

**ASYNCHRONOUS & LIVE RECORDING ARTS EDUCATION  
FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN**

by

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ASYNCHRONOUS & LIVE RECORDING ARTS EDUCATION FOR ELEMENTARY

SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN Thesis Portfolio directed by Associate Professor Lorne Bregitzer

**ABSTRACT**

In our modern internet-attention-span culture, we need the arts more than ever to build our kids' minds, souls and confidence to prepare them for creative solutions with positive energy. As this Thesis Portfolio will show, the Recording Arts can help build those traits — often in remarkably fast and intensely memorable experiences — in elementary age children, yet are hardly utilized at that age group at all. I developed asynchronous recording arts content for elementary age kids and the infrastructure to make it accessible, in particular to kids in a pandemic, including an entirely new album and curricula for each production. I've also developed educational live content in the form of shows and workshops, both of which utilize and demonstrate inspiring audience-interactive recording arts, for young kids. To do so, I had to develop an ideal Mobile Music Production Rig, described in detail in this Thesis Portfolio. Finally, I did extensive testing of both my asynchronous and live learning content, arriving at recommendations and conclusions I hope will serve two simultaneous goals: to make my work teaching recording arts to kids better, and inspire others to start teaching the recording arts to younger children as well in their own creative ways. Those kids will, in turn, become the next Recording Arts students at institutions like CU Denver, and culture-shapers — from local recording artists in an accessible age of recording technology to Grammy winners.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Cecilia Wu

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis portfolio is dedicated to my wife Janette Cullinan, who supported my plan to go back to school with her typical grace and thoughtfulness. My love for her is very, very cheesy. I hope this document teaches somebody as much as this amazing woman has taught me.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'm indebted to all the teachers I've had at CU Denver. In particular, I'd like to thank Lorne Bregitzer, who stepped up graciously to chair my committee, even though he has a life full of stewardships and accomplishments of his own, and even though he knew he would have to hear my jokes and receive my overly-excited and detailed tech texts during the process. Thank you Master! Also heartfelt thanks to the rest of my committee, all of whom I've learned from in my two years here — Sam McGuire, Scott Burgess and Advisor Cecilia Wu. I've also been fortunate to learn from the teachings of David Bondelevitch in my time here, and study with my fellow graduating Masters classmate Kevin McGrath. And we've all been inspired by Alex Allred.

The other great teachers of this project — teachers who have been educating me for fifteen years as Doctor Noize and five before that as a high school Music teacher and Arts, Communications & Technology Department Head — are the kids I've had the privilege of serving across the country, and the teachers and parents who've entrusted them to my care for an hour. I have learned so much from these kids, and I've learned a lot by observing and talking with their teachers too. The work has inspired me to stay curious, the adjective of a child, and the adjective all of us in higher education would like to permanently stamp on our students as they head into adulthood — even as our childhood years are far behind us.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **The Evolving, Pandemic-Era Masters Thesis Portfolio**

An opening note: The structure and direction of this Masters Thesis Portfolio has been amended significantly by the pandemic which coincided directly with my time here as a Masters student. That's okay; in fact, one of the main findings of my Thesis Portfolio work is that musicians and creatives working with kids must adapt and evolve with their team, audience and surroundings. In my case, my team is a combination of production specialists like me, teachers, venue hosts... and very young kids. Kids demand both creativity and flexibility.

My original Masters Portfolio proposal was to create and document a complete Doctor Noize album, doing everything as a teaching project with my CU Denver college students in my role as a Lecturer here — from songwriting and recording to mixing to mastering. A review of that Proposal will find I couldn't record the album as a college teaching tool as planned due to the pandemic, because I couldn't meet in person with students.

But I recorded it remotely with a cast of acclaimed musicians, and even had a successful hit single on it called *Stay At Home*. The album was called *Homemade*, because we all recorded our parts at home. I did learn a lot from that project, including, among other things, teaching Grammy-winning singers how to set up and record their own vocal parts at home for the album. But that project — as rewarding as it was — was completed before my Masters Committee even assembled. So I will briefly describe it at the beginning of this document, and then move on to my new subject, one that's made me realize I have some expertise that few people have ever really done a deep dive into: Recording Arts education for elementary age kids.





### **The New Thesis Portfolio Project**

I essentially studied and documented my second major project during my time here at CU Denver instead of my first, because I think it's both an inadequately covered topic and a subject that's offered far too little to kids in the elementary school age group. I researched, developed, and tested Recording Arts Curricula for elementary age students leveraging both the *Homemade* project of my last three semesters (the bulk of my original Thesis proposal) and the educational Doctor Noize content I've built over the last decade, including making a lot of enhancements and improvements on it for this Thesis Portfolio. I researched, built and tested asynchronous and live learning content for today's kids, accessed in-person or virtually. The Thesis' three phases were:

#### **Phase 1: Research**

The Research Phase I envisioned involved researching and documenting asynchronous curricula and live workshops, interviewing adults and kids involved in the last decade of both of

those in the tours and travels of Doctor Noize, and reaching out to experts and practitioners of the field for their insights.

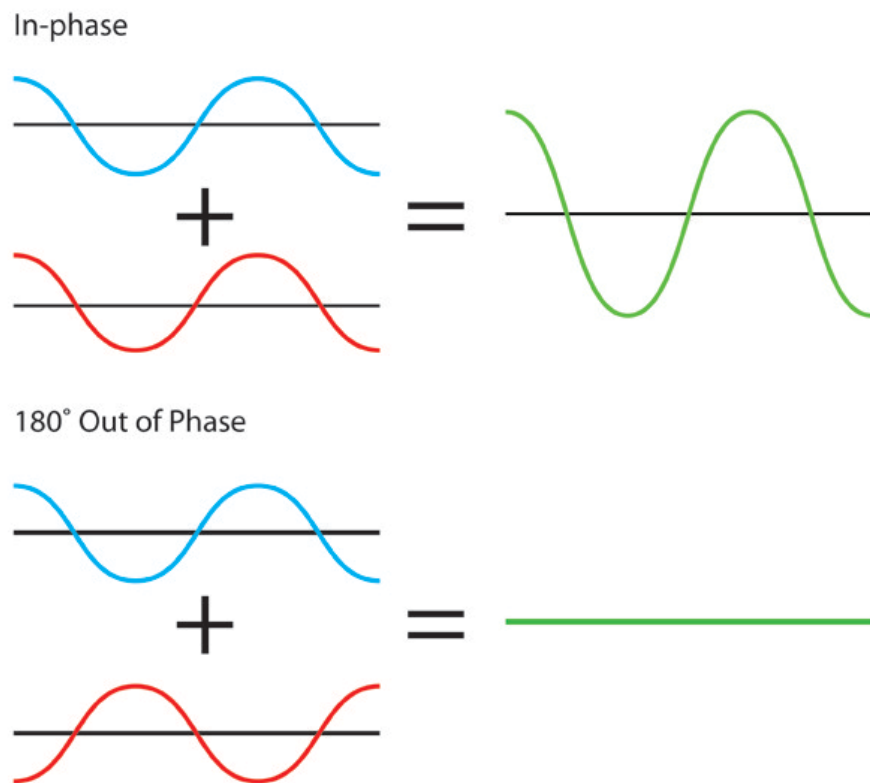
## **Phase 2: Development**

This Phase involved continued development and evolution of both the asynchronous and live content I've created for Recording Arts education for the young.

## **Phase 3: Testing**

This phase included classroom testing with teachers and students of both the asynchronous and live content, road testing of the workshops, and individual testing by kids and parents at home. Coronavirus made much of the live in-person testing impossible.

## **Is That In Phase?**



I experienced a common recording arts workflow conundrum during this project, exacerbated by the pandemic. I'd like to say the Phases were all done in the exact and regimented order above, but the reality was more like life in the creative arts and teaching: they were sort of done in that order, but I never passed up an opportunity to jump ahead to a next step whenever a student or teacher was eager or willing to jump in and get stuff done. This is also one of the main joys kids can teach us: Have a plan, but *never* stick obstinately to that plan if something better, more insightful, and more inspiring comes along. You can always go back to the step you were on later, but you can never get back a magical moment if you blow it off because it's not its defined spot in the chain. And you never know when your Testing (Step #3) will send you back to Research (Step #1).

### **The Why**

So why switch from documenting the *Homemade* album to teach college students how to make a recording from start to finish, to documenting how to inspire elementary kids to get jazzed about Recording Arts and one day *become* the next generation's college Recording Arts students? Despite the aforementioned pandemic forcing me to *not* meet in person with college students for that project, I view the forced change as a blessing in disguise. My Committee Chair Lorne Bregitzer said that in seventeen years, he's never seen a Thesis about recording with or for younger kids. Few documents about Recording Arts education and experiences for young kids actually exist anywhere in depth like this. Isn't that what a Thesis is supposed to do? Shed some light on something that hasn't been researched or discussed enough? So hopefully we'll do something useful for the world here.

## CHAPTER 2

### WHERE IS RECORDING ARTS EDUCATION FOR ELEMENTARY AGES?

#### Why It's Needed

Despite the impact music and recording arts make on the everyday life of American kids, and the prevalence of technology, creative music and recording arts education is hardly taught in the curriculum of K-12 schools, and many of the most prominent broadcasters and artists of children's music only pay a cursory nod to educational content. And those two groups — children's media creators and educators — are far less interconnected than one would expect.

#### Asynchronous Curricula

Asynchronous curricula *about* recording arts projects are obviously not as immersive as live events *engaging people directly in* the recording arts. So why include it in this Thesis Portfolio? I've found that the main reason people — kids especially — want to record things is because they find recordings of other people expressing themselves, it inspires them, and so they imagine themselves using the recording arts as a tool of expression as well. Often, the spark to becoming a recording artist is a desire to reach for the heights of a recording we love by someone else. Modeling is important. So getting deep and diverse curricula in the schools that connects kids to the best children's musicians would be a wonderful development.

Who's doing asynchronous curricula for kids in the children's music genre? When I first started in the field fifteen years ago, there appeared to be quite a bit, and much of it was quite good. There's still some out there, but as I was surprised to find and document below, the most acclaimed proponents of the genre have generally stopped doing it — the regional artists are doing a better job of it.

## Live Workshops

Finding live recording arts workshops for elementary age kids is even slimmer pickings. I searched for those teaching K-8 kids in recording arts, and this result is almost no one. There are people who teach songwriting, and there are a handful of programs that teach recording over time. But, to my surprise, almost nobody is doing what I'm doing in regards to combined, single-event composing and recording workshop sessions.

This is one reason I hope this document is useful — I'd like to inspire more of us to do this sort of work for kids. It's a new frontier — the gear exists and kids love music, so let's get 'em recording. There's a real potential growth area and market in education. My research made me realize — more than I had — that what I was doing was an outlier.

## Use Technology To Engage

It's important that we engage kids in the recording arts so some of them will use technology to create their own art early and proactively rather than merely using technology to passively and exclusively be on



the receiving end of art and technology — in mobile devices, games, entertainment. The goal of recording arts for the young is to make kids creators and expressers, not just passive observers of others' creations and expressions. They already create content with technology in videos and social media posts, but these are largely small-form, quick creations. Getting creative in recording spurs a greater diversity of thinking, especially at younger ages where kids are totally willing to break boundaries and molds. One of my favorite things about being Doctor Noize is

that kids don't care if I play a country song about a robot, followed by a James Brown homage about a sandwich, followed by an orchestral song about a monkey conductor. They're the most adventurous audience in the world, and it's our duty to inspire the brilliant, unending diversity of those adventures and not reign them in. We need that creativity to last into adulthood.

When people get involved in recording music, they also become more active listeners. Active listening is a skill that's not only beneficial to musicians — it's beneficial to salespeople, teachers, marketers, spouses, parents and more. Training a kid to actively listen is really just training a kid to actively focus. And focus is in short supply in the modern internet short-attention-span world. The recording arts use the same computer technology that is decimating attention spans to grow those attention spans back.

I'm an elected member of the Recording Academy Board of Governors, where I serve on both the Education Committee and the Producers & Engineers Committee. But that's for adults. This Thesis Portfolio is essentially trying to fuse those two interest areas for elementary age students. The stunning availability of affordable recording technology has surprisingly not filtered down into elementary age education much, if at all. A knee-jerk response is sometimes that it's too complicated for students at that age, but even a cursory examination of that concept demonstrates it holds no water: Kids use advanced technology every day — iPads, iPhones, computers, video games and more. The truth is that elementary teachers are spread thin and hesitant to use the technology available; we're not doing a good job inspiring and enabling them to do so; and the people who could do that inspiring — children's recording artists — are being taught by the gatekeepers of our industry to steer clear of educational content because they think there's no money in that area of industry without a lot of money to go around to begin with. But,

as my ensuing Chapters reveal, they're wrong: audiences are starving for more engaging and challenging educational content.

### **Absent In School**

In school, we learn the history and the nuts and bolts of the creative composition of the written word, visual art, and more; but not music. This is one of the first things I noticed when I took over a Silicon Valley high school music department years ago, so I created a composing and recording program. It was unusual — and unusually effective — for high schools, but the landscape is even bleaker for recording arts experiences in elementary school.

When music is taught at the elementary age, it's generally performance-based in the form of live recreations of existing works of art. It almost never has to do with composition or recording. This reduces the number of kids who get really inspired about Recording Arts early, which reduces the number of kids who go into it in a studied and educated way, which reduces the quality of music in this country, which reduces the quality of life in this country.

### **Industry Deficit**

So you'd think that the children's media outlets and artists would step in and fill this void for the schools. But they don't, and they're not really encouraged to by educators. The schools suffer from a lack of funding nationally, and elementary teachers are already tackling a million subjects — most teachers would need artists to come in and do it for them, but often schools don't have the money for that. As artists, we often must find the funders and connect them to the school — a difficult task and a different skill set than playing a show.

Additionally, many of the biggest children's media outlets and agencies incorrectly assume their audience doesn't want educational or challenging substantive content, a misread of

the most adventurous audience in the world — children — and the adults who belong to them — parents and teachers. This has more to do with broadcasters' fear of not staying on the air than a desire to shirk their stewardship to their listening and viewing base; but in turn, it convinces artists to downplay the educational potential of what they do when they send content to children's media outlets. We send our "fun" stuff, not our substantive stuff.

Think that's a stretch? Here are two verbatim emails to me, in response to singles I sent in the last several years, from Programming Directors of prominent children's music outlets:

*"As you know, we don't do a lot of curriculum-based stuff."*

What does that even mean? At the very least, this programmer is signaling to me as an artist that they don't want anything remotely connected to educating. The response was sent before the programmer even listened to the song, a song which appeared to be from an educationally-themed Doctor Noize album called *Punctuate This!*. And that, apparently, was bad. They declined to add the song to their rotation, and as you can read for yourself above, they were predisposed to do so.

Here's an email I received from another major children's music Program Director in response to *Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony*, which has an orchestra in it, but contains several simple and straightforward singles for kids, and went on to be a best-seller on CD Baby despite receiving zero airplay from the major children's music outlets:

*"It's fantastic... (it's clearly top notch)... Perhaps if Phineas McBoof became the Hamilton of Broadway for kids, and some of these songs hit a ubiquitous level of familiarity, then they might make more sense on the radio. I know that this isn't the response you were hoping for, but please know that this has less to do with what you do, and more to do with what we do."*



I agree with the last statement: That has everything to do with what they're doing, and nothing to do with what I'm doing. That Program Director's express cultural stewardship is deciding what music we expose kids to. The comments reflect a major children's media outlet acting like they're not accountable for the culture they're creating. This person *determines* what becomes "*the Hamilton of Broadway for kids*," but is acting like they program in *response* to trends and have no say in them. In actuality, they have everything to do with these trends; in fact, they largely curate their own national charts. How do I know this? Because I had a #1 chart hit on this station when nobody had heard of me and I'd sold less than 40 copies of the album and song. It was a ska song called *Banana* featuring one word repeated over and over to humorous purposes. Fun, but not substantive — although I've subsequently made it substantive by using this catchy song as an entry point to teaching musical depth and diversity, as it's been made into many different iterations on the Doctor Noize recordings by members of The International Band Of Misunderstood Geniuses, each one teaching something different about music fundamentals.

My longtime publicist — a top PR agent in the children's genre — dropped me when I released the *Symphony* album in 2016, telling me "*I just don't think I can sell it.*" My question to her — "*But do you think you SHOULD sell it?*" — was unconvincing. The album went on to become the best-selling Doctor Noize album ever with Elizabeth Waldman Frazier as its publicist, who relished the challenge of bringing such depth and unusual colors to kids.

### **Holding The Line In An Anti-Intellectual Time**

There are absolutely broadcasters and publicists out there who have always promoted depth and diversity of content — Katie Stone of The Children's Hour and Sagan Thacker of



Radio Active Kids come to mind and should be applauded, and there are more, mostly in smaller markets — but many bigger industry gatekeepers, from the broadcasters to the publicists, including many in the Grammy

Children’s Music Nominating Committee room, favor music that leans toward mainstream comfort food music over diverse brain-building.

I’m not the only children’s artist who’s observed and experienced this. I know this because, as part of my duties as a Recording Academy Governor (the organization best known for running the Grammys) I researched and wrote an extensive report on Children’s Music investigating the lack of breadth and diversity in the Children’s Music category after the 2021 nominations, yet again, reflected mostly “white guys with acoustic guitars.” I spent dozens of hours interviewing dozens of artists, all pared down to a 7-page report that kept the artists anonymous but reflected what they said.

A number of those artists confided in me their frustration that the most prominent outlets and publicists are not very interested in their substantive or educational offerings, so they must focus on more “pure entertainment” content to earn a living and survive. In one of my interviews, an aghast and highly acclaimed children’s musician told the story of recently going to one of the major children’s music conferences and hearing the Keynote Speaker trash Leonard Bernstein — whose 53 *Young People’s Concerts* are legendary and introduced thousands of kids to one of the great musicians of the 20th Century — for winning the Children’s Music Grammy once a long time ago over comedian Soupy Sales, who was best known for receiving a pie in his

face at the end of every television episode. This expert speaker said Bernstein's recordings weren't children's music, as if children's music was a narrow and shallow stylistic genre performed by a preapproved set of musicians, rather than the diversity of musical offerings for children.

By 2021, I still have an acclaimed Doctor Noize Symphony Show program and curriculum introducing kids to the orchestra, but it's much harder to get it booked than it was in 2010; in fact, it's harder to find funding for anything intellectual after the well-documented anti-intellectual American political and cultural takeover that came to a head in the last decade. This is perhaps best represented by the President of the United States' selection of a non-educator as U.S. Secretary of Education, the President's open hostility to the National Endowment for the Arts, and his overt attempts to eliminate its funding. There are glimmers of hope that trend could be over — as the New York Times wrote in January 2021, Trump's effort to defund the NEA not only failed, but there appears to be a bi-partisan course-correction brewing.

So now it's time for artists and broadcasters get introspective, step up, and loudly demonstrate our support for education and educators, for depth and diversity. Part of this is acknowledging our part in it all, and not simply blaming an administration whose election was the natural result of our move away from intellectualism, and not actually the cause of it. When I first started as Doctor Noize in the 2000s, I remember a major children's music reviewer who used to regularly state that he didn't like it when children's music tried to teach kids anything — he felt they got too much school as it was, and they needed a break from all the intellectualism of the world. Fast forward to the past decade, and those sorts of sentiments — expressed and enacted by the gatekeepers of children's music — had everything to do with why the most

“successful” children’s musicians largely separated themselves from education or diversity of genre. It was an anti-intellectualism spurred on by assumed necessity in an incurious American internet culture that had become so tribal it couldn’t even agree on a baseline set of scientific facts anymore. So we threw our hands in the air and decide to “just have fun” with kids, a concession to the “entertainment over education” faction — instead of a much more proactively impactful commitment to entertaining education — that became increasingly dominant in media and, as noted above, even infected our educational system.

The good news is there’s evidence that trend is changing in children’s music too. After the well-founded critiques of the lack of breadth in the 2021 Grammy nominees, children’s music programmers, publicists, and artists are actively trying to position themselves as dedicated to something more diverse and substantive than “mainstream fun.” They’re addressing the diversity issue, which is great and long-overdue; we need to stay on them for the depth issue.

So it appears the industry’s ready to deepen and diversify. Let’s hold ourselves to it. Sesame Street was once the most prominent children’s media in the long-gone pre-commercial glory days. My memories as a kid in the 1970s are vivid of *Conjunction Junction*, *What’s Your Function?* Imagine the producers of Sesame Street sending me the email quoted above from a modern major children’s programmer about *Punctuate This!* disparaging “curriculum-based stuff.”

I haven’t even tried to address the shortcomings of the major corporate kids’ media producers here, who are more guilty of it than the indie artists and their broadcasters, and largely exist to divert and entertain. Hats off to Pixar for creating thought-provoking works of art on a regular basis instead of lowbrow babysitting, showing it can be done with Big Money involved.

And huge kudos to organizations like Geena Davis' Institute on Gender in Media, which has made huge strides shedding light on the massive gap between male and female characters depicted in media for kids.

### **Artists Must Step Up**

There's also so much positivity and good intentions in children's music. These are people who make a difference. Folks don't go into this genre for the money; so why chase the money? Artists must step up and enact change. While a lot of the blame for the lack of attention to education and diversity in children's music can and should be laid at the feet of gatekeepers who've performed their jobs differently than the educationally-minded children's media producers of yesteryear, we as artists can and should step up and take more personal accountability for it too. Changing the climate of the children's music industry is not unlike addressing climate change: Ultimately, we have to step up as individuals and force the systemic changes that will help future generations. It's my hope that, in some small way, this Thesis Portfolio will help inspire that change. And Chapter 3 will demonstrate how there is absolutely an audience for substantive and diverse content if we're brave enough to give it to them.

I certainly have my shortcomings and failings in this regard too, but I've done as best I can to produce art that's smile-building, soul-building, inclusive *and* brain-building for kids. Each Doctor Noize album has specific educational and character-building goals, and my characters' inclusive diversity of species, background and musical style in Phineas' International Band of Misunderstood Geniuses sends a clear diversity and tolerance message. But I made a commitment to balancing major male characters with major female characters at the outset in

2006, and while I'm better than most male artists in that regard, I still have a few more male characters than female, and that can and should be balanced better.

A lot of our music for kids admirably builds smiles and hearts, but stops short of combining the joy of feeling with the joy of learning. This doesn't mean that music is not great for kids — music that's positive and inspiring *is* great for kids — it simply means it's more often more inspirational than educational. As artists, we often don't have an educational focus outside of the recordings we make, because nobody's spurring us on to do so. But here's a thought to start: the music itself doesn't have to be expressly educational if we build curricula and workshops around it that go deeper and teach kids the amazing mathematical, musical, verbal, artistic, colorful and technological foundations underneath it all.

### **Who's Doing It?**

I decided to review the websites of the most recent Children's Music Grammy winners — the most prestigious award in our genre — to see how many of them clearly offer learning content in the form of curricula or live educational workshops on their websites. I thought I was going to be counting how many I found in a decade of award-winning acclaimed leaders for kids in the area of music; instead, I ended up having to count the years back in time until I found at least one curricula and one workshop for kids among the most celebrated artists in the field. Here are the results of that research, in a nutshell. It's possible artists offer them and they're not on their site; but if that's the case, this speaks for itself, as few people know about them and clearly they're not an out-facing priority.

I want to emphasize that these artists are uniformly wonderful, performing a beautiful service for the world in the form of recordings and performances. I'm not trying to inspire

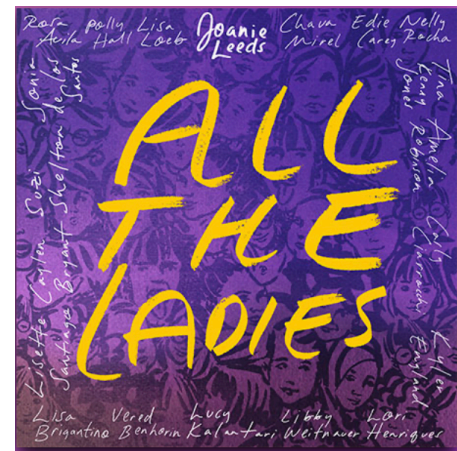
change in that at all, or critique their artistry, which is sensational. I'm simply trying to inspire more educational content, perhaps within and particularly alongside, what these artists do for our most important audience: the kids. To rebridge the divide between the entertainers and the educators. One of the disheartening things to me as a family musician and educator over the last fifteen years, about both the children's music genre and the culture in general, is just how much education has been separated from culture and the arts. The idea that learning and fun are one and the same for kids is being benignly attacked by gatekeepers whose stewardship in previous generations used to be to promote that link. Whereas kids used to watch *Sesame Street* and *Mr. Rogers* to have fun and learn — including appearances by major musicians and actors — kids now listen to *Sirius XM Kids Place Live!* or watch TikTok, where the programming is often purely entertainment or even anti-educational. When we as artists literally receive emails from major Program Directors indicating they won't play our music if there's a curriculum made around it, it's no wonder artists who'd love to earn airplay and a Grammy don't make curricula.

## 2021 Children's Music Grammy-Winner Joanie Leeds

### *Asynch Offerings*

Joanie's album *All The Ladies* is exceptionally educational, inspiring girls and boys to learn about and understand the contributions of women in our society in a moment in time where society is making an effort to wake up to diversity. But there are no materials beyond that.

Although the artist is a powerful feminist trailblazer herself, there's no curricula on the site to back up songs like *RBG* about feminist trailblazer Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and the nation's top



kindie music station was reluctant to play this song with much regularity until Joanie was nominated for a Grammy. Again, this is not intended to critique the artist and her goals here; on the contrary, it's intended to encourage expansion of that work and those goals.

### *Recording Workshops*

She doesn't offer these. She offers to write and record songs *for* you, but not *with* you. You can hire her to write and record a song for you, which is a cool thing to get from a Grammy-winner. But she's not offering to teach kids anything about that process on the site.

### **2020 Grammy-Winner Jon Samson**

#### *Asynch Offerings*

Again, Jon's album is exceptionally educational and valuable — there's a clear theme about acceptance and mental health with direct and wonderful songs about ADD and other things kids are dealing with — but there's no asynch learning content offered. The nation's top kindie music station completely ignored this album and artist, even *after* it won the Grammy for best Children's Recording. But the last two Grammy-winners could be seen as an encouraging sign the industry may be heading back in an educational direction.

### *Recording Workshops*

Jon comes closer than other artists here with his wonderful Sessions. A licensed music therapist — that's actually his main gig — Jon works with kids in an improvisational way and records the work, in particular working with kids seeking therapy for a variety of reasons. It's quite impactful, and few follow his lead. He's an outlier.

### **2019 Grammy-Winner Lucy Kalantari**



Lucy's website doesn't offer asynch or live workshops. She's an exceptional musician, producer and songwriter, and her album reflects that. It would be amazing to have learning activities and programs designed by such a talent in the field. Lucy's album, while exceptional musically and with brilliant jazz inflections, has a less specifically educational bent than the above two, and it was much more popular on children's radio than either of them.

#### **2018 Grammy-Winner Lisa Loeb**

None and none. A supreme talent, an accomplished artist for adults too, and a great album. There's a Summer Camp page she endorses and supports generously, but no specific learning for kids from the artist offered on the site.

#### **2017 Grammy-Winner Secret Agent 23 Skidoo**

None and none. Skidoo is known for his exceptional wordplay and commitment to diverse and colorful hip hop. It would be great for kids to learn directly from this man.

#### **2016 Grammy-Winner Tim Kubart**

None and none. He and his album are a brilliant positive-energy machine. Imagine what that machine could do specifically directed to education.

#### **2015 Grammy Winner Neela Vaswani**

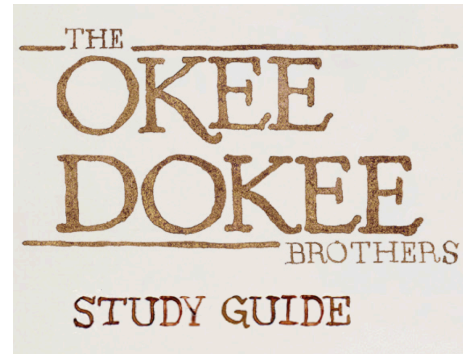
2015 was an unusual Grammy year in that an educational audiobook won: *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World*. I don't know how to assess this with the rest; on the one hand, it's educational. On the other hand, it's neither music nor "entertainment." More than anything, it seems to signify the continued separation of educational content and entertainment content during the mid-2010s.

#### **2014 Grammy Winner Jennifer Gasoi**

2014's winner was Canadian musician Jennifer Gasoi, who has a lovely video series addressing mindfulness and other things for kids, but no asynch or live curricula.

### **2013 Grammy Winner The Okee Dokee Brothers**

You have to travel all the way back to 2013 Grammy winners the Okee Dokee Brothers to find anything remotely related to an educational curriculum related to an album easily findable on a Grammy-



winner's website. Their curriculum is quite good, and I applaud them for it. It's also a single document that covers all their albums, shows, and everything they do — and this is possible because their albums cover similar territory, not significantly different educational or auditory directions. There's nothing wrong with that; many artists have a style and stick to it. But as comprehensive and well-done as The Okee Dokee Brothers' curricula is, this one document over the last decade is a pretty remarkable statement on just how disconnected the most acclaimed recording artists for kids are from educating kids about what we do.

### **Outside The Grammy Winners**

Outside the Grammy-winners, there's a bit more educational content being offered by children's musicians — a commentary, for sure, on what the top gatekeepers in the business reward, from programmers to awards programs. Some, like the Alphabet Rockers, have done much more to ally with education, and should be commended for that work. These hip hop artists have very specific goals to teach kids about social justice, and conduct songwriting workshops and programs that incorporate those goals. It's very prominent on their website, which really sticks out in our industry.

Yosi, Andy Z, Zak Morgan, Katherine Dines and more all do various forms of educational workshops and curricula. I noticed that Lori Henriques — a Grammy-nominee who recorded an outstanding jazz-influenced album about Nobel Peace Laureates that was completely ignored by many of the prominent children’s music programmers (the same people who played the crap out of her “Poop Song”), is starting to build an “Education” section on her website with tabs for “Lesson Plans” and “Activism.” All are extremely successful children’s musicians who do mostly regional live work (but cover large regions) and have perhaps wisely stopped focusing on trying to please the children’s media gatekeepers and simply connect directly with kids and educators. I applaud them for their efforts. And the Children’s Music Network has been endorsing this sort of thing, and inclusive classroom activities, for years.

In summary: There has been no serious connection between the most acclaimed children’s media outlets/musicians and education in the last decade. The artists the biggest stations play the most have not been encouraged to focus on educating our kids. The artists surveyed above, most of whom I know personally in my work as Doctor Noize, are actually some of the most sincere practitioners of the art, and are deeply committed to inspiring and educating kids — but the industry has not allied itself with educators at all, so as they’re trying to make a living in a field where the living is tight, it’s a big ask to get them to do it unless the programmers and gatekeepers reward it or the schools are willing to pay for it. There does appear to be a change in the cultural tide, and we’ll see if that change leads to permanent action beyond present talk. If not, perhaps the wisest step of all for us as artists would be to bypass the race for airplay and awards completely, and focus on finding grants and funders of kids’ educational content to support our goals.

## CHAPTER 3

### ASYNCHRONOUS CONTENT DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

#### Core Productions

**“Mission Statement:** *Doctor Noize inspires creativity, curiosity and character through music, art and words.”*

These are the first words on the very first page of the Doctor Noize website, and have been from the beginning. The core productions I’ve made for children and the adults who belong to them as Doctor Noize are recordings, books and videos. The live shows are based on these productions, and these productions’ very existence is what inspires interest in the curricula and workshops — as described above, most kids want to get involved in recording arts because they’ve heard someone, somewhere else, on a recording that sounds so spectacularly exciting that they want to experience making one of their own. I’ll focus on the recordings, with a brief summary of the books and videos to address how they all fit together and build interest in the core series story of a diverse group of songwriters and recording artists (Doctor Noize, Phineas McBoof and The International Band of Misunderstood Geniuses) who passionately seek out every color of musical and verbal experiences. I’ll also highlight why the website is a crucial multimedia production to the whole process. Without the recordings, the curricula and Workshops don’t exist; without the website, they don’t provide access and resonance.

#### Recordings

##### *Overview*

The Doctor Noize recordings are all narrative works of musical theatre that teach about composing, performing and recording without kids realizing it (both of these represent a

fundamental sleight of hand job teaching kids at this — or any — age: Make learning *fun*.). Each album has a specific educational goal. *The Ballad of Phineas McBoof* introduces kids to the instruments and the Doctor Noize world. *The Return of Phineas McBoof* expands the character diversity and explores themes of cooperation and leadership. *Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony* teaches about the orchestra, musical form and introspection. *Homemade* teaches music fundamentals and creative resilience in a challenging time. *Grammaropolis* teaches the value and meaning of words. *Punctuate This!* explores the power of language through sentence structure. And they all teach the value of seeking our greatest potential together. Kids completing the series learn those specifics, and the leadership and character to be a strong and purposeful person and friend in any situation.

The albums are narrative works of musical theatre because I want to both entertain *and* educate, and I learned a powerful lesson as a high school Music teacher and Arts, Communication & Technology Department Head: Students of any age will go *anywhere* with you as long as you remember that people are primarily interested in people, story and purpose. A philosophical story from my teaching past here is actually one of the main insights and ingredients driving every Doctor Noize production I make, every course I teach, and every show and workshop I perform. Here it is.

### *The Lightbulb Experience*

I studied classical music history as an undergraduate at Stanford, and became convinced it's marketed incorrectly today as a bunch of old music for rich snobs rather than as wild masterpieces by the crazy rock stars of their era. I asked my school to add a class called *Western Music History: Too Many Notes* as an elective to the schedule. (The title is a reference to a

buffoon lecturing Mozart in my favorite film of all time, *Amadeus*.) The school administration said no one would sign up. I said put it on anyway, and then I made sure to play sports and write songs with the coolest kids in school at lunch and right after school, which in turn inspired a few of them to enroll in the class, which in turn inspired everyone to enroll in the class. Now I just had to make it engaging. (As described in a following chapter, I follow the same formula in the workshops in a constricted time frame — make sure that *fun* and *connection* happen first, then get to work.)

Within two years, the course was so popular students couldn't get in. It was made a freshman requirement. Parents wrote: "*You inspired my son to go to the San Francisco Symphony!*" It was a real joy validating my belief that kids — even non-musicians — could go wild over fine art music, or really anything sophisticated. We just had to believe in them and present it in a way that honored the humanity and thrill of the composers who wrote it.

The secret to student engagement was connecting works to their creator's story and purpose. Learning this informed everything I've done as a teacher and Doctor Noize, whose albums are character-based musicals challenging kids with sophisticated fare. Students of any age will explore challenging musical puzzles when we remember: We're all moved by people, story and purpose. And kids, in particular, are moved by *diversity* of people and experiences — much more so than adults, who often have found their lane and want to stay in it.

So, as CU Denver Recording Arts Professor Lorne Bregitzer pointed out upon listening to and contributing his mastering talents to the latest Doctor Noize recording: There is a ton of both character and stylistic diversity on the Doctor Noize recordings, and it struck him as a genre where that approach was uniquely desirable in recordings to stretch and not limit adventurous

minds. Other genres often try to reign in the chaos and band of creativity. As described in this and ensuing chapters, I try to do just the opposite in Doctor Noize asynchronous and live learning experiences: We tell the kids to open those creative avenues and let it rip.

So there is *no set Doctor Noize musical style* by design. It's an open palette for kids. We go where the characters explore, and in the recordings first, which inspires the kids to do so in the curricula and workshops later, as we'll see. As the characters sing at the end of *The Return of Phineas* when Phineas unexpectedly leaves his own Band: *Go Where You Wanna Be*.

But while it's crucial with kids to open their minds with this *breadth* of diversity, it's equally important to honor their intellects with *depth* of experience. It's a whole lot of fun to provide intellectual and cultural depth and diversity to an audience who will really digest that and base their life on it. Let's examine that depth and breadth in three brief specific production Case Studies below.

*Case Study: Homemade*



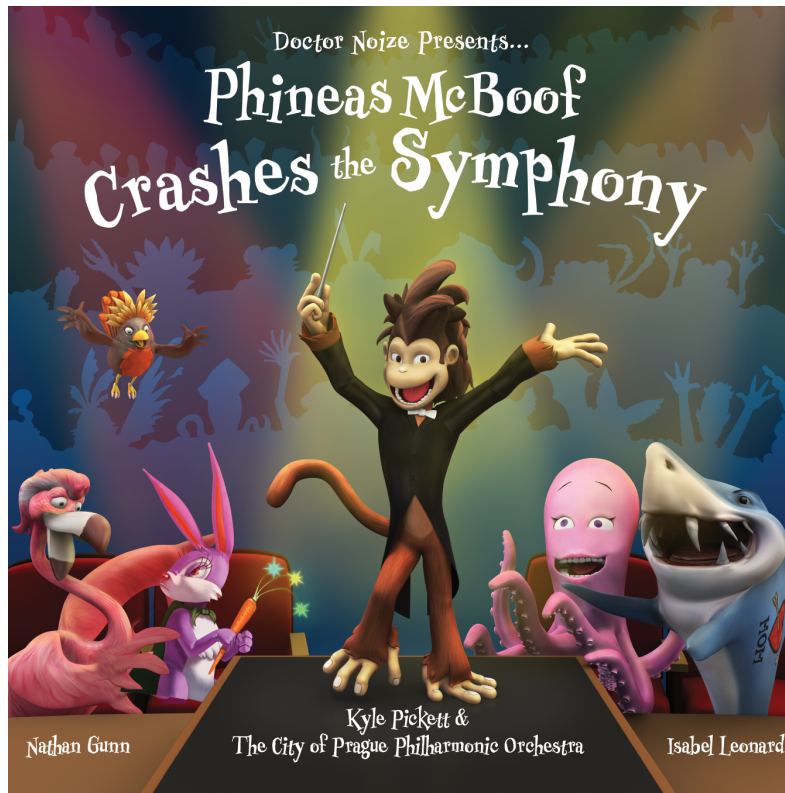
By design, *Homemade* is literally a recording about making a recording. Its simple message is: *We're all stuck at home — why not collaborate and create fun art while we're here?* *Homemade* was actually going to be my Thesis Portfolio, but COVID had me finish it before my Thesis semester even started, so I'm really doing two projects for the price of one — *YAY!* Oh well. It features Doctor Noize making songs at home with his family initially, and then creatively branching out to call talented friends to contribute musical parts from their homes.

The album, whose concept was inspired by the coronavirus pandemic and the fact that Doctor Noize and his family (and everyone else) were, in fact, stuck at home, spurred a national hit on radio and TV called *Stay At Home* and an all-star environmental song about farts (that is not a misprint) featuring five Grammy winners called *Positive Energy!* The back half of the album features an exploration of music fundamentals in a diverse, creative, character-based way: each Band member plays their own version of Doctor Noize's national hit song *Banana*, explaining in the preceding track which elements they were changing from the original — tempo, meter, harmony, structure, instrumentation, etc. In other words, *Homemade* is all about making music, and all about doing so in crazy, fun, smart but not always serious ways. Its specific call to action in the final track is for kids to go make creations of their own and share them with Doctor Noize. Conceptually, it would be hard to create a better pre-recording-arts-workshop album for kids, and I had that in mind when writing it.

*"One of Kindie's well-known names, Doctor Noize, has thought about something to bring the kindie community together and uplift their fans. He also wanted to make something very upbeat to boost the moods of families and even other artists... due to the pandemic,"* wrote Matt de Guzman in a children's music blog based in the the Philippines.



Case Study: *Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony*

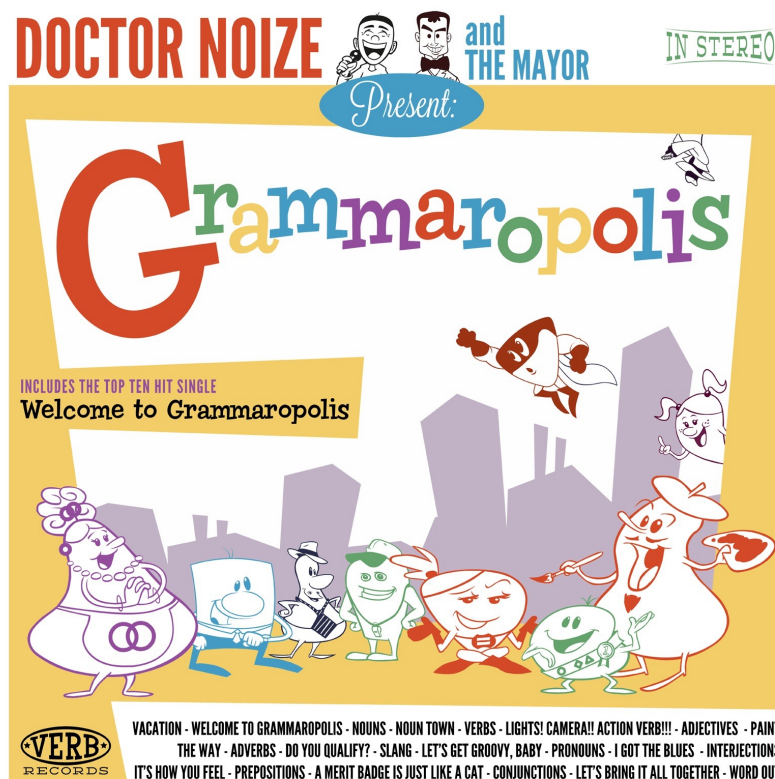


Similar to *Homemade*, *Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony* is literally a symphonic musical theatre recording about putting on a symphony show. It says to kids, with everything it's about: Putting on an orchestral show is big, crazy, wonderful, chaotic fun, and you should try it sometime. The *Symphony* album actually was developed straight out of live Workshops, performances and commissions. I was commissioned to write a 60-minute live orchestral work for kids by The McConnell Foundation that was intended to be interactive and specifically written for kids, instead of just adapted for them from works for adults. That show, performed with multiple orchestras nationwide and accompanied by a teaching Workshop I developed comparing Sonata Form in Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* to Popular Song Structure in Bieber and other pop stars (more on that Workshop in another chapter) was such a hit that we decided to make a recording out of it.

Over a period of a few years, the concept expanded into a two-act double album recording of musical theatre for kids funded by almost \$120,000 of direct donations from like-minded fans via both traditional fundraising and a successful crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter. We found there was *definitely* an appetite for expanding kids' minds musically with extreme depth both asynchronously and in live events and concerts, and kids would go all in on it. Someone even wrote a Doctoral Thesis on the project in 2018 that's allegedly been cited in over 300 other academic publications. But mostly, it teaches kids the color and depth of orchestral music.

The album received glowing reviews from 100+ publications, it was one of the top sellers on CD Baby for months (an opera for kids was a top seller!), and *School Library Journal* called it "*an essential addition to any collection.*" Like the Doctor Noize songwriting and recording Workshops in a later chapter, it was sort of its own genre.

Case Study: Grammaropolis



After the first two Doctor Noize albums, I became known as the crazy guy in children's music who would go deep and wide and produce things that demanded both attention to and acceptance of stylistic diversity from an audience — too wide and too deep for some gatekeepers of the genre. The result was that some traditional children's music programmers, writers and defenders of the genre decided I was far too pretentious, but others — particularly those with an educational bent — decided I was *the guy* to do things to push the envelope. This led to Doctor Noize commissions like the aforementioned symphony projects, musical theatre works, iPhone apps, and even multiple entire album commissions. *Grammaropolis* was one of those albums.

The commission from the Grammaropolis brand was to write a modern-day *Schoolhouse Rock* about grammar for kids and teachers to utilize. The story and characters were created as a collaboration between myself and Grammaropolis CEO Coert Voorhees, himself an acclaimed teacher. Everything, again, followed the rule of telling stories through fun characters to joyfully engage kids forward to the learning points. After the album's completion, the songs also became the soundtrack to a series of animated videos, an app, and a membership-based learning website. The videos have been watched millions of times online, and the content is still going strong — the app was called “the best language app for kids” just last year in pandemic 2020 by the national television show *Live with Kelly & Ryan*, years after we created the materials. Again, clearly there is an appetite for learning-based music and media for kids.

A sequel to *Grammaropolis* called *Punctuate This!* — with its own series of animated videos and more — was commissioned and released in 2017, and *Grammaropolis* itself was commissioned into a school stage musical that premiered in 2020. A review in *You Know, For Kids* by Myles McDonnell shows that the attributes most commonly cited as the most successful

ingredients in the Recording Workshops have their foundation in the polished professional recordings as well:

*"It's the album... that is delighting our seven-year-old most right now. The good Doctor proves quickly to be a master... an alarmingly accomplished musician playing nearly every instrument you hear. Most of all, though, both the Doctor and the Mayor are funny, which is really what makes the album irresistible to kids. And that, in turn, lets all the grammar lessons the songs are really about just seep in without really even feeling like learning. It's remarkably effective."*

### **Books, Videos, Apps & More**

The Doctor Noize educational productions have branched out into many other multimedia avenues as well — from illustrated books, to animated and live videos, to apps, to online games, to website content and more — and it's been pivotal to getting eyes and minds on the recordings. This Thesis Portfolio is focused primarily on analyzing the learning surrounding the recording arts content. That being said, it's important to note the importance of utilizing many multimedia avenues in today's arts ecosystem. Sean Hildreth, former Programming Director at the world's largest children's museum — the Children's Museum of Indianapolis — was a frequent collaborator for some of the earliest Doctor Noize Workshops. During my recent interview with him about those Workshops, he unexpectedly offered this: *"You were always trying to push technology as part of the experience because that's where the access comes after the show. I remember you always pushed the edge — with your apps, your recording workshops, etc. Your innovation was getting things out there on technology and giving kids access to them, both online and in the Workshops."*

To that end, here's a studied analysis of one of the most important means of equitable distribution of Doctor Noize's asynchronous and live Workshop creations (there's an entire page stacked with published Workshop songs for classrooms and friends and family to enjoy and feel proud of): The website.

## The Website

[JOIN EMAIL LIST](#)  
[BUY, BOOK, SUPPORT!](#)

Doctor Noize

[MUSICAL RECORDINGS](#) [ILLUSTRATED BOOKS](#) [CLOTHING & MERCH](#) [MOBILE APPS](#) [ONLINE GAMES](#) [ONLINE VIDEOS](#) [SOLO SHOWS](#)  
[SYMPHONY SHOWS](#) [TEACHING & LEARNING](#) [THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS](#) [STAY AT HOME](#)



Hi Everybuddy!

**Mission Statement:** Doctor Noize inspires creativity, curiosity and character through music, art and words.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Sunday 11/15/20 - Monday 05/31/21**  
Home at [Stay At Home](#)

**Saturday 05/15/21**  
Denver, CO at [University of Colorado Denver](#)

**Thursday 08/05/21**  
Columbia, MO at [Stevens Lake Amphitheatre](#)

**Tuesday 08/10/21 - Thursday 08/12/21**  
WY at [Wyoming Tour Venues](#)

[View Full Event Calendar!](#)

Subscribe:  

The Doc's a Stanford-educated father, chart-topping recording artist, commissioned composer for stage and screen, live performer, author, hit app creator, award-winning teacher, speaker, studio owner and humorist. Featuring strong male, female and diverse characters with contrasting and collaborating perspectives, his work is for *everyone*.



### WEBSITE UPDATE!

This site, [corycullinan.com](#) & [reachstudios.net](#) – the Doc's three ID's – have all received major updates. See the [Stay At Home](#) page and more!

### LIVE W. KELLY & RYAN!

Doctor Noize was featured on [Live with Kelly & Ryan](#), who called his app



“ I have to tell you that your CD's have been the only ones playing in our house these days (by my daughter's and husband's request no less) - a huge hit with the Davis fam! Who sings all Backbone's solos in "PM Crashes the Symphony"? Tell her she has the voice of an angel!!!”

Julie Hettinger  
CO Noizemaker



I should have asked this when I shared the premiere of my daughter Sidney's video series the other day: If you find this a positive message told by a teen in a worthwhile way, please share it and like... [See More](#)

6 hours ago ·

 Video

[View on Facebook](#) · [Share](#)

The Doctor Noize website is not your normal recording artist site. One of the first unusual things you'll notice is that every single album, and every single illustrated book, is 100% free on the site for any kid or class who can't afford it. We sell them if you'd like to support them, and we certainly need to make and raise money if future creations are to be made, but you don't have to buy them to get them. This is something that was initiated in the pandemic so kids at home have more enrichment materials to work with, but I'm seriously learning toward just keeping it that way permanently and eliminating product sales as any meaningful part of the income stream. Education needs to be equitable to have a fair impact, and I increasingly view what I do for kids more from an educator's lens than an entertainer's in a culture that increasingly seems to seek fictions over fact and diversions over depth. Instead of joining in, why not be an outlier and focus on longterm attention span activities like asynchronous curricula that inspire kids to listen to entire musical albums over single songs, and Workshops that get kids to hang out and work on something collaborative and complicated for 90 minutes?

### **Philosophy & Purpose**

In order to do that, I needed a website that's inviting and encouraging and easy to navigate for kids and adults alike. I had already invested years of time and funding into the website, but over the last two months alone, as it became clear that the website was the best place for the media repository related to this Thesis Portfolio, I've spent about 150 hours on a philosophy and purpose review and update of the site, personally redesigning and simplifying its structure and messaging, and making all for-sale productions 100% free on the site for educational and inspiration accessibility for all. Among other things, the Teaching & Learning page and subpages are greatly improved and enhanced — the Genius Workshop Recordings page

alone now has over 30 recordings written and recorded in 45-90 minute Workshops with kids, some held in the last month in a brand-new form of Zoom Workshop born of necessity in the pandemic that was surprisingly effective, as demonstrated in a later Chapter.

I consider the website a key component of the asynchronous *and* live learning, now and, especially, in the future after the feedback I've received from my testing in Chapters 5 and 6. It's colorful and busy as a child would like, yet organized as an adult would like. Contrast [doctornoize.com](http://doctornoize.com) (where I'm excitedly trying to make everything fun like a kid) to [corycullinan.com](http://corycullinan.com) (where I'm desperately trying to get people to take me seriously as an adult) and you'll instantly see how design communicates in a nanosecond as much as words communicate in minutes to the human mind. I've interviewed, hired and worked with many website designers to learn the philosophies that make them work, and I'll share a few of those tips here, because I think it would be useful to anyone else who wants to give the world their own recording arts materials to learn from.

## **Design & Ease Of Use**

Every website professional I've talked with and worked with has given me a variation of one quote that's important to note in site design:

*"People are lazy."* — Anyone Who's Ever Met Modern People

While I will freely admit that giving in to this premise contradicts some of the experiences I've described above where modern audiences have been hungry for deeper and more diverse content, remember that people's perspectives are flexible and situational. When someone sits down at a curriculum on my album introducing the orchestra to kids, or signs up for a 90-minute Doctor Noize Workshop, they're committed to something different than when they

arrive at a website homepage. On the internet, the low attention span ethos reigns supreme. It's definitely a "when in Rome" place if you want any traction. Experts say you have only seconds to secure interest on the web, and the look is most important, followed by the content. But the *design* allows quick *access* to the content, and *this* is the key.

I spent a considerable time learning a platform called Wordpress (with experts and teachers and a lot of Googling on the web) to become the person who actually maintains my own website. Wordpress has templates but allows you to be more flexible than other musician website platforms like BandZoog — if you're willing to spend the time to learn. The Doctor Noize website is built on a modified Wordpress engine with a bunch of plug-ins — like the players, the Calendar, the quotes, and many others. The Header and Footer menus and submenus were worked and reworked until the flow of information is simple and elegant, yet allows you access to a huge depth of detail with only a few clicks. Purging the pages down to size and number is a *much* more difficult job than adding endless pages and prose. An easily navigable structure takes a lot of experimenting and work until it flows correctly, and that flow is crucial if you want people to be able to get to things like your recordings and curricula and workshops.

That's the macro level. On a more micro level, the crucial step — that took over 100 hours of testing and changing, testing and changing — was to find the Default Page Template. I started by typing and putting whatever I thought was best for each page. Then I started analyzing the pages for both common occurrences and what seemed to work the best. Ultimately, I arrived at the following template, and resolved to make every possible page follow it. This generally required taking things *out* of pages and reorganizing the layout to match the others.



## Website Page Template

### *Left Column*

- Elevator Pitch
- Inspiring Buzz Quote
- Main Activity or Call to Action!
- Buy, Book or Support! Button

### *Right Column*

- Video or Image
- Go Deeper...
- Doctor Noize Quote
- Extended Writeup

Here's that template on *The Ballad of Phineas McBoof Book*'s page — it's actually highly organized, but it looks fun and almost chaotic, a model I repeat in the Workshops as well. The template's designed to appeal and encourage engagement:

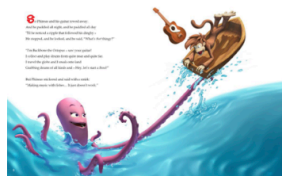
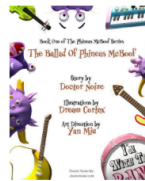
# THE BALLAD OF PHINEAS McBOOF BOOK

With characters as colorful as the gorgeous 3D scenesurroundings, and words as wonderfully witty as one can write, acclaimed storyteller Doctor Noize's first illustrated children's book has brought joy and togetherness to many families and classrooms.

“ This cartoon-colored Odyssey shows how Phineas learns about other creatures' love of music... as he realizes we each have a song to contribute to the great symphony of life.”

Joseph W. Cates  
Richmond Parents Monthly

**Read The Book!** Just click on a page.



Doctor Noize productions inspire kids' minds and creativity and bring friends and families together. Read **The Ballad of Phineas McBoof** here free because the Doc believes great educational media should be available to all. Then go pay it forward with what you do in your own life.

**Buy, Book or Support!**



**Go Deeper...**

- [Learning Curriculum](#)
- [Musical Recording](#)
- [Stage Musical](#)
- [Interactive Book App](#)
- [The Return of Phineas McBoof Book](#)

“ This book is bananas!”

Doctor Noize  
CEO, Creative Director & Performing Artist of Doctor Noize Inc.

There once was a monkey — McBoof was his name.  
His fans called him Phineas, and he had great fame...

So starts the journey of the great enigmatic monkey, Phineas McBoof, as he fleetingly flees fame and fortune to find philosophy and form his fantastic new band, *The International Band Of Misunderstood Geniuses*. Take an adventure with rugged individualists like Backbone The Octopus, Bottomus The Hip Popotamus, Riley The Robot, Lenny Long Tail, and The Ooh Gah Boo Gus as they travel the world with one thing in common: They groove to their own music.

So come join The Band to find your own inner genius. With colorful characters brought to life by the storytelling of **Doctor Noize** and the three dimensional magic of Dream Cortex and Artistic Director Yan Miu, this book tells the same tale as Doctor Noize's beloved recording of the same name, with its #1 national hit song *Banana*. Also available in a stunning and sonically Interactive Book App.

There are a number of wonderful tech tips under the hood of Wordpress (and no doubt other website design) to help bring that kid-perfect combination of creative fun, yet order, to the proceedings. This is not a website design Thesis — only a Thesis Portfolio that acknowledges the essential job of a website for asynchronous and live workshop content of the sort I’m teaching — but here are two to whet your appetite.

First, you can set what are called Breakpoints to determine whether certain things are shown on websites, mobile devices, or both. Second, you can use what’s called “Animation” to create the appealing visual of having a few items “move into place” when you first arrive at the page. I decided that, in general, it looked best if two items moved into place, and everything else on the page stayed anchored. But this effect looks fun and creative and high-end on every page when used in such moderation, and you can go to almost any page on the site to see it in action.

This template is on all but a handful of pages that are simply better another way. It allows plenty of info but not too much. More importantly, it allows visitors to find things quickly, because you start to realize that once you can quickly find things on one page, you can quickly find them on most of the other pages too.

## **Curricula**

Only after the recordings are made and the website is ready to engage do the curricula find a place to shine and a purpose to serve. To kids, I don’t call them “curricula” — I name them “Learning Adventures.” Diving into curricula is like staring at a salad to a kid; going on an *adventure* is far more appealing. So, like Phineas, on adventures we go.

The curricula are free and appealing, and currently are found on the site along with all Doctor Noize recordings free for teachers & students. The recordings are positioned nicely to inspire kids to check out both the asynchronous curricula and the song recording Workshops because, as described above, Doctor Noize recordings are much more specifically about the *creation* of music and words by *composers* (the stories' characters) than most children's music. It's probably the teacher in me. My stories are not typical children's music topics of shared childhood experiences, dancing up and down, or attending the first day of school; they're generally about the more unusual and extraordinary experience of characters using words and music to express creativity. This is not to say more common children's music topics are not valuable — it is *certainly* valuable to let children know they're not alone and we all have shared experiences — it's just to say that my recordings lean more toward stories about eccentric individual creative characters joining together to collectively create extraordinary things, and that serves my educational goals — and those of this Thesis Portfolio — quite well.

All the curricula I created are included in Appendix B. They're works in progress. In the Case Studies below, I simply display the first page and a link to all the curricula online.

### **Case Study #1: *Homemade***

Here's the first page of the *Homemade* [Learning Adventure](#):

# Homemade

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures

\*One question  
per track



1. What is one thing we can do while staying at home?  
Make soggy pancakes  
Watch cartoons until midnight  
Love one another  
Eat soggy pancakes
2. Who is home with Doctor Noize?  
A spaceman  
Sydney, Riley, & Mom  
The world's greatest opera singer  
Mom & Hank
3. What instrument has a solo in "More Than Love"?  
Drums  
Violin  
Saxophone  
Alphorn
4. Who should you call for some bass?  
Doctor Noize  
The New York Philharmonic  
The kid with a mohawk  
Bottomus
5. What sound comes in first in "Gotta Teach Others To Enjoy Life"?  
Snapping  
Whispering  
Pipe Organ  
Trumpet
6. What kind of song did Mama write?  
A song for Halloween  
A symphony  
A song for Easter  
An avant-garde sonata for pots and pans

[www.doctornoize.com](http://www.doctornoize.com)

Our first Case Study is the worst! The *Homemade* curriculum, as it stands, is an inauspicious beginning in a world where first impressions are everything. But, in that sense, it's a great way to demonstrate how design, professionalism, and ease of use are crucial — from recordings to websites to curricula to even Workshops that seem chaotic but are actually very planned out. The *Homemade* curriculum was created after several long months of late nights finishing a free pandemic album; I was tired. In fact, I largely farmed it out to my teenage daughter and a temporary hired hand, told them it had to be done by the afternoon, and put it up on the site without much review.

There's no beating around the bush: My original curriculum for *Homemade* is pretty mediocre. I was exhausted from creating an album in a pandemic, producing everyone remotely from my home, and doing school and parenting, and I didn't devote proper time to this one. Even the formatting is terrible, because it didn't go through a second draft. Room for improvement in this one is pretty much everything, which is unfortunate, because I created the project as my go-to creativity starter. It's high on my list to go back and improve.

The results of that level of care are predictable. On the very first question, the text goes over Phineas' tail in such a way as to make it hard to read. Sure, you can figure it out, but this immediately says: "*We don't take this seriously, so why should you?*" It's particularly noticeable when all the other productions are so pristinely wrought. Other immediately obvious failures of this Learning Adventure: It's the only curriculum where the four multiple-choice answers are not labeled (A), (B), (C) and (D), so you don't instantly know where to circle your answer; our online PDF is missing the entire second page (!); and it's artwork and design, while beautifully laid out, is a much lower resolution than all the other curricula, making the artwork

almost-but-not-quite beautiful when printed or displayed on full screen. Come on, Doctor Noize! Have some pride.

**Case Study #2: *Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony***

Here's Page 1 of the *Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)* Learning Adventure:



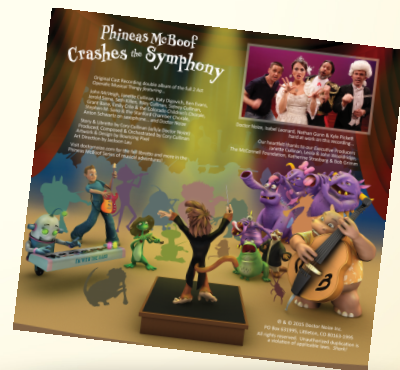
# Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



\*One question  
per track

- \*1. Does Phineas apologize?
  - A. Nope
  - B. Yes
  - C. I wish
  - D. No way José
2. Why do composers repeat sections of music?
  - A. They're lazy
  - B. They ran out of time to write new stuff
  - C. People like hearing things they know
  - D. Why do composers repeat sections of quizzes?
3. What formula does this Beethoven's 5th Symphony movement follow?
  - A. Classical Sonata Form
  - B. Popular Song Structure
  - C. Romantic Blomantic Structure
  - D. Burping Structure
4. How does rehearsal go in "Practice Makes Imperfect?"
  - A. It sounds like angels humming "Three Blind Mice"
  - B. We have rehearsal?? Oh no! I forgot!
  - C. It goes perfectly
  - D. Not well!
5. The first half of "Movin' On" is all what instrument?
  - A. Guitar
  - B. Drums
  - C. Voice (called "a capella")
  - D. Strings
6. What does Placido decide?
  - A. To sing pop music from now on
  - B. To go home to his family
  - C. To write more music
  - D. To become a beautiful mermaid
7. Why does Placido say the world was made at the end of "Long, Long, Ago?"
  - A. For him
  - B. For Phineas
  - C. For his child
  - D. For his parents



[www.doctornoize.com](http://www.doctornoize.com)



Our second Case Study fares much better before our user testing phase in Chapter 5 (it doesn't fare quite as well after that!). The curriculum for *Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)* reflects the work of a much more serious teacher. A glance at the first page shows that while the fun and humor are still there, some of the questions are actually more musically substantial (it's intentional that not all of the questions are musically difficult). For this curriculum, I worked *with* my teenage daughter — I wanted a combination of my musical knowledge and her closer experience to modern youth, with both of our senses of humor — instead of just farming it out to her to quickly complete. Time and care are reflected, and the print resolution is excellent. From a production values perspective, it's a top-notch production that matches and honors the album.

As with *Homemade* and all the Doctor Noize curricula, there's one multiple-choice question per album track, and the final question or two are more expansive, creative and time-consuming. The second-to-last page on *Homemade* (it lists no page numbers) challenges kids to make their own art in response to the album. But it fails to give them a clear framework to do so, doesn't capitalize the song title in *Banana*, and incorporates two low-res stock images that don't match the rest of the artwork. The last page is inexplicably blank. The whole thing feels like a rush job and doesn't inspire a carefully considered response.

The last two pages of *Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)*, on the other hand, demonstrate more care. Page 5 (the pages are numbered so teachers can navigate with students) asks you to draw and write something, and it gives you clearly defined fun spaces to do each of those tasks. Page 6 presents a much more challenging "GENIUS QUESTION" that requires you to synthesize information learned on the double album, and gives clear instructions how to do it.

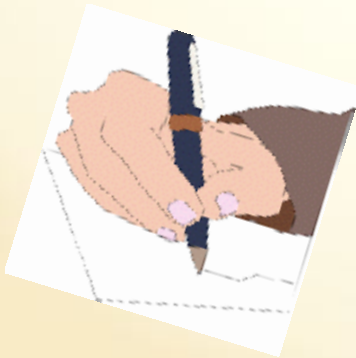


*After listening...*

*Here's your Stay at Home Challenge!*



*Create your own version of banana, draw a picture of the band or your family at home, make a music video to a Doctor Noize song, anything your creative genius thinks of! Post it on Instagram or Facebook and use #DoctorNoize for a chance to win a free book or CD! We can't wait to see what you do!*



[www.doctornoize.com](http://www.doctornoize.com)

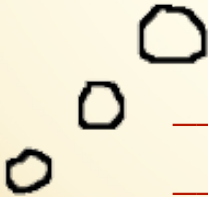
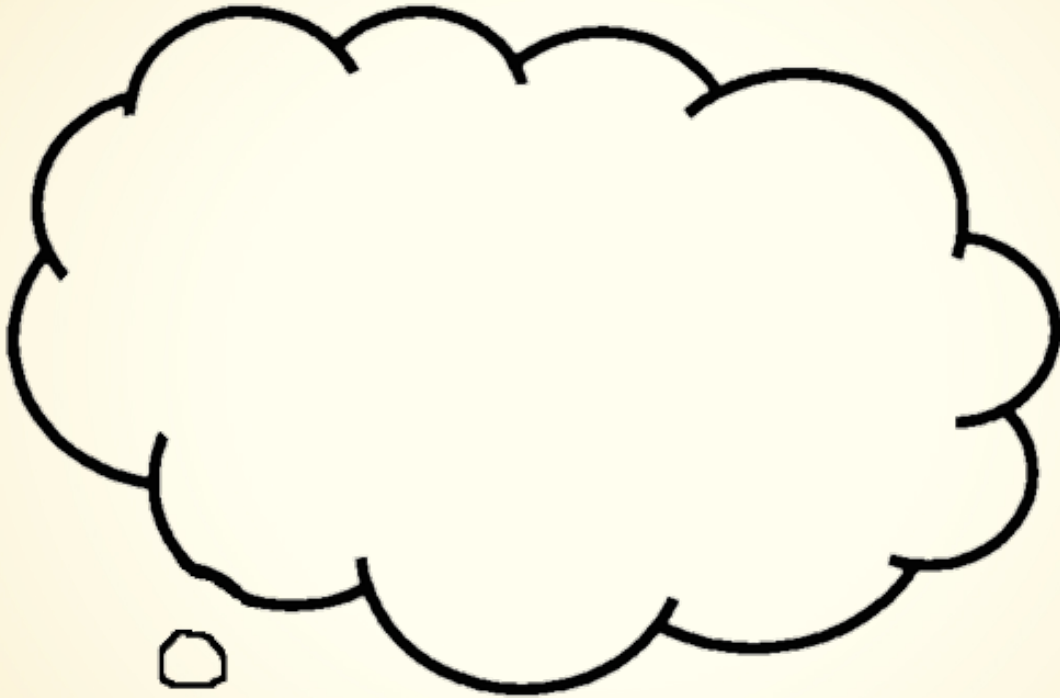
Phineas McBoof  
Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)

Doctor Noize  
Learning Adventures



Phineas McBoof and his friends found their voices...  
what will YOU do to find yours?

Draw and write about something YOU like to do, and show  
yourself sharing it with the world!



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[www.doctornoize.com](http://www.doctornoize.com)

Phineas McBoof  
Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)

Doctor Noize  
Learning Adventures

Now, let's put it all together with a  
GENIUS QUESTION!!!



Draw a line between each instrument family and its list of instruments.

Woodwind Section

Flute, clarinet, oboe,  
saxophone, bassoon

String Section

Piano, organ, voice,  
conductor, fart

Brass Section

Timpani, snare drum,  
bass drum, cymbals,  
drum kit

Percussion Section

Trumpet, French horn,  
trombone, tuba

Others

Violin, viola, cello, double  
bass, harp, guitar

[www.doctornoize.com](http://www.doctornoize.com)

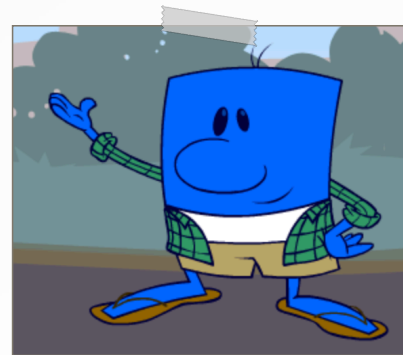
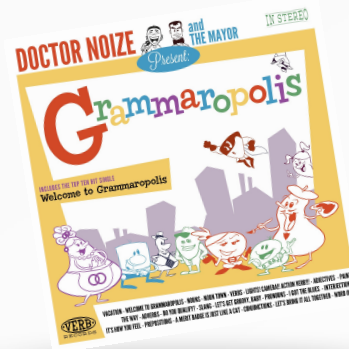


### Case Study #3: Grammaropolis

## Grammaropolis Learning Adventures

- \*1. Where did Doctor Noize go on summer vacation?  
A. Thelonious  
B. Fresno  
C. Grammaropolis  
D. The Symphony
2. Is it Grandma-opolis or Grammar-opolis?  
A. Grandmaopolis  
B. Grammaropolis  
C. Octopoopopolis  
D. Grandpamanapopolis
3. Is happy a noun?  
A. No, it's an adjective  
B. No, it's an adverb  
C. No, it's a verbopolis  
D. Yes, it's a noun
4. What are nouns?  
A. Person  
B. Place  
C. Thing  
D. All of the above!
5. What kind of word is stop?  
A. Verb  
B. Noun  
C. Adverb  
D. Interjection rejection correction
6. What does Action Verb do?  
A. Saves someone from a burning building!  
B. Nothing  
C. Gets donuts  
D. Goes to Noun Town and disco dances
7. What kind of word is red?  
A. Noun  
B. Adjective  
C. Verb  
D. It's the reddest adverb in the world
8. Adjectives...  
A. Rock climb with reckless abandon  
B. Name objects  
C. Describe  
D. Represent an action

\*One question per track



Bonus: What is the name of this character? Hint... he's a part of speech!! Go watch the free animated videos at [doctornoize.com](http://doctornoize.com) for the answer!

Two things immediately stand out about the *Grammaropolis Learning Adventure*:

- (1). It has a totally different graphical look than the first two curricula; and
- (2). It has a familiar organizational layout.

Both of these are good things. *Grammaropolis* and *Punctuate This!* are from the *Grammaropolis* series of Doctor Noize adventures, and follow a completely different set of characters teaching about language through music. The rest of the albums are from the *Phineas McBoof* series, and follow the original characters on their journeys learning about music, leadership and cooperation. The *Phineas McBoof* characters are animated in 3D with vibrant colors; the *Grammaropolis* characters are in old-school 2D and hip faded colors as a throwback to the *Schoolhouse Rock* days. So, as with the difference between [doctornoize.com](http://doctornoize.com) and [corycullinan.com](http://corycullinan.com) in website design, we instantly know we're in a different universe than we were with Phineas McBoof.

However... The *Grammaropolis* curriculum is clearly designed by the same teacher as the previous two, and feels like it fits right in with the rest. It's in the same format: title, “\*One question per track” at top right, multiple choice along the left, images along the right, and a more advanced activity at the end. And it's thoughtfully considered like the *Symphony Learning Adventure* — its questions are fun, but actually do check your knowledge of grammar, the images are consistent and from the accompanying animated video series, the resolution is high, and the final activity is a Mad Lib that allows you to be creative while still demonstrating your knowledge of the content taught. Here's that last page:

## Grammaropolis Learning Adventures

18. Which is NOT a preposition?

- A. Across
- B. At
- C. Before
- D. Woah!

19. What kind of word is for?

- A. Preposition
- B. Interjection
- C. Conjunction
- D. An adjective used by singing slugs

20. Conjunctions...

- A. Bring clauses and words together
- B. Describe
- C. Names
- D. Laugh at the Mayor's fashion choices

21. Who interrupts the broadcast THIS time?

- A. Slang again
- B. KIDS!!
- C. The weather forecasters
- D. Action Verbs



### A Grammaropolis Mad Lib

(use the parts of speech you just learned!)

One day in Grammaropolis, the Mayor was on his way to \_\_\_\_\_  
verb  
 with the nouns. Just as he was arriving, Slang started to \_\_\_\_\_ in  
verb  
 front of him. The Mayor was so \_\_\_\_\_, he said " \_\_\_\_\_!"  
adjective interjection  
 Soon the whole town had left their \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to  
plural noun plural noun  
 see what all the fuss was about. The Mayor was bright \_\_\_\_\_  
color  
 because he was feeling so \_\_\_\_\_. Slang felt bad for making the  
adjective  
 Mayor feel this way, so he gave him a pet \_\_\_\_\_ to make up for it.  
animal  
 The pet was very \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_  
adjective pronoun  
 liked to \_\_\_\_\_  
verb adverb  
 The Mayor  
 named his new pet \_\_\_\_\_, and everyone went  
name  
 home to get their own \_\_\_\_\_!  
adjective plural animal

The Doctor Noize asynchronous productions — recordings, books, multimedia, website and curricula — have represented my attempt to contribute something to the world as a teacher in my post-high school teaching years. When I first started them, I had a 5-album story arc mapped out in my head for the characters that would teach kids like mine the things I would love for them to learn about music, diversity, creativity, leadership and character. That arc has evolved a bit with unplanned developments like the pandemic and the opportunity to serve the goals and opportunities presented by the *Grammaropolis* label, but the core story arc of that initial plan has actually remained intact in the *Phineas McBoof* series.

While both the recordings and the website have largely unfolded to my specifications or even a higher level than planned, the curricula, and even some of the other multimedia, have never received quite the level of planning, testing and care that I'd like. The opportunity in this Thesis Portfolio to test and strengthen those for the future has been very rewarding, and the Chapter on Asynchronous Content Testing & Recommendations will reveal some of those findings and provide a roadmap for moving forward.



## CHAPTER 4

### LIVE EVENT CONTENT DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Nothing gets people — especially young kids — excited like a live, in-person event. This is why the pandemic has been such a challenge for kids, parents and teachers alike. The pause of the pandemic has allowed me to stop, review, interview, assess and recommit to live experiences building the minds and character of kids when the pandemic is over. It's worthwhile to reiterate here what it says at the top of the Doctor Noize Homepage, because I literally go back to this one grounding statement every time I start imagining a new production.

**“Mission Statement:** *Doctor Noize inspires creativity, curiosity and character through music, art and words.*”

#### Live Shows

So... how do we do this in a lives how or workshop? My answer, in a nutshell, is to invite kids into the creative process at every live event, so they're not just passively *receiving* art — they're actively participating in its *creation*. The art in doing so is to make this interactivity seem spontaneous and chaotic, when in reality it's predetermined and organized. It's planned collaborative creativity with ample doses of musicianship and humor.

The recordings start this process, because they teach about composing and recording without kids realizing it and inspire people to want to book or come to the shows and workshops. The *Doctor Noize Live!* shows are the most obvious live event entry point to this, because they sneakily teach recording arts without kids even realizing it. Here's an actual candid shot from the final song of a *Doctor Noize Live!* show in Palo Alto, CA. People who've never been to a show think this is a staged shot, but people who've been know this is actually what it often looks

and feels like in the finale, with everyone who wants to be onstage there to dance and sing the chorus of a song we've just spent ten minutes loop recording into a giant interactive funfest:



Each *Doctor Noize Live!* show features at least two songs — and usually more — that utilize loop recording to build and record a musical arrangement instrument by instrument. I have every instrument onstage that I have any facility to play — the world's most versatile wireless electric modeling guitar, a wireless keytar to play like a piano or walking around, a bass keyboard with controls for Ableton Live, a saxophone, an electronic percussion instrument, a kazoo (never underestimate the humor value of a kazoo), a headset mic, and a handheld wireless mic. As I write this, I realize I should add a harmonica, because I play a very bad version of harmonica too. I also have a computer that can play pre-recorded backing tracks, although I limit this to one song per set because it's philosophically important to me that I model proactive

music *creation* and not passive music *playback*. But I do enjoy that one karaoke song per set where I get to press play and just go out and dance, sing and focus on the audience.

Each show also features as much diversity as possible. This starts with the set list. As opposed to most artists, you'd be hard pressed to state what kind of music you just heard walking out of a Doctor Noize show. You might hear a rocking anthem jam, an introspective singer/songwriter acoustic guitar song, a Beatles piano ballad the Doc sings with your parents onstage, a two-minute karaoke dance break of the Doc's big ska hit *Banana*, an a cappella Bobby McFerrin cover, and a 12-minute live electronica loop jam with audience interaction where kids record vocals and keyboard parts onstage live — all in the same show.

The show diversity continues in that I make an effort in every performance to incorporate — including onstage — the full range of diversity present in the audience. Girls, boys, parents, teachers, the oldest kids, the youngest kids, Black kids, brown kids, white kids, the loud kids, the shy kids... everyone gets invited to participate. One of the most frequent — and most satisfying — comments and emails I receive from adults after is a variation of the same comment: *"My kid is the shyest kid in the world, and she was up onstage dancing and singing solo in front of hundreds of people today. I have no idea how that happened."*

How it happened is simple, and is a comment I've heard repeatedly in my interviews regarding the workshops: We make silliness and imperfection okay onstage. The show is organized chaos, which we'll dive into in detail discussing the workshops, as it's one of the primary feedback comments from teachers I received. But here's a common response from kids, pulled straight from the randomly displayed quotes on the Shows page of the website:

“ I didn't know how AWESOME you were until I saw your show... I was inspired by your concert to write a song on the guitar.”

Jacob

Student, *Eagle Ridge Elementary*

The important part of this simple email is not that *I* am awesome. The context of the “AWESOME” comment is actually artistic, and it demonstrates that the show actually spurred this kid to action as designed:

(1). This child is actually quoting one of the songs I played that day — a song called *Are You Awesome?* from *The Return of Phineas McBoof* that poses and answers that question to kids, and inspires them to sing it back to me interactively in the concert: “*YEAH!*” He puts the word in all caps because that’s how loudly we’re singing about being awesome by the end of the song.

(2.). The email, which is not unusual after a Doctor Noize show, lets me know kids are not just telling their friends how much fun they had at the show, but they’re actually going home wanting to write songs and create content of their own. And that’s the goal of the show!

The best way to get a sense of the shows, their insane interactivity, and the audience’s participation in them is to watch the videos on the website sampling shows around the country:

- [Doctor Noize Live! & Unplugged Solo Shows](#)
- [Doctor Noize Symphony Shows](#)
- [Kaia’s Song](#) (interactive a cappella song composed for a girl who’d just lost her mom)



While not the focus of this Thesis Portfolio, it might be interesting to watch the video on the Doctor Noize Symphony Shows to see a genre that is also extremely underrepresented: The interactive orchestra show for newbies. I could write a whole Thesis on those shows alone and how none of us — including me — do enough of such events for kids.

Not musically inclined, but creatively inclined? That's okay. Here's an example how the live learning and the asynchronous offerings synthesize to engage children's minds. Literally as I'm writing this sentence, Facebook just popped up a memory from five years ago today. (Okay, yes, busted, I had Facebook up this morning while writing my Thesis Portfolio...) It says:



There's so much wonderful feedback to unpack here in this one post. First of all, this couldn't be more adorable. But going deeper, the goals of the live and asynchronous ecosystem seem to be working in this child's case. That page she's holding is one of the asynchronous learning activities on the Doctor Noize website. How she found it is beyond me, because until I did a much-needed study and reorganization of the website for this Thesis Portfolio in the last few months, those coloring pages were nearly impossible to find on the site. But there she is, holding a page she's printed of her favorite Doctor Noize character Riley The Robot (named after my youngest daughter), arriving early to a live show at her local library with a *signed copy* of her creative work to present to an impressed Doctor Noize before we record and perform songs together with instruments connected to a computer Riley The Robot would love. The combination of the recordings, the website and the live events is working to make this child want to *create, share* and *collaborate*.

### Workshops



## ***Create A Hit Song With Doctor Noize!***

The main workshop I've developed and tested — *Create A Hit Song With Doctor Noize!* — takes the next step in the creative process. Whereas the shows are primarily intended to interactively entertain you while getting you a little bit under the creative hood, the workshops are specifically designed to *write your song* with a little zany interactive entertainment thrown in for good measure. Workshops give kids their first experience at a young age composing and recording, two disciplines which are increasingly one and the same in the modern tech world. Here's the writeup for this workshop on the website:

***"Create A Hit Song With Doctor Noize!"*** *What's the formula of most popular songs today? It's not complicated. You can learn it. You can hear it. And you can write it. In 90 minutes, Doctor Noize writes and records a song with Genius Campers on his mobile studio or at Reach Studios — lyrics, music, everything — in an energized and challenging interactive workshop unlike anything they've ever experienced. The next day, the song's posted online on the Genius Workshop Recordings Page for all to hear. This Workshop is based on the Doc's popular high school songwriting and recording class that yielded 150 student songs during the Doc's five-year teaching tenure."*

The truth of the matter is that these workshops and songs are increasingly actually done in 45 minutes or less — more on that in the Live Content Testing & Recommendations Chapter. This is partly due to the Zoom nature of recent pandemic workshops, and partly due to an increased (and, in my view, errant) belief among many adults that kids can't do anything for more than 45 minutes. Kids watch 90 minute movies passively; they can create something

actively for 90 minutes. Having said that, the recent challenge of delivering a song in 45 minutes or less with kids... has been a blast, and one that's taught me a lot.

What's not written in the website writeup is just how these things are pulled off under the hood. The simple answer to that question is that, after creating and mastering the most appealing and efficient mobile recording rig you can (more on that in the next section), you must throw out much of what you've been taught about the recording arts and do just the opposite.

In the Recording Arts college courses I've taught, and the college courses I've taken, and the books I've read, and the experiences I've had, one component of Recording Arts is about devoting everything you can during recording and post-production to make it as sonically perfect as possible. Certainly, you don't want to destroy a performance or take by over-editing it or over-quantizing it, and Recording Arts acknowledges this balance... but we're still expected to take the time, and have the care, to make a pristine recording of a heartfelt performance, one in which the audiophile nature of the recording is important to the song as the job of the recording engineer and producer.

The first thing you must do when teaching kids Recording Arts is throw out all that. *'Treat this recording like a live performance, cultivate managed chaos, and record THEIR song'* is the mantra I tell myself before each workshop. Nobody except you wants to spend ten minutes perfecting the vocal EQ. Spend ten *seconds* on that — or better yet, have a preset set up in advance that will make most vocals sound good, and forget about tweaking that entirely during the workshop session. When auditioning bass sounds, don't try twenty. Give the kids three preset alternatives that are sufficiently diverse that you've selected and set up in your Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) in advance — an upright bass, an electronic bass, and an electric



bass, for example — play a five-second lick on each one, and have them vote on the sound they want. Make the vote fun and funny, saying things like “*No WAY!*” when they select their choice. Done in thirty seconds if you’ve mastered and rehearsed your setup in advance. Managed chaos.

It cannot be emphasized enough that you need to make these impactful decisions fast and fun to keep kids engaged and feeling momentum, and so you must be *devoid of judgment* as to their choices. Kids pick up on this instantly — whether you’re judging their opinions and choices or not. Remember, *you’re not writing your song*. If you were writing your song, you wouldn’t have a bunch of damn kids hanging around in the room to distract you, right? It’s not your song. It’s theirs. When you tell yourself that with every decision they make — “*We don’t want one of those bass sounds, we want a tuba! Sing the vocals upside down! Let’s make the lyrics in a language we make up! The Chorus shouldn’t have any of the same instruments that are in the Verse!*” — and just go with it, you will be shocked at just how much fun it is, just how much you can serve their artistic and experiential goals, and just how diverse and unusual their songs will be. You’ll be serving them but opening up your own mind.

If you’re not very good at what they ask you to do, that’s fine. Don’t record it five times to get it right, unless your timing is completely off. Just make it a joke. I cannot emphasize how much value there is in you recording a vocal part in front of kids that is not quite perfect. It makes them think: *‘It’s okay if I go up there and just try my best.’* You’ll get a million more volunteers if you don’t fix the last 20%. And, whenever it’s relevant, when you’re done with the job they task you with, ask: “*Now who else wants to try recording that???*” That’s where you get your group vocals and your surprise soloists, all the kids whose teachers and moms write you after and say: “*That kid has never spoken aloud in public until then.*”



While we're promoting energetic imperfectionism: Don't just bring the instrument you're amazing at, and don't just accept the challenges they give you that you're comfortable with. Bring every instrument you can hack away at, and laugh and say *yes* to that country rap they ask you to do that you have no business doing. In all the workshops I've done, I've never had a kid demand I play anything virtuosic. Ever. They just want fun courage and energy, and when you represent it, they'll deliver it right back to you in spades. And finally, don't force the kid who wants to sit on the fringes to do anything. They'll join when they feel like it, but they're *there*, even if they don't quite match your definition of there, and most kids who don't get involved directly will still be happy dancing around and singing the Chorus with everyone at the end when the pressure of recording anything is off.

To see and hear what the actual Workshops are like, visit the following resources:

- Watch the video on the [Teaching & Learning](#) page of the website
- Listen to over 30 songs created with kids on the [Genius Workshop Recordings](#) page

### ***From Beethoven To Bieber: How To Listen***

My other predesigned workshop for K-8 kids — *From Beethoven To Bieber: How To Listen* — also gets kids inside the composing and creation process, but does so with an eye toward the Symphony Shows and connecting orchestral music to a modern child’s experience. It’s based on a lecture I used to give to high school students as a high school teacher, but it’s so compelling, surprising, and basic that it can resonate with elementary school kids too. It’s particularly effective when given before or after a Symphony Show, because it simply takes Movement 1 of Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* and compares it to almost any contemporary pop song (I often let the students choose the pop song right at the start of the workshop). It’s an exploratory listening workshop. I don’t give them the answer; they analyze the music with me and discover the answer for themselves, which any elementary school group of kids is shocked to find they can do. But I’ll skip the exposition and get straight to the result: They’re basically the same thing, and even though modern pop and rock stars generally don’t know it, their songs are based on a time-tested structure Mozart and Beethoven perfected hundreds of years ago. Here’s the chart they reach at the end:

<b>Sonata Form</b>	<b>Modern Pop Song Structure</b>
Theme 1	Verse
Theme 2	Chorus
Theme 1	Verse
Theme 2	Chorus
Development	Bridge
Theme 1	Verse
Theme 2	Chorus
Coda	End

It's an amazing moment when they get there — and they get there. I tell them: *“Justin Bieber and Taylor Swift probably don't know where their songs came from — but you do.”*

All of these experiences getting kids *inside the music*, from recording workshops to song structure workshops, makes kids feel empowered to create both music and experiences for themselves. Getting kids inside the creation of music is much different than simply having them passively enjoy it. One of my favorite stories of this derives from the above workshop combined with the interactive Symphony Show.



Pictured is Eric Whitmer, who attended a *From Beethoven To Bieber* workshop and then was chosen from 1,000 kids the next day at a Doctor Noize Symphony Show in Chico, CA to come onstage and learn to conduct the orchestra on the spot. Eight years later, Eric contacted Doctor Noize. He said he had

learning differences, and decided, on that day, he would go to a top college and join an orchestra.

Eric graduated from a Top 15 elite college and became the timpanist in The North State Symphony, the very orchestra we brought him up to conduct that day as a kid. I'd like to say I took proactive credit for finding and interviewing Eric about this experience, but I didn't have to — he reached out and



contacted me during the year of my Thesis Portfolio. Eric wrote:

“ I still credit Dr. Noize as being one of the foundational experiences in my musical journey... Truly your program changes lives! Who knows what I'd be majoring in at Vanderbilt if not for Phineas McBoof! I'm majoring in percussion performance with a minor in business, focusing on arts administration and sustainability... Whoo boy that's a mouthful!”

Eric Whitmer

*North State Symphony Percussionist & Former Audience Member*

### **Building Excitement & Awareness For The Workshops**

Aside from making me tear up like all of us cheesy teachers do when we receive such a correspondence, the above example points out something: It's often the combination of multiple events and asynchronous activities that really ramp up a kid's engagement and incitement level. Note that Eric cited Phineas McBoof in his email to me. Phineas is barely in the orchestral show, and is not in the *Bieber To Beethoven* workshop at all. Clearly, the workshop and show got Eric into the recordings too, or perhaps the other way around, until creating art and leading an ambitious intellectual life was something he was going to do, just like the ever-curious, brave and adventurous rock star monkey Phineas McBoof — whose name, incidentally, is modeled after Paul McCartney and whose story in the first two albums and books is clearly modeled after the Beatles to those of us old enough to notice such things.

So connecting live learning to asynchronous learning is certainly something that deepens the commitment to the experience. Another is connecting kids directly to the recording and performing artist, who in this case is me, but in other cases could be to whoever is coming to

town to play a show or assembly. When kids know you're a "Recording & Performing Artist!" and they get to know you before the show — in a workshop, a Zoom meet, a school drop-by, etc. — the excitement they bring to the show is immensely increased. At venues where this pre-event is not possible, like non-school venues, I often practice the unconventional artist approach of walking out into the audience before the show and high-fiving kids, or doing goofy things like running around and hiding from the kids onstage before the show like I'm terrified of them, which makes them laugh. Anything that builds a connection with them before the event increases their participation buy-in tremendously.

But the way to really build engagement, and future exploration, is to build experience upon experience, starting with the asynchronous learning activities and ending with the live ones. The kids who are about to explode with creative energy upon arrival are the ones who've...

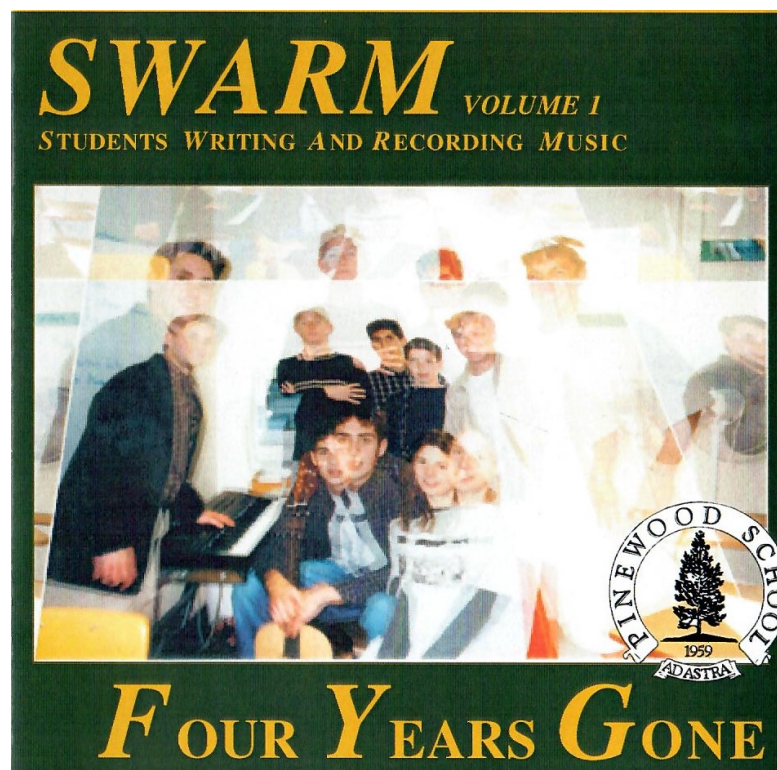
1. Listened to one or more Doctor Noize albums, and possibly read the books.
2. Participated in the asynch curriculum or curricula.
3. Attended a Doctor Noize Workshop before the live show.
4. Show up at the live show bursting with energy to participate.

You certainly don't have to do all these things, or in this order, to get a kid excited about a musical event. But, as described above with Eric Whitmer and below in the feedback Chapter, it's pretty hard for them *not* to be excited, and *not* want to continue exploring music and creativity, if you follow something close to this sequence. The most magical ending combination I've found — aside from that occasional lucky kid who gets to *conduct* the orchestra at a Symphony Show — have been the times when I've done a *Create A Hit Song With Doctor Noize!* Workshop with kids, and then performed a show that night or the next day, performing the

song we just wrote and recorded together, with all the workshop kids onstage singing and dancing to their song. It literally makes the kids rock stars for a day. The energy at the recording workshops is even more electric when they know they'll participate in its performance immediately after *and* it will be up on the web for folks to go hear after. And they're not stressed about the show because they know I'll be there with them to make sure we pull it off.

### **The Lightbulb Experience**

I'll close this section with a foundational story for why the workshops exist. I've mentioned that *Beethoven To Bieber* came from my high school teaching years; what I haven't said is I knew the recording workshops would work because of my high school experience too. Twenty years ago I launched a high school course called *Students Writing And Recording Music (SWARM)*, where students learned to write and record songs in Pro Tools during the semester. Then we printed up CDs of the songs, rehearsed and performed a school assembly of them at the end of each semester, and sold the CDs to the student body to buy more gear for the studio.





One of my favorite memories of my high school teaching career was when Seejun — a kid from South Korea who had just arrived in this country without his parents, hardly knew English at the start of the year, and was a shy and intellectual kid without a lot of friends in his new culture — wrote a love song for his girlfriend in Korea on one of our CDs. This boy, who never drew attention to himself all year and was almost invisible, decided to get up at the end of the year and perform this song — *in Korean* — in front of the whole school. He said into the mic that it was a love song for his girlfriend in Korea, and after an awkward silence, Seejun perfumed the song with Roger from our class on guitar and Boris on drums. Everyone watching was stunned that “silent Seejun” had done this, and after the song, there was a pause before the coolest senior boy in school stood up, shouted “*YEAH!*”, and lead a standing ovation for Seejun. Seejun was popular on campus from that moment forward, thrived in school, and was accepted to USC.

Almost everything in that story is transferable to the elementary ages. The courage-building, creativity, and excitement are all there. The successful “Doctor Noize Workshop to Show” combo sequence is really just an incredibly constricted version of the semester-long progression I learned was so effective teaching teens like Seejun Jeong, as is the lasting effect:

*“The SWARM CD is the most valuable thing in my life. With this CD, I took a step forward in my life instead of being controlled by my fate. This CD is my baby, which arrived after the series of the most difficult events in my life. I am sure that I will meet other difficult problems in later life. Then, I will listen to this meaningful CD and believe that I can go through those problems again as I did last year.”* — Seejun Jeong, from his College Application Essay



I noticed with my high school students that there was something amazing about holding that CD that we produced in their hands and realizing they were “published.” In the modern era, with streaming all the rage, we publish the Doctor Noize workshop songs straight on the Doctor Noize website for kids, parents, friends, teachers, Grandma and anyone else to go listen to the kids’ songs. It doesn’t just sit on the shelf. It’s published on the web, the same place as my professional releases. And kids get really excited about that.

### **The Mobile Music Production Rig**

So what is the perfect technical setup to pull all this off? First things first. As I always tell my fellow artists and students: The best gear is the gear you know how to use. No gear is very good if you don’t know how to use it — especially when there are dozens of eyes at a workshop, or hundreds to thousands of eyes at a show, waiting for you to accomplish something with your gear. So, at this very moment, the best gear to use is the stuff you have and know.

Having said that, most of us can upgrade our setup to give kids recording arts experiences that are optimized with the best tech for the job. I have researched, thoroughly, every single piece of gear I have for the live shows and workshops, including the stands. I don’t buy new stuff unless I have proper downtime between shows to install it into my system, learn it, and, importantly, rehearse with it. I rehearse items like improvisations and new workshops, trying to speed up my processes switching between things and learning what doesn’t work as well as I thought it would.

This is important to achieve what Professor Jeff Merkel at CU Denver elegantly described as making the technical aspects appear “*effortless and magical to build an on-ramp for kids.*” As Jeff pointed out when reviewing my live work, that’s my job in all this: “*You know it’s*

*harder than it looks, but they don't yet. Get them excited about it before they find out!"* I absolutely love this insight.

My mobile recording/performing rig, for the shows and the workshops, is an evolving project I've honed over fifteen years, and a project that will never end as tools become available. My choices are not the only answers, but they may be the most battle-tested answer for this kind of thing out there. Two overriding philosophies I've developed over the years are: (1). With kids, do everything you can wirelessly, so you can move freely and the audience doesn't pull things out; and (2). I do everything I can virtually or modeled, which has greatly reduced the gear I have to travel with over the years. I currently have my gear down to six cases for touring, two of which are carry-on and four of which are check-in. I can carry all of it on one of those standard carts you rent at the airport, and this is essential for a touring artist with no roadie.



To get quick insight about just how versatile and visually appealing the mobile rig I've developed is, watch the [Doctor Noize's Mobile Studio](#) video or some of the show videos, which show different evolutions of the rig. Part of the art of first impressions is in the sleek one-man-

band tech look the show's had the last few years with the modern streamlined version of it. I'll briefly describe my most important tools of choice. Currently, here is what I use, and would recommend to anyone:

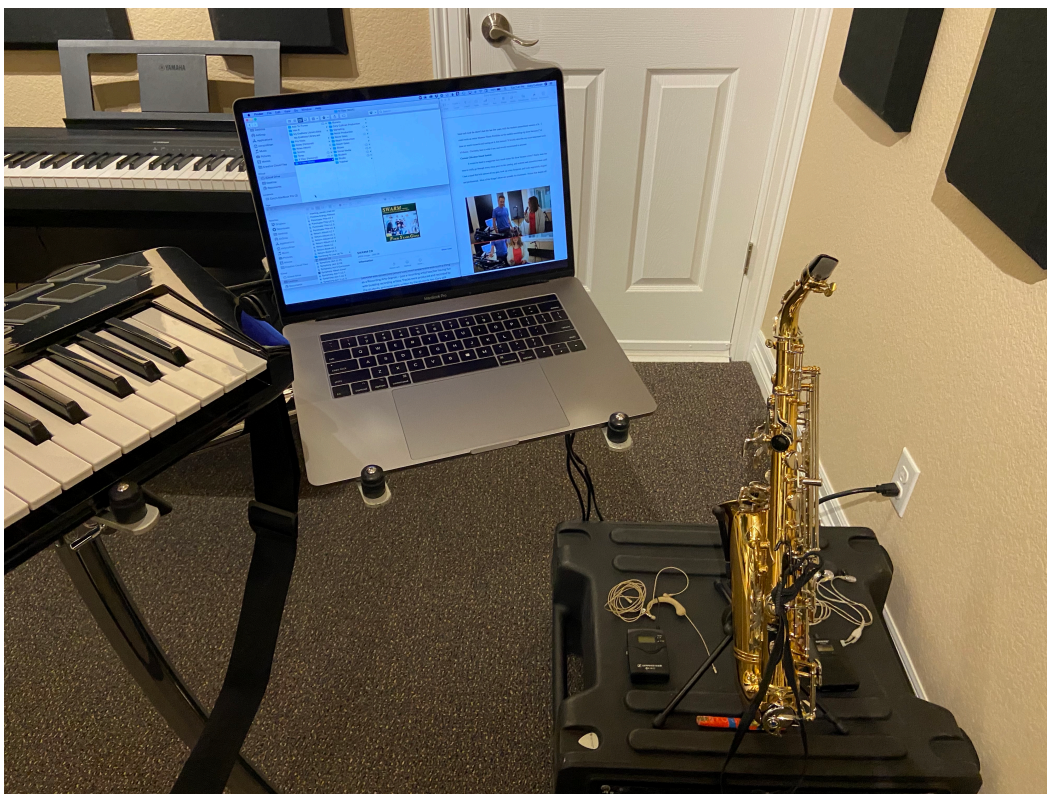
### **Custom Gibraltar Stand System**



It would be hard to exaggerate how much better the show became when I finally took the time to really go through every crazy piece in the Gibraltar catalog, and ordered and assembled them until I had a stand that held almost all my gear, took up a tiny footprint, and looks supremely elegant and professional. Most of the things I chose are actually for drummers. Notice that despite all my gear, there are no wires hanging around, and the audience can almost fully see me and the audience members I bring onstage from almost any angle. On the stand are...

*MacBook Pro Laptop*





My MacBook Pro is the top of the line model from 2017. I always buy the fastest, best, most expensive laptop, and then I ride it *way* longer than experts say you should. I had my last laptop for eight years. Changing everything over — programs, set lists, etc. — is hugely time consuming, so I buy big and change as seldom as possible. I find it saves time and money in the long run. The relevant audio software I use for shows and workshops is...

### *Ableton Live Software*

The software I use to write, record and perform music — in both my live shows and my workshops — is Ableton Live, which just released a major upgrade in Live 11. Ableton is revered for its loop recording and time stretching capabilities, which is why I use it for the shows. But many don't know it also works well as a standard DAW and can do many of the

things Pro Tools or Logic can do. In over 1,000 shows, Live has only crashed on me twice.

That's pretty amazing.

### *Apple Logic Pro*

Logic is my album production software of choice — my latest Doctor Noize album, *Homemade*, for example, was produced, mixed and even mastered entirely in Logic. Some of the studio tracks find their way into the shows, especially before and after the show. In the pandemic, I've actually turned back to Logic for the virtual Zoom workshops as well, but I'll describe that in Chapter 6, and I plan to return immediately to Live for workshops once I'm back out on the road again.

### *Apple iTunes*

I use iTunes to play music before and after shows and workshops.

### *Alesis Vortex Wireless Keytar*





I would like to say I use this because kids love the weird retro hip unhipness of the keytar. And it's true, they do. But actually I use this because *I* love the weird retro hip unhipness of the keytar. You're welcome, world. It's wireless functionality is pretty flawless, and it even has pads to play drums or crazy sounds. I recommend the crazy sounds. Always the crazy sounds. I can, for example, program a crowd to laugh at one of my dumb jokes whenever I push one of the pads. That's not funny. Yes it is. Anyway... putting the keytar on a kid in a show and telling her to just play is something that never fails to bring smiles all around.

*Novation LaunchKey 25*



This device serves simultaneously as my bass keyboard and my Ableton Live controller — it has a few rows of pads like on one of the larger Live Push controllers, and once you figure out how to navigate it, it works quite well. I find it's easier for kids to understand what I'm playing and doing when I have one keyboard for bass sounds and another for keyboard sounds.

### *Roland HandSonic Electronic Hand Drum*



The HandSonic has beautiful sounds and is a huge hit with kids. Literally. I bring kids up onstage every show and invite them to hit it. Which they love to do — I mean, adults *never* encourage them to hit expensive stuff. I loop drum and percussion parts, play percussion solos, open it up to the audience to play, and it's a beast. It has a bunch of well-placed sturdy drum pads and a cool optical feature that allows you to change sounds by moving your hand higher and lower in space over the drum.

### **In The Rack**

I use a four-unit rolling rack for the mobile studio and set it to the back right of my custom gear stand on the ground. The sax and other immediate needs go on top of it. Inside is...

### *Apogee Ensemble Audio Interface*

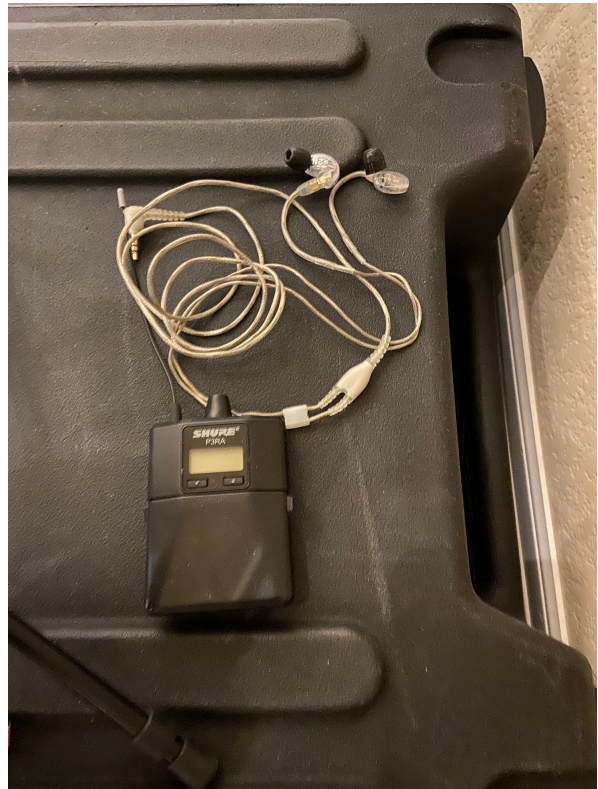
I have *no idea* how this thing still works, and I'm playing with fire — it's ancient and it's not officially supported by the current Mac OS. But it works great, and I have a philosophy



based on both my time and my money that I buy the best computer and audio interface gear there is, and then ride it until I just can't use it anymore. And this old horse is still runnin'. Someday, somewhere, I'll probably have to switch mid-show to an acoustic set when the thing just dies.

#### *Furman M 8-X2 Power Conditioner*

A power conditioner can save you at venues like old schools. It also gives you a power strip so you can use reduce your venue outlet needs to one or two power plugs out.



#### *Shure P3RA Wireless Headset Monitor Transmitter (Half Rack Space)*

An in-ear monitor system has been a godsend for a genre where some venues you play are super-pro, some are not, and you bring your own PA system to many. The receiver straps on your pants or belt. Using in-ear monitors takes away a lot of feedback and hearing issues present in speaker monitor systems. I'd like to invest in earphones you can get for it that allow both the

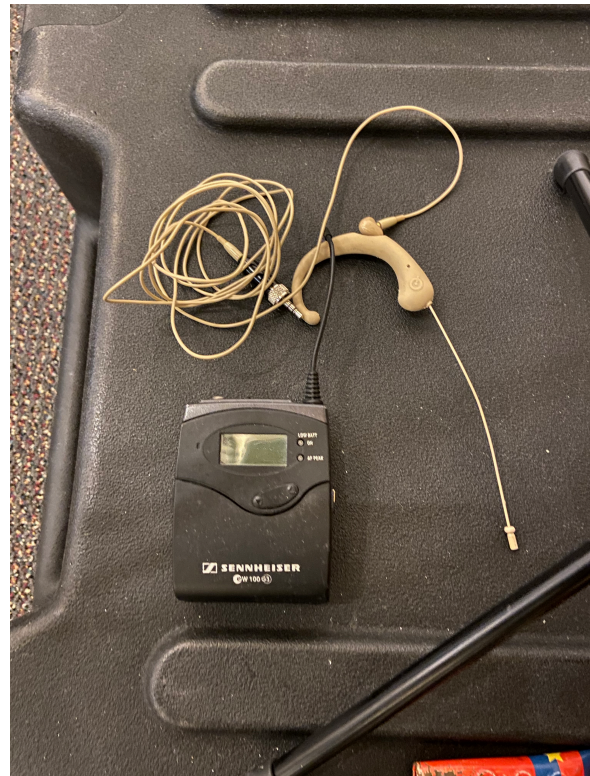


headphones audio and audio from the crowd in — as it stands now, I keep one headphone in and one out of my ears to hear both the system audio and the audience.

*Sennheiser Evolution Wireless G4 Handheld Mic Receiver (Half Rack Space)*



This is the mic I use to record kids, play my sax into, and sing solo vocals on songs where I don't have to play guitar or keys. It's on a separate stand from my main rack so I can place it anywhere on stage for audience members to sing.



*Sennheiser Evolution Wireless G3 Headset Mic Receiver (Half Rack Space)*

Just as I ride my computers until they die, I am still riding this wireless headset mic receiver connected to my Que Audio headset mic. It uses frequency bands that are now illegal and allocated for some other commercial purpose and may get interference, but I've never heard any, so I'm still using them. Read closely between these double lines, and you'll realize that the children's musician just admitted to technically committing a crime in a Masters Thesis Portfolio. Even worse, I plan to keep committing that crime until I can't do it anymore.

### *Sennheiser Evolution Wireless G3 Guitar Receiver (Half Rack Space)*

This is the exact same unit as my criminally-negligent unit above, so now I'm just on a crime spree. This one will be reconnected to my Variax guitar now that I'm using the guitar wirelessly again. The transmitter pack attaches via velcro to the back of the guitar.

### **Que Audio DA-12 Omnidirectional Headset Mic**

I currently use a Que Audio headset mic. I've gone back and forth over the years on whether to use a cardioid directional mic like Janet Jackson made famous, or whether I should use an omnidirectional mic that picks up more background noise and has more feedback risk, but doesn't have as much loud breath noise and pops. I've used both, but as my workshop work and interest has grown, I've settled on the omni, because I can get right down close to a group of kids and record them singing their group vocals just standing right in front of me. This doesn't work with the directional mic. The reason I chose this particular brand is that you can easily order new cables from the headset to your transmitter pack when they break — you don't have to reorder the whole mic. And they *will* break working with kids. I buy and carry extra cables on tour.



### **Kazoo**

*Never* underestimate the humorous heft of the well-timed kazoo. Note that my kazoo is not bent, bruised or road-battered at all. I keep it in pristine condition. That is a lie.

### **Jupiter Alto Saxophone**

No electronic instrument here. I use an Eb alto sax in the show to play solos and loop in horn sections. I play it into the handheld mic.

Sometimes, in a small venue, I'll just go into the audience with it and play it unmiked over the looped mix. A key road innovation I learned from Art Bouton, head of the Woodwinds Department at University of Denver and bandleader of the Colorado Jazz Repertory Orchestra, is to tour with a plastic reed. This has made the saxophone much more reliable on tours than when I used wooden reeds.



### **Line6 Variax Guitar**

My guitar of choice is the computer modeling Variax, a revolutionary product that can make your guitar sound like dozens of other guitars, including acoustic guitars. I could fawn over this technologically astounding ax for too long, so I won't, but also note it has a bright sunburst design that kids love.



Guitar effects are currently the thing I haven't quite solved to my satisfaction. I've used a Line6 PodXTLive floor pedal effects box forever, and it's great for two reasons: (1). The effects are amazing; and (2). It switches the guitar model I want to use at the same time I switch the preprogrammed effects with its foot pedals. I can go from a reverbed acoustic to a screaming electric with the push of one pedal to the next song patch in my set. The downsides to the PodXTLive are two:



(1). It just broke, it's dead, and they don't make 'em anymore; and (2). To use it, I must plug my guitar in, which means I can't go out into the audience with it. So...

I'm currently in the process of transitioning to the Line 6 Helix Native guitar effects, which I will use directly in Ableton Live. I'm testing it to make sure the latency is okay, and I think it will be with modern computing. This means I'll be able to return to my wireless guitar days, and go straight out into the audience. The downside is that the wireless systems will *not* switch my Variax guitar models with the effects, so I'll have to do all that manually, which is a boring thing for kids to watch onstage, so I will *practice* these changes to make them fast, and prepare dialog and jokes if necessary to say while I'm making the changes, so nobody realizes the show or workshop has stopped and I'm doing something technical.

Notice that the above description is an important point in maintaining the ultimate road rig: Whenever I make a change, I research, plan, wait for time to implement it when I don't have shows coming up, and then test and rehearse before launching it in the shows and workshops.

### **BOSE PA-1 Personal Amplification System**

When I bring my own PA, I bring the BOSE. It's a revolutionary technology that I find lives up to its marketing materials, spreading sound around a room



or area with a more consistent volume level at various distances and angles. Significantly, for a looping artist who's manning his own PA when the BOSE is there, it's a feedback killer. It creates far less feedback than a standard PA system. I wrote a whole essay on the BOSE once, but I'll spare you that here.

### **Mixing My Own Show**

The crazy thing about the Doctor Noize shows and workshops is that I mix it all onstage in Ableton Live. I send a stereo mixdown out to the sound people when I'm not running my own PA. There are obvious flaws to this — the sound person can only do so much with me when there are problems like feedback — but the benefit is that I can set up my song mixes in advance and just focus on loop recording, performing and entertaining. The sound guy can't fix my mix if it's bad, but he also can't screw up my mix to the point where it's so different than what I'm used to, it's hard for me to loop record to. The tradeoff's worth it to me.

### **Final Thoughts**

Honing and testing the mobile rig for over a decade has yielded many subtle refinements to scale down the cases. One is instrument stands. My saxophone stand fits in the bell of the sax. My guitar stand fits in the guitar case. Another is cases. The keytar and drums fit in the same case, as do the computer and Novation. I'm always maximizing space.

The mobile rig has reaped some unintended benefits as well. I don't always just use it to record songs written with kids. When inspiration hits on the road, I can work on recordings.

*Welcome To Grammaropolis* — a Top Ten hit on kids' radio that spawned two albums, an animated video series and a school stage musical — was written and recorded entirely over a few days on tour in hotel rooms. I like to say this song was produced at Hampden Inn Studios, a, um,

little-known studio chain in several cities... I never could have recorded that song on the road without the rig — for all I know, the song would have been forgotten and all those career developments wouldn't have happened.

I have a dream aligned with some of the environmental messages in the Doctor Noize productions that the rig will someday be solar powered for outdoor shows. That could bring up a host of complicated issues — for example, does that mean the indoor rig is different than the outdoor rig? — but it's on my wish list. There's always a wish list.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ASYNCHRONOUS CONTENT TESTING & RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

Now that I've laid out the content development and infrastructure of the project, it's time to discuss the testing I conducted and prescriptions I arrived at for my Masters Thesis Portfolio. This Chapter describes that process, and the feedback I received, for asynchronous content; the following Chapter does the same for the live learning content. We'll start by going a step below the big picture Doctor Noize Mission Statement to note four main goals that apply to both the asynch and live productions.

#### **Goals**

The goals of the Doctor Noize asynchronous and live learning productions are:

1. Have fun promoting music and communication.
2. Promote active listening and extended attention spans in an increasingly short-attention-span culture.
3. Increase depth of intellectual thinking.
4. Promote diversity in all forms — thought, music and people.

#### **Implementation**

The implementation of my testing for the core productions — recordings, books, videos, apps and more — has been in place for years. I didn't really need to proactively test anything here for this Thesis Portfolio, as it's been tested in the culture and the marketplace. The response can be found all over the Doctor Noize website. I'll briefly review this response below, which has been very positive.

The implementation of testing the curricula and its access on the website is where I focused my time for this Thesis Portfolio. I engaged numerous groups of students and teachers in testing the curricula and how to access it online, I interviewed experts on curriculum development after they reviewed my curricula, and I interviewed people who've used my work in the past. The results were extremely enlightening.

### **Core Productions (Recordings, Books, Videos, Apps & More)**

#### **Overview**

The core productions, and in particular the recordings, have been very well received for over a decade. I've become known as a children's musician who makes sophisticated and expertly produced recordings of a different sort in this era for children — namely, works of narrative musical theatre that challenge kids to pay attention for an entire hour of a character-based story instead of a traditional album that asks you to listen to the songs you like best in 3-minute intervals. It's clear from the show bookings and album reviews that the response to these have been positive, and it's clear from the many musical theatre, orchestral, album, video and multimedia commissions I've received since launching Doctor Noize that people get the difference in what I do and there *is* a market out there of people who'd like more longform works for children. I consider my work an attempt to go against the grain and counter the modern short-attention-span internet culture, and while I'm certainly not winning the war, I'm carving out a niche for people who still want that sort of thing.

#### **Testing & Feedback**

So here's where it is on the website:

*Core Productions Testing & Feedback*



- Fan Buzz: This page has thousands of quotes from fans, educators, parents, articles and fellow artists about the core Doctor Noize productions. You can press tabs to limit the feedback to Musical Recordings, Illustrated Books, Solo Shows, Symphony Shows, Teaching & Learning and more.
- Articles & Awards: This page is a repository of dozens of articles and awards about the core productions.
- Doctor Noize Website: There are feedback quotes on every page of the website, often generated randomly by a sophisticated algorithm that targets the quotes to the subject of that individual page.

#### *Sample Quotes for Core Productions*

I'll list one feedback quote for each core recording here; visit the links above for more.

#### *The Ballad of Phineas McBoof*

“ On first listening I thought you were great. On second listening I thought you were brilliant. Now that I can't force myself to take your CD out of my CD player I just think you're a genius. This is one of the best kid CDs I've ever heard. My wife and I are now in the process of adopting a whole orphanage of kids just so we can have an excuse to listen to your CD...”

**Roger Day**

*Award-Winning Children's Recording Artist*

### *The Return of Phineas McBoof*

“ (Doctor Noize) is not afraid of taking risks. Meticulously constructed and presented, the CD nonetheless exudes a sense of being created in the moment with unbounded humor. The album is a towering artistic achievement, that never feels weighty and reveals new secrets with each listening.”

**Dr. David Yearsley**

*Cornell Music Professor, in Counterpunch*

### *Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony*

“ The Orchestra... gives a **soaring performance**, and they're more than matched by Grammy-garnering stars... Cullinan, a former high-school music teacher, has sprinkled tantalizing tidbits about orchestration, instrumentation, and music history throughout his lively story. Bravo, Doctor Noize!”

**Lisa J. Curtis**

*Brooklyn Family Magazine & nyparenting.com*

### *Homemade*

“ **Homemade** is a melodic masterpiece and a recipe for addressing earnest issues with quirky humor and a compassionate heart.”

**Jon Samson**

*2020 Children's Music Grammy Winner & Music Therapist*

### *Grammaropolis (Mobile App Review)*

“ Grammaropolis should be a required stop on every learning roadmap.”

*Parents' Choice Awards*

### *Punctuate This!*

“ Without Doctor Noize there would be no Grammaropolis. His wonderful combination of verbal creativity, musical range, and flat-out goofiness is what made our album about the Parts of Speech such a success, and I knew there was no other musical option when it came time to record an album on Punctuation. The best part about the good Doctor is that he respects and challenges his audience. He doesn't speak down to kids; he expects a lot from them.”

**Coert Voorhees**

*Mayor & CEO of Grammaropolis*

## **Observations & Recommendations**

Again, the recordings are educational lessons in disguise, with each recording having specific educational goals that are reemphasized in website content and activities, curricula, shows, and workshops. Let's move on to a deep dive into testing the curricula on the website.

## **Curricula & Website**

### **Overview**

I'll primarily discuss the testing and feedback of the curricula. I've written in a previous Chapter about how I sought feedback from experts in web design (and hired a few) to update the website during this Thesis Portfolio process, and I constantly asked fans and family to visit and test it during that process; a website is one of those cases where there is no clear distinction between the research, development and testing phase. So I'll leave the discussion of the website to the previous Chapter except as it serves as a distribution system for the curricula.

### **Testing & Feedback**

The curricula feedback was very interesting and helpful. I'll spare the suspense and say up front: The feedback I received is that the curricula is good but not great, and really more active listening exercises than actual curricula. It's not that the kids didn't enjoy the curricula — they love listening to the albums and filling out the Learning Adventures. It's that the Learning Adventures could be greatly enhanced as actual learning materials.

I enlisted the feedback of many kids, parents, educators and experts, both individually and as classes. I conducted interviews with the teachers and experts after they reviewed the curricula, and asked them to interview the kids about them and tell me what they said. I also personally observed the kids doing the curricula and interviewed them as classes during Zoom sessions. For classes, I did one Zoom day on the asynchronous content, listening to an album while doing the curriculum with them and asking them questions in real time about it; then I did a second day doing a live *Create A Hit Song With Doctor Noize!* Workshop with them over Zoom.

Due to the pandemic, I was never able to meet with any classes in person. I had hoped this would not be the case toward the end of this semester, as at least two of the classes (at Acres

Green Elementary School in Colorado) were actually back to full-time in-person learning. But even those classes would not let an outside teacher (me) in the building for workshops. While this is different than meeting with them in person (for both this testing and the live learning experiences in the next Chapter), and I'll plan to continue testing and tweaking my content in person once I can get in the same physical space with kids again, what was initially perceived as a setback became an opportunity to develop and test new ideas like virtual class meetings and take time to stop, review and reflect by going back and interviewing teachers — *many* teachers — I'd worked with in person in the past. Much more on that in the next Chapter.

I'll focus on a few case studies of the asynchronous learning testing and research below, and then give summarizing observations and prescriptions. I wasn't allowed to take screenshots of *any* classes or kids I met with, so with apologies, no pictures in this section. But there is a lengthy Appendix B with every one of the curricula for reference at the end of this document.

#### *Case Study: Los Altos School District Virtual School*

I met with four different Second Grade classes at Los Altos School District Virtual School in California. The primary teachers overseeing my days with the kids were Mrs. Romero and Ms. Alapat. This particular school district had just returned to in-person learning that week, but these were the kids who had decided to remain in district-wide classes for remote learners — so I was meeting with 20+ kids and a few teachers all in different houses on Zoom. With this group and pretty much everyone else, plans changed a bunch of times, and ultimately I was lucky just to meet with them. This is not because the teachers were flaky; it's because it was a time of transition in a pandemic for the schools, and seemingly every 48 hours their schedule and infrastructure was changed by the district due to quarantines, reopening, etc. Amazingly, the kids

at the Los Altos School District had already used both the *Grammaropolis* album and our series of animated videos to learn in class before I ever contacted them about this project. Signs that the website is working!

Big Picture, the curricula were a success here. Wrote Ms. Alapat after: *“I think the kids had a blast! My students talked during the Closing Circle about how grammar can be fun and wanted to know if they could create music videos to turn in for Key Assignments.”*

This is extremely encouraging, as not only did kids get psyched about the specific learning content, but they wanted to proactively produce their own creative art about it moving forward. I expect this response from the live workshops; to get it from curricula is inspiring.

In the details, however, there were items to improve. When we did the curricula in class together, everyone loved it and thought it was fun and easy. They got the answers right with their hive mind. The teachers and I decided to give completing the curricula to them for homework to see how they did it on their own, and their responses to that were more of a mixed bag. They still thought it was fun, but they were mixed on its clarity, purpose and learning content. Here’s a representative sampling of questions and answers on my feedback form:

**Was it fun?**

*“It was really fun!”* — Amelia

*“YES! LOVED it! It was super fun!”* — Emmalynn

**Did you learn anything?**

*“I love it was amazing and I want to do it again.”* — Michelle

*“I didn’t really learn anything (no offense)”* — Kayden

**Was anything too confusing?**

“No.” — Michelle

“Some of the questions were a little confusing.” — Amelia

“Nothing was too confusing.” — Rishik

“Yeah. On the homework, it was kinda tricky I didn't understand some of them.” —

Emmalynn

“Yes, the homework after the meeting (the questions) were a little tricky, and sometimes the recording was no help. I didn't like the homework after the meeting because it took up some space after my day. Hopefully that wasn't bad feedback.” — Kayden

(I am a Kayden fan — honesty!) The takeaway from all this to me is that for 2nd graders, the curricula were engaging when supervised by an adult; when they were on their own, it depended on the kid's personality and proactivity level whether it was an inspiring activity or not. I suppose this applies to any age, but I still think more well-defined questions — and more frequent questions, as Acres Green Elementary will teach us below — would help.

The final question — the expansive creative question that challenges higher level thinking instead of merely a multiple choice selection — was generally a hit. One girl said it was “a little tricky and a little hard,” but most of them raved about it. Even Kayden loved the last question: “I loved the Mad Libs!” The teachers loved the question, with Mrs. Romero highlighting it as “A fun way for kids to apply their learning” and Ms. Alapat agreeing. I was starting to get the sense there should be more expansive, creative questions on the curricula.

The teachers were wonderful as teachers are: “Thank you for helping me teach my kids with Grammaropolis!” wrote Mrs. Romero, when in actuality *she* had helped *me*. The teachers’

main critique was that they'd like a longer class time to work on the curricula next time. Also encouraging.

*Case Study: Acres Green Elementary School*

I met with Mr. Ludwig's 4th Grade class and Ms. Fuhr's 4th Grade class. There were a few repeat suggestions from above from this class and other kids and parents, but I won't repeat those. I'll only add new insights from these classes.

While the Los Altos kids were genuinely positive and delightful, these kids were more so, and more enthused. I don't attribute this to difference in the kids or the age — I attribute it to the fact that the Acres Green kids were all in a classroom together with their teachers, talking to a guest recording artist, and the excitement was palpable. It was a simple reminder of the power of live events, especially in the young — it's the difference between going to a rock concert and listening to an album for a kid. The general equation is: Kids are most excited about learning when they're together live, a little less so when they're together virtually via Zoom, and even less so when they're on their own doing an activity for homework. Not rocket science, but still very clearly demonstrated by the groups of kids I met with.

There were several little detail improvements that came to light meeting with the Acres Green kids as we popped from curriculum to curriculum, doing a few questions in each. In the *Grammaropolis* curriculum, one astute student noted that Action Verb doesn't actually save anyone from the burning building in *Lights! Camera!! Action Verb!!!* That person really saves himself after Action Verb convinces him to act. So technically my supposedly correct answer ("Saves someone from a burning building!") is not entirely correct. I watched the animated video for the song (which the kid had seen and cited as proof of his position) and this child was



absolutely correct. The lesson here is that, with every iteration of a curriculum, I should get a focus group of kids and do the curriculum with them live, with discussion. The things they notice and point out will lead to useful upgrades.

Both of these classes had one major critique — echoed elsewhere as well — that I’m going to implement. They actually wanted the questions to be *more* frequent, challenging and engaging. Currently, there is one question per track (song) on each curricula. They cited the fact that, in many cases, they could answer question within the first thirty seconds of the track, and then they were just hanging around listening. When I designed the curricula, I thought this was a good thing, so they could soak in the music at times and not just work. But the kids felt like this made the process herky jerky, where sometimes they were engaged in an active listening quiz, and other times they were just hanging around in la la land waiting for the next question. I even observed this watching them on Zoom, as they’d finish the question early in the song and wonder what they were supposed to do. So I should increase the active listening questions and save the casual listening minutes for when they’re just listening to the albums.

I asked the kids and teachers how frequent they think questions should be asked in the curricula. Their consensus was 2-3 questions per track. Doctor Noize tracks, however, range anywhere from 30 seconds to seven minutes. So I’m going to take the gist of their advice and aim to have a question asked on the curricula every 90 seconds or so of playing time. I will then test this and adjust as necessary.

*“Thank you so much for this! We had such a great time!!!”* wrote Ms. Fuhr after. There was another teacher *thanking* me for a favor they did for me. As I interviewed dozens of

teachers for this project, I was continually reminded why I love working in education. It's the people.

*Case Study: Coert Voorhees*

My most compelling asynch interview and critic was entrepreneur and educator Coert Voorhees, the CEO of the Grammaropolis brand, Mayor of Grammaropolis, acclaimed novelist for young adults, and former high school teacher. Coert's one of the foremost grammar experts in the world, and he's the man who commissioned and hired me to write both the *Grammaropolis* and *Punctuate This!* albums. But he'd never actually seen the Doctor Noize asynchronous curricula, including the ones for the two albums I produced for him — probably because he has his own line of educational tools based on those albums. Coert spend considerable time reviewing not only the *Grammaropolis* curricula, but the *Phineas McBoof* series curricula too. His insights were so powerful, and he's such a great writer and speaker, that I'm going to edit them down to a large quote that are all his words:

*“My main takeaway is that the each curriculum comes off more as an end-of-lesson quiz or assessment than it does a curriculum. It's very helpful as a summary, but if I am a teacher or parent who wants to use these resources on my own, I don't have a lot to work with here.*

*My favorite thing about the first Phineas McBoof was that kids were able to learn music theory as a progression by following Phineas as he added one instrument at a time to his band. I think it would be more helpful — and more impactful — for students to be able to follow that progression in the corresponding curriculum.*

*Multiple choice questions are definitely the challenge here. You want to provide something that parents will be able to present to their kids without having any knowledge of the*

*subject, so a multiple choice assessment makes sense because you can provide an answer key. But it's also the least engaging way to assess.*

*The extra exercises on Grammaropolis and Punctuate This! are probably the most effective of the non-multiple choice quizzes part of the resources, because they encourage the kids to put into practice what they've learned. The extra exercises on Phineas McBoof 1 & 2 don't really have much to do with what the kids have learned. The materials for Crashes the Symphony are better in that regard.*

*My suggestion for improvement would be to try to find a way to use different exercises to reinforce what you want the kids to take away from each of the albums. They can still be fun, and you don't have to get rid of the multiple choice questions, but perhaps if you expanded on the content so that each lesson or assessment was focused on a particular skill and was only one page long... You could then order those into a progression — maybe 5? Maybe 10? — that gave the students the ability to build on what they've learned in the previous ones.”*

So... There are a lot of great ideas to unpack there, and notice that Coert echoed what the kids told me: Their favorite curricula activities were the creative, higher-level ones at the end. My way of adapting Coert's critiques and the kids' critiques into something I feel will work for Doctor Noize's teaching moving forward will be in the next section. For now, I'll just add a few other things Coert suggested.

Image details matter when convincing teachers to let you teach their students: A few weeks ago, everything in this document and on the Doctor Noize website referred to my “curriculumums.” Coert told me that teachers — especially language teachers — judge you for the words you use, and “curricula” was a much hipper thing to say than “curriculumums,” even though

both are technically accurate. So every iteration of “curriculumums” — in both this document and the Doctor Noize website — was changed to “curricula,” a process that took the better part of an hour, but hopefully made me look way smarterer-like. (I wrote that sentence just to drive Coert crazy, on the off chance that he reads this document. You’re welcome, Mayor!)

Coert has a lot of online membership and app customers for Grammaropolis. I asked Coert if, in his experience, I should have online quiz versions of the curricula. His answer surprised me: He said I don’t need online quizzes, and that in fact teachers want PDF’s instead. Teachers are old school. *“I’ve spent all this time working on this digital thing, and it turns out teachers just want PDF’s,”* he laughed.

What about homeschool kids? Coert says outside of individuals, it’s a very hard market to figure out. *“I don’t know — I stopped focusing on it, because the homeschool market is super, super fragmented.”* Even in the same neighborhood, Coert says there are homeschoolers who don’t talk to each other — different religious denominations or philosophies who prefer to do their own thing. *“My solution to that is to list on the Homeschool Buyers Coop — they’re like a GroupOn for homeschoolers.”* But mostly, he said word of mouth is where it’s at for homeschoolers — a long-game process that must be supported by the kind of website infrastructure discussed in Chapter 3. The other thing that helps, of course, is doing workshops and building more Doctor Noize fans.

## **Observations & Recommendations**

My main observation and synthesis of the feedback I’ve received is *more and more*. No, I don’t mean that as a toddler would. Allow me to explain.

1. There should be *more* questions on the curricula that exist — one question every 90 seconds or so on the CD, so they have enough but not too much time to hear the answer, read the question and choices, and answer — as the kids suggested, but I don't think those should be the curricula anymore. I think I should expand and improve the questions on all those documents — particularly on *Homemade*, whose current questions are pretty lousy — but rename them “Active Listening Adventures!”
2. I should have online versions of the Active Listening Adventures where kids can take those adventures online and the results automatically submit to Doctor Noize Inc. Then I think Doctor Noize Inc. should provide some sort of encouraging response to them to try another one. Yes, I know Coert Voorhees said his teacher audience doesn't want online quizzes. But I would like to be able to tell parents at shows and workshops their kids can go right home, get online, and go on these adventures, and Mom and Dad don't even have to print anything out. I'm hopeful to develop more passionate future recording artists that way.
3. The final questions — the longform-thinking and creativity questions — should be removed from the renamed Active Listening Adventures, and used as the start of the new curricula. These new curricula — which I'll still call “Learning Adventures” to appeal to kids — will assume kids have *already* listened to the albums, and jump straight to the high-level creative content. *These* are the curricula documents teachers would focus on in school, while the Active Listening Adventures would be things kids can focus on at home. But I'll also promote to teachers that anytime they need an hour off, they can

print out the Active Listening Adventures, press play to stream the album, and tell their kids they have an hour to do a fun assignment.

4. I've developed two other ideas about the asynchronous content reflecting on this process and feedback. The first is that I'd like to create Teacher Study Guides. Nobody told me they needed this, but that's because I took time to thoroughly explain the process to them beforehand. It would save me time, and allow them to prepare whenever they want, if I wrote this all down in Study Guides.
5. A pivotal longterm project, in my view, is to determine if a social media space for Doctor Noize could be developed where kids and fans can share their creations, songs, videos, Learning Adventure pages, and more. This is complicated with this age group, because some aren't on platforms at all, and the platforms they *are* on are often different than mom's and dad's. Adults, for example, are on Facebook as of this writing, but kids are on Instagram. So is this safe space for sharing on the adults' pages, or the kids' pages? Or is it not a good idea to do this, and instead Doctor Noize (me) should just share occasional highlights on my social media page? I'd like to explore if there's a way to make a creative sharing space for kids, but I know that's a huge and complicated research process, and beyond the scope of this Thesis Portfolio for now.

## CHAPTER 6

### LIVE CONTENT TESTING & RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

On to the live content! One thing producing this Thesis Portfolio in a pandemic has taught me is this: I *love* the live content, and can't wait for it to return. Not just on Zoom. In person. The extensive interviews I conducted for this Chapter with educators and promoters I've worked with to build workshops in the past made us all nostalgic for those days again. One of the unintended inspirational byproducts of these interviews was checking in with everyone and hearing so many of them say: *"I can't wait to have you back to work with the kids again."*

#### Goals

Chapter 5's four fundamental goals of the asynchronous content also apply to the live content, but for the live events, we'll emphatically add another goal:

5. Light the spark for the next generation of Recording Arts students, producers and artists.

#### Implementation

As with the last chapter, I'll go through the research, implementation and testing of the first components — the live shows and mobile rig — rather quickly, as much of it was done in my studio and the marketplace before I started working on this Thesis Portfolio. But as with the last chapter, I'll briefly review the responses I've gotten.

A thoroughly researched review of the workshops thus far, as well as implementation of a new Zoom version of the workshop for this Thesis Portfolio in these strange times, will get much

more attention here. I interviewed people involved with dozens of workshops — past and present for this project — and there was great consensus in why things work.

## **Live Shows & The Mobile Music Production Rig**

### **Overview**

The Live Shows — performed on the same Mobile Music Production Rig as the in-person workshops — are Secret Mini Recording Arts Workshops In Disguise. Don't tell anybody; it's a secret. The shows promote diversity of musical style, diversity of people who come onstage to contribute to songs, and diversity of instrumentation. But mostly, they celebrate the joy of creation and invite people to risk getting out there and doing something.

### **Testing & Feedback**

#### *Live Show & Mobile Rig Testing & Feedback*

- To see more enthusiastic quotes about the impact of a Doctor Noize show than even my mother would want to read, again visit the [Buzz](#) page and select the Solo Shows and Symphony Shows tabs
- [Doctor Noize Event Calendar](#): A glance at the Doctor Noize touring calendar, which goes back years and includes hundreds upon hundreds of shows — all of which got kids inside the music creation process — demonstrates there is a market hungry for these events, and many repeat bookings once venues and schools get their first taste. Or just watch the videos on the page.
- Reach Studios show enhancements on my Mobile Rig: During the pandemic, I've used the touring break to set my rig up in my studio and install a number of enhancements to the show based on feedback. Sometimes literally! For example: Scott Burgess, on my Thesis Committee, consulted with me to help me tame feedback and signal issues I'd been having in



the last year of my shows, but never had time to fix. Those are now fixed. Lorne Bregitzer, my Committee Chair, helped me learn and create some Ableton Live moves to enhance my show; practicing and perfecting those are long from complete. I installed a new wireless mic, which is listed in Chapter 4. And I'm in the process of updating my guitar effects and making my guitar wireless, which is also discussed in Chapter 4. These are things that needed improving, but I hadn't had time to do, when I had shows coming up; there are always benefits to an unfortunate situation if you use your time and focus wisely.

### *Sample Quotes for Live Events*

“ We have had the opportunity to work closely with a wonderful young musician-educator by the name of Cory Cullinan (aka Dr. Noize), who is performing here in the museum as well as exploring a possible traveling music exhibit with us. He's a great musician, wonderful educator and great person and we recommend him highly! ”

**Jeff Patchen**

*CEO, Children's Museum of Indianapolis*

*(That exhibit never materialized. But we did talk about it!)*

“ I just wanted to say a HUGE thank you to you for giving such a great show last Friday. In total we managed to raise HK\$13,790 for bring me a book which is fantastic plus the feedback from parents (and children alike) has been wonderful and very positive indeed. In fact, everyone wants to know when you'll be back to do another show! ”

**Jane Archibald**

*Director, Corporate Development Division*

*(That show was in Hong Kong, so the honest answer is: Not anytime soon!)*

## **Observations & Recommendations**

During this Thesis Portfolio process of research and reflection, I've actually learned two things I want to improve — without even playing a show! I discussed in Chapter 4 how *Doctor Noize Live!* Shows give a taste of what students get in a Workshop. But there's a more expansive middle ground I'd like to explore. Inspired by Redding School of the Arts Teacher Tom Burkett's discussion of limiting the creative choices kids make in his songwriting lessons (discussed later in this Chapter), I want to write a new song with the audience at every Doctor Noize show, but make the whole process from composition to performance no more than ten minutes long. Sound insane? I now believe *it can be done*. In order to do it, I'll need templates I know like the back of my hand available, even more technical mastery of my rig than I already have, and the freedom to wing it beyond there. Each song will be only be one loop, in a Theme & Variations structure, not a Verse/Chorus/Verse/Chorus structure, unless the Chorus has the same chords as the Verse. This was done in a Zoom Workshop last week discussed below.

The second thing I learned during these interviews is that I need a better sales and marketing strategy to combine my offerings. Even though the calendar shows a lot of Doctor Noize shows, after conducting this research and realizing just how people feel after booking workshops, it's actually pretty silly I don't book more of them. There is certainly much more to be done out there, and I've been encouraged to offer Show + Workshop packages with much more enthusiasm, because nobody who books that package ever regrets it, but I haven't tried very hard in the past to communicate that to new venues.

## **Live Workshops**

*“I have not taken a single music lesson in my life. So this was an eye-opener for me :-) It was amazing to see ideas, melodies and lyrics layered into a song.”*

— Teresa Alapat, Los Altos School District Virtual School 2nd Grade Teacher

## **Overview**

What initially appeared a real disappointment — I wasn’t going to be able to do any in-person workshops to test the workshops — actually became a blessing in disguise in two ways. First, I was forced to develop a new Zoom version of the *Create A Hit Song With Doctor Noize!* Workshop, and to my surprise... it worked fine. Second, instead of traveling and setting up gear for a bunch of new in-person workshops, I instead spent that time deeply discussing them with the hosts and teachers who sponsored many of the former workshops, and received feedback from educators and promoters I respect who I’d never thought to ask before.

As I did with the asynchronous content, I will end the suspense and give the overview before the details: Whereas the curricula had plenty of critiques and could use a complete retooling, as described in the last Chapter, the Doctor Noize Workshops are considered unique, one-of-a-kind, deeply valuable, and a model educational experience. It was hard to get anyone to come up with a critique, and I am deeply proud of that. But there is still value in documenting what they say, for the following reason:

There should be *more of us* doing this work, and everyone I interviewed said *I’m the only one they’ve ever seen do it*. This was stunning to me, since they’re all either music teachers or family event promoters. There was consensus as to what the key ingredients were, and there was consensus that it would be great if more adults gave kids these experiences. So let’s hope this document provides a blueprint, or at least an inspiring agenda of ideas, for others to teach

Recording Arts workshops to the young as well. Below are the key points distilled from long interviews with a talented array of educators and promoters.

To hear the songs created at the workshops described below (and many more), please refer to the newly-enhanced [Genius Workshop Recordings](#) page that shows the genius of all these kids I've had the pleasure of working with. It's a repository of workshop songs created in conjunction with this Thesis Portfolio; I even had to go find the Ableton Live archive files and re-bounce the ones I couldn't find. Several of my interviewees below discussed the impact of kids being "published" online, something I did early on, and then only occasionally did. This research convinced me to always post the songs, and always post them within 24 hours. When people go to the website to find their workshop song, it's not on some semi-pro "songs by kids" page. The page it plays from is beautiful and professional looking, with as much care put to that page as the pages for Doctor Noize's professional albums. Kids, teachers, Moms, Grandpas go to the page and say: "*Wow. Amazing. My kids' song is on that.*"

### **Testing & Feedback Of Live In-Person Workshops**

*Case Study: Indianapolis Children's Museum, IN*

[Genius Workshop Recordings](#) here include...

- 2012
- Chris The Alien
- Dragons Licking Lollipops
- Happy New Year
- I Like Food
- My Puppies Don't Love Me

- Ooh
- Superman & Spiderman

Sean Hildreth is a former Programming Director of the world's largest children's museum. I've done many workshop songs with kids under Sean's stewardship, and I've also done a few "Noon Year's Day" parties at the museum where we wrote and recorded a song that morning to perform at noon to celebrate the New Year. Most kids were elementary aged. Sean immediately talked about the value of having fun with ideas and providing structure to them:

*"The workshop was great because it taught kids to break down the songs and also have fun with it. It had the full range of creativity and musical structure — but mostly they weren't afraid to participate. I really enjoyed that you could take just about anything and find a way to make it relatable — even something like Dragons Licking Lollipops."*

He also discussed the impact of kids being "published" online: *"When we did post things we did get a lot of feedback from families. There were people asking where they could hear their songs. At the time it was just Ballad and Return. People would go ask for the book. At camp the kids wanted to hear what they created."*

Note that the workshop songs would encourage kids to go to the website and explore the asynchronous materials — recordings and books. They thought it was cool that their own songs were on the same site as Doctor Noize's professional releases. I asked Sean if anyone else had ever offered him Recording Workshops at the world's most prestigious children's museum, and I was shocked at the answer: *"No. I've seen performers take audience suggestions and incorporate that into the song. But yours was more about the creation, a group effort — more than just one person incorporating a few words into the performance."*

When I asked Sean why he thought the workshops worked, he emphasized the fun creativity combined with no entrance requirements: *“It’s a creative approach in a very FUN way, which is why it’s so successful. You don’t pull a rigid structure and make it about theory. You just make songwriting part of the fun as opposed to being drilled about structure. For example, for someone taking a guitar lesson, rightfully it’s a lot of structure, but with you it’s a wonderful way to get people connected to music with little experience. You’re the vessel through.”*

*Case Study: Green Valley Ranch, CO*

Genius Workshop Recordings here include...

- Chipmunks Playing Rock 'n' Roll
- The OG's

I spoke at length with Nancy Lease, the Owner & Creative Director of Bling Entertainment & Events. She takes primary responsibility for planning ground-up events from the bottom up, and was the promoter of several events for primarily low-income families in Denver, Colorado which held *Create A Hit Song With Doctor Noize!* Workshops at big outdoor events. At these events, I played a *Doctor Noize Live!* Show, then we immediately did a Workshop — right there onstage, in front of hundreds of people — and a “one song show” immediately followed, which was a performance of the Workshop Song with the kids onstage with me performing it.

Here’s why she planned it that way: *“I wanted them to see what does a professional musician look like and what are they gonna aspire toward. Then I wanted them to learn some skills from you and then perform on their own. In that particular community, I don’t know if*

*they've ever seen a live show — so I wanted to expose them to it first and then inspire them to do it. I had very big doubts that those kids had ever seen anything like that.”*

*It's an unusual sequence, but she's an experienced event planner, and it worked: “I gave a lot of thought to this.... The community is so starved for arts and education programming. I picked you because I felt like your ability to interact with young children is something a lot of performers can't do in a very close proximity. Some kids had behavioral difficulties and real challenges. You handled them super well, and a lot of performers would move away from them and not handle them. That's how you got a second year back because of how you handled the difficult kids along with the pure love of music you had — I generally have a policy that I never hire the same act two years in a row.”*

I laughed and told her I had no recollection whatsoever of difficult kids, and it's possible those were my favorite kids in the bunch because of their energy. She emphasized a common theme from my interviews — that I didn't need kids to act or think a certain way: *“You're color blind when it comes to the activities — cultural or learning disability, you just do your craft and do what you need to get your goal accomplished. With this particular community, you handled it just right.”*

I asked Nancy whether she thought the Workshops had any sort of lasting impact, or if they were just a fun afternoon. She said: *“There's a kid who comes up to me every time he sees me at Green Valley Ranch and says: “I made my own song. Do you remember that?” And I say: “Yeah, you played with Doctor Noize!” He's the boy who rapped on the Chipmunks song.”*

I remember that rap well. See him recording it on the [Teaching & Learning](#) page video.

*Case Study: Lusk Elementary/Middle School, WY*

Genius Workshop Recordings here included...

- **Mysterious Island**

At this workshop in tiny Lusk, Wyoming — one of my favorite little towns to play in, with an always-amazing audience — there were multiple grade levels all in a big music room. The teacher, Ivy Palmer, immediately established herself as a “gamer” and played violin *and* bass on the recording. This made the kids want to play something too. They played their flutophones on the song, because they all have flutophones. All right! They also had these cool percussion things we worked into the song.

The result is quite sonically interesting, albeit obviously not refined. But let’s be honest:

*Mysterious Island* — created in less than 90 minutes by *elementary school kids* with my assistance and the assistance of their fine teacher — is far more sonically and dramatically creative than most rock/pop singles you hear on the radio. Listen to it and tell me I’m wrong. It’s even in a minor, “mysterious” key. Imagine how cool it would



be to take these little idea nuggets and have a professional production team make them into pristine versions. Now *there’s* a cool project — a super pro album produced by industry veterans written entirely by elementary school kids. Somebody make that happen!



*“I’m a string player, and I live and teach in an area where strings aren’t offered to students. So putting that out there that you can do this is an important thing,”* said teacher Ivy Palmer. She then recounted how the song subject was developed: *“We were talking about how people write songs and how they’re generally story based. One imaginative student said pirates, another said where do pirates go, islands, what do they look for, treasure, and then you helped them create a linear story.”*



The next story Ivy told was about an incredibly shy little girl who came up with a main story component and stunned her teacher by offering to sing it solo. I had no idea this was unusual for this student. *“For her to wanna do that was amazing. The animated series with the monkey and everything encouraged her to go up there, as did your presence. Even if it doesn’t sound right this guy is gonna make it sound right — he’s telling me I can’t do anything wrong. She*

*was in first grade! She was comfortable enough because of what you portrayed that she could go up there and she didn’t have a wrong answer.”*

Ivy closed with a familiar concept to any elementary school teacher: chaos management. *“Honestly, being an elementary teacher, I live in chaos all the time. You set up, you did your thing, the kids accepted it, OMG this is chaos, this is fun... Music, it’s awesome, it’s freeing,*

*there is no structure, but hey we're gonna make music and you somehow put it all together.*

*Organizing the chaos but acting like you're not organizing the chaos — I felt like you and I both were on the same page. The message that you give — “You can make music anywhere, anytime” — is very empowering.”*

*Case Study: Palo Alto Children's Theatre, CA*

Genius Workshop Recordings here include...

- Chickens With Lightsabers

I've worked with the kids at Palo Alto Children's Theatre many times over the years — as the composer of commissioned musicals, as the pit Music Director, and just playing Doctor Noize Shows. Fairly recently, they brought me in to do a recording workshop, followed by a huge outdoor Doctor Noize show the next day where the kids all got up onstage with me to perform their Workshop song, *Chickens With Lightsabers*, with me. I asked Marieke Gaboury, Director of Theatre Operations, what made the workshop work.

*“Cory breaks down all of the barriers that might prevent kids from being creative. He isn't afraid to look silly – in fact he embraces it – and helps everyone around him feel that they can jump in without fear of being laughed at, or doing something wrong. Most of the kids that took Cory's workshop had never written a song before, but he is able to help them take creative and social/emotional risks, and at end they get the phenomenal reward of having something tangible to point to, that they can say – “hey, I made that!” After working with Cory, we saw workshop participants inspired to continue writing music, and several continued to seek out mentorship from Cory for some time after.”*

Note that her emphasis is not musical or technical, even though she has a very technical job. She specifically says that the willingness to risk *not* being great, *not* being technical, and *not* being taken seriously — antithetical to much that we’re conditioned to do in a professional recording studio — is what achieves buy-in from the kids. It’s a completely different mindset than producing a professional act. I asked her (and everyone) what could be improved, and her idea was to evolve it:

*“I would say that in an ideal world, we would have more time so that we could have multiple sessions, to allow for some sequential learning and ultimately create individual (or smaller group) projects. This workshop is great as an initial “dive-in” -- but expanding it to something like a week long intensive would allow kids to go much deeper, and to create a work that allows them to find their own voice through music.”*

About that voice... It is the night before this Thesis Portfolio is due, at 10:23 PM, and I *just now* received this email from a mother whose daughter attended Marieke’s PACT workshop:

*“As a parent, I wanted to let you know that since your workshop, my daughter has been inspired to write poetry and spoken word pieces on her own and in other writing workshops. The workshop which leads the kids through the songwriting process from writing to performance is amazing. She actually performed a spoken word piece for a school talent show. These moments are small but important in building confidence and resilience. We originally enrolled her as another means of expression after having experienced a series of bullying incidents.”*

The invitation to express oneself in a safe space is a powerful thing.

*Case Study: City of Whitewater, WI*

Genius Workshop Recordings here include...

- Be Healthy
- I'm A Monster
- Stinky Socks In Space
- Summer Song

Whitewater is one of my favorite tour stops as Doctor Noize, and I've played their summer concert series for years. Recreation & Community Events Programmer Michelle Dujardin often books a recording arts workshop around noon and then an evening show, during which we perform the workshop song. *"What I remember is the excitement of the kids. Just a good day. Having the workshops and shows combined is huge — they worked so hard to be introduced to the instruments, the sounds, creating the words like a team.... And then being able to showcase what they did — to not only to prove to themselves what they can do, but to entertain others. To do it in one day is huge as well — our dance classes are six weeks and then they have to wait two weeks for the performances. To do it all in one day is a huge accomplishment."*



Michelle brings up an interesting point reflecting on her experience above: The constriction of time makes the kids' focus better and excitement level higher. *"It's ongoing, moving to the next thing for words, now recording, now performing for others. The Workshops add the steps and the process and instruments, learning, coming up with words, putting it all together — it's the whole beginning to end process and the completion instead of just the insertion of things from the shows."*

*Case Study: Redding School of The Arts, CA*

Genius Workshop Recordings here include...

- Hairball
- I Love Pizza
- I'm Haunted

Redding School of the Arts in California is a special place with two extremely dedicated music teachers, Tom Burkett and Byron Wylie. I've done literally everything Doctor Noize offers at this school — *Doctor Noize Live!* Shows, Symphony Shows, *Beethoven To Bieber: How To Listen* Workshops, and *Create A Hit Song With Doctor Noize!* Workshops. You read that right — we did an entire staged orchestral show with the North State Symphony, a professional orchestra, at this school. Students there are about as lucky as arts students get. We creatively combined events, too, fully cognizant of the fact that it all might crash and burn. For example, the song *I'm Haunted* was written by the kids with Doctor Noize *for orchestra and choir*, fully scored on a long night by yours truly, and performed with the orchestra and student choir 36 hours later in front of a huge audience. See the video of this performance at the Workshop Recordings page. We'll start with what Byron wrote about the Beethoven Workshop:

*“Cory was able to weave instruction about form and structure of songs, making connections from classical to pop/rock for a highly engaging comparison between Beethoven's sonata form and how that can be found in pop music. I was inspired and have used this in my own teaching since that workshop. Cory connects with kids through all this with disarming spontaneous humor and it draws students into feeling connected with the songwriting process.”*

About our songwriting & recording workshops. Byron wrote: *“Students were highly engaged, entertained, educated, and empowered as the song writing process moved along with Cory's great leadership and genius.”* (Editor's note: Genius is apparently a term Bryon throws around very loosely...). *“Cory was able to manage any disruptions and discipline issues with ease, pulling students into the process of creating a song with structured parameters.”*

Jokes aside, note again that the “genius” here Byron speaks of is not one of pure art — it's of human relations and the understanding that, even with an orchestra on call, we're *not* pressuring ourselves to actually compete with Beethoven. Kids can do that *later*, after they've mastered their craft. In these workshops, we're just trying to have fun in artistic expression.

Similarly, what Bryon's fellow teacher Tom Burkett remembers about *I'm Haunted* almost completely bypasses any discussion of the technical achievement of a choral/orchestral piece written by kids (!), and goes straight to its power in inspiring the kids' comfort to truly express themselves:

*“The first thing that comes to my mind about I'm Haunted is that it had a memorable melody — a learnable, catchy melody so it was something that appealed to the kids. The magic of the subject developed is that it hits something that's deep in all of us, and that is we want to laugh at death, we want to face our fears, we kinda like courting our fears yet still being safe. A*

*song like I'm Haunted, with a melody and orchestration that supported the hauntedness, taunts the unknown, the world that we don't know if it exists but we kinda think it does. The love for fantasy and the magic of using our imagination in terms of the dark world is critical. Think of all the children's stuff that is dark — ring around the rosy came out of the Black Death. There are strange nursery rhymes poking fun of life or death or sadness. We wanna play on the safe side of the fence and look in sometimes — maybe even stick your arm through the hole in the wood and see what happens, I dare you — that's what Haunted did for me. When I was little, I loved minor keys and Halloween because it was creepy — and I was not a dark kid."*

First of all: That's all Tom just talking off the top of his head, and you can see why he's such an effective teacher. I could talk to Tom all day long and never get bored — the excitement and passion of creativity oozes out of him and inspires me. Secondly, *Chipmunks Playing Rock 'n' Roll* this is *not*. At Green Valley Ranch (written up earlier in this Chapter), kids in a lower income bracket wanted to write optimistic and funny raps, so we did that. At the prestigious Redding School of the Arts, with kids whose parents have already gotten them into a college prep type program in elementary school... the kids wanted to write a scary song about fears. So we did that. These would not have been my guesses. For a truly memorable workshop, you approach it without bias and don't lead the kids; they lead you. You also lean on any talents and experience in the room. Tom Burkett took one look at the score and decided to get his Orff band involved in the project too:

*"I remember I took part of the melody and worked it up for the Orff instruments — xylophones and marimbas. They were accompanied by the North State Symphony and 100 kids in the choir, and they had a part of this composition. They knew you were a recording artist and*



*they thought maybe they'd become famous or recording artists through all this. Maybe Eric Whitmer is your best example of this — he clearly remembers this experience as a turning point in his life.”* (As his former student, Tom knew of the Eric Whitmer story told in Chapter 4, and proudly told me: “*He’s a professional percussionist!*”)



Hearing Tom Burkett talk about teaching and music and his kids is the secret sauce to everything that makes workshops like these tick. He is crazy effusive, goes on forever about the song projects they do, and laughs at moments he remembers, like when the kids stood up at the wrong time. It’s his *joy of creating music and learning* that rubs off on the kids. When I hear Tom talk about teaching, I hear how the people I interviewed describe me in the workshops. And I realize that I have partly gotten that attitude, and been inspired by, all the teachers in my life, some of whom I continue to work with — that positive energy and communal passion is what galvanizes us all, including our students. It sounds so simple, but getting off your perch and



meeting kids at their level — while subtly using your skills and preset organization to get the job done — is how these workshops work.

*“In all these years — several decades — I always had a mic set up with an amp and said “we’re gonna sing some songs.” And basically the whole class wanted to hear their voice on the microphone, or the whole class took a turn on the drum set, and how they laughed.... Sometimes they were terrified or couldn’t believe it or were delighted, but I laughed and then everyone laughed and it was okay to be silly. It became a regular culture in my classroom, but it had power. One, they’re up in front of their friends. Two, there was no judgment. Three, it was in the medium of music, so if they wanted to do something, they could.”*

This, too, is why the workshops work, with the added bonus of ending up with something joyous, in the moment, *and* permanent. I asked Tom if anyone else had done recording workshops with his class, and he was as surprised as I am that nobody had. *“You’re the only one who’s ever done it. I don’t do it myself. I wish there were more people who did it. Recording is just the next level up. Kids are so into technology anyways now.”*

Tom said he didn’t do it because he felt technically it was beyond his grasp, but then he said something that gave me an idea that’s going to revolutionize my *Doctor Noize Live!* Shows in the future. Ironically, the idea I’m stealing from him is based on an idea he stole from me. After I left following our first Recording Arts workshop there — a hilarious song called *Hairball* where his class said they wanted to write a song like Van Halen’s *Jump* — Tom decided he wanted to try his hand at creative songwriting with his classes too. He didn’t feel comfortable opening up all the parameters I open up to the kids, so he decided to limit what they could choose: *“I created the melody but then they write the lyrics. So I did the same musical song*

*with eleven different classes and subjects! I wrote down subjects like breakfast, the beach, swimming... And I asked what kind of nouns go with those topics. It was like a mad lib — you put those nouns in the song about breakfast, or the beach, etc.”*

Essentially Tom is cueing students to think of the things to fill into the song, which is similar to what I do in the recording workshops. Compare and contrast his workshops to mine, and he simply presets more of the music fundamental structures than I do, and allows them to set subject and lyrics. The interesting thing about what Tom described is that for teachers who don’t want to make all the creative factors open-ended, you can limit whatever elements you want and just focus on certain elements you’re comfortable being flexible with. This could be either because the teacher wants to limit the changes to what she can handle, or you could theoretically do a weekend residency like Marieke Gaboury of Palo Alto Children’s Theatre touted above, and teach students how songs are built by limiting what they compose and master each day before moving on to the next level of component. *“If I gave them a melody, they’d have to either fit the lyrics to fit the melody, or alter the melody to fit the words — and that’s actually an important component of songwriting! So now I have students writing songs and bringing them into class, saying: “I wrote this song but I want YOU to create a melody to go with it.””*

Tom’s more “structured creativity” approach gave me the idea to write a new song in ten minutes or less at each Doctor Noize *Show*, not just the workshops. This would be possible if I experimented with limiting the parameters I allow the audience to choose — for example, give them only two bass sound choices, and whichever one gets the loudest cheer *wins* — so they are greatly restricted versions of the *Create A Hit Song With Doctor Noize!* Workshops that also

serve as promotion for the extended workshops. It's one of many ideas generated from this Thesis I'm going to incorporate moving forward.

And speaking of Workshops with greater restrictions than normal, let's get to...

### **Testing & Feedback Of Live Zoom Workshops**

Genius Workshop Recordings here include...

- Achoo!
- Chicken! (Don't Cross The Road)

*Ooh boy.* Wasn't sure if these were gonna work. But, due to the pandemic and my obstinate insistence on actually doing *some sort of Live Recording Arts Workshop* with elementary school kids remotely for this project, we tried it, and... much to my surprise, it worked awfully well.

*Case Study: Los Altos School District Virtual School 2nd Grade Classes, CA*

The first thing I did with my first Zoom Recording Arts Workshop was decide, at the last minute, that I was going to do it in Logic Pro instead of Ableton Live. An inauspicious beginning for a supposedly organized venture about chaos management. But the decision had merit. The reason I did this, even though I had my Mobile Rig ready to go in my Reach Studios main soundproofed tracking room, is that I already had the mic and a good songwriting template of sounds set up in the Control Room for a project I've been co-producing for UNICEF on which I'm playing a bunch of instruments, and I realized something I've always said, including in these pages: *The best gear is the gear you know.* It suddenly dawned on me that while my shows and recording workshops on the road were always on my Mobile Rig using Ableton, I hadn't played a show on the road for almost a year, and during that time, I've produced entire albums and

projects in Logic. At the moment, because I've been stuck at home and in the studio, I'm fast and facile with Logic. So I thought I should use it.

I contacted CU Denver Professor Sam McGuire, who knows everything about Logic, and CU Denver Professor Sam McGuire (same guy), who knows everything about Zoom, and asked if Logic would work on a Zoom call. He texted back: *"I can tell you right now that it barely works if using the Zoom audio driver."*

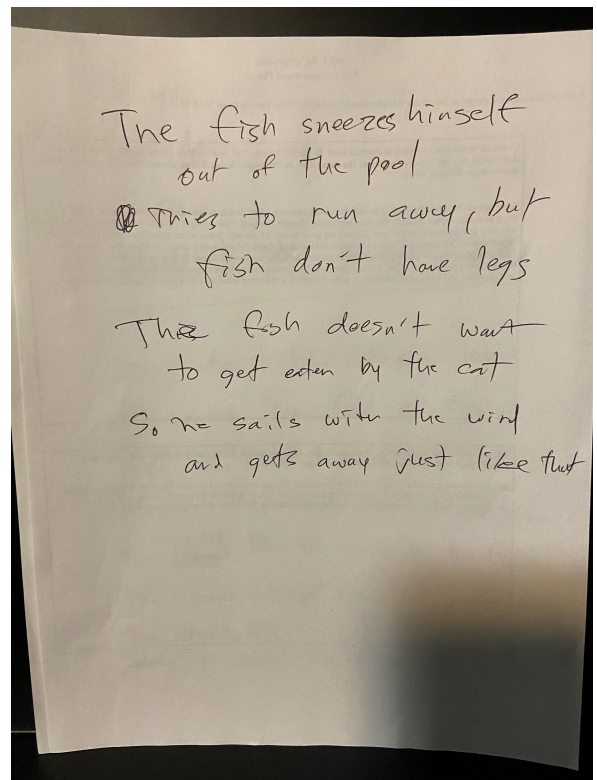
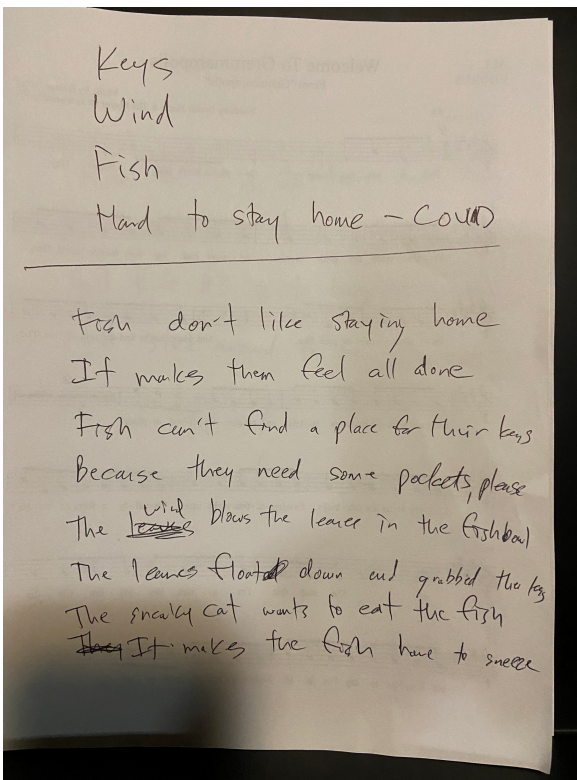
For reasons that have nothing to do with logic (no pun intended) and everything to do with me obstinately wanting to do what I obstinately wanted to do, I decided to try Logic anyway. But I resolved to switch the Three P's of pen, paper and piano if it didn't work. The long story short: It worked, even with over 20 people on the Zoom call, if I set the I/O Buffer size down to 32 or 64, which causes a crazy stupid amount of recording latency, clicks and pops. Adults would hate that, but kids were like: *'Whatever — let's do this!'* That is also how I felt about it, so we launched into things, making a joke about how it was incredibly challenging for me to play things in tempo because of all the latency. I resolved to get close during the workshop and nudge things properly after the call, and that's what I did. The screen would turn fully black, purple or white every once in a while due to some bug that we all found very amusing — the kids laughed every time it happened — but the program actually never crashed.

So the combined Zoom and Logic system struggled. The kids didn't care. They just cared about the lyrics and melodies and parts we wrote. I asked them what subject they wanted it to be about. One kid said wind, another said a fish, another said sneezing, another said keys. I used a trick I love to use with kids: *"Great — that's our subject."*

They said: *"Which one?"*

And I said: “*All of ‘em.*” Everyone laughed and thought this was a smashing idea, which incidentally it is because it isn’t (I was a kid once, and really still am). So we wrote a song about a sneezing fish who has no pockets for his keys and hitched a ride on a leaf in the wind to get away from the housecat who was trying to eat him. Because of course we did.

45 minutes after we started, it was done. The song is called *Achoo!* Later, in an hour offline, I quit Zoom and returned Logic’s driver to 256 to eliminate the clicks and pops, nudged and edited the parts that totally sucked due to latency, spent not enough minutes to perfect it but enough to make it sound good and still raw (maybe 25), and mixed it down. I posted *Achoo!* hours after we recorded it, and sent the link. The kids and teachers went nuts.



This, in a nutshell, says so much about what you must be willing to do to engage kids in the recording arts. *Perfection is not the goal.* Creative, chaotic, messy, adventurous fun is the goal. Period.

An interesting note about this workshop — and the other Zoom workshop — is that the kids were noticeably more attentive to the *mix* than they are at live events. Kids actually commented on the mix and made requests — the levels of instruments, the effects — whereas they almost never do that live. I attribute this to kids being on headphones and really individually locked in. Obviously there are things that make Zoom workshops worse, like the fact that I have to sing all the vocals and the kids can't. But one unexpected improvement of the Zoom workshops is that some of the kids were actually more attentive to details like the mix.

*Case Study: Acres Green Elementary School 4th Grade Classes, CO*

I really don't have a lot to say about this workshop, which was held just a few days ago, except the following:

1. The school had trouble with Google Meet, and then Zoom, and it took us 25 minutes to fix, which left us with 35 minutes to write and record a whole song.
2. I wore this:



3. The kids said they wanted to write a James Brown song with electronica drums about a chicken, and they insisted I try to sing like James Brown. (They really said that.)
4. You should really listen to *Chicken! (Don't Cross The Road)*, completed in 35 minutes, if you know what's good for you.
5. I swear I'm not making this up: I was contacted by a national radio DJ yesterday who told me he's gonna play the song on his show.

### **Observations & Recommendations**

Training the teacher to work freely and non-judgmentally with kids is the primary takeaway I got from the workshop feedback. They mostly cited my ability to do this as the reason for the success. Obviously this is not something one learns overnight — I've been developing that trait and skill since 1998 when I first started teaching high school, and for the last fifteen years as Doctor Noize. But I do feel it's a mindset you can train. And part of that mindset is mastering your gear so you can focus on the kids instead of your key commands.

The second most important thing I've learned, over and over again, is to cast aside all the inclinations and training toward perfectionism those of us trained in the recording arts have built up, and *treat the recording session with kids like a live show*. What does that mean? For starters, it means the energy and purpose are far more important than the details. Sure, we get this is important in adult productions, but we still make sure to polish the final product. I don't do that with the kids. Kids don't want to spend ten minutes, or even ten seconds, adjusting the EQ to make the guitar sound perfect. So let it go. They want to get on to the next part, the next lyric, the next section of the song, or the next song.

45-90 minutes sounds like a ridiculously short time to audition sounds, write lyrics, melodies and chords, record vocals, and be done with an entire song — but you must embrace that ridiculousness and make that race the most enjoyable part of it. I do the same thing for the post-workshop process — I basically set myself a time limit of 30-90 minutes, and that's ALL I'm going to spend mixing, editing (sometimes there's a bit of editing to put the song together, like when you have to create a third Verse out of previous elements), and mastering the song. By “mastering,” I really just mean bouncing it down. I don't spend time actually mastering the songs. The audience/songwriters are *far* more interested in hearing the song online *that night* than they are in hearing a version of it that's 20% better sonically. I mix the songs with this mentality too — the mentality of a live show. If the song brings the energy and joy and purpose and humor or seriousness of what the kids were trying to convey, it's done and it's a success. I don't polish them up too much. I let them grin, warts and all, and move on to the next song.

This is a real lesson kids can teach us — to not forget the raw fun of just making a recording out of nothing. I don't know why I was so surprised that the Zoom Workshops worked. If I had read my own Thesis Portfolio that I hadn't written yet, it would have told me why they worked: *It's not about the technology. It's not about virtuosity. It's about building a fearless group harnessing controlled cooperating chaos into wild, free creative energy* — and then working that into a secret little structure while everyone's basking in what we just did. If you can agree to write a James Brown song about Chickens in person, you can agree to write a James Brown song about Chickens over Zoom. *Yow! I feeel goooood!!!!*



## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY

So.... More of us in children's music should be partnering with teachers for educational *depth* and *diversity*, and the moment is right culturally for everyone in the industry to jump into that. And I've learned I can help even more than I am. Testing my own asynch and live educational offerings that deepen the learning in my Doctor Noize recordings found that, basically, I'm mediocre at what many teachers are good at — curricula — and great at what most people don't even try: composing and recording workshops. Interesting. So I'm a weirdo.

### What I Can Do

Yes, I know that Chapter 2 demonstrated I'm more advanced at curricula than most children's artists, for the simple reason that I actually have curricula and most of the others don't. But my curricula fell short of great, despite the fact that I'm an experienced and successful teacher. The head scratcher and ego buster for me at first was why my curricula were only average. Don't get me wrong, the kids liked them. But it was nothing like the ecstatic wonder on their faces in the workshops. Remember, the recordings the kids are listening to for the curricula *sound* much better than the workshop recordings, but kids still loved the workshop recording process as much or more. Imperfection rules. Again: passion and in-the-moment engagement over supreme quality control are good guidelines for inspiring entry activities for kids in the arts.

And therein lies the answer: the quality is there in the curricula, and even in some of the curricula's fun and jokes, but the pacing is off, and the immediacy of empathy is not there. I need to revisit the asynchronous Learning Adventures and Active Listening Adventures as

described, and I need to do it with kids to watch and *test* it again and again with empathetic eyes until I get the formula just right.

Currently, in the curricula, the kids float in an unclearly-defined area: “*Am I listening to an album or taking a fun quiz?*” The quiz is too easy, and the questions too infrequent, for it to be a fun challenge; but you’re stuck there staring at a piece of paper anyway.

Why I didn’t catch this before this Thesis Portfolio, since I fancy myself a fine teacher and everyone’s mostly said so, was puzzling initially. But the answer’s simple, stupid: I’m hardly ever there to watch and assess how students are responding to my Doctor Noize curricula. I just slapped it up there and called it done. I don’t know how I forgot what I know about every great teacher: Our kids don’t learn because we’re such geniuses that we figure out exactly how and what to do to reach kids. Our kids learn because great teachers are always observational and empathetic, and make micro or macro changes on a dime, on the fly, to tailor the lesson just right in the moment and get kids through. That’s what we do.

And therein also lies why my workshops are so much more awesome, more finely tuned, and more developed than the curricula. In the workshops, I’m in the trenches, for every second, for every one, empathetically observing and assessing what’s working, what’s not, when they need to be pushed, when they need to be given a dance break, how it’s all going, where it might go with the proper nudge or push. It’s not because I’m clairvoyant and know what they want.

It’s because I’m empathetic and responsive but fun, and I care about giving them what they need from me in the moment. I’m quite certain I’ve made most of the workshop fixes that become permanent practice *within* workshops, without consciously knowing or documenting it — it’s in real time, on the fly, for the project to survive. And then I do it on the next one too before that

particular problem can arise. Like a seasoned performer before an audience; like a seasoned teacher giving their curricula for the twenty-fifth time, always slightly tweaked, always slightly better.

So I'm going to chisel the curricula over time, just as I've honed the workshops. This sure has been fun and educational. For the kids, sometimes; for me, always.



### **What You Can Do**

I realize this Thesis Portfolio has given an expansive amount of research, examples and suggestions that could seem too overwhelming to start. I also realize I've spent fifteen years producing educational entertainment for kids as Doctor Noize, over twenty years of teaching some version of everything I've written about (from pre-K to college students), and even longer than that just playing and studying music. And I know I've offered a few challenges and critiques of the last twenty years that might be a little uncomfortable to some. My Thesis Committee suggested I give artists and educators a roadmap for how *you* can start teaching kids

recording arts. I wrote a big long to-do list of things, but then I deleted it and simplified it to just four steps. It's imperative, in such a creative project, that you fill in the details on your own.

My first suggestion is to do what the kids and I do in the workshops: embrace the uncomfortable. Life is not about your comfort. Or mine. Or kids'. So, first... get outside that comfort zone, starting with introspection and self-study of your work as a children's musician, programmer or teacher. You'll probably find — as I have in this Thesis Portfolio — that there are some things you're even better at comparatively than you thought you were, and some things you're definitely worse at than you thought you were. And, like a kid in a workshop that's run right: that's okay. So that's Number One.

Number Two is this: Make a list of your educational goals as an artist or teacher, followed by a catalog of your collective musical, creative and teaching assets and abilities, and form a plan to educate kids with your gifts from that. You may have noted in this document that I diagrammed my educational goals and thematic plans as Doctor Noize before I even produced my first product, a habit of the old teacher in me. I do so with every production, curricula or workshop as well. Your goals should reflect things that you can actually accomplish in your current skill set, so they may be different than mine — you could start with Tom Burkett's amendment of my recording workshops to just aspects of songwriting, for example. But you can also plan to master a recording DAW over the next year and then start incorporating that into your workshops too, and plan to become a competent guitarist in addition to piano the year after that to diversify the instruments in your workshops or shows. (That last step is literally one of the planned steps I took in the early years of Doctor Noize.)

Number Three is to just start doing it, before you're perfectly ready, realizing it's an ever-evolving project — just like my Mobile Music Production Rig — and kids aren't going to demand perfection from you at all. You may also have noticed in this document that, even though I diagrammed my 6-album story arc and my curricula and my workshops and my shows, I am fully willing to alter the plan when a better opportunity or idea based on feedback comes along, and I do so all the time. But there's always a plan. As with my technical knowledge of my gear and song structure under the workshops, or a jazz pianist's knowledge of scales under her incredible solos, secretly structured creativity is generally far more proactive and impactful than pure creativity without a plan.



And Number Four is to constantly assess — honestly, seeking feedback from others — how you're doing. I found I was doing great assessment in some areas, and almost no assessment in others, and I was in total denial as to what I was actually assessing and what I

wasn't. A lot of that is because, like most of us, I fancy myself too booked and too busy to ever take a breath and take stock in what I'm doing. This was the greatest gift bestowed by the pandemic — for example, I never would have interviewed all those former workshop collaborators if the pandemic hadn't hit — the gift of down time and reflection. As books from business and life gurus from Stephen Covey on tell you: Don't forget to devote time to the important but non-urgent. Even if you're a creative musician or teacher. You'll never regret self-reflection and honest self-critique after the initial sting of the challenge wears off and all that remains is the clarity it provides.

Do those Four Steps, and you'll do great, getting better all the time, making the world a better place, and fueling and fusing your artistic and teaching soul. Success in this is not a destination. It's just a road. Don't take too long to get on the road. Just get on the road.

### **Hand The Maestro The Baton**

I'm available as a practitioner to come in and do shows, curricula and workshops with and for you and your school or organization. I deeply love doing it, and I learn something every time I do. But I'm also available to speak, consult and teach you how to do it yourself, so that (gasp!) you won't need me around anymore at all. That makes me uncomfortable. And that's okay, because: it's precisely the goal we all share as educators. If we do our job right, we make ourselves irrelevant to those in our stewardship. And once our students are on their feet with proactive creative projects of their own, as artists we can still go out and inspire and collaborate with them — and even learn back and forth from them, as Tom Burkett and I did, as every teacher in this Thesis and I did, and as many of the artists I've had the pleasure of working with and I have done.



I close this Thesis Portfolio with the words of Devin Patrick Hughes, Boulder Symphony and Arapahoe Philharmonic Conductor. He's the last man I worked with to bring an exceptional live, in-person learning experience to kids before the pandemic hit. It was a Doctor Noize Symphony Show in the Denver metro, and it was joyous. I asked Devin — just today — what he felt our goal was at that last show we performed for kids:

*“Engage them emotionally. Even if they’re just an active observer. It’s not about teaching them this is the violin versus the viola, it’s more about what kind of emotional connection did I have? It’s really an investigation into what allows kids to imprint a memory — it will influence the whole person, it will influence empathy, as they see and experience that group effort democratization of human endeavor.”*

We make the world we live in.



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## **APPENDIX A**

### **ASYNCHRONOUS CURRICULA CREATED**

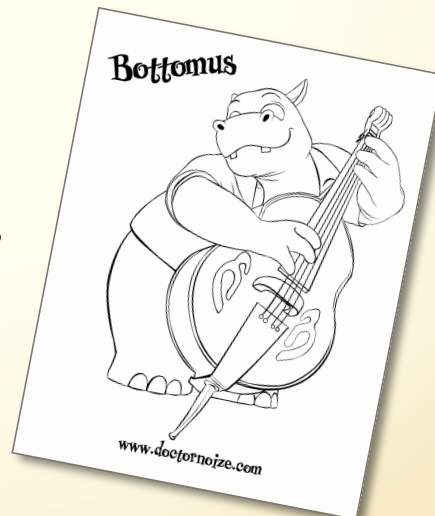
The following pages include the asynchronous curricula created. The excellent suggestions from the study groups in my research will be implemented, and a new set of album Active Listening Quizzes and Learning Adventures (curricula) will appear on the Doctor Noize website in the future. I may well write up an additional Appendix with the updated asynch materials at that point, to give examples of enhancements for people reading this Thesis Portfolio documentation with goals of creating their own educational programs. Or, I may finally get some sleep instead.

# The Ballad Of Phineas McBoof Album

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



- \*1. Where does the band welcome you to?
  - A. Madagascar
  - B. The Moon
  - C. The Isle of Thelonious
  - D. The Non-Island of Germany
2. What did Phineas McBoof start?
  - A. A country
  - B. A cheap hotel
  - C. A Band
  - D. A school
3. What animal is in "The Ballad of Phineas McBoof?"
  - A. Monkey
  - B. 50-foot tall unicorn
  - C. Snake
  - D. Zebra
4. What instrument do you hear in "Don't Monkey with my Heart?"
  - A. Kazoo
  - B. Bagpipes
  - C. Guitar
  - D. Accordion
5. What did Phineas do in "Farewell to Thelonious?"
  - A. Ate a banana
  - B. Hopped in his rowboat
  - C. Disco danced in groovy rainbow pants
  - D. Went skydiving
6. Which instrument does Backbone the Octopus play?
  - A. Drums
  - B. Guitar
  - C. Saxophone
  - D. Keyboard
7. What does Bottomus like to sing about?
  - A. World peace
  - B. Doctor Noize
  - C. The ocean
  - D. Love



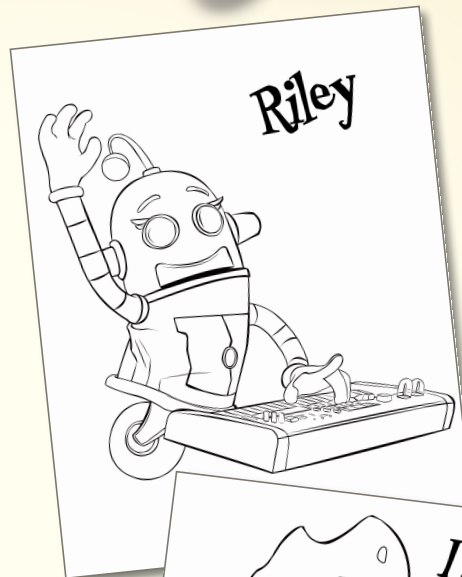
[www.doctornoize.com](http://www.doctornoize.com)

## The Ballad Of Phineas McBoof Album

### Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



8. The song "Banana" is...
  - A. Boring
  - B. BANANAS!!
  - C. Slow
  - D. All voices, no instruments
9. What is Riley?
  - A. Human
  - B. An octopus
  - C. A robot
  - D. A lizard with really bad teeth
10. What does Phineas need?
  - A. Time
  - B. A girlfriend
  - C. A kazoo
  - D. A new car
11. Where does the band go?
  - A. Swimming
  - B. The symphony
  - C. Back to Thelonious
  - D. To OUTER SPACE!!!
12. Lenny likes to...
  - A. Yodel
  - B. Play drums
  - C. Control the weather
  - D. Chase squirrels
13. Who are the Ooh Gah Boo Gus?
  - A. Phineas McBoof haters
  - B. Horn-playing monsters
  - C. Birds
  - D. Lizards
14. What do you hear in "The Monster Dance?"
  - A. Clarinet
  - B. A cello in jello
  - C. Kazoo
  - D. Horns



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# The Ballad Of Phineas McBoof Album

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



15. Draw what you think will happen in the next album:



Write about your drawing...

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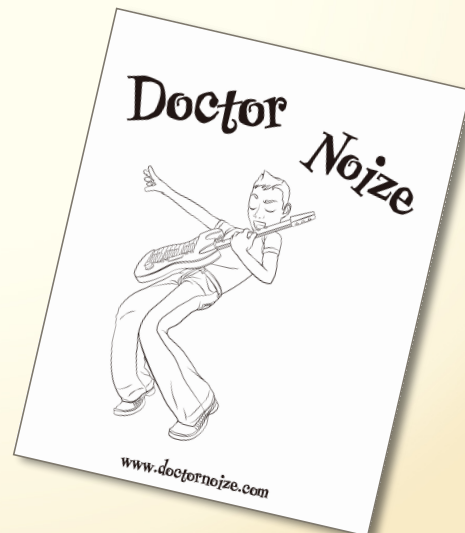
# The Return Of Phineas McBoof Album

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures

\*One question per track



- \*1. What did Backbone and Doctor Noize do during intermission?
  - A. Eat
  - B. Play tag until they ran into a nose-picking rhino
  - C. Go to Mars
  - D. Write a song
2. Are you awesome?
  - A. No
  - B. Eh
  - C. Maybe
  - D. YES!!
3. Who farts in "Backstage pass?"
  - A. Gus
  - B. Lenny
  - C. Riley
  - D. The zebra
4. What does Doctor Noize play in "On With the Show?"
  - A. Kazoo
  - B. Cymbals
  - C. Banjo
  - D. Accordion
5. Where does the band find Doctor Noize?
  - A. In The Valley Of Vanilla Voovoo Bugs
  - B. Playing a show
  - C. Saving the world
  - D. Gardening
6. Who solos in "The Funky Monkey?"
  - A. Bottomus
  - B. Boo
  - C. Ooh
  - D. Lenny
7. Does Doctor Noize like chocolate covered cockroaches?
  - A. No, and it's really not a funny joke
  - B. Yes
  - C. Only on special occasions
  - D. He thinks they're okay



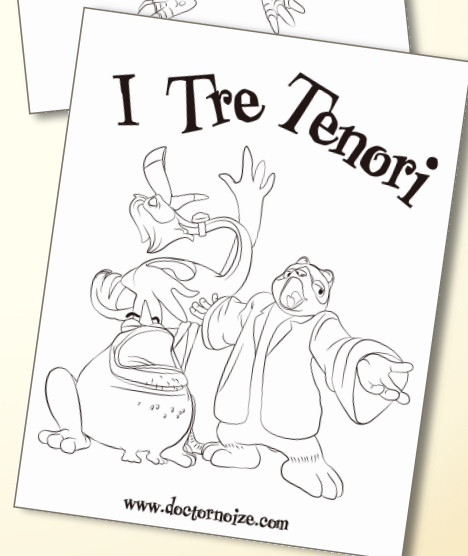
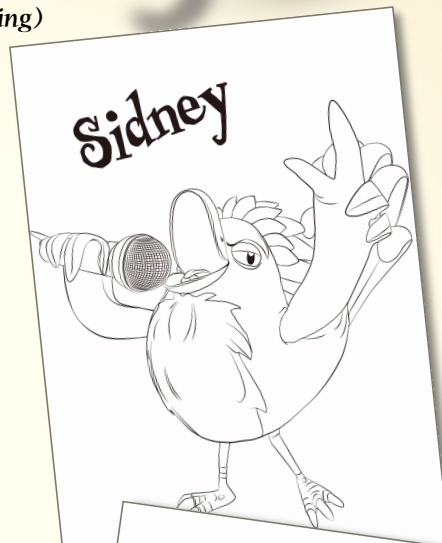
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## The Return Of Phineas McBoof Album

### Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



8. What is Sidney the Beak really good at?
  - A. Singing in 57 different languages at the same time
  - B. Playing guitar
  - C. She can rhyme her some fat words (rapping)
  - D. Moonwalking
9. What is the bass in "Better Eat It Quick?"
  - A. The ham
  - B. The bread
  - C. Mayo
  - D. A toothpick
10. Which character is an opera singer?
  - A. Luciano Frogerati
  - B. Placido Flamingo
  - C. José the Ferret
  - D. All of the above
11. What do the opera singers sing with in  
"Banana, Che Chosa Mi...?"
  - A. The orchestra
  - B. Other animals
  - C. A Choir of Gargling Geckos
  - D. Assorted fruits
12. What does the band want to do?
  - A. Rule the world
  - B. Become opera singers
  - C. Write The World's Greatest Song
  - D. Play underwater music
13. Did anyone hear The World's Greatest Song?
  - A. No, the crowd cheered too loud
  - B. EVERYONE heard it!
  - C. Only your mama did
  - D. There is no World's Greatest song
14. What do you hear in "Go Where You Wanna Be?"
  - A. Clarinet
  - B. Cello
  - C. Nothing — the song is 14 minutes of complete silence
  - D. Guitar



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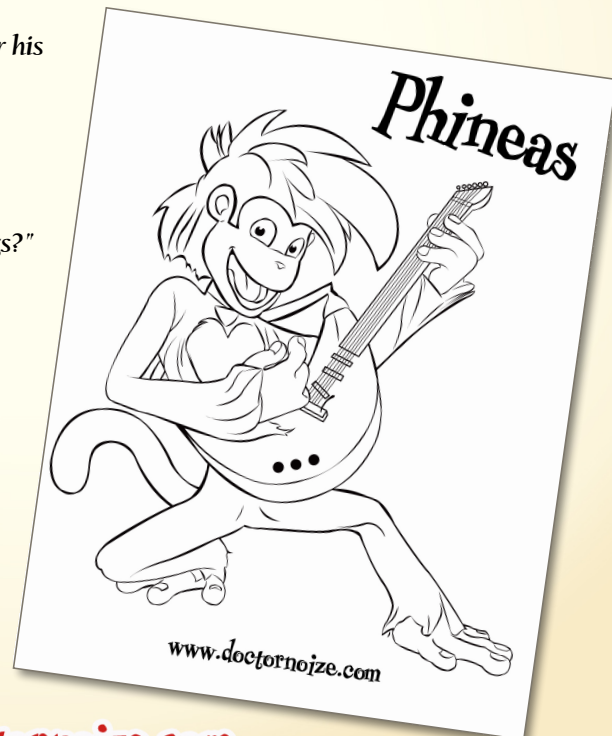
## The Return Of Phineas McBoof Album

### Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



Color your  
own monkey!

15. What instruments is heard in "Carry On?"
  - A. Harmonica
  - B. Drums
  - C. Guitar
  - D. Guitar AND Harmonica
16. What does Doctor Noize do after Phineas leaves?
  - A. Cries uncontrollably
  - B. Goes swimming in his own tears
  - C. Gets The Band together to write a song
  - D. Goes to find Phineas
17. Who does Sidney invite to sing in "Couldn't Love You Any More?"
  - A. Phineas
  - B. KIDS like you
  - C. Every single character in the greatest movie you've never seen
  - D. Strangely singing bananas
18. What song does Doctor Noize write for his daughters?
  - A. The World's Greatest Song
  - B. Banana
  - C. So Many Things
  - D. Are You Awesome?
19. What instrument is in "So Many Things?"
  - A. Guitar
  - B. Drums
  - C. Upside-Down Horns
  - D. Violin



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The Return Of Phineas McBoof Album

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



*Make your own Misunderstood Genius*

*Invite your own new member into The Band... draw what he or she looks like!*



*Name:*

*Type of Animal:*

*Instrument Played:*

*Special Talents:*

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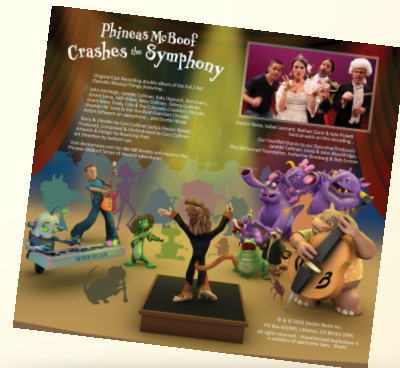
# Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony (Act 1)

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



\*One question  
per track

- \*1. What is Backbone?
  - A. The World's Only Eight-Armed Drummer
  - B. A violinist
  - C. A food critic who's allergic to EVERYTHING
  - D. A rapper
2. What instruments do you hear first in "Mystery Monkey?"
  - A. Drums
  - B. Guitars
  - C. Strings
  - D. Oboes With Serious Attitude
3. What was the rumor about Phineas?
  - A. He started a new band
  - B. He sailed away and founded an orchestra!
  - C. He retired on a beach
  - D. He took a train to the Lost City Of Atlantis
4. Who is the conductor??
  - A. Doctor Noize
  - B. A woman named Bubba
  - C. An unknown man probably not named Bubba
  - D. Phineas
5. Who harmonizes in "Harmony Shines?"
  - A. Doctor Noize and Phineas
  - B. Backbone and Phineas
  - C. Lenny and Riley
  - D. Three Tenors and a tone-deaf fish
6. What did the orchestra build themselves?
  - A. Their instruments
  - B. A ship
  - C. A sopping wet paper airplane
  - D. Homes
7. Who interrupts the band in "I've Found You!"
  - A. Bottomus
  - B. Aliens who accidentally visited the wrong house
  - C. Phineas
  - D. Mama and Mama's Boy



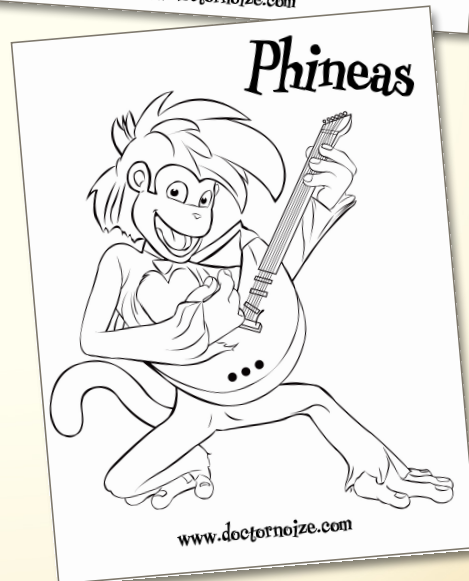
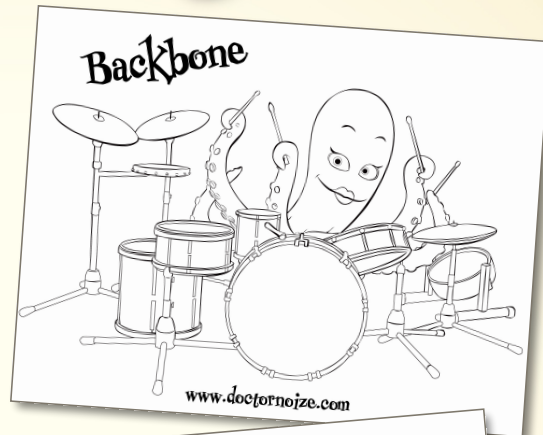
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Phineas McBoof  
Crashes the Symphony (Act 1)

Doctor Noize  
Learning Adventures



8. What song did Mama's kids write?
  - A. Mama's Lament
  - B. The Bunny Hop
  - C. The Banana Bop
  - D. Bunnies Just Want to Have Fun
9. What did Phineas promise?
  - A. To bring the symphony to kids
  - B. To return to Thelonious
  - C. To stop playing music backwards
  - D. To rule the world with a talking magic carrot named Frank
10. What will the opera singers do?
  - A. Start exercising after they finish their donuts
  - B. Write new songs
  - C. Make parents cry
  - D. Conduct orchestras
11. What's happening to Riley The Robot?
  - A. She's running out of power
  - B. She's eating too many broccoli Slurpees
  - C. She doesn't like the symphony
  - D. Mama's Boy scares her
12. What instruments are in "Some Day Soon?"
  - A. Strings
  - B. Horns
  - C. Percussion
  - D. All of the above
13. Who sings "It's Hard to Explain?"
  - A. Phineas and Doctor Noize
  - B. Backbone and Phineas
  - C. Mama and Mama's Boy
  - D. Those old people your parents listen to
14. What does Mama say Phineas' weakness is?
  - A. Mama's Boy
  - B. His fear of snuggly puppies
  - C. His mid-range jump shot
  - D. Backbone



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Phineas McBoof  
Crashes the Symphony (Act 1)

Doctor Noize  
Learning Adventures



15. Does Mama's magic work?
  - A. Only on fairies named TinkerSmell
  - B. No
  - C. Yes -- uh oh!
  - D. Eh
16. What theme song does the band pick?
  - A. Banana
  - B. Welcome To The Band
  - C. The World's Greatest Song
  - D. Old McDonald Had A Rental Unit
17. When was the Early Music period?
  - A. Hundreds and thousands of years ago
  - B. Yesterday
  - C. Tomorrow
  - D. The 1900's
18. Who is an example of a Baroque composer?
  - A. Bach
  - B. Your brother Larry
  - C. Phineas
  - D. Mozart
19. What was a focal instrument in the Classical era and "Classical Music?"
  - A. Saxophone
  - B. Piano
  - C. Electric guitar
  - D. All of the above
20. What is a characteristic of Romantic period music?
  - A. Light and fluffy
  - B. Sad
  - C. Very traditional
  - D. DRAMA
21. The Contemporary music heard here is...
  - A. Experimental
  - B. Traditional
  - C. Boring
  - D. Never-ending



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Phineas McBoof  
Crashes the Symphony (Act 1)

Doctor Noize  
Learning Adventures



22. What character sang a different version of Mama's "Stand Strong?"  
A. Bottomus  
B. Phineas  
C. Lenny  
D. Backbone
23. What do Placido and Mama have in common?  
A. They hate Phineas  
B. They're both parents  
C. They like to surf on waves of jello  
D. They are both birds
24. Are Placido and Mama flirting??  
A. No, they're lecturing each other  
B. Yes, duh  
C. Not really  
D. Maybe, just maybe, it's A AND B
25. What instrument does the show start with in "This Could Be a Disaster?"  
A. Strings  
B. Guitar  
C. Drums  
D. Your grandfather's old electric bass
26. Can you write down the order of popular song structure??  
(Hint — there are 7 parts!)



Word Bank: Verse, Verse, Verse, Bridge, Chorus, Chorus, Chorus

Put them in the correct order here:

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Phineas McBoof  
Crashes the Symphony (Act 1)

Doctor Noize  
Learning Adventures



Now, let's put it all together with a  
**GENIUS QUESTION!!!**

Draw a line between each music history period and its composers and characteristics.

Early Music Period  
(Older than Grandma - 1600)

Baroque Period  
(1600-1750)

Classical Period  
(1750-1825)

Romantic Period  
(1825-1925)

Contemporary Period  
(1925-NOW!)

Stravinsky, Higdon — From straightforward pop songs to art music with experimental harmonies & rhythms

Lady Hildegard of Bingen, Anonymous — Vocal music, solo melodies first and harmonies later



Bach, Vivaldi — Explosion of bigger, more rhythmically energized music, more instruments

Wagner, Puccini — Big drama like opera, adventurous structures & harmonies

Mozart, Beethoven — Elegance & grace, refined and balanced order in structures like Sonata Form



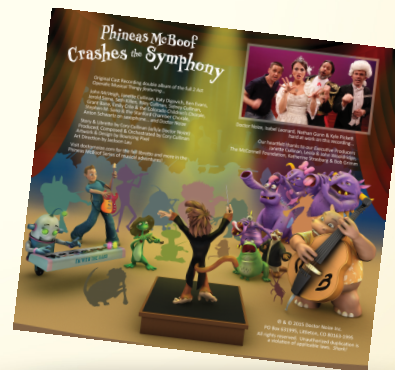
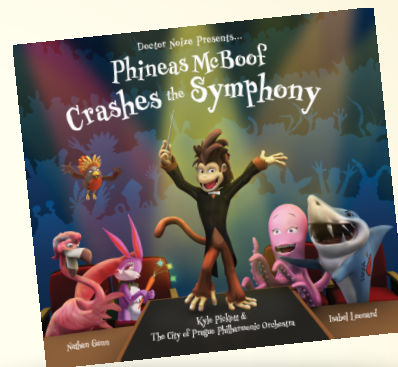
# Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



\*One question  
per track

- \*1. Does Phineas apologize?
  - A. Nope
  - B. Yes
  - C. I wish
  - D. No way José
2. Why do composers repeat sections of music?
  - A. They're lazy
  - B. They ran out of time to write new stuff
  - C. People like hearing things they know
  - D. Why do composers repeat sections of quizzes?
3. What formula does this Beethoven's 5th Symphony movement follow?
  - A. Classical Sonata Form
  - B. Popular Song Structure
  - C. Romantic Blomantic Structure
  - D. Burping Structure
4. How does rehearsal go in "Practice Makes Imperfect?"
  - A. It sounds like angels humming "Three Blind Mice"
  - B. We have rehearsal?? Oh no! I forgot!
  - C. It goes perfectly
  - D. Not well!
5. The first half of "Movin' On" is all what instrument?
  - A. Guitar
  - B. Drums
  - C. Voice (called "a capella")
  - D. Strings
6. What does Placido decide?
  - A. To sing pop music from now on
  - B. To go home to his family
  - C. To write more music
  - D. To become a beautiful mermaid
7. Why does Placido say the world was made at the end of "Long, Long, Ago?"
  - A. For him
  - B. For Phineas
  - C. For his child
  - D. For his parents



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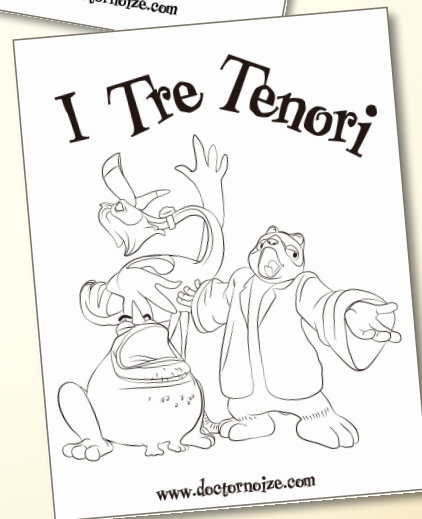


Phineas McBoof  
Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)

Doctor Noize  
Learning Adventures



8. Are the Tenors jealous of Placido's song?
  - A. Why do you ask?
  - B. No -- well, a little bit
  - C. Is that a squirrel???
  - D. It was a horrible song anyway
9. What does Lenny build for Riley?
  - A. A solar panel
  - B. A new piano
  - C. Bottomus' bass
  - D. A cowboy hat made of waffles
10. What happens in the middle of "Shine!"
  - A. A singing carrot barges in
  - B. The band starts snoring
  - C. Doctor Noize drops his kazoo
  - D. Riley faints
11. What instrument does Phineas conduct first in "Concert Night?"
  - A. Strings
  - B. Kazoo
  - C. Piano
  - D. Woodwinds
12. Who is José in love with?
  - A. Doctor Noize
  - B. Mac and Cheese
  - C. His amphibious gal
  - D. Himself
13. What do we learn about Mama's Boy in "I Could Be Someone?"
  - A. He grows magic carrots
  - B. He can sing!
  - C. He's actually a goldfish who works out a lot
  - D. He really is tone-deaf
14. Does Mama find out Mama's Boy can sing?
  - A. Yes, and she's confused
  - B. I can't tell you because I'm in the bathroom
  - C. Mama's Boy can sing?
  - D. No



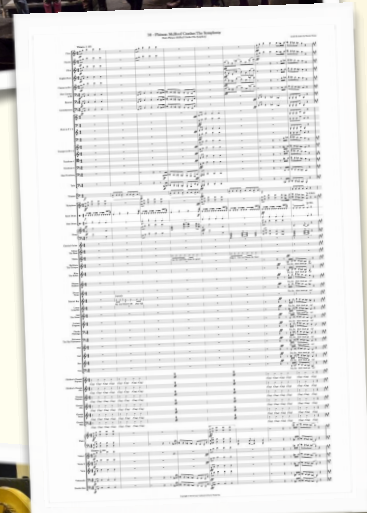
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# Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



15. Who does music bring together in "Music Can Bring Us All Together (Or Apart)?"
  - A. Placido and Mama
  - B. José and Luciano
  - C. Placido and Luciano
  - D. Everybody
16. What did Phineas write "The Island Overture" about?
  - A. Bananas
  - B. The Band
  - C. The island
  - D. Backbone
17. What music do the kids in "Take Me To The Symphony" want to listen to?
  - A. Simple pop music
  - B. A 20-hour lecture on laundry cleaning
  - C. Sophisticated orchestral music
  - D. Grumpy grandpas
18. Who responds to the trumpet in "This One Moment?"
  - A. The crowd
  - B. Phineas
  - C. The strings
  - D. Riley on piano
19. Who does Mama cast a spell on first??
  - A. Gus the monster trombonist
  - B. Doctor Noize
  - C. The harpist
  - D. All of the above
20. What does Mama keep changing in "Phineas McBoof Crashes the Symphony?"
  - A. The weather
  - B. The beats per measure
  - C. The instruments playing
  - D. The conductor
21. What happens to Backbone?
  - A. She falls from her instrument
  - B. She runs away
  - C. She eats the magic carrot
  - D. She conducts the orchestra



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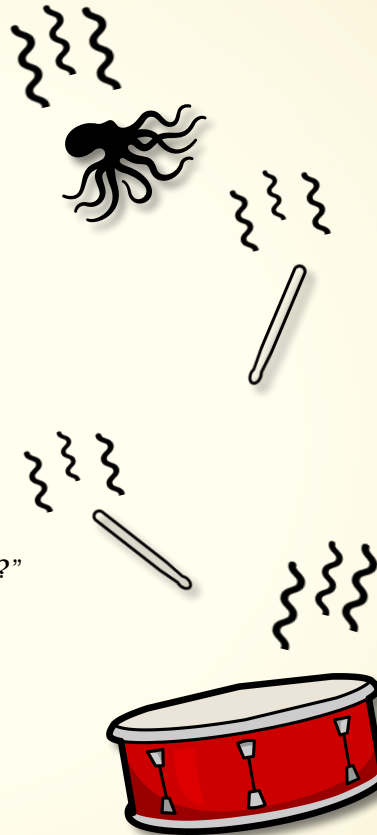


Phineas McBoof  
Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)

Doctor Noize  
Learning Adventures



22. What does Phineas realize in "Earn You?"  
A. He wants to go to Thelonious  
B. Mama's Boy can sing  
C. He should treat his friends as people first, not instruments  
D. Placido needs to go home
23. What happens in "Together?"  
A. Everyone joins together  
B. Mama's Boy vows to use his real voice  
C. Lenny vows to find creative answers  
D. All of the above
24. Who caught who?  
A. Phineas caught Backbone  
B. Backbone caught Phineas  
C. Mama caught Backbone  
D. Placido caught Mama
25. How did Mama win?  
A. She destroyed the show  
B. She sees her kids  
C. She ruins the concert hall  
D. She gets a solo song
26. What instruments do you hear in "The Bunny Hop?"  
A. Strings  
B. Horns  
C. Woodwinds & percussion  
D. All of the above
27. Who is invited to the backstage party?  
A. The President of the Pimperdoodles  
B. Mama's Boy and Mama  
C. The monkeys from Thelonious  
D. The crowd
28. What does Mama suggest Mama's Boy do in "Home?"  
A. Meet Placido's kids  
B. Eat a magic carrot  
C. Live his dream to join the Band and sing!  
D. Go to the Land Of The Bunnies



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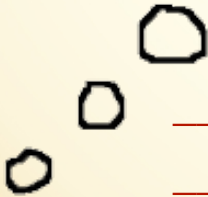
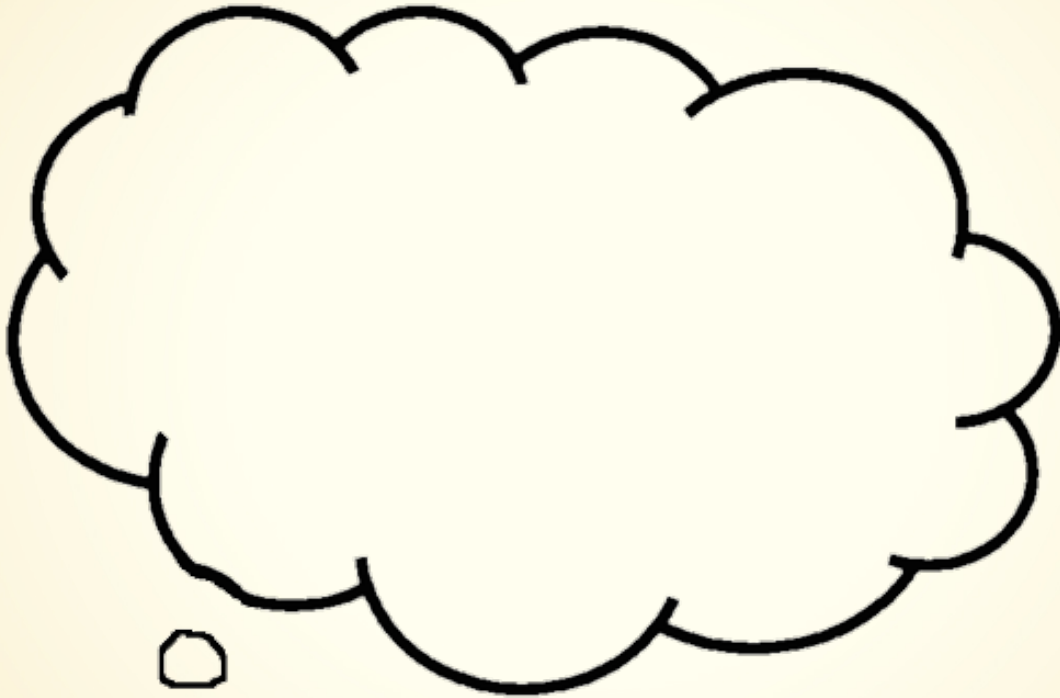
Phineas McBoof  
Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)

Doctor Noize  
Learning Adventures



Phineas McBoof and his friends found their voices...  
what will YOU do to find yours?

*Draw and write about something YOU like to do, and show  
yourself sharing it with the world!*



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[www.doctornoize.com](http://www.doctornoize.com)

Phineas McBoof  
Crashes the Symphony (Act 2)

Doctor Noize  
Learning Adventures

Now, let's put it all together with a  
GENIUS QUESTION!!!



Draw a line between each instrument family and its list of instruments.

Woodwind Section

Flute, clarinet, oboe,  
saxophone, bassoon

String Section

Piano, organ, voice,  
conductor, fart

Brass Section

Timpani, snare drum,  
bass drum, cymbals,  
drum kit

Percussion Section

Trumpet, French horn,  
trombone, tuba

Others

Violin, viola, cello, double  
bass, harp, guitar

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# Homemade

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures

\*One question  
per track



1. What is one thing we can do while staying at home?  
Make soggy pancakes  
Watch cartoons until midnight  
Love one another  
Eat soggy pancakes
2. Who is home with Doctor Noize?  
A spaceman  
Sydney, Riley, & Mom  
The world's greatest opera singer  
Mom & Hank
3. What instrument has a solo in "More Than Love"?  
Drums  
Violin  
Saxophone  
Alphorn
4. Who should you call for some bass?  
Doctor Noize  
The New York Philharmonic  
The kid with a mohawk  
Bottomus
5. What sound comes in first in "Gotta Teach Others To Enjoy Life"?  
Snapping  
Whispering  
Pipe Organ  
Trumpet
6. What kind of song did Mama write?  
A song for Halloween  
A symphony  
A song for Easter  
An avant-garde sonata for pots and pans

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# Homemade

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures

\*One question  
per track



12. Who is being encouraged to sing straight from the heart?

Doctor Noize  
The next-door neighbor  
Mama  
A soccer player

13. When do we make the world we live in?

It's impossible and frankly makes no sense  
Sometimes  
On the weekend  
Every day

14. Who is going bananas while stuck at home?

Sidney  
Nathan Gunn  
Mama  
All of the above

15. What do bananas do when thrown?

Go smushy  
Go mushy  
Go bananas  
Go smushy AND mushy  
16. What does The Doc encourage the band to do to Banana?  
Sing it in opera-star voice  
Make a music video to it  
Shake it up!  
Never sing it again

17. What instrument solos while Sidney the Beak is rapping?

Saxophone  
Piano  
Violin  
Tamborine

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# Homemade

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures

\*One question  
per track



18. What is Backbone's banana all about?

- Lenny Longtail
- Dancing unicorns
- The guitar
- Rhythm

19. How many beats per measure does Backbone switch to?

- 2
- 9
- 4
- 5

20. What are the opera guys always up for?

- Talking to Doctor Noize
- Talking about themselves
- Listening to pop music
- Chasing waterfalls

21. What does Bottomus say you can't say enough?

- Eat red meat
- I love Bottomus
- Banana
- Phineas is crazy!

22. What does Riley the Robot love doing?

- Studying different musical genres
- Playing the piano
- Listening to Lenny play the fiddle
- Writing lyrics to songs

23. What language does Backbone speak in Banana Parfait?

- English
- French
- Spanish
- German

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# Homemade

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures

\*One question  
per track



24. How does Lenny say his song kicks off?

With Phineas singing  
With a hoedown showdown  
With some piano  
With Bottomus on bass

25. In this song, the band says grab a partner and what?

Do-si-do  
Eat chocolate  
Sing a song  
Go scuba-diving

26. Where are the Ooh-Gah-Boo-Gus going to take us?

The rainforest  
To a fancy dinner  
To the city of cats  
To their monstrous lounge

27. Who sings on this song?

Mama  
Lenny  
Backbone  
The Doc

28. The Band can't wait to...

Make another album  
Go on vacation  
See what you do!  
Kick Bottomus out of the band

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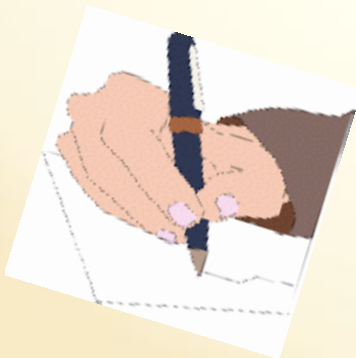
*After listening...*

*Here's your Stay at Home Challenge!*



*Create your own version of banana, draw a picture of the band or your family at home, make a music video to a Doctor Noize song, anything your creative genius thinks of! Post it on Instagram or Facebook and use #DoctorNoize for a chance to win a free book or CD! We can't wait to see*

*what you do!*

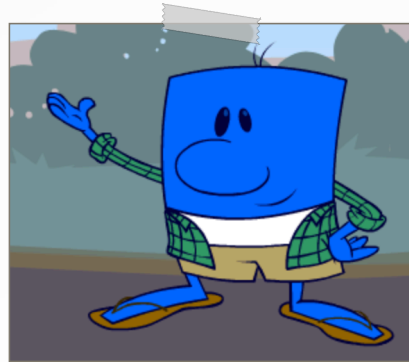
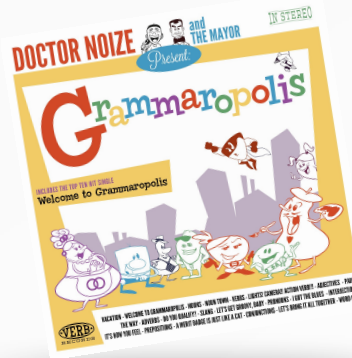


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# Grammaropolis Learning Adventures

1. Where did Doctor Noize go on summer vacation?
  - A. Thelonious
  - B. Fresno
  - C. Grammaropolis
  - D. The Symphony
2. Is it Grandma-opolis or Grammar-opolis?
  - A. Grandmaopolis
  - B. Grammaropolis
  - C. Octopoopopolis
  - D. Grandpamanapopolis
3. Is happy a noun?
  - A. No, it's an adjective
  - B. No, it's an adverb
  - C. No, it's a verbopolis
  - D. Yes, it's a noun
4. What are nouns?
  - A. Person
  - B. Place
  - C. Thing
  - D. All of the above!
5. What kind of word is stop?
  - A. Verb
  - B. Noun
  - C. Adverb
  - D. Interjection rejection correction
6. What does Action Verb do?
  - A. Saves someone from a burning building!
  - B. Nothing
  - C. Gets donuts
  - D. Goes to Noun Town and disco dances
7. What kind of word is red?
  - A. Noun
  - B. Adjective
  - C. Verb
  - D. It's the reddest adverb in the world
8. Adjectives...
  - A. Rock climb with reckless abandon
  - B. Name objects
  - C. Describe
  - D. Represent an action

\*One question per track



*Bonus: What is the name of this character? Hint... he's a part of speech!! Go watch the free animated videos at [doctornoize.com](http://doctornoize.com) for the answer!*

## Grammaropolis Learning Adventures

9. What kind of word is quickly?

- A. Adverb
- B. Noun
- C. Adjective
- D. Verb

10. What do adverbs describe?

- A. Food
- B. A noun
- C. The quality of this song
- D. An action

11. Who interrupts the Mayor's broadcast?

- A. A horn-playing monster
- B. Slang
- C. Gabby Verbose
- D. Doctor Noize riding a giant flea



12. Which word is slang?

- A. Therefore
- B. Fa shizzle
- C. Definitely
- D. Quickly

13. What kind of word is monster?

- A. The scariest pronoun of them all
- B. Noun
- C. Adjective
- D. Verb

14. What is an example of a pronoun?

- A. Mr. President
- B. Bird
- C. She
- D. No noun



15. Which is NOT an interjection?

- A. Yay
- B. Wowza
- C. Hallelujah
- D. Town

16. What do interjections usually end with?

- A. An exclamation point!
- B. A period.
- C. A comma,
- D. A semicolon;

17. What kind of word is yesterday?

- A. Preposition
- B. Noun
- C. Adverb
- D. What kind of question is that?



## Grammaropolis Learning Adventures

18. Which is NOT a preposition?

- A. Across
- B. At
- C. Before
- D. Woah!

19. What kind of word is for?

- A. Preposition
- B. Interjection
- C. Conjunction
- D. An adjective used by singing slugs

20. Conjunctions...

- A. Bring clauses and words together
- B. Describe
- C. Names
- D. Laugh at the Mayor's fashion choices

21. Who interrupts the broadcast THIS time?

- A. Slang again
- B. KIDS!!
- C. The weather forecasters
- D. Action Verbs



### A Grammaropolis Mad Lib

(use the parts of speech you just learned!)

One day in Grammaropolis, the Mayor was on his way to \_\_\_\_\_  
verb  
 with the nouns. Just as he was arriving, Slang started to \_\_\_\_\_ in  
verb  
 front of him. The Mayor was so \_\_\_\_\_, he said " \_\_\_\_\_!"  
adjective interjection  
 Soon the whole town had left their \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to  
plural noun plural noun  
 see what all the fuss was about. The Mayor was bright \_\_\_\_\_  
color  
 because he was feeling so \_\_\_\_\_. Slang felt bad for making the  
adjective  
 Mayor feel this way, so he gave him a pet \_\_\_\_\_ to make up for it.  
animal  
 The pet was very \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_  
adjective pronoun  
 liked to \_\_\_\_\_  
verb adverb  
 The Mayor  
 named his new pet \_\_\_\_\_, and everyone went  
name  
 home to get their own \_\_\_\_\_!  
adjective plural animal

# Punctuate This! Learning Adventures

- \*1. What does punctuation do?
- A. Nothing
  - B. Describes other words
  - C. Makes things easy to read
  - D. Dances The Chicken Dance and sings

\*One question per track

2. What does Slang call Officer Period?
- A. An exclamation mark
  - B. His dog
  - C. A mayor
  - D. A glistening, angry unicorn

3. What does the traffic cop represent?
- A. Question mark
  - B. Exclamation mark
  - C. Comma
  - D. Period

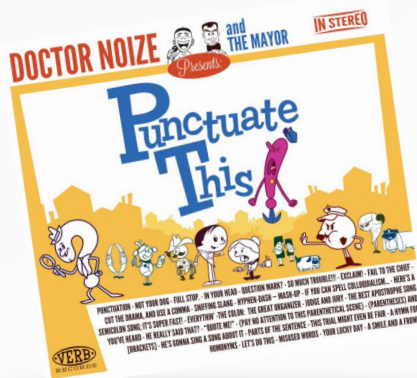
4. Who is introduced next?
- A. Deputy Colon
  - B. Detective Question Mark
  - C. Sergeant Exclamation Mark
  - D. Officer Period and his pet snail

5. What do you use to ask a question?
- A. Colon
  - B. Question mark
  - C. Exclamation mark
  - D. Period

6. How does "Question Mark?" leave you with a question?
- A. The last note is never played
  - B. The song is confusing
  - C. Nobody likes Detective Q. Mark
  - D. It doesn't

7. If someone used exclamation marks all the time, it would feel like they were...
- A. Yelling at you
  - B. Falling asleep
  - C. Very very very very very mellow
  - D. Not excited

8. What does Chief Comma never allow in her precinct?
- A. Questions
  - B. Slang
  - C. Doctor Noize and his Band Of Farting Skunks
  - D. Run-on sentences



Bonus: What is the name of this character? Hint... watch the free animated videos at [doctornoize.com](http://doctornoize.com) for the answer!

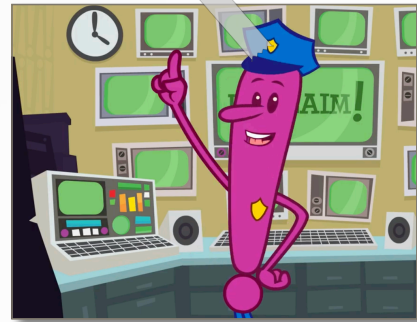
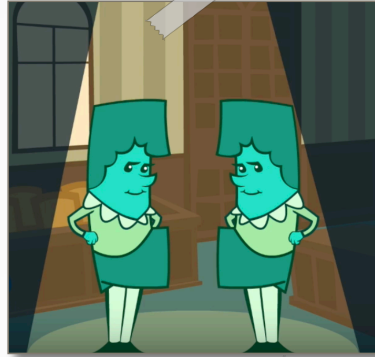
## Punctuate This! Learning Adventures

9. Commas prevent...
  - A. Questions
  - B. Run-on sentences
  - C. Robberies
  - D. Too many exclamation marks
10. If Doctor Noize can correctly explain what Hyphen and Dash do, Chief Comma will...
  - A. Build a spaceship destined for Venus
  - B. Let him adopt Dash
  - C. Buy him ice cream
  - D. Ask the judge for leniency
11. You can substitute a dash for...
  - A. Commas
  - B. Semicolons
  - C. Periods
  - D. All of the above
12. Who takes Doctor Noize and Slang to the courthouse?
  - A. Chief Comma
  - B. Dash and his bearded dragon Slick
  - C. Sheriff Semicolon
  - D. The Mayor
13. Semicolons join...
  - A. Independent clauses
  - B. Dependent clauses
  - C. Really bad bands
  - D. Moonrocks
14. What does Deputy Colon like to do?
  - A. Bake muffins
  - B. Ask questions
  - C. Make lists
  - D. Dance upside down on the moon
15. What is the main purpose of the colon?
  - A. End a sentence
  - B. Stop run-on sentences
  - C. To perform colonoscopies
  - D. Organize
16. How does Slang plead to his charges?
  - A. Not guilty
  - B. Guilty as charged
  - C. Awesome
  - D. Slang doesn't show up
17. Which is a contraction?
  - A. Don't
  - B. Do not



## Punctuate This! Learning Adventures

18. Who is the court reporter?  
 A. Quotation Marks  
 B. Apostrophe  
 C. A giant orange fish named Gooblebeeger  
 D. Officer Period
19. Quotation marks come in...  
 A. Pairs  
 B. Groups of five  
 C. Threes  
 D. One at a time
20. What character is introduced next?  
 A. Slang  
 B. Defense Attorney Parentheses  
 C. Sheriff Semicolon  
 D. Doctor Noize The Magical Unicorn
21. Parentheses and Brackets come in...  
 A. Pairs  
 B. Threes  
 C. One at a time  
 D. In groups of five
22. What is the Mayor's verdict?  
 A. Doctor Noize and Slang are guilty  
 B. Doctor Noize and Slang are not guilty  
 C. Doctor Noize is guilty, but Slang is not guilty  
 D. Slang is not guilty, but Doctor Noize is guilty
23. What are the parts of the sentence?  
 A. Subject  
 B. Predicate  
 C. Full thought (clause)  
 D. All of the above
24. What does Sergeant Exclamation Mark suggest the Mayor do?  
 A. Find a new court reporter  
 B. Arrest Slang  
 C. Ask Chief Comma out  
 D. Yell like him!
25. Which is NOT an example of a homonym?  
 A. Bare and bear  
 B. Too and two  
 C. Meant and mean  
 D. Hear and here
26. What will Doctor Noize and Slang have to do if they don't pass the test?  
 A. Grade 4th grade grammar tests for a year  
 B. Grade 4th grade grammar tests for a year AND a half  
 C. Sweep the floors  
 D. Go to jail and take this quiz 582 times



## Punctuate This! Learning Adventures

27. Which sentence is correct?
- A. I'm a better swimmer then her.
  - B. I'm a better swimmer than her.
  - C. I'm a betterer swimmer then her is.
  - D. I'm like a betterer swimmer than her is.
28. What does the Mayor ask Slang to do?
- A. Take a grammar test
  - B. Take a spelling test
  - C. Drop him a beat and throw him a party
  - D. Become the new Mayor
29. Antonyms...
- A. Are a type of punctuation
  - B. Are words that mean the opposite thing
  - C. Are boringgg when snoringgg
  - D. Are words that mean the same thing



### Put in the punctuation!

Is it a question mark? Maybe an exclamation mark! Or, maybe, a comma or period.

Late yesterday night\_\_\_ there was a robbery at Chief Comma\_s office! A cake and some dog treats were reported to be missing. Can you figure out who the thief was\_\_\_ Officer Period and Detective Q. Mark have teamed up to solve the mystery\_\_\_ First\_\_\_ they questioned Deputy Colon. She said she had many things to do last night\_\_\_ grocery shop, clean, and sleep. Next they saw Court Reporter Quotation Marks. She said, "I didn't do it, and you can quote me on that\_\_\_" Sheriff Semicolon reported he had been sleeping. The K-9 dogs only answered with a bark\_\_\_ however, they had a suspicious amount of frosting on their mouths. When questioned\_\_\_ Sergeant E. Mark says he was watching a movie last night. So... Who is the thief\_\_\_

Write who you think did it! \_\_\_\_\_



# The Ballad Of Phineas McBoof Book

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



- \*1. What is the monkey's name?
  - A. Phineas McBoof
  - B. Doctor Noize
  - C. Jerry The Warthog
  - D. Mr. USA
2. What happened when Phineas performed?
  - A. The Earth moved
  - B. Everyone hated it
  - C. Monkeys dropped their bananas
  - D. This is a trick question because nothing happened
3. What animal do you see in the bottom right corner of page 7?
  - A. A lizard
  - B. A fish
  - C. An octopus
  - D. A monkey
4. What does Backbone play?
  - A. Guitar
  - B. Ukelele
  - C. Drums
  - D. Piano
5. Where did Backbone take Phineas?
  - A. Thelonious
  - B. Under the sea
  - C. Across the globe
  - D. To MARS!! AND BACK!!!
6. What animal lurks in the water on page 12?
  - A. SHARK!!
  - B. A zipping zebra
  - C. A happy hippo
  - D. A sad and sobbing whale
7. Who is introduced next?
  - A. Sidney The Beak
  - B. Phineas McBoof
  - C. Bottomus The Hip Popotomus
  - D. A beautiful, glowing unicorn named Leroy

\*Answer questions  
as you read the  
book!



# The Ballad Of Phineas McBoof Book

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



8. What is Riley?
  - A. A giraffe
  - B. A monkey
  - C. A robot
  - D. A dog. No — a cat. Maybe that's a dog. I dunno.
9. How did Riley thank The Band?
  - A. She rolled up and kissed 'em!
  - B. She gave them ice cream
  - C. She wrote a song for them
  - D. Thank them for what?
10. Where did The Band find Lenny?
  - A. The symphony hall
  - B. Underwater
  - C. On an island made of marshmallows
  - D. In outer space with a really noisy alien
11. What music does Lenny play?
  - A. Orchestral music
  - B. Both kinds — country and western
  - C. All Justin Bieber, all the time
  - D. Electronic music written by three little pigs
12. What animals are running from the monsters?
  - A. Lizards
  - B. Dogs
  - C. Birds
  - D. Cats
13. How many monsters are there in the Ooh Gah Boo Gus?
  - A. 2
  - B. 3
  - C. 4
  - D. 5
14. Did The Band write the World's Greatest Song?
  - A. Yes, and it's called "Banana"
  - B. Yes, and it's not called "I'm With The Band"
  - C. Absolutely not! What a ridiculous question
  - D. We haven't learned



Listen to the album too!

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# The Ballad Of Phineas McBoof Book

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



15. What does the license plate on the bus say?

- A. Phineas
- B. Muzic
- C. Thelonious
- D. Noize

16. What are you going to do now??

- A. Read
- B. GO MAKE SOME NOIZE!!
- C. Sing
- D. Sleep

Who's your favorite character?  
Draw him or her here!

What instrument does this  
character play? Draw it here!

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# The Return Of Phineas McBoof Book

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



- \*1. What fruit do you see on page 3?
  - A. Blueberry
  - B. Grapefruit
  - C. Hamburger (hamburger?)
  - D. Banana
2. What are Phineas and Backbone doing on page 5?
  - A. Skydiving
  - B. Swimming
  - C. Reading
  - D. Eating a really delicious bowl of dirt
3. What happens during Cory's show?
  - A. The kids fall asleep
  - B. An earthquake
  - C. Cory saves the world from burping guppies
  - D. Cory gets fired
4. What name does The Band give Cory?
  - A. Phineas
  - B. Doctor Noize
  - C. Zebra Face
  - D. Zolaf The Warrior Piglet
5. What animals are crawling on the vines on pages 10 and 11?
  - A. Pink and purple snakes
  - B. Wiggly and wanky worms
  - C. Ladybugs
  - D. Nothing!
6. Doctor Noize drops what on page 12?
  - A. His kazoo
  - B. A guitar
  - C. Sidney the Beak
  - D. The ladybugs
7. Where are the tenors singing?
  - A. A park
  - B. A concert
  - C. A cave
  - D. Your house, and they weren't even invited

\*Answer questions  
as you read the  
book!



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# The Return Of Phineas McBoof Book

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



8. What were the tenors arguing about?
  - A. Who got the banana
  - B. If Phineas could play guitar
  - C. Who was the best
  - D. What cave they should practice in
9. Who is fixing his or her bow on page 19?
  - A. Riley The Robot
  - B. Gah The Monster
  - C. Lenny is fixing his violin bow
  - D. Sidney The Beak
10. How many band members voted to return to Thelonious?
  - A. 1
  - B. 2
  - C. 10
  - D. 13
11. Which do you NOT see in the audience on pages 22 and 23?
  - A. A pink-haired monkey
  - B. Crazy Phineas fans
  - C. A big-haired unicorn tuning his guitar
  - D. Monkeys singing
12. Did the crowd notice when The Band left?
  - A. No, because they were cheering too loud
  - B. Yes, they ran after them
  - C. No, because they didn't like The Band's music
  - D. Yes, they felt Phineas had betrayed them
13. What did Phineas leave?
  - A. A microphone
  - B. A note and the Bandleader Necklace
  - C. His shoes, which smelled very much
  - D. Nothing
14. What animals are sitting on the cow on page 28?
  - A. Lizards
  - B. 27 blue whales
  - C. Birds
  - D. The monsters



Listen to the album too!

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# The Return Of Phineas McBoof Book

## Doctor Noize Learning Adventures



15. Who leads the band after Phineas leaves?
- A. Backbone
  - B. Bottomus
  - C. Doctor Noize
  - D. What's up with that? I should lead The Band

16. Who's sitting on top of the door on page 32?
- A. Phineas
  - B. Sidney the Beak
  - C. Gus The Monster
  - D. Your Grandma

Wanna join The Band?  
What would you do?  
Sing, dance, play an  
instrument, whatever it  
is... draw you doing it  
here!

[www.doctornoize.com](http://www.doctornoize.com)

## **APPENDIX B**

### **LIVE RECORDING ARTS WORKSHOP SONGS CREATED**

This is not just a page. This page is oh so much more than that. It's also a link. And, if you want to get even crazier, it's another link. And another.

But please... link responsibly.