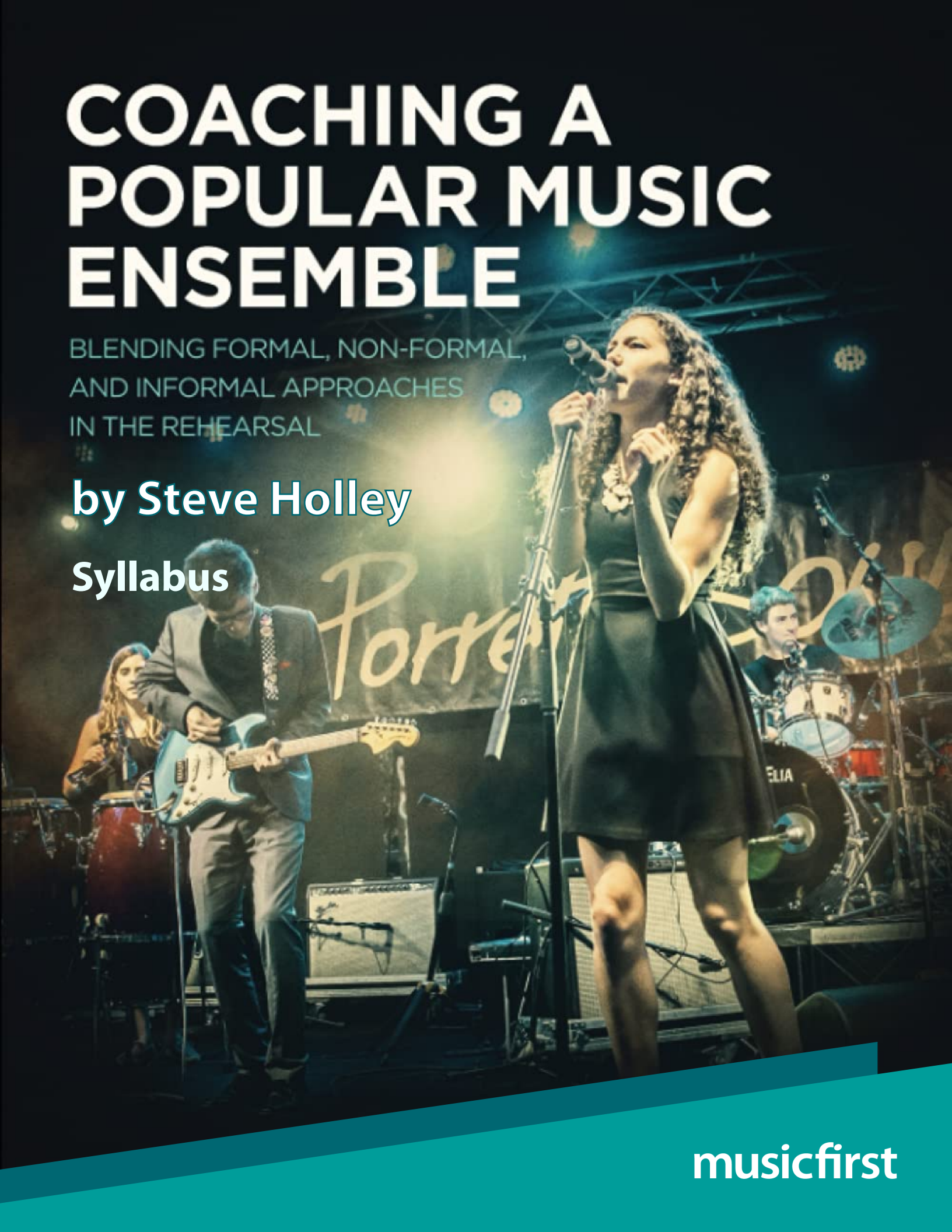


COACHING A POPULAR MUSIC ENSEMBLE

BLENDING FORMAL, NON-FORMAL,
AND INFORMAL APPROACHES
IN THE REHEARSAL

by Steve Holley

Syllabus



musicfirst

Coaching a Popular Music Ensemble

By Steve Holley

Welcome to MusicFirst's Coaching Popular Music! The units, lessons, activities, and tasks in this series focus on how to develop, coach, and grow a popular music ensemble/modern band/flex ensemble in a school or community music setting.

While technique is covered throughout, this is not the primary emphasis of this approach, as there are a number of instrument-specific methods widely available. Instead, this approach focuses on cultivating a rehearsal environment by supporting teachers and students in developing the confidence, skills, and know-how to start a band, choose music, organize a rehearsal, and get students up on the stage and into the recording studio.

This series of lessons features the voices of professional musicians, songwriters, and teachers who have deep experience in learning, creating, producing, recording, and performing popular music. Their perspectives help provide a comprehensive understanding of popular music.

Additionally, this approach will highlight how and when the traditional band, orchestra, or choir rehearsal can be different from—and sometimes similar to—a popular music rehearsal. This asset-based approach functions as a base of knowledge for the teacher and the student, allowing the collective to collaboratively learn together in a creative, educational environment.

Think of all the various tasks and responsibilities involved in the preparation, coordination, and management of a rehearsal. This approach supports the teacher in identifying and passing those responsibilities over to the students. The result of this not only deeper engagement with the music and the rehearsal process, but also serves to develop agency, autonomy, and ownership of their learning process and their band.

These approaches were developed and refined over my career as a professional musician and later as the producer of the top secondary popular music program in the United States. During my time with the program, the R&B, soul, salsa, and rock bands were recognized by DownBeat magazine's Student Music Awards fifteen times. The student-led bands performed hundreds of gigs in the U.S. and abroad, held standing gigs at local clubs, performed on dozens of radio and television broadcasts, recorded at some of the most hallowed studios in the country, and performed with dozens of Grammy-caliber artists. These approaches (and curriculum outlined in this series) are detailed in my book *Coaching a Popular Music Ensemble*. For a deeper, more robust experience for you and your students, I recommend the book as a companion as I go into greater detail in the book on the approaches presented here.

In closing, tradition and innovation in music education are not mutually exclusive, and this approach takes this foundation of understanding into account by focusing on what we know and what we have yet to know in the popular music learning space.

Good luck!

Course Sequence

All of the units, activities, lessons, and tasks:

Can be modified and/or extended to fit the students and the classroom.

Can be assigned to an individual, a group, or as a collaborative activity.

Work with existing songs (covers), writing new songs, or arranging new/existing songs.

Understanding Music Through Active Listening

Lesson 101: Creating a Playlist

Lesson 102: What Stories does a Song Share?

Lesson 103: Drop the Needle

Lesson 104: Exploring the Form of a Song

Lesson 105: Selecting Songs that Fit the Band

Getting the Band Together

Lesson 106: Learn the Song - Get to Playing!

Lesson 107: Peeling back the Layers of a Song

Voices: Victor Sawyer

Lesson 108: Looping and Layering the Song

Lesson 109: Writing a Road Map of the Song

Lesson 110: Writing a Detailed Map of the Song

Lesson 111: Writing a Chart

Instrument Boot Camp

Lesson 112: Getting to Know the Drums & Bass

Lesson 113: Getting to Know the Guitar & Keys

Lesson 114: Getting to Know the Vocalists & MCs

Lesson 115: Getting to Know the Horns & Strings

Lesson 116: Getting to Know Music Technology

Getting Ready for the Rehearsal

Lesson 117: Musician Speak

Lesson 118: Can You Turn Me Up?

Lesson 119: Prepping for the Rehearsal

Working Out the Parts

Lesson 120: Facilitating the Musical Conversation

Lesson 121: Crafting a Part to Fit the Song

Voices: Jamey Arent

Lesson 122: Fitting All the Cogs of the Machine Together

Lesson 123: Get Your Head Out of Your Chart!

Dialing It In

Lesson 124: Making a Song Your Own

Lesson 125: Curating a Set List

Lesson 126: Rehearse How You Want to Perform

Voices: Raina Murnak

Lesson 127: Fine Tuning

Lesson 128: The Soundcheck

Lesson 129: Critique and Evaluation

Voices: Ashely Shabankareh