iPad Projects for the Music Classroom

by Katie Wardrobe
Midnight Music

Sample project

The Spooky Soundscape

THE SPOOKY SOUNDSCAPE

Objective

Create a spooky story from sounds only

Musical elements

Sound exploration, rhythm, melody, texture, timbre

Technology skills

Playing instruments, sampling sounds.

Suggested age

Grades 3 - 8

iPad access options

Works best with one iPad per student, or one iPad per group of students (groups of 3-4). Can also work in a one-iPad classroom (with majority of students using real instruments - *gasp*!)

Time needed

1 lesson

App required

GarageBand and/or other instrument apps such as Thumbjam, Bebot or Virtuoso - experiment with what you have!

INTRODUCTION

The *Spooky Soundscape* project allows students to explore sound and the way it is produced by experimenting with the instruments found in the GarageBand app.

By building up a repertoire of spooky music techniques and sound effects, they can put together their own spooky soundscape - a story that's told through sound only - no speaking aloud!

Step-by-step

Preparation

1. Listen to examples of spooky or suspenseful music. Film music is ideal. Some good examples include the *Jaws* Theme (John Williams) and the shower scene from Psycho (Bernard Hermann). Documentaries are also a good resource!

2. Discuss the ways in which composers make music sound scary and write a list of compositional techniques that invoke suspense. Your list might include the following: use of a drone, pitch that rises, rhythms that increase in speed, dissonance, extremes of pitch (high or low) and so on.

Experimentation & Exploration

In GarageBand, start a new project and select the **Smart Strings**. Switch to **Notes** view so you can see and play the cello fingerboard.

Set the students a challenge: see if they can come up with **3 different ways** to make spooky sounds using the cello fingerboard.

> **Tip: in Notes view, GarageBand will automatically isolate the cello, but you can select a different instrument by swiping through the instruments on the "stage"**

Don't forget that you can play pizzicato notes by holding down the arco/pizz button on the left side of the fingerboard while you tap your fingers on the strings. *[figure 2.2]*

Once they have some spooky string techniques in their repertoire, ask them to create more spooky sounds using at least two of the *other* GarageBand instruments.
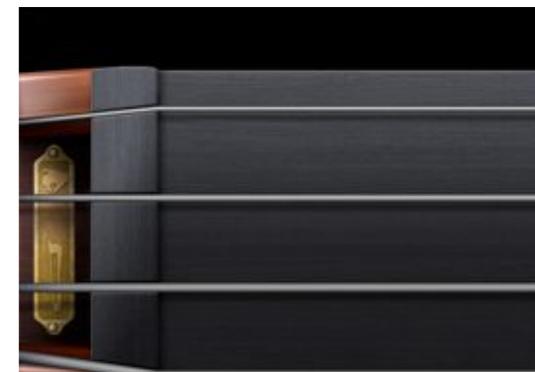
2.2 Pizzicato/arco "button" on the left of the fingerboard

Hint: the **Drums** and **Keyboard** instruments have a wide variety of playback sounds and options.

9 Ways to Make Spooky Music

If you want to inspire students with a few spooky music techniques, you can share some of these examples:

1. **Suspenseful drone**: select the Smart Strings and tap on the Notes button to switch to the fingerboard view. Tap and hold one finger on any of the strings to create a drone

2. **Suspenseful drone #2**: open the Smart Strings, choose Notes view and make sure the cello is selected. Play a drone on one of the cello strings (as above) and then slowly (VERY slowly!) move your finger to the right. Pause on a single pitch every now and then, and then continue to move gradually to the right again

3. **Dissonant drone**: same as the previous example, but this time add a second finger on to a *different* string (while still holding down the first finger). The more dissonant the two pitches sound, the better. Keep you fingers the same distance apart and move them gradually to the right at the same time.

4. **Creepy pizzicato footsteps**: Still in the Smart Strings Notes view, select the Violin at the top of the screen. Hold down the pizzicato button on the left edge of the fingerboard and tap randomly on the top two strings, moving your fingers along the strings as you tap - as if you were imitating footsteps. Increase in speed gradually (as if you're trying to escape from something!).

5. **The terrified heartbeat**: Open the Drums (**not** the Smart Drums). Play the kick drum in a slow, steady rhythm - like a heartbeat. Gradually increase the speed of the rhythm, as if the heartbeat is getting faster.

6. **The erie piano**: Open the Keyboard (**not** the Smart Keyboard) and move up 2 or 3 octaves using the octave keys on the left of the screen. Choose 3 notes that are next to one another - a combination of black and white notes. Then, experiment by playing them all at the same time or one after the other, fast or slow.

7. **Crunchy chords**: Open the Keyboard (**not** the Smart Keyboard). With the first 3 fingers of your left hand, choose 3 black notes to play (any 3 black notes will do). Then at the same time, choose 3 white notes to play with the first 3 fingers of your right hand. The stranger and more dissonant your chord sounds, the better. Experiment by playing the notes all at the same time, with a variety of rhythms or one after the other.

8. **Dramatic diminished 9th**: Open the Smart Keyboard. Tap on the wrench icon to open the Settings menu and then tap on **Edit Chords**. Tap the **Em** chord strip on the left of the screen and then use the scroll wheels at the top to change it to an Edim9 chord. Tap **Done**. You can then play the chord strip in a variety of ways to create a dramatic mood: try playing a bass note in the shaded area of the strip and then tap the white part of the strip. Vary your speed and dynamics. You can also run your finger slowly (or quickly) up and down the chord strip.

9. **The monster roar:** Open the Sampler, tap the **Start** button and record a single cough. Shift the keyboard down two octaves and then play a low note. Your cough should have been transformed to a scary monster's roar!

Plan your story

Once the students have a decent repertoire of spooky sounds, it's time for them to plan their story. Allow some brainstorming time where they can work out their storyline and which spooky sounds they will use.

Set (or suggest) a time limit for the story itself - ie. between 1-2 minutes and encourage them to structure their story with a beginning, middle and end.

Students can write their story plan down on a piece of paper, or in another iPad app (such as Pages or Explain Everything).

Performing the story

This project culminates in a performance of the Spooky story for the rest of the class. No talking allowed! Can the other students work out what happened in the story?

Extensions

Students can create a graphic notation score to accompany their story using a "whiteboard" app like Explain Everything. See Project 14 for more information.

Tips for working in groups

If you are doing this project as a group activity and have one iPad between 2-4 students, each student can take turns making spooky sounds on the iPad. The ones not using the iPad can make spooky sounds on classroom percussion or body percussion.

Alternatively, this activity could be done on a rotating basis, with half the class planning and performing their story one week and the other half the following week.
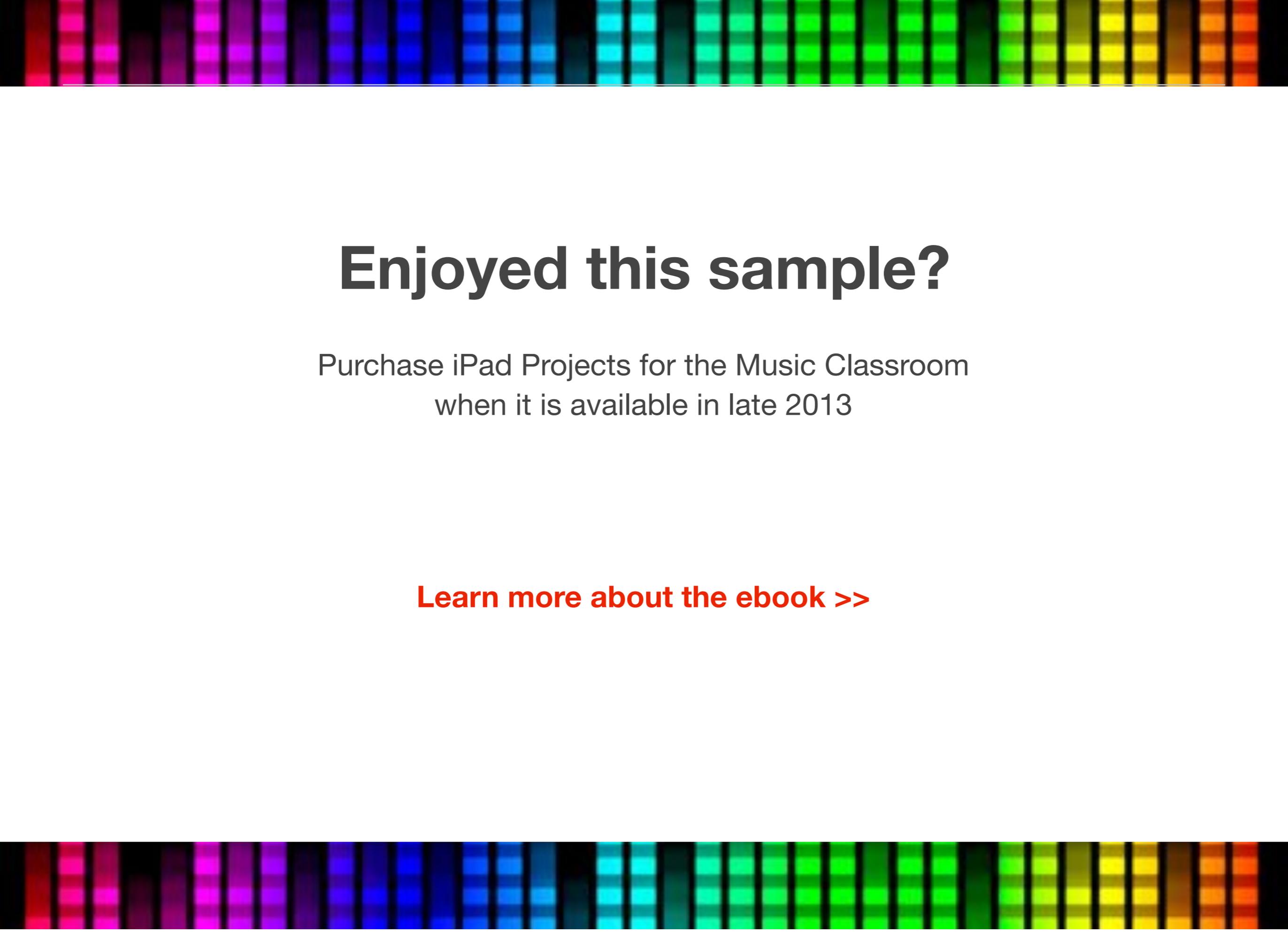
Enjoyed this sample?

Purchase iPad Projects for the Music Classroom
when it is available in late 2013

Learn more about the ebook >>