Digital Folk Tunes Lesson Plan

Audience: High school

Overview: Students will listen to examples of how FolkRNN, an artificial intelligence melody generator, has been used to inspire compositions and performances. Then, they will use FolkRNN to generate their own melody and use a DAW to create a track based on the melody.

Objectives:

- Use FolkRNN to generate an original folk song melody
- Use a MIDI file and a DAW
- Make creative choices to create a track
- Share a creative work with the class

National Standards Addressed:
MU:Cr1.1.T.IIIa: Generate melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic ideas for compositions and improvisations that incorporate digital tools, resources, and systems.
MU:Cr3.1.T.IIIa: Develop and implement varied strategies and apply appropriate criteria to improve and refine the technical and expressive aspects of draft compositions and improvisations.
MU:Cr3.2.T.IIa: Share compositions and improvisations that demonstrate an accomplished level of musical and technological craftsmanship as well as the use of digital and analog tools and resources in developing and organizing musical ideas.
MU:Cn11.0.T.IIIa: Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

Duration: 2-3 class periods

Materials:

- Devices with internet access and DAW (digital audio workstation) for each student
- FolkRNN: https://folkrnn.org/
- Recordings (optional):
    - "Bastard Tunes" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZ2jb0ksOm4
    - "Between the Lines" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdvylH-0Q1k&t=129s
- Student instructions (below)
- Speakers and projector (optional) to play recordings for students

Prior Knowledge and Skills:

- Fluency with using DAW
- Familiarity with MIDI

Preparation:

- Print copies of the instruction sheet for each student or share with students digitally
- Set up speakers to play recordings for students
- Determine how students will turn in completed work (e.g. email, upload to LMS)
- Determine how students will be partnered for pair feedback

Procedure:

1. (Optional) Play recordings for students to hear 2 examples of FolkRNN used for live performances.
2. Pass out the student instructions and let students know when they will be presenting their projects. Also provide students with any additional instructions for partnering up to give feedback and how to turn in their work.
3. Students will use FolkRNN (https://folkrnn.org/) to generate a melody that they will save as a MIDI file and upload to a DAW
4. Students will then use the melody as the basis for creating a track
5. When students have a rough draft of their track, they will share their work with a partner and provide at least 2 positive and 2 constructive comments
6. Students will revise their work based on peer feedback
7. Students will present their work to the class

Differentiation:

- More advanced students could use multiple artificial intelligence-generated melodies and combine them to form a coherent piece
- Students fluent with Western musical notation could use the printed melody generated by FolkRNN and perform and record it themselves
- Students could record vocals or instrumental accompaniment over top of their track
- Students may be given ideas for ways to transform their MIDI file into a track (e.g., repeat sections of it, change the gain (dynamics) in different sections, add drums/percussion, change the reverb)

Feedback, Evaluation, and Assessment:

- Evaluate student creations
    - Suggested rubric: https://willkuhn.com/2014/08/11/a-rubric-for-project-based-music-classes/
- Evaluate student ability to think critically about music based on their peer feedback
- Evaluate student presentation of their work (optional)

Extension/Follow-up:

- Create an album with pieces of all the students in the class. Share with family, community members, and other students and teachers at the school.
- Have students share their creations on an online streaming service such as SoundCloud or YouTube

Tips:

- FolkRNN may sometimes be slow in generating melodies. Encourage students to refresh the page before they hit “Compose” and to be patient while waiting.
- “Temperature” determines how unusual the melodies generated are.

Names _____

Digital Folk Tunes

You will be using artificial intelligence as a tool to create a track inspired by Irish traditional music.

Objectives:

- Use FolkRNN to generate an original folk song melody
- Use a MIDI file and a DAW
- Make creative choices to create a track
- Share a creative work with the class

Generating a melody

Go to folkrnn.org to generate a melody. Choose a temperature, meter, and mode and hit "Compose." The site will use artificial intelligence to generate a melody in the style of Irish folk music. If you don't like the first melody, you can change any settings you would like and select "Compose" again to get a new melody.

When you have chosen your final melody, save it as a MIDI file by selecting "Download MIDI."

Creating your track

Open the MIDI file of your melody in a DAW. Create a track that you would enjoy listening to. Make sure to also create a title. Here are some things you might consider:

- Tempo
- Panning
- Adding drum beats, harmony, loops, etc.
- Instruments
- Gain
- Repeating, splitting, and/or rearranging sections of your AI-generated melody

Peer feedback

When you have a rough draft of your track, find a partner who also has a draft, and listen to each other's work. Provide at least 2 compliments and 2 suggestions to improve their work. List the feedback you are going to give/gave to your partner here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Submitting your work
When you have completed your track, bounce it to an MP3 file to turn in.

You will present your recording to the class on _____