

***OnMusic Appreciation*. Third Edition. Reston, VA:  
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***OnMusic Appreciation* Standard for Blackboard  
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***OnMusic Appreciation* Extended for Blackboard  
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**A**lthough online courses are becoming more widely used at many colleges and universities, many college faculty still resist their implementation for a variety of reasons, including the perception that the online format does not provide enough interactivity, as opposed to a face-to-face classroom. Connect4Education, publishers of *OnMusic Appreciation*, have responded to these concerns by continuing to develop and adapt this webtext since the launch of the first edition as a stand-alone, online course. The third edition, available since 2010, can be used in three different teaching scenarios: in face-to-face classes, in hybrid or blended classes, or in exclusively online courses. *OnMusic Appreciation* is not an e-book—an electronic version of a printed book—but a fully integrated, interactive text with multimedia resources, communication capabilities, and comprehensive assessment tools designed to “engage the students in the learning process.” From the publisher’s website ([mywebtext.com](http://mywebtext.com)) students can order the webtext in different formats: a standard version, an extended version with an expanded historical section, or a Blackboard version of either that is completely integrated for use with the Blackboard course

management system. Faculty may adopt a specific version depending on their teaching needs, and students can purchase the text online either directly through the publisher's website or through their respective college bookstore.

As more students enter college having little acquaintance with Western art music, either as music majors or non-music majors, faculty find that remediation is necessary. The resources within *OnMusic Appreciation* are extensive and can be used either as a general education course for the non-music major or as an introductory literature course for music majors. Each topic is provided with learning objectives, full-length audio examples, interactive graphic and/or prose listening guides with a complete analysis of selected works that serve to focus the student listening experience, and a glossary of keywords integrated with the publisher's *OnMusic Dictionary* ([dictionary.onmusic.org](http://dictionary.onmusic.org)). Video documentaries and performances of selected archival material from the best sources on the web (BBC, Discovery, etc.) help learners focus more fully on the repertoire and concepts. Also included is a "Test Yourself" section that serves as an informal assessment of the reading material and prepares the students for the quizzes located within and at the end of each class.

Two-thirds of *OnMusic Appreciation* focuses on introducing the learner to fundamental music concepts, basic compositional practices and analysis, guidance on listening, and an introductory overview of the elements of musical style. The approach begins by familiarizing the reader with basic principles of how music "works," the role of the performer in formulating an expressive interpretation, how musical structure serves to convey emotional meaning, and a discussion of music's purpose. In my experience, most students using this text have minimal engagement with structured listening exercises, and the text works to move the students from casual, oblivious, and unmindful listening to more subtle and perceptive experiences. The listening guides help to focus the students' awareness by highlighting specific musical characteristics and by helping them to visualize the form and motifs within the work.

The classes addressing music fundamentals are similar to the beginning two or three chapters of any music theory textbook, and they provide enough information to introduce students to the basics of musical mechanics. Unique to this text, however, is the integration of interactive Flash movies for each element subsection (duration, pitch, intervals, and notation) that help students to visualize, hear, and identify abstract concepts. These are also supported with an interactive piano keyboard, enabling the student limitless opportunities to practice a concept. If conferencing with students online, the instructor can access the interactive piano to answer student queries. The music theory fundamentals are further extended with a chapter addressing music elements, containing additional sound files with listening guides and selected notation examples of the concept.

Several sections on “The Building Blocks of Sound” cover information on instruments. While at the outset this approach might seem heavily oriented towards orchestral music, many other styles and genres, such as vocal music, chamber music, sacred and secular genres, and introductory information on folk music, jazz, and contemporary genres and styles are also addressed throughout the webtext. Ethnic, world music, and popular music are not included to the extent that these would be considered a major part of the course content. (Connect4Education has separate texts available for *OnMusic of the World*, *OnMusic Jazz*, *OnMusic Rock*, and *OnAmerican Popular Music*, in addition to music theory, music history, and music education webtexts.)

The last seven sections cover traditional Western music history. Each era begins with several paragraphs outlining the contemporary social and political background, with relationships briefly established between the music, other art forms, and cultural context, moving quickly to the stylistic, structural, and characteristic changes that occur within the period. The individual classes contain an introduction with a “Listening Bridge” of repertoire and sound files to help the student compare and contrast musical characteristics covered in the previous section (performance medium, language, and musical elements), and an introduction to representative composers and compositions with listening guides directing the student’s attention to specific details (by both graphic and descriptive means) in each composition. Interactive maps appropriate to the genre and era being studied are accessible in the music history sections through the webpage menu, and these provide a historical, geographical, and musical perspective on selected composers and their works. Important composers are also highlighted through “Meet the Composer” inserts that contain composer profiles, text, graphics, and streaming music. While there are several music appreciation textbooks that cover the historical content in greater depth and detail, it should be noted that this text is intended as an introductory overview. For that purpose the content is sufficient, thorough, and comprehensive. One criticism is that female composers are not well represented; however, the material acquaints students with the essential information to comprehend the development of music and provides stimulating engagement for students who want to delve further into the subject.

The text contains over 36 hours of audio files, representing more than 400 compositions. These are all fully integrated with the text through cloud streaming so that students do not need to purchase CDs or DVDs. That being said, the student will need to have access to a good (fast) Internet connection. For students who still use dial-up modems the publisher provides a free DVD that allows them to play all the music content from their local CD drive (Mac or PC) via RealPlayer technology.

The webtext preamble provides a full description of the hardware and software requirements, and Connect4Education provides free technical support to answer any questions that students and instructors might have related to setup, as well as a comprehensive user manual for students. This introduction also serves as a course syllabus by describing the course goals and objectives, course format, and a grading and evaluation scale. All the course elements mentioned above can be customized for the instructor. Instructors send the publisher course details (course number, section, institution, term) via an online course setup page ([mywebtext.com/course-setup-form](http://mywebtext.com/course-setup-form)). All these details are displayed when the student registers to start taking the course. (In the interest of full disclosure, I should add here that I have used this text for the past five years and from time to time have had students from other institutions appear in my course, and a few of my students have selected the wrong institution or course. This is easily remedied with an e-mail or phone call to the publisher.) In the course set-up, the correct time zone must be selected in addition to the registration dates, start and end dates for the semester, and days on which the mid-term and final exams will occur. I set the registration to remain open at least two weeks past the start of the semester for late registrants, and midterm and exam dates open for three days, since many of my students have full-time jobs and are not able to complete the exam within one hour or even one day.

The home page for each text is very similar to other course management systems, with expandable windows in order to view the entire text index, upload instructor announcements (welcome, assignment changes, due dates, etc.) and specific course information. If due dates are to be specified for each quiz and assignment, the instructor must set them through the appropriate links. *OnMusic Appreciation* contains a complete grade book, in which the student's contact information and user name appear once the student has registered for access with the publisher. The grade book also provides an overview of how many assignments and quizzes the student has completed, whether an assignment has been submitted and needs review, when it was submitted, the student's score (average grade and percent), and an area for student comments. (The student comments usually appear after a student has misunderstood a quiz question.) The instructor is also able to e-mail students directly from the course site, view statistics about student activity within the course, and export the grades to an Excel spreadsheet.

Navigation to and through the text is very intuitive. Instructors have access to an instructor orientation page providing information on everything from re-setting a quiz to working with the electronic grade book. In the primary horizontal menu the instructor can access an overview of each assignment, chapter outlines, and mobile content access for which a login and password are needed. One of the greatest strengths of the *OnMusic Appreciation* webtext is

the flexibility encouraged by the publisher. Instructors can set which types of notifications they want to receive from students, drop a student from the roster, upload a discussion forum that can be added as an entry in the grade book, and include or change any of the assignments and due dates. The webtext comes with five assignments that relate directly to the text and also includes one concert report. (I place more emphasis on live performance and have eliminated one written report and require two concert reports. I have also changed the first assignment to include a different composition for analysis rather than the one used in the text.)

The text flows in a sequential and logical manner. Quizzes and tests appear at appropriate places within the text. Again, instructors are encouraged to edit any quiz or exam and submit questions to the test bank. Anti-cheating measures such as randomization of questions and answers are built into the software. The midterm and final exam are not cumulative and tend to be long (eighty questions for each) and must be completed in one sitting. Students have commented that they were not prepared for the length of the tests, so to compensate I place much more emphasis and grade weight on the assignments and course participation through discussions.

With registration, students have access to the entire webtext, audio, and sound files indefinitely, as long as the publisher offers the webtext title. If a student drops the course, the webtext can be re-accessed when the course is repeated by a phone call to the support line. When *OnMusic Appreciation* is used as a text for face-to-face classes, the publisher can enable a print feature on the assignments, texts, and worksheets, and all the materials can be viewed on tablets and smartphones. Approximately 170 institutions currently use the *OnMusic Appreciation* text and very close to 300 institutions use Connect4Education texts, which now include a full range of offerings in music and other fields. The *OnMusic Appreciation* webtext provides a rich, interactive, comprehensive and well-integrated text that will engage students.