

Rock Band Ensemble Syllabus

Thai-Chinese International School
7:30a - 8:50a / 1st Block Odd Days
2018 - 2019 Academic Year
Instructor: Mr. Jay Carlin

Course Description

A Performance Ensemble for students interested in Singing or playing standard Rock Music instruments, such as Guitar, Bass, Piano, or Drum Set. Students will form small-group "Rock Bands" to play arrangements of Pop, Rock, and Hip Hop songs from the early 1950's to today. Students are expected to demonstrate improvement of their individual musicianship, develop their ability to work collaboratively with others, and create projects and experiences that approximate that of a "gigging" professional musician.

Pre-Requisites:

It is expected that you have some level of proficiency on your instrument prior to registering for the class. Rock Band Ensemble is an auditioned class. That being said, if there are students who wish to pursue a new instrument, are willing to show proof of private lessons concurrent with the Rock Band Class, and there is space available after auditions, those students may be permitted to join on a case-by-case basis.

Course Objectives:

Upon Completion of this course, students should demonstrate the ability to:

1. Describe and discuss the history and development of Western Popular Music (including Pop, Rock, and Hip Hop) from post-World War 2 to Present Day.
2. Select appropriate repertoire for a given audience within established guidelines and student interest.
3. Demonstrate sufficient mastery on their instrument to learn and play from memory a 6+ song set of music selections within an appropriate timeframe (< 3 weeks).
4. Arrange songs within your group to maximize audience impact with consideration of each members' strengths and weaknesses.
5. Sequence songs in a set to build interest and engagement with the audience in concert settings, and plan appropriate spoken or musical transitions between songs.

6. Plan, Promote, and Perform at least one performance in front of a live audience monthly.
7. Set up, operate, and tear down appropriate sound enforcement equipment for each concert.
8. Write, Record, Edit, Produce, Release, Promote, and Perform their own original song.

Required Materials for this course:

- You must either own or have access to a quality instrument in good working condition for both individual practice and group rehearsal.
- A MacBook or PC to take notes, fill out Google Forms, and write reflections about performances.
- (Optional, but Recommended) A subscription to a music streaming service such as Spotify or iTunes Music will assist in discovering, analyzing, and selecting music.

Assignments / Course Structure

Each month, you will be assigned to a new 7-member group. Your group will be expected to choose a number of songs within given parameters to arrange, learn, rehearse, and perform in front of a live audience. After each successive concert, the expectations will be raised: you will either need to perform more songs, more difficult songs, individual improvised solos, etc.

The Parameters within which you can select repertoire each month will be chosen through a process of student-driven inquiry and teacher discretion. These guidelines are intended to address a number of issues:

- 1) To increase your exposure to music genres with which you may be unfamiliar;
- 2) To study music genres that will most improve your musicianship; and
- 3) To choose genres in which students are interested through discovery and inquiry.

Sample Monthly Assignments

- Decade: Select and Perform 2 Songs that were released during the 1990's
- Artist: Perform a Medley of Queen songs
- Genre: Perform songs that feature a Rapped or Hip Hop Bridge
- Popularity: Perform songs that Hit #1 on the Billboard Hot 100
- Album: Perform The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*
- Gender: Perform only songs by female singers
- Instrument: Perform a song with a Guitar Solo in the Bridge
- Topic: Perform a Political Protest Song
- Vote: Perform songs chosen by your Teachers

All Songs must be performed primarily in English unless otherwise approved by Mr. Jay.

For each successive month, the number of songs and difficulty of material you will be expected to learn in that month will increase;

During the first semester, each group will perform at the same concert:

- September: Select and Prepare at least 2 Songs / Perform 1 Song
- October: Select and Prepare at least 4 Songs / Perform 2 Songs
- November: Select and Prepare at least 6 Songs / Perform 3 Songs

During the second semester, each group will perform their own concert:

- January: Select and Prepare enough songs for a 30-minute concert
- February: Select and Prepare enough songs for a 45-minute concert
- March: Select and Prepare enough songs for an hour-long concert
- April - May: Songwriting Project and Performance

Performance Reflection

After each monthly performance, students are to watch their performance and record themselves verbally reflecting on the performance from the perspective of an audience member. Students should take notes about both successes and areas for improvement, then discuss their findings with the rest of their group. Students will fill out a Google Survey rating and describe the performance of other members in their group from the previous month. Each member should give honest but kind feedback about both the strengths and weaknesses of group members, including musicianship and affability.

Single-Instrument Master Classes

Following each Concert and Performance Reflection, students will spend one week (2 - 3 class periods) meeting with their like-instruments rather than their band members; i.e., all the keyboards will meet in one room, all the guitars in another, all the singers in another, etc. During these days, students will take turns discussing concerns and questions about their instrument's role in their previous group. Topics for master classes could include:

- Identifying effective musical keys based on Vocal Ranges for Singers
- Chord Voicing on Guitar to add interest and excitement
- Beyond the Root Note: How Bass players select what notes to play
- Dynamics and energy management in drum set playing
- Melody, Harmony, or Rhythm: The versatility of the Keyboardist

Selecting, researching, and teaching these topics are the responsibility of each student, and should be inquiry-driven based on school-wide standards and expectations for Socratic Seminars. Each student should come to Master Classes with both ideas to

share as well as questions to ask. Everyone is both teacher and student, regardless of musical ability.

Songwriting Project

In Quarter 4, students will participate in a Songwriting Project where they will write original songs with their group members. Rock Band members will need to coordinate with Audio Productions Class members to “book” studio time to record their song or songs to create a high-quality studio recording of each song. Students will submit their recordings to Spotify / iTunes / Google Play through DistroKid. The Final concert of the year (Mid- / Late-May) will feature performances of songs composed by Band Members.

Grading Procedures

Students will be graded using a combination of Standards-Based grading, Student Feedback, and Teacher Observations. Failure to complete a concert during an assigned month will count as a 0 on a Summative Assessment for all group members; as such, it is imperative that all group members communicate any problems early. This class requires each individual to learn their part outside class, and come to class ready to rehearse as a group. If a student is having trouble learning individual parts, it is their responsibility to seek assistance from other members or the instructor in enough time that the performance is not compromised. As the success of this class depends entirely upon group-based performances, attendance is mandatory and all absences will be treated as a 0 regardless of whether they are excused or unexcused. Excused absences (those communicated at least one week / 2 class periods in advance) can be made up outside of class if every group member is in rehearsal for an entire 80-minutes; unexcused absences cannot be made up.

Concerns, Questions, or Comments

The true purpose of this course is to develop yourself as a musician, teach you how to work collaboratively with others, learn the skills necessary to be a lifelong musician, and understand your own learning process for procedural knowledge-based topics. Personal accountability is as much a part of this class as musicality.

Should you have any Concerns, Questions, or Comments, Mr. Jay, will be available to answer any at your convenience. Should you have any issues keeping up with the performance schedule of the class, or with any inter-personal dynamics within your group, please schedule and appointment with him at your earliest convenience by emailing james.carlin@tcis.ac.th .