

# NYSSMA MUSIC VIEWS

Standards-Based Teaching & Learning Across the State



## Lesson Plan for NYSSMA Music Views

**Name:** J. Peter Hansen

**Title:** Ives/Cage: Empowering Student Composition

### Level

- Elementary
- Middle School
- High School

### Content Area

- Band
- Chorus
- Classroom
- Orchestra

### Objective

Teams of students will combine composition, improvisation, aleatory concepts and artwork to create a meaningful product.

**The NYS Learning Standard(s)** this lesson will address...

- Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts
- Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
- Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art
- Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

**National Standards for Music Education** this lesson...

- Singing – alone and with others – a varied repertoire of music
- Performing on instruments – alone and with others – a varied repertoire of music
- Improvising melodies, variations and accompaniments
- Composing and arranging music within specific guidelines
- Reading and notating music
- Listening to, analyzing and describing music
- Evaluating music and music performances
- Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
- Understanding music in relation to history and culture

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## **Instructional Ideas**

Students are placed in teams of 2, and they decide on a topic on which to compose. The students study the contributions of composers Charles Ives (opposing pieces played simultaneously) and John Cage (chance music) and 'empower' their group compositions based on these concepts. The team chooses or draws a visual artwork that matches their topic/concept. Each member of the team composes exactly 2.5 minutes on an individual music workstation, without listening to or consulting the other team member. Their composition is based on the chosen topic also. The students also choose a timbre to 'improvise live' during the upcoming recording. The last step is to burn a live CD of the team as they simultaneously playback their compositions while looking at the visual image and improvising.

## **Assessment**

The recording on the CD that was made during the 'performance' of the team piece is played back for analysis. The remaining students in the room are asked to fill out a 'critique sheet' that focuses on specific goals set in the Project. The results are then discussed openly with the team, other students and the instructor.

## **References/Resources**

- Korg Music Workstations
- CD burner
- Mixing board, playback system
- The music of Charles Ives, John Cage
- Internet studies of these composers
- DVD: John Cage

## **Notes**

The teams of composers are all given a copy of their work on CD or Mp3 file for future analysis. Students are encouraged to learn about the History of musical development/thought through the works of the great composers. The by-product of this lesson is to break down the walls of fear when improvising, and to develop a confidence when composing in 'unchartered waters'...