

# Teaching Music Composition Using Notation Software

---



**Thomas Rudolph, Ed. D.**  
Director of Music  
School District of Haverford Township  
email: [terudolph@aol.com](mailto:terudolph@aol.com)

# What is Notation Software?

---

A computer program used to print out parts and scores.

A notation program is to music what a word processor is to the printed word.



# Recommended Notation Software

---

- Finale 2003 - [www.codamusic.com](http://www.codamusic.com) (\$250)
- PrintMusic (low-end version of Finale) (\$60.00)
- NotePad (basic use - similar to PrintMusic and Finale)  
FREE [www.codamusic.com](http://www.codamusic.com)
- Sibelius - [www.sibelius.com](http://www.sibelius.com) (\$250)

Available from SoundTree ([www.soundtree.com](http://www.soundtree.com))

# Resource materials & lesson plans

---

- Strategies for Teaching Technology (MENC)

- [www.menc.org](http://www.menc.org)

- Sibelius Teaching Tools

- [www.sibelius.com](http://www.sibelius.com)

- [http://www.sibelius.com/products/teaching\\_tools/](http://www.sibelius.com/products/teaching_tools/)

- Vermont MIDI web site

- [www.vtmidi.org](http://www.vtmidi.org)

# Start with the basics

---

- Do **not** just start composing...
- Do develop a vocabulary using Theory texts books, Computer-Assisted Instruction software and so forth.
  - Master Theory ([www.kjos.com](http://www.kjos.com))
  - Alfred Basic Theory Software ([www.alfred.com](http://www.alfred.com))
  - Music Ace ([www.harmonicvision.com](http://www.harmonicvision.com))

# Start with the basics...

---

## ■ Music Theory Background

- Use notation software to write assignments
- Use music notation software to compose scales and chords
- Transcribe a familiar melody by ear into standard notation (Strategies for Teaching – page 56)

# Editing and Modifying Existing Pieces

---

1. Drag or transpose given notes to new locations
2. Copy and paste patterns to create a melody
3. Add expressive elements to compositions
4. Arrange excerpts enhancing the expressive effect of the music (Strategies for Teaching page 135)
5. Add chords – tonic and dominant to a given melody (Sibelius and Finale will play back chords selected)
6. Transpose tonality of an existing exercise (Sibelius Teaching Tools page 102)

# Arranging Compositions

---

- Sibelius Teaching Tools:
  - Arrange a piano piece for 2 instruments (pg. 106)
  - Arrange an SATB score for 4 instruments
  - Compose a canon for 4 voices (Frere Jacques)
- Transcribe an instrumental piece for SATB voices  
Strategies for Teaching – page 116.
- Transcribe a duet or trio for three instruments –  
Strategies for Teaching – page 90



# Adding melodies, chords and accompaniments to existing songs

---

## ■ Rounds

- Copy/paste melody - Frere Jacques
- Add percussion parts
- Add an original accompaniment

## ■ Question/answer (Tension/Release) Strategies for Teaching, page 46

## ■ Theme and Variations projects – Vermont MIDI

# Adding melodies, chords and accompaniments to existing songs...

---

- Create an accompaniment – fill in the blank measures
  - Sibelius Teaching Tools page 118.
- Compose a blues melody using the blues scale over the 12 bar blues in C
  - Sibelius Teaching Tools page 136
- Composing melodies to existing chord changes
  - Sibelius Teaching Tools page 128.

# Composing Original Compositions from Scratch

---

- Select an existing song such as Lightly Row
  - Analyze it
  - Compose a song using the same chord progress and melodic movement.
  - Select another song, perhaps more difficult. Analyze it and then compose a song in this style.

# Composing Original Compositions from Scratch...

- Compose a duet basing the melody and harmony on a Korean Folksong style (Pentatonic Scale)
  - Strategies for Teaching – page 114
- Composing a song in a specific form such as ABA, Rondo, 12-Bar Blues and so forth.



## **Come And Play With Me!** by Jenny and Molly

**Three months ago our whole band class was assigned to make a composition piece to put on the website. It had to include these following things: 4/4 time, 12 measures or more, ABA form, using notes we can play, use at least two different kinds of note values, and we had to give our song a title. This song is supposed to represent two people playing and singing.**

# Teaching Strategies

---

- Use one or a several computers in the music classroom
- Take the class to the computer lab – use free software or purchase a site license
- Teach in the Music Department MIDI lab
- Encourage students to download free software or purchase software and compose at home.

# Training and Support

---

- Seek out training in the use of computers and technology
  - Technology Institute for Music Educators ([www.ti-me.org/ti-me/summer.html](http://www.ti-me.org/ti-me/summer.html))
- Join Music Education Technology Organizations:
  - TI:ME ([www.ti-me.org](http://www.ti-me.org))
  - ATMI ([www.music.org/atmi/default.htm](http://www.music.org/atmi/default.htm))
  - TDML (<http://music.utsa.edu/tdml/>)