Incorporating iPad in the Music Classroom

Dan Jones
In all my recent experience, one learning platform has completely changed the field of play, not just in music, but all education. In the last two years I have seen this platform utterly transform the engagement and then crucially attainment of the students who have engaged with it. That platform is iPad.

Over the coming months and years I do not think it takes a genius to predict the growth we will see in their usage. But will they be utilized as they should be? Is there a reliable source of app recommendations, and most importantly, how will we as educators be supported as we start to integrate this amazing piece of kit into our lesson plans? Well the short answer to question one is we don’t know! Personally I think it would be tragic if the answer was not a resounding yes.
To best support that process of integration, my intention is to produce a range of resources to help advise and encourage tutors to embrace the iPad in classroom delivery. This book is the first of those resources. The purpose of this book is to help you understand and then implement some of the basic functions in your music lessons. I will also advise you on tried and tested app’s that really work. Mix Music Education do not sell Apple products or have any allegiances to specific app’s, I tell you this so you do not think I am promoting something for anything other than their educational relevance. iPad is the future, and I would love to help you embrace it in your classroom.
Applications Used

The applications used within this book have been tried and tested by tutors across the UK. Each of the recommendations below I would advise you install on your iPad as we will be using them in every lesson plan.

**Notion** (Screen shot pictured opposite) Notion is an application designed to help you create musical notation. It takes the principles used by pretty much every other notation program you or I have ever seen, but it then packages it in a way that will suck you and your students in. How does it do it?

- **Physically play in the notes** – This enables students who understand their instrument to play immediately and see their notes appear on the screen – This is a wonderful way to engage more experienced musicians in notation learning.
- **Input the notes directly onto the score** – I have found, after many years of frustration with computer based notation input, the physical sensation of touching your compositions engages your brain totally in the music – When you touch the score the note appears also on the virtual instrument. This is a wonderful way for students to find out how to play specific notes without assistance from a tutor.

**Garageband** (Screenshot pictured opposite) Garageband is renowned for its interactive user interface helping none musicians create music quickly. It has been criticized by some for not delivering real music ability. Like all teaching aids, utilized in the right way, it provides as good a teaching resource as I am aware of with regards the understanding of how songs are put together.

**Other Applications:**

As you progress with your own iPad development there are many other applications which can add benefit when utilized in the right way. I will list further applications in the summary at the end of this book. I have found it is very easy to overload yourself with too many ‘potentially’ useful applications. The most successful approach I have witnessed and then employed myself is to focus in on one or two applications, master their usage then move on to others afterward.

You will also find blue highlighted and underlined sections. If you are reading this book on a PC, Mac or Tablet, when you click on these sections you will be taken to additional web based content. These areas are not essential reading but are supporting information for those of you who want to find out more.
CHAPTER 2
Lesson Planning

Throughout this book I will offer you ‘my’ approach in iPad classroom usage. Some things may work for you, I hope all will, but do feel free to mix and match the techniques and teaching methods we will cover. My intention for the first publication of this book is to cover the first 10 lessons I would deliver to a class of students of any age with limited or no musical knowledge. We will cover:

- The structure of most popular music
- What chords are
- What a rhythm is and how we put one together
- Recording our music
- Mixing our track
- Basic music notation
- Basic composition

Each of these subjects will be tackled in order, slowly building up your students (and your!) knowledge. At the end of this course of study your students will be able to:

- Understand the structure of modern music when listening
- Understand how to create a song featuring an intro, verses, chorus and outro
- Be able to compose a short piece of popular music
- Understand how to mix a piece of recorded music
- Be able to operate notation software to create simple drum patterns and guitar/keyboard chords

Planning Lesson One

You can deliver all my lessons to a full class of students or to a small group. The deciding factor in your group size will be equipment!

- 3 students to 1 iPad is the optimum

Any more than this and it becomes difficult for all to engage. I wouldn’t have any less than 2 on each iPad – Music is a team sport! Let’s get our young musicians working collaboratively from lesson one.

- If you only have one iPad available and a large group of students to teach don’t discard the lesson plan

You could adopt a rotation system where other students are experimenting with class percussion or undertaking another activity. 3 students could still easily engage with the iPad using a headphone splitter & headphones.
Understanding Garageband

Garageband has a range of ‘Smart Instruments’ within it. These are instruments that will play rhythms in any chord you instruct it. A chord is a collection of three notes normally, when combined rhythmically with other chords, creates music. In our first lesson we will learn 3 chords and how to play them at the right time. In music this would be called ‘playing in time’.

- We will begin on the Garageband ‘My Songs’ screen. When you select the app from your iPad home screen it should open immediately at ‘My Songs’. If it does not, you will see in the top left hand corner of any ‘Garageband’ screen a ‘My Songs’ box. Press this to access the screen. When you get there it will look like this:

You will see on screen a box that says ‘Curtain Call – Demo’, press this to access the prerecorded demonstration track. This will open a screen that looks like this (see opposite):
Metronome & Pulse

The two most important elements of creating ‘any’ music is how it sounds (the mix) and does everyone play in time (the pulse).

- Ensure the main volume is up
- Touch the play button
- Students should be listening out for any sounds that they like (eg particular instruments)
- Students should also be listening to the speed of the track

Challenge your students to listen to the track again (To jump back to the start of the track push the button on the left of the play button)

- This time can they tap or clap along to the track?
- This will help them start to understand pulse and how to listen for it
- Some students my struggle but don’t worry, we will sort them out in just a minute!

So how did they do?

- Press the ‘Track Settings’ button, you will see a screen like this (See opposite):
  
  ✤ Slide the metronome switch to the right to the on position (it will light up blue)
  ✤ Tap the settings switch again to leave this screen
  ✤ Restart the track – This time the metronome can be heard

  Challenge the students to clap along again this time listening out for and clapping along with the metronomes click
Pulse is evident in every piece of music, sometimes fast, sometimes slow but it is always there. For music to sound correct musicians must listen to the pulse and play in time with it. If they do not, things will start to sound a little odd! Try this exercise to demonstrate:

- Select settings
- Tap ‘Tempo – 156’ box
- On the 156 you will see an arrow up and an arrow down, tap the down box until it reaches any speed less than 120, press the settings button again and listen to the track
  
  Feel free to experiment with different speeds

- How does this sound? Terrible! One half of the band is playing at the correct speed, the other half is playing way too slow.....

- To correct go back to the settings, then tempo and reset to 156

- Remember to exit, press ‘Settings’ to get back to the main ‘Curtain Call’ screen:

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**Mixing**

Ok, so we now have a basic understanding of pulse and how we control it. It is time to play with some mixing. At the start of the lesson we listened to the ‘Curtain Call’ track, we asked our students to listen to sounds they liked and to the speed.

- Can your students identify a sound they like?
- Or
- Can they identify a sound they do not like?

It is really important that they tell you why they do or do not like the sound they have identified. There is no right or wrong answers here; this is all about developing how we listen to music. Make you sure you challenge them as to why they like or dislike something.

Slide the ‘Mixing Control’ to the right:
Mixing Control Screen

You can now access the individual volume controls for each different instrument. You can increase, decrease, solo or mute any single instrument.

- Now give each student the opportunity to alter the mix of the track
  - Soloing each instrument to find sounds you like and dislike
  - When they have identified the above, challenge them to set the volumes of each instrument to reflect their likes and dislikes
  - Notice how changing the volumes of each instrument, creating your own mix, can change dramatically the final sound of any song

Important learning points so far......

- How the track is mixed is just as important as the notes that are played by the musicians
  - You could have the best recording in the world ruined by a poor quality mix
- Playing in time with the pulse of the music is vital for all musicians playing in a band
  - If someone plays too fast or too slow it sounds terrible!

At this point you could finish your first lesson, or for a longer lesson or more advanced group you could continue.....
Lesson One - Advanced

Exploring Basic Chords
Now it is time to tackle some chords. I know that’s enough to strike fear into any none musician and many musicians as well! But do not worry, I promise you it is easy if we follow some simple rules. The most important thing is to keep things moving and keep things fun. The best part about Garageband is it is structured to stop things going wrong. Are you ready? Okay, lets rock!

Creating a ‘New Song’ in Garageband
In my experience creating a new song was always a painful experience. My ear could only easily recognise what sounded right and what did not sound right with the instruments and I knew and understood. Not only that, pulling together the outline of a song on most PC or MAC applications needs a little skill and time. In GarageBand on iOS we find a range of ‘Smart Instruments’ that enable us to pull together the outline of a song very quickly. Once we have established our chosen instruments work well together and that our composition makes sense, we can replace the ‘Smart Instruments’ with the real thing.

Return to the ‘My Songs’ screen by pressing the button highlighted above. No matter where you are in Garageband this option is always there. (If it isn’t it means you are on the ‘My Songs’ screen already!)
Tap on the ‘+’ sign and select new song

Inputting new instruments

You will be greeted with the instruments page (see below):

- We need to select ‘Smart Guitar’
- To do this immediately, swipe your finger right once
- Tap on ‘Smart Guitar’

Swipe your finger to the right or left to see the instrument choices:

- My Song Box – Here is your new song. Tap in the middle of the box to enter!
- Guitar Selector – Press here to choose between 4 different
- Guitar Strings – Physically strum your guitar here
- Chord Player – Press here to play the chord
Playing your first chords

For the next few lessons we will be looking at the main theme from ‘The School of Rock’ motion picture.

In music there are a huge amount of notes you could play. To help us remember what notes to play when, the notes are grouped into collections called keys. Each key has a slightly different combination of notes, so sounds slightly different.

✦ Press the ‘Guitar Selector’ button
✦ Select the red ‘Hard Rock’ guitar

Key Changing

Before we play any music we should note what key it is in.

✦ ‘School of Rock’ is in the key of G Major

To select G Major, press the ‘Key’ option in the ‘Track Settings’ menu
✦ Select G then Major in the ‘Key Selector’

To exit the ‘Key Selector’, press anywhere outside of the track settings box

Challenge each student to find and play the following chords: D C G C

Now try playing them as a sequence starting with D then C,G and finally C again

✦ Try pressing the alphabetical note (You will hear a complete chord)
✦ Also try strumming the guitar strings manually
Remember the importance of tempo/pulse? The real challenge now is playing these notes ‘in time’

- Press record and have a listen to the metronome, notice how there is a different sounding click every fourth beat?
- Try and clap at the same time as this different sounding click
  - This is the first beat in each bar
- Challenge each student to try playing each chord in time (eg when you have been clapping)
  - Press record
  - After you hear 4 clicks play your chord sequence – everyone else in the group should keep clapping
    - D – C – G – C
  - Try counting in between each chord
    - D – 2 – 3 – 4, C – 2 – 3 – 4
  - You get 8 chances (bars) to play in time, then you will automatically hear back what you have played….But will you be in time!

After the first student has had a go, listen back to see how they have done. Then it is time to repeat the same process with the next student…

- To clear the first students recording or to get rid of a mistake anytime in Garageband press ‘Undo’
- You now have a new 8 bars to fill

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**Recording Each Student**

After your first student has hopefully tried and succeeded to play their chords in time, you need to move on to the next:

- Press the ‘Mixing Screen’ button (see page 11)
- Swipe right to enter the ‘Mixing Controls’ (Refer to page 6)
- Tap the ‘Instrument Mute Control’
- Press the ‘+’ (Add new) button

You are now back at a screen you should recognize (see page 10)

- Select ‘Smart Guitar’
- Change guitar to ‘Hard Rock’

You are now ready to record your second student, continue this process until all students have completed their challenge!
Giving Work a Title

We need to give our song a title. I find the best way to do this is with the first names or initials of the students and the title of the song. So in my case I would title the song ‘Dan – School of Rock’. Titling this way will ensure a whole year group of students should be able to find their music really quickly. But how do we do it?

✦ Hold your finger down on the text ‘My Song’ underneath your new song box
✦ When you release your finger you will see this screen:

![Screen showing how to rename a song]

Use the QWERTY keyboard to delete ‘My Song’ and input your new song title
✦ Once you have completed this press ‘Done’

Learning Objectives – Lesson 1

• Do we all understand the importance of tempo and pulse and its effect on musicians playing in a band?
• Do we understand how important the mixing of a track is and how altering the volumes of different instruments in a band can have a huge effect on the finished recording?
• Do we understand what a chord is?
• Can we all play a sequence of chords ‘in time’?

Garageband Learning Points

• We can all access a current song
• We can enter the mixing screen and change individual instrument volumes
• We can enter the track settings, change key’s and alter tempo
• We can set up a new song and record 8 bars
• We can add additional instruments to our song

In forthcoming lessons we will:

• Add bass guitar to our new song
• Add keyboards to our new song
• Add drums to our new song
• Learn about versus and choruses
• Add vocals to our song

If you would like any further information or if you have a question relating to iPad usage in the classroom you can contact me at dan@mixmusiceducation.co.uk
Dan Jones (pictured second from the left) is a former Music Teacher of the Year, columnist with Music Teacher Magazine and Managing Director of The Mix Music Education Limited.

Dan worked in the classroom for many years before leaving to form The Mix Music Education. He now works with educators across Europe helping them develop relevant educational programs. One of these projects, JamPod™, recently won ‘Best Tech in Music Education’. Dan collected this award on behalf of the 55,000 students and 120 tutors who deliver their curriculum in JamPod™. Dan is a keen support of all education and can be contacted at dan@mixmusiceducation.co.uk

Students’ requirements have changed so much in the last 10 years. Technology engages us on a multi-sensory level and yet we expect our students to respond to the same age old teaching practices. The challenge is finding the right product to enhance our lesson delivery, then finding the time to incorporate that into our lessons. Mix Music offers a totally unique package to educationalists. Working with the world’s leading manufacturers, Mix Music specializes in understanding your needs, matching products to your specific requirements, then training you to use them. Mix Music takes away the concern of engaging in new technology and allows you to focus on what you do best.

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