Identifying Students: The program will move better and be much easier to implement with students that have previous musical training. However, at no point should we limit the program to those students. In fact, it is the students with no musical training that stand to most feel the impact of music and its ability to change lives.

An ideal situation would be a mix of students with some musical training and some with no prior experience. The more experienced students can help and "mentor" those with less experience enhancing the concept of community and developing leadership.

In full classroom settings it is logistically necessary to put the students into composition groups.

Those students that play an instrument would be invited to perform with the ensemble on the concerts.

It will be very important to establish relationships with music and arts teachers in the schools already. We are here to enhance and support your programs.

Concert: The entire program culminates in a public performance of the student compositions. This performance will be a public concert to be held perhaps at the student's school or in a public library or concert hall. There are endless possibilities. Multiple performances are very possible depending on opportunity.

Performers: Performers will be members of the Playground, potentially supplemented with selected teaching artists and/ or the classroom teacher. Performer obligations include three services: 1 session of instrument demonstrations, 1 rehearsal and 1 performance. Additional performances require addition service fees.



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Outcomes/ Standards: This program meets state standards for composition and improvisation and at times, performance.

One thing that must be made clear, evaluating this program simply on the number of students served is short sighted and a problem that funders and education coordinators make. This is an integrated hands-on program that gives students creative power and a real experience. Running 100's of kids through a concert hall does not impact students in the same way. Don't play music at kids, play music by kids and with kids!