

Composer in the Classroom

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The Niagara Symphony's Composer in the Classroom (CITC) will be presented to nearly 250 students this season alone, with many more attending the final concert. The CITC programme provides opportunities for students in grades 5 to 7 to be actively involved in a music composition. The programme gives the students an understanding of how the elements of music support the creative process. The CITC has been developed to fulfill many of the overall Ontario Arts Curriculum expectations.

Through the creation of a composition, students will come to understand that the final work is the result of all the decisions made by the composer during the compositional process. Students will compose in small groups, working collaboratively to write an expression of their ideas in a musical form. At each step in the programme, students will be asked and encouraged to think critically about the choices available in melodic development, harmonic style, formal structure and orchestration. They will compare the effects of different choices and experiment with musical elements to bring their group's work to completion.

No previous music experience or knowledge is necessary, but enthusiasm and interest in being involved in the creation and performance of a work of music is essential to the success of the project. To facilitate maximum achievement, a CITC Preparation Package will be delivered to each school two weeks before the programme begins.

This well annotated guide will help the classroom teacher improve the musical literacy of the students, both in basic music notation and listening skills. Each class will work with the composer for ninety minutes on five separate days. Each school is limited to two classes of thirty participants.

DAY 1 (90 min.)

Participants will be introduced to composition and how a composer works. Discussion of types of music: music that tells a story or is inspired by poetry, music written for events or celebrations, or to express feelings or ideas. The class will be introduced to ORFF instruments. Groups will experiment with melodic ideas and write short melodies.

DAY 2 (90 min.)

Groups will work on developing their melodies using various imitative techniques. They will work with rhythm in the refinement of their melodies, and will explore how contrasting melodies can help define the formal structure of music. Students will learn about some of the different formal structures composers use: binary, ternary rondo, etc. Listening exercises will help the students aurally recognize various compositional forms.

DAY 3 (90 min.)

Students will listen to and make group decisions about the harmonic style of their melodies. They will hear how different harmonies will change the character of their music, and how their choices of harmony can affect the formal structures of their pieces. The classes will listen to piano versions of all of the works-in-process, and be asked to aurally analyze the melodic development and formal structures of their classmates' music.

DAY 4 (90 min.)

Symphony musicians will participate with students in an orchestration workshop. Students will have the opportunity to experiment with the various sounds, timbres, ranges, textures and balance of the instruments, using their own pieces. Through this experimental process, groups will make decisions about the orchestration of their works.

DAY 5 (120 min. combined groups)

Each of the classes will participate in a dress rehearsal as preparation for the formal concert performance. This is an opportunity to make last minute improvements to their pieces, and learn about some of the traditions involved in the performance of new music. Students will participate in discussions dealing with the logistics and challenges of

performance in front of an audience. The final 45 minutes will be a live, in-school performance for fellow students and family.

Grand Finale: School Concert Performance

Students, teacher and parents are invited to the world premier performance of the pieces written by the students groups, performed by professional musicians from the Niagara Symphony. Each school will receive a book of scores containing all of the compositions in their final form.

CITC 2011/2012 is Full

Watch for 2012-13 information in May 2012

BOOK EARLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT!

COST: Schools pay a fee of \$800 for five half-day sessions. The remainder of the \$1,200 cost is underwritten by our generous sponsors and supporters.

Individual schools will be invoiced directly by the Niagara Symphony Association. Payment is due at the beginning of the session.

MATERIALS: Schools must provide a piano or electric keyboard, ORFF instruments and access to a photocopier on Days 4 and 5.

HOW: For additional information contact B. J. Armstrong at 905-687-4993 ext. 223 or email at BJ.Armstrong@NiagaraSymphony.org

Fax: 905-687-1149

For a video report of the Composer in the Classroom programme (at St. James school), follow the link below:

[CITC at St James video](#)

*Orff Instruments

Orff Instruments for children began to be developed in 1928 by K. Maendler under the direction of composer Carl Orff. They were modeled after a wooden African instrument. The unique quality Orff instruments possess are removable bars. This way the bars that are not used can be removed and the student has a greater chance for success. Orff said, "Experience first, then intellectualize." A successful and fun experience is the basis for a positive learning process.
Associate Conductor and CITC Composer -

Laura Thomas

Laura Thomas is a conductor, arranger, composer, percussionist and teacher. She is the Associate Conductor of the Niagara Symphony Orchestra, Artistic Director of Niagara based chamber choir Choralis Camerata and Music Director of the Hamilton/Niagara area WomEnchant Chorus. For over 15 years, she was Conductor of the Junior Niagara Youth Orchestra in St. Catharines. In the fall of 2008 she became Music Director of the Niagara Youth Orchestra. Ms. Thomas is also an instructor in the Brock University Music Department and was recently appointed Music Director of the Dundas Valley Orchestra.

Her guest conducting appearances include the Etobicoke Philharmonic, the North York Concert Orchestra, Niagara-on-the-Lake Sinfonia and the Bard Chamber Orchestra. She was for many years, Director of the Niagara College Jazz Band. Ms. Thomas holds a Master of Fine Arts in Conducting from New York's prestigious Bard College, where she studied with Harold Farberman. She is also a graduate of Hamilton's Mohawk College and McMaster University, where she studied percussion and composition.

Niagara Symphony audiences have known Ms. Thomas as Principal Percussionist with the NSO since 1985. She has also performed with many ensembles throughout Southern Ontario and Western New York, including the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Hamilton Philharmonic, the Te Deum Orchestra, and the Aradia Ensemble. Her recording credits include the Aradia Ensemble's CD for Naxos Records, "Ballet Music for the Sun King", the Niagara College Jazz Band's "On the Move", Rich Blend's self titled CD, sisterLune's "Wonder", and Women In Music's "LIVE at the Black Sea Hall".

She is a member of Niagara's popular group BroadBand. This quintet of multi-instrumentalists and singers performs mostly original songs at events around the St. Catharines area. Their active schedules included many fundraisers and social justice events. Their latest cd "BroadBand" contains exclusively original songs by all members of the group.

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