

Students will use the U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own" recording of Ron Nelson's *Rocky Point Holiday* to understand "virtuosity" in music and how musicians apply efficient practice techniques to become proficient on their instruments. Students will be presented with a melodic passage from *Rocky Point Holiday* and will discuss effective strategies for learning and practicing the passage. Students will then apply the practice techniques they learned to a popular social media dance and explore how effective practice techniques can be used in areas outside of music.



SETTING

General Music (Grades 4-6+, middle school)

AREA OF FOCUS

"Virtuosity" and Effective Practice

NATIONAL STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Performing/Presenting/Producing

Anchor Standard #5: Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.

Responding

Anchor Standard #7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard #11: Relate artistic ideas and work with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

PRIOR UNDERSTANDING NECESSARY

Students should be able to read simple music notation at a basic level. Students should have familiarity playing on recorders or mallet instruments.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Contextual Understanding

Students will examine how musicians practice and the purpose of "virtuosity" in music.

Knowledge/Skill

Students will practice playing a short passage from *Rocky Point Holiday*.

Students will perform a popular social media dance by applying practical practice techniques.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Projector screen and sound system
- Chalkboard/whiteboard or electronic equivalent
- U.S. Army Band recording: https://youtu.be/Yt7_Hd83DUg
- Pencil and paper (or electronic equivalent)
- Classroom instruments (recorders or mallet instruments, or both)
- Link to Floss Dance "how-to": <https://www.wikihow.com/Do-the-Floss-Dance>
- Simplified melody sample from *Rocky Point Holiday*



PROCEDURES

PART I: Listening and Response

1. Before class, write the word "VIRTUOSITY" in big letters on the board.
2. Print handouts or display the photo of Rocky Point Amusement Park as students enter.
3. Introduce *Rocky Point Holiday* by Ron Nelson. Explain how the piece was inspired by now abandoned amusement park, Rocky Point Park, in Rhode Island.
4. Ask students to picture what "roller coasters" might sound like in music. Would the music be fast or slow? Challenging or easy?
5. Play the entire Army Band recording for them to watch and listen to together.
6. As students watch and listen, ask them to listen for moments in the piece that seem most like roller coasters — particularly impressive or difficult passages for musicians to perform. Have students write down the instrument and timestamp for each instance they notice.
7. Following the recording, discuss. "Why did those moments in particular seem more difficult than others?" Go back through and play segments of a few of their examples.
8. Explain the definition of "virtuoso/virtuosity" in music: "exhibiting exceptional technical ability, mastery, and a deep understanding of music."
9. Pose the following questions to students for discussion based on the recording:
 - What makes a musician impressive?
 - How do musicians become virtuosos?
 - Why would a musician want to play something really difficult?
 - Can you think of any examples of virtuoso musicians — either in your life or famous celebrities? (record their answers on the board).

PART II: Effective Practice

10. Pass out handout of included sheet music sample from *Rocky Point Holiday* and display it on the projector:



11. Explain how musicians only get to play impressive, fast, virtuosic music like this after many years of practice. "But it's not just practice time itself! It's about efficient practice."
12. "A virtuoso musician would practice a really difficult section of music by breaking it down into chunks and playing it really slowly at first, then gradually increasing its tempo (or speed) over time."
13. Pass out recorders, or assign students to mallet instruments.
14. Teach students the attached melody from *Rocky Point Holiday*.
15. Emphasize efficient practice by breaking down the melody into three parts (mm. 1-2, m. 3, and m. 4), practicing each chunk slowly, putting them together, and increasing tempo.
16. Float around room as students practice the melody on their own, using the practice techniques they learned from the group exercise in #15.
17. Discuss. "Would this have been effective if we just tried to play it right off the bat with no practice?"

PART III: Applying Effective Practice Beyond Music

18. Learn the "Floss" dance ahead of class (refer to included link).
19. Teach the "Floss" dance to students, motion by motion. Start slowly and increase speed. Stress the importance of taking each step one at a time (efficient practice).
20. Once students are ready, perform the floss dance to any segment of the Army Band *Rocky Point Holiday* recording. Optionally for fun, students can pretend to be roller coasters and move around the room to the music.

PART IV: Wrap-Up

21. Ask students to turn in an exit sheet answering the following prompts: "How can we apply effective practice techniques to areas beyond music? How can this help us in our daily lives?"

ASSESSMENT

Informal

Listen to student verbal responses (Procedures 4, 7, 9, 17).

Teacher will listen as students practice the attached melody on recorders or mallet instruments (Procedures 15, 16).

Teacher will observe as students participate in the "floss" dance (Procedures 18-20).

Formal

Teacher will collect completed answer sheets as students exit (Procedure 21).

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Band Together 2025: Rocky Point Holiday