

by Scott Burstein and Bryan Powell

# Approximation and Scaffolding in Modern Band

**Abstract:** Many K–12 teachers face hurdles when it comes to running a Modern Band, including the pedagogical challenges of facilitating large scale ensembles with unfamiliar repertoire and instruments. Approximation and scaffolding are two important tools teachers can use to help learners thrive in this environment. This article uses music examples to demonstrate how to approximate popular songs in a variety of ways, providing accommodations and adaptations for students of all skill levels to give all students an opportunity to learn. This article outlines how scaffolding in the Modern Band classroom allows for whole-class instruction while keeping advanced students motivated without alienating beginning students.

**Keywords:** accommodations, adaptations, approximation, curriculum, funk, Modern Band, popular music, scaffolding

*Your students can get down with “Uptown Funk” by breaking the parts down to manageable chunks.*



Photo of Scott Burstein courtesy of the author



Photo of Bryan Powell by Warren Gramm

**M**odern Band is a category of music education that includes broad genres of music performed on popular and traditional instruments (see [littlekidsrock](http://littlekidsrock.org/the-program/modernband)

[.org/the-program/modernband](http://littlekidsrock.org/the-program/modernband)). The goal of Modern Band is to bridge the gap between the music that children experience in schools and the music they experience out of school.<sup>1</sup>

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Modern Band uses popular music repertoire that can include the music that students engage with outside of school, original student songwriting, or teacher-chosen songs that the educators think would be a good fit for the ensemble.<sup>2</sup>

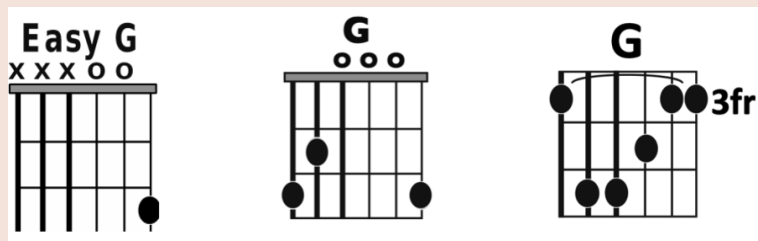
By giving students the opportunity to select songs that are meaningful to them, Modern Band classrooms can honor the students' music preferences in a way that is often not possible in traditional large ensembles while aligning their curriculum with the National Core Arts Standards.<sup>3</sup> The instrumentation of Modern Band focuses on popular instruments, such as the guitar, bass, drums, keyboard, vocals, and technology, but does not exclude concert band or classroom instruments, such as ukulele or the Orff instrumentarium, as many of these are occasionally included in popular music. Students with experience on a variety of instruments should have access to Modern Band regardless of their background.

For many K–12 teachers, implementing a Modern Band ensemble can be fraught with challenges, including a lack of familiarity with the music and multitude of styles, a lack of curricular resources, and a lack of experience with facilitating music experiences with large classes comprising students of various skill levels on popular music instruments. While an examination of all these issues is outside the scope of this article, we focus on the last of these challenges, the pedagogical challenges of facilitating large-scale Modern Band ensembles. Approximation and scaffolding are important tools to help teachers and their students thrive in this environment. Embracing approximation allows teachers to differentiate instruction through scaffolding.

This article describes how to teach various instrument parts to perform the Bruno Mars song “Uptown Funk” through the use of approximation and scaffolding. Using notated music excerpts, we hope to provide examples of accommodations and adaptations that can be used with students at various skill levels to motivate both beginning and advanced students.

## FIGURE 1

### Various Ways to Play a G Chord on the Guitar



## Approximation

*Approximation* is an approach through which teachers modify performance expectations to accommodate developing students' needs. These approximations focus on adjustments to end-goal performance expectations ensuring the finish line is developmentally appropriate for each student. The approximation is product-oriented. When applied in the Modern Band classroom, approximation can be understood as the process by which students play versions of songs that are appropriate for their skill levels. Approximation is initially guided by the teacher and implemented by the students, but over time, students can find ways to approximate parts that might be beyond their skill level. As one example, it would take most beginning guitarists years to learn Jimi Hendrix's rhythm guitar parts note for note; however, by knowing a few simplified basic chords, they could play versions of the chords that are similar to the those used in Hendrix's songs and that provide just the right level of challenge for them. Providing opportunities that challenge students at an appropriate level can keep them playing in a “flow state” and can increase student participation by allowing beginning students to play alongside those who are more advanced.<sup>4</sup>

Using simplified guitar chords, for example, enables beginners to play with advanced students. Participants choose the appropriate level for themselves. Instead of grouping beginning students into one group and advanced students into another, using differentiated chords and embracing approximation can allow

students of all skill levels to play together. Just as beginners pick up a new language more quickly when conversing with fluent native speakers, the same is true when learning music.<sup>5</sup> As shown in Figure 1, there are many ways to play chords on the guitar, and allowing students to use chords that best fit their skill levels can accommodate learners of all abilities.

While the use of approximation focuses on designing learning outcomes so that, regardless of student level, the end product recognizably captures the original song, the use of scaffolding is the process, or road map, toward the approximated destination.

## Scaffolding

In 1975, Jerome Bruner used the term *scaffolding* to describe the support that teachers provide to learners, similar to the support that mothers provide to their children. Bruner described the role of the adult as “supporting the child in achieving an intended outcome, entering only to assist or reciprocate or ‘scaffold’ the action.”<sup>6</sup> Scaffolding in the music classroom focuses on approaches to teaching and learning that benefit the whole class or ensemble in meeting their music objectives and occurs when “teachers provide appropriate support that enables students to move beyond their current skill or knowledge, in small and attainable steps.”<sup>7</sup> These temporary supports, or scaffolds, help learners span the distance between what they can do and what they need to do to succeed at a learning task.<sup>8</sup>

University of Melbourne faculty members Derek Holton and David Clarke argue

that scaffolding has multiple functions in teaching and learning and “anticipates some act of construction. It is not an act of closure.”<sup>9</sup> Katherine Brownfield (now teaching in the Upper Arlington Schools in Columbus, Ohio) and Ian Wilkinson (Ohio State University professor of teaching and learning) argue that the term *scaffolding* has been so broadly used in the field of education and research that its meaning and significance have become unclear.<sup>10</sup> With this in mind, Brownfield and Wilkinson offer a definition of scaffolding that focuses on three theoretical tenets. The first of these is *intersubjectivity*, which they define as a shared understanding between the teacher and learner about the goal of the activity so that both have “common ground with regard to what is known and what is to be learned in order to be successful.”<sup>11</sup> The second tenet is *contingent support*, where “the level and kind of assistance provided by the teacher varies depending on the performance of the child.”<sup>12</sup> Their third tenet of scaffolding is *release of responsibility to the learner*, where the students gradually require less assistance over time and the teachers “revise their level and kind of help while scaffolding not only as the child experiences difficulty, but also as the child’s competence grows.”<sup>13</sup> With the understanding that scaffolding can take different forms, this article combines Brownfield and Wilkinson’s tenets of scaffolding with a definition of scaffolding that includes “an act of teaching that (i) supports the immediate construction of knowledge by the learner; and (ii) provides a basis for the future independent learning of the individual.”<sup>14</sup>

In the music classroom, Jackie Wiggins, a professor of music education at Oakland University in Annandale, Michigan, identified several ways that music teachers can use scaffolding in the songwriting process to assist learners. These approaches included “helping students musically realize ideas they were able to conceive and communicate in some way, but not able to fully realize musically” and “creating and playing a harmonic accompaniment that either fitted with what students’ melodic ideas implied or served to lead the creation of new

**TABLE 1**

**Approximation and Scaffolding**

Approximation <i>How do I modify learning outcomes?</i>	Scaffolding <i>How do I differentiate learning processes?</i>
<p><b>Q. What simpler chord can I use instead of this complex one?</b></p> <p>A. Use fewer notes, remove extensions (such as 7ths), or even just play the root.</p>	<p><b>Q. What are different chord options of varying difficulty for this chord?</b></p> <p>A. Use multiple voicings and/or inversions.</p>
<p><b>Q. What notes of this challenging melody can I remove while still keeping the character?</b></p> <p>A. Remove quicker or repeated notes, or syncopation, while keeping the general contour.</p>	<p><b>Q. What are ways to make sure this melody is playable by all students?</b></p> <p>A. Beginning students can focus on notes and rhythms, while more experienced students can think of phrasing, articulation, and timbre.</p>
<p><b>Q. How can I modify the form of this song?</b></p> <p>A. Remove sections, such as bridges that contain new progressions, and add in extensions of easier sections to give room for instrumental exploration.</p>	<p><b>Q. How can I modify parts of this song so that all students can participate?</b></p> <p>A. Add a solo section for students who want to show their musical growth, have beginning students move to auxiliary percussion for complicated breaks, or have features for entire instrument sections.</p>

melodic material.”<sup>15</sup> In Modern Band, one of the easiest ways to scaffold instruction is by using backing tracks and play-along recordings. These backing tracks can fill in parts that might be missing, motivate students, and “be layered such that aspects of the scaffold are removed as the student gains more confidence and skill.”<sup>16</sup> These backing tracks allow students to play approximated parts, while the accompanying tracks allow students to see how the simplified parts fit into the larger whole. Additionally, the use of hints and musical questioning can provide students with a little more information so that they can arrive at the right response or action. Teachers can also use images, such as iconic notation, to scaffold instruction in the Modern Band classroom to support the immediate construction of knowledge by the students.

**Zone of Proximal Development**

The combination of approximated activities and scaffolded approaches to teaching

can engage learners in their zones of proximal development, described by educational psychologist Lev Vygotsky as the “area which lies between [students’] existing knowledge or skills and the potential level of development beyond this.”<sup>17</sup> Once a student’s zone of proximal development has been identified, the teacher can establish an appropriate level of difficulty, provide assistance in the form of scaffolded instruction, and evaluate the independent performance of the child on the given task.<sup>18</sup> By designing lessons that are within a student’s zone of proximal development, teachers can find a balance between experiences that are instantly gratifying but too easy and experiences that are too difficult and offer little or no short-term gratification.<sup>19</sup> This differentiated instruction is an important part of successful scaffolding, as it caters to individual students by addressing their needs so that they can be successful.

Table 1 offers answers to some common questions about approximation and scaffolding in the music classroom.

**TABLE 2****Basic Form of “Uptown Funk” through 1:32**

The following section includes examples of approximation and scaffolding through a common Modern Band song by Mark Ronson, Bruno Mars, and others, “Uptown Funk.”<sup>20</sup> You can find one version of the music video of this song here, and as with all visual materials, watch it yourself first to make sure it’s appropriate for your students (there are a number of versions available): <https://bit.ly/1vpmnNX>.

### “Uptown Funk”

“Uptown Funk” is pop song from 2014 that allows for exploring the practice of approximation and scaffolding. A cursory glance at the piece would show a seemingly simple pop song—strict common time and an unchanging harmonic progression that alternates between two chords. However, the piece is rich with detail, including funky horn riffs, slap bass fills, and slight keyboard and guitar chordal variation to consistently create excitement.

An exact recitation of the piece necessitates some very advanced skills, but an exciting and creative rendering of the piece can also be achieved by varying the performance expectations (approximating) and creating steps to assist learners at any level while actively implementing approaches to teaching that allow the students to take control

of the learning as their competence increases (scaffolding). At the outset, an examination of the basic musical materials can help teachers determine where the challenges might lie. This piece basically has two sections, although they are repeated in a variety of ways. There is the initial section with the bass melody that is heard from the beginning, which repeats in the verse. The second section is the chorus section (50 seconds into the song), which ends with the rising chromatic bass. Once the basics of each of these sections are understood, the rest of the song is about layering and variation: learning the different lyrics, deciding when the drums come in and out and change patterns, adding in different horn and guitar riffs, and other musical and textural ideas. As with any piece of music, it will be necessary to make some determinations about how to best use it in the classroom. One of the determinations with this song and all popular music songs is how to change the lyrics when necessary to be school-appropriate. References to pouring liquor in a cup can be changed to fruit juice, and the repeated use of *hot damn* can be changed to *hot dog*. As the music educator, you know best what is appropriate for your students to sing, and when in doubt, you can always speak to your administration and parents about

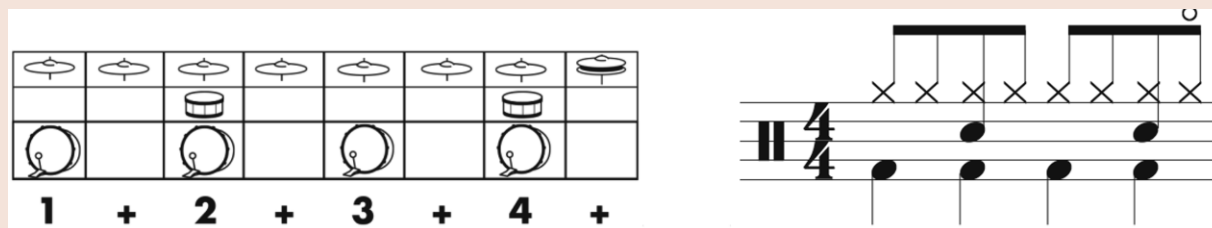
potentially controversial language or themes.

Once basics of appropriateness have been handled, the next step would be determining the form to use that best achieves the desired musical result. At the outset of working with a new piece of music, the most basic approximation has to do with the song’s form, since oftentimes a piece of music can have a multitude of issues beyond just technical challenges for the performers. An example of this is found in Justin Timberlake’s “Can’t Stop the Feeling,” which consists primarily of three simple chords throughout but contains a prechorus that includes both a pedal tone in the bass and a more complex harmonic series. Removing or simplifying these sections is a crucial part of approximating the form.

We begin with an initial look into the specific form challenges and opportunities of “Uptown Funk” (see Table 2). This can be handled by making a music map of the piece with students and determining as a group how they would like to proceed with their version. For instance, listen to the makeup of the instruments during the first section of the song. When the vocals enter (0:16), the only instruments playing for the first four phrases are the drums. The next four phrases (beginning at 0:33) add the intro bass line, the keyboard accents a Dmin7 chord on beat 4

## FIGURE 2

### Iconic and Standard Notation of the Drums



of every other measure, and a simple guitar riff. Compare this to the section immediately following the chromatic rise (1:07), where the basic progression is the same, but now the guitar is strumming funky chords, the keys are holding full chords for a whole note each, the drums and bass are adding some fills to their basic parts, and the brass section is adding punchy lines to liven up this section. The variation between these two parts highlights a variety of interpretations of the chord sequence, and these parts can be modified, moved around, and added to in order to accommodate the music for your learners. Table 2 provides a music map of the song using instrument icons to indicate which instruments are playing at that time.

Next, let's examine the instrumental parts separately and discuss ways in which to approximate the parts, beginning with the drums.

### Approximating the Drums

The first step toward approximating the drum part is to identify the particular challenges and must-haves for the part in order to maintain the character of the piece while making it playable for all levels. To establish a steady yet identifiable beat, students can subdivide the beat on the hi-hat or ride cymbal while playing the snare drum. Figure 2 shows a basic backbeat with "four on the floor" (hitting the bass drum on the downbeat of all four beats) and an added opening and closing of the hi-hat in iconic and standard notation. The first notation example in Figure 2 uses iconic notation

to notate the drum part, while the second example uses traditional drum notation. The National Association for Music Education defines notation as "visual representation of musical sounds" and defines iconic notation as "representation of sound and its treatment using lines, drawings, pictures."<sup>21</sup> Using iconic notation in the music classroom is also in line with the National Core Music Standards' recommendation to use standard and iconic notation in both the creating and performing artistic processes.<sup>22</sup>

While not extremely challenging, the addition of the extra hi-hat lift and close complicates matters. Younger learners also may not feel comfortable playing all these elements at once. So at the outset, removing the lift of the hi-hat with the left foot on the *and* of beat 4 is a basic approximation for student success. Furthermore, the parts of the drum set can be played by multiple students as a scaffolding measure, with a student on the bass and snare and another student playing the cymbals. Similarly, a third student can add fills on the tom-toms or even on a separate snare in appropriate spots, waiting for ends of phrases during busier sections. Teachers can discuss with students which drum fills might be appropriate based on the musical material of the song, using one- and two-beat drum fills at various points in the songs.

### Approximating the Guitar and Keyboard

Before diving into specific melodic material, let's examine the harmonic parts in the guitar and keyboard, which merely

alternate Dm7 and G7 throughout. When the performance expectations are modified, the two chords can be played at a variety of difficulty levels. For the purposes of these examples on guitar, let's look at it using tablature. Tablature, or tab, is a method of notation for guitar and bass players that has advantages and disadvantages over traditional staff notation. The basic concept of tablature is that there are six lines for guitar and four for bass that denote which string is to be played. The number on the tablature indicates which fret to hold down, or more accurately, which space on the fretboard to hold down. While tab often lacks rhythmic notation, it does have the benefit of showing exactly where on the fretboard the notes are played, leaving out the ambiguity of traditional staff notation, which can be important especially on guitar since notes can be played in sometimes four or five different locations.

The original has a relatively sparse funk guitar part, as seen in Figure 3.

What music knowledge is needed to decipher the notation on this page? Knowledge of the staff, key, rhythm, musical alphabet, muted strings, and ledger lines are all required, just to name a few. It would take a long time to get our students comfortable enough to play this part, composed primarily of dyads and muted strings. Understanding the harmonies within the song is a similarly confusing endeavor: if it is in fact a Dm7 moving to a G7, why does the guitarist never play either a D or G? If the notes used are just C-F and then B-F, where are the thirds in those chords? Wrestling

**FIGURE 3**

**Funk Guitar Part in Standard Notation and Tablature**

Dm7 G7

*mf*

18 X 18 X 18 18 X X | 18 18 16 X 16 X X

**FIGURE 4**

**Approximated Chord Voicings for the Harmonic Progression (Simplified to Half Notes)**

Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7

T 13 13 12 8 7 1 1  
A 13 12 7 6 7  
B 7 7 0

with these questions can easily stifle a student's ability to play what is essentially a simple guitar part or, for more advanced students, might propel the student to significantly increased musical ability. Figure 4 looks at a few different approximated versions of these chords, removing the complex-looking rhythms so chord voicings can be learned.

In the first measure, the dyads have been moved up a string set, so they are much easier to play on the typical classroom acoustic guitar, and students no longer have to worry about missing the first string while strumming strings 2 and 3. In the second bar, the chords move down even further but add in the D root, giving it a thicker sound. This

also has the added advantage of giving students an exercise in holding chords with all their fingers; they can hold the second chord with three fingers and just use their pinky finger to add on the C for the first chord. Finally, the last chord is simple enough to hold for beginning students, where they can hold down the two notes and then lift one for the second chord. Through providing simplified chords for the students to analyze and play, teachers can meet the recommendations of the National Core Arts Standards that students should be analyzing pieces of music and should "refine artistic techniques for work and presentation."<sup>23</sup>

Unlike chords, rhythms are much easier for students to copy with no background

knowledge, and while they may struggle repeating what they hear on a recording exactly on an unfamiliar instrument, they should have little trouble creating their own version. This is an ideal place to let the students use their ears and choose how they want the rhythm to go. It is improvised on the recording, with modifications throughout anyhow, and as long as their rhythm complements the song, the teacher and the students can consider it a success. As the students become more adept and comfortable on the guitar, teachers can walk through more complex intricacies, such as incorporating the muted funk strums or focusing on smooth right-hand alternate picking.

As for the keyboard, throughout the song, it either holds long tones (such as at 0:09) or plays chordal punches (0:31). This can be a valuable way to get absolute beginners to work on timing cooperatively, by having two players at each keyboard, some playing the held top note while the other plays just the moving notes (Figure 5). Younger players can move up to holding complete chords and moving between the parts as they get used to playing full chords, and the most advanced students can play the bass line with their left hand and the chords with their right.

**Approximating the Bass**

Now we can examine the melodic materials, beginning with the initial bass line (Figure 6), first heard as a vocal part at the beginning of the song.

This can be played on the guitar, bass, or keyboard of your Modern Band or all three as well as sung by a vocalist. We first look at the bass line and immediately need to approximate by playing the melody an octave higher due to range limitations of a standard four-string bass (the original uses a five-string with a low B string, enabling use of the low C and D).

Figure 7 shows the same melody as earlier, but this time including tablature for bass.

There are a lot of musical ideas for discussion here; this is a melody that outlines the pentatonic scale (four of the five notes), includes some syncopated

**FIGURE 5**

**Three Approximations of the Keyboard Part**

Three musical staves illustrating approximations of a keyboard part. The top two staves show Student 1 and Student 2 with simplified chordal parts for Dm7 and G7. The bottom staff shows Student 1 with a more complex bass line.

**FIGURE 6**

**The Initial Bass Line**

Musical staff showing the initial bass line for Dm and G7 chords. The staff includes vocalizations: (Doh, doh, do, do, doh, do, do, doh, doh).

**FIGURE 7**

**Bass Line in Standard Notation and Tablature**

Musical staff showing the bass line in standard notation and tablature for Dm and G7 chords. The tablature shows fret numbers: 5, 5, 5, 5, 3, 5, 3, 3.

We argue not. However, even when learned through tablature or by rote, this might still be too challenging to play, so let us approximate it.

Clearly, the easiest step would be to remove the grace notes entirely, and then the next consideration is the quick move between strings 3 and 2. Figure 8 shows a first level of approximation (removing the upbeats).

While this is still easily recognizable as the introductory bass line from the song, it is now much more manageable for beginners on the instruments. However, the part can be approximated even further in Figure 9.

While it no longer includes the characteristic contour and rhythm from the previous versions, it still retains the important features of a solid bass line, outlining the harmonic motion and providing strong downbeats. This is where approximation and scaffolding come in; beginning students can play the most basic version of this line, supporting the more advanced students and vocalists as they tackle the original. If the class consists of all beginning students, scaffolding techniques, like relying on a backing track to fill in the missing parts, can provide the opportunity for students to play a song that would otherwise be above their skill level. As the students' competence grows, the contingent support offered to the students can transition so that more of the responsibility for learning is returned to the student, in line with Brownfield and Wilkinson's tenets of scaffolding.<sup>24</sup> Also note the difference between the two examples in Figure 9; while they look the same in traditional staff notation, the tablature highlights that one is fretted while the other can be played just on open strings.

Figure 10 shows the other section of the piece, the chorus with its rising chromatic bass line.

This effective moment of the song provides dynamic contrast, pared down to just bass drum and vocals, and as the contour of the vocal line rises through each phrase, the instruments rejoin in a unison off-beat chromatic line, from tonic straight through to tonic.

In a more traditional, reading-first guitar or bass method, learning this passage

rhythms, can be played using only two fingers on the fretting hand, and has some hammer-ons or ascending slurs. However, if we were to work on this excerpt only when students have already mastered reading these complex rhythms, have learned notes in third position on

the bass, and possess enough finger dexterity to handle the grace notes, it would be quite some time before they could perform this part. Should students be allowed to play music they know and love only once they are able to handle the complexity of reading it on the page?

## FIGURE 8

### Approximation by Removing Upbeats and Grace Notes

The figure shows two measures of music in 4/4 time. The first measure is for a Dm chord, and the second is for a G7 chord. The notation is written on a bass clef staff. The first measure has a quarter note on the 5th fret of the 3rd string, followed by a quarter rest. The second measure has a quarter note on the 5th fret of the 3rd string, followed by a quarter note on the 3rd fret of the 3rd string, then another quarter note on the 5th fret of the 3rd string, and finally a quarter note on the 3rd fret of the 3rd string. Below the staff is a tablature line with 'T' above and 'A' and 'B' below. The first measure has a '5' on the 3rd string line, followed by a quarter rest. The second measure has '5' on the 3rd string line, a '3' on the 3rd string line, '5' on the 3rd string line, and '3' on the 3rd string line, each with a quarter rest below it.

would take a long time. First the notes of C major in first position would be learned on the strings, with quarter notes devoid of syncopation. It would take months of practice before learning the accidentals and off-beats, as well as learning to move up the neck of the instrument past the third fret. However, with tablature and by trusting our students' ability to play the rhythms they hear, they can quickly learn this chromatic passage in Figure 11 played starting on the fifth fret and moving up from strings 3 to 1.

However, there is still another way to play this passage, one that virtually any player can master no matter how new to the instrument. It can be taught simply by starting on the second string, open, and then adding the first finger on fret 1 and playing each successive fret once while sliding up until reaching the 11th fret. See Figure 12.

More advanced students may prefer to play the first fingering; it takes advantage of the thickness of the lower strings and is a good exercise in finger dexterity

and right-/left-hand coordination, among other things. However, the goal of approximation is to enable all students to play music they know and love at any skill level and as part of the ensemble. To see an example of a middle school Modern Band rehearsing "Uptown Funk," visit [bit.ly/modernbandrehearsal](http://bit.ly/modernbandrehearsal). In this video, many of the aspect of approximation can be seen firsthand. In the third section of the video, students of varying degrees of skill are performing together, with some playing approximated versions of the chords on guitar (i.e., the simplest chords on the first fret versus other voicings higher up the neck), some keyboardists are approximating the melodic parts from the horn section while others are staying on the harmonic progression, and different students on the electric bass are playing the part according to their level.

### Music at All Levels

As demonstrated through this article's notated examples, accommodations and adaptations can be used with students of all skill levels to keep both beginning

## FIGURE 9

### Further Approximation of Introductory Bass Line

The figure shows two examples of bass line approximations for Dm and G7 chords in 4/4 time. The first example, titled "Just downbeats," shows a bass clef staff with a quarter note on the 5th fret of the 3rd string in the first measure, followed by a quarter rest, and a quarter note on the 5th fret of the 3rd string in the second measure, followed by a quarter rest. The second example, titled "Open strings," shows a bass clef staff with a quarter note on the open 3rd string in the first measure, followed by a quarter rest, and a quarter note on the open 3rd string in the second measure, followed by a quarter rest. Below each staff is a tablature line with 'T' above and 'A' and 'B' below. The first example has a '5' on the 3rd string line in both measures. The second example has a '0' on the 3rd string line in both measures.

## FIGURE 10

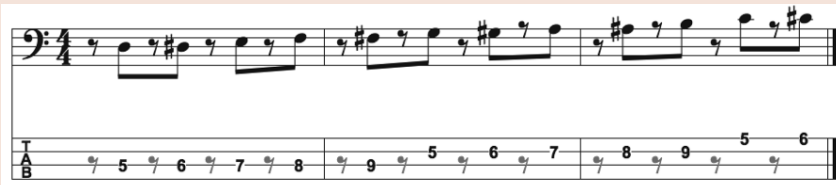
### Rising Chromatic Bass Line

The figure shows a single measure of music in 4/4 time on a bass clef staff. The melody consists of eighth notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The notes are grouped in pairs of eighth notes with a quarter rest between them. The first pair is G2 and A2, the second is B2 and C3, the third is D3 and E3, the fourth is F3 and G3, the fifth is A3 and B3, the sixth is C4 and D4, the seventh is E4 and F4, the eighth is G4 and A4, the ninth is B4 and C5, and the tenth is a quarter rest.



**FIGURE 11**

**Bass Line with Tablature**



**FIGURE 12**

**Approximation for One String**



“teachers’ decisions, actions, and ways of being during the creative experience itself will often be a determining influence in learners’ capacity to succeed and the extent of that success.”<sup>26</sup>

**NOTES**

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and advanced students motivated. Approximation through one-finger chords, simplified melody lines, and/or changing the key to a song to match the chords that your students know can provide access to thousands of songs. Once songs are looked at as simple harmonic progressions, changing songs to beginner-friendly keys can allow students to perform thousands of songs after learning a few simple chords. Embracing approximation allows teachers to differentiate instruction through the active process of scaffolding, thus expanding access to more music for more students. Table 3 summarizes the

different approximations that students at all skill levels of the scaffolded classroom could use.

Using popular music in a Modern Band classroom is about more than simply the instrumentation and the repertoire; it is also about embracing the opportunities for differentiation that work so well in popular music ensembles. It is also about embracing different styles of teaching through popular music pedagogies and the changing role of the music educator to embrace the role of *facilitator* instead of *director*.<sup>25</sup> After all, as music educators Jackie Wiggins and Magne Espeland explain, the

**TABLE 3**

**Scaffolded “Uptown Funk” Using Three Levels of Approximation**

Level	Guitar	Keyboard	Bass	Drums
Level 3	Funk chords and muted strums, slurs in riff	Bass line in left hand with chords in right	Actual bass line with fills	Include fills, hi-hat lifts
Level 2	More complicated chords and simplified guitar riff	Bass notes and triads in right hand	Bass line with upbeats removed	All parts of a basic backbeat
Level 1	Simple two-note chords	Two-note chords	Just open strings on downbeats	Just two parts

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