



**MUSIC
FOR YOUTH**

INFINITY RESOURCE SERIES

BACK TO BASS

A CREATIVE MUSIC PROJECT

The second resource pack in the Infinity series of creative music workshops for young people.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Music for Youth	1
National Union of Teachers	1
Mark Withers	1
Overview of the pack	2

BACK TO BASS

Core principles and the theme	3
Structure of sessions	4
Creative resources	6
Recording your work	6
Inclusion of all pupils	7
Selected listening	7

PROJECT TEACHING GUIDE

Session 1, Sunrise: Simple Basses	9
Session 2, Night: First Bass Riffs	12
Session 3, Sound the Trumpet: Music for Now	15
Session 4, The Home Fires: Music for the Past	18
Session 5, Believe Me: Refining Your Music	21
Session 6, The Big Picture: Putting it all Together	24

CREATIVE RESOURCES

Percussion instruments	27
Pianos and keyboards	28
Listening	30
Sets of notes	31
Structures	32

INTRODUCTION

MUSIC FOR YOUTH



Music for Youth is a national music education organisation which presents performance opportunities and showcase events on a large scale across the country for young musicians. The Infinity Project provides grass roots support to non-specialist teachers in the form of music resource packs and CPD opportunities, as well as the chance to participate in Infinity LIVE workshops alongside other schools at our National Festival.

NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS



The NUT has a long established partnership with Music for Youth and is proud to promote the Infinity resources, which provide professional development for primary teachers. The resources are built on the trade union principles of active learning and cooperation, building links between the work of teachers in mainstream and special school settings. The NUT believes that using creativity in the classroom allows pupils to learn, think and grow in preparation for life beyond the classroom. Creativity through the use of music-making brings classrooms alive and enables teachers to inspire and pupils to imagine. The NUT would like to encourage teachers to engage with the Infinity resources. As one teacher on a recent NUT course commented they provide “excellent practical and useful training to make music accessible for both children and practitioners.”

MARK WITHERS - AUTHOR OF BACK TO BASS



For over 25 years, Mark Withers has been performing old music and creating new music working alongside the widest possible range of musicians. He has collaborated with numerous orchestras and opera companies in the UK and abroad for many years, such as the London Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Aix-en-Provence Festival and in Barcelona with the Fundacion “La Caixa”. In recent years he has helped to establish new creative education programmes with groups including the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France in Paris and the Orchestra Nacional de Espana in Madrid. Mark has a special interest in music for people with sickness and disability. He has had periods as a resident musician at the Royal Schools for the Deaf in both Margate and Manchester. Since 1998 he has directed the London Symphony Orchestra's programme of work for children in London Hospitals. From 2000 to 2004, he was also a member of staff at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in London where he worked with children with cancer and heart conditions. Mark is an advisor and lead musician for the charity, Jessie's Fund, providing music for disabled and life-limited children throughout the UK.

OVERVIEW OF THE PACK

This music composition project is aimed at 6-11 year olds and is suitable for use by all classroom teachers, youth workers and arts leaders regardless of their previous musical experience and confidence. Whilst presented as a six week Unit of Work, the pack can be used more flexibly in informal settings, perhaps as a workshop day or an ongoing creative project.

The pack contains practical ideas for working with others, starting points to explore and develop, and progressive lesson guides.

The children will:

- Immerse themselves in practical musical exploration
- Use their vocal and instrumental skills
- Be encouraged to draw on their own unique musical experiences
- Be introduced to a broad range of stimuli

The leader's role will be to act as a facilitator drawing out individual contributions, challenging each child to move outside of their comfort zone and together take ownership of the project. For schools there will be the opportunity to make links across the curriculum and to encourage learning outside the classroom.

In this project the shared understanding of the process will be central so progress should be recorded and used to support and focus learning. The final performance will be a celebration of this musical journey.

Leaders will be encouraged to work with other groups such as Music Education Hubs, professional and amateur musicians, arts organisations, schools, students and the local community.

The project has been devised with an awareness of the key aspirations of Ofsted and the National Music Plan and will support the aims of the National Curriculum.

BACK TO BASS

CORE PRINCIPLES AND THE THEME

Back to Bass is the second resource pack in the Infinity series of creative music workshops for young people. At its heart, the work follows several principles to maximise its value to teachers and their pupils:

- Pupils' engagement in music is optimised when they are creating their own original work. This creativity is enhanced by listening to and understanding a wide range of music.
- Teachers leading this work may or may not have a particular expertise in music. Their key skill is the ability to lead their pupils in a process of exploration.
- Music is an area of the curriculum that allows for the inclusion of pupils with the widest imaginable range of skills and abilities. Children who find school life quite demanding often excel musically. All of the ideas in Back to Bass embrace the diverse range of needs that can be found in so many primary school classes.
- It can be a challenge for primary school teachers to find time for all of the work that they want and need to include with their class. Music work is at its most stimulating when combined with work in the broader curriculum: the music has increased relevance and learning is enhanced in other areas.

The musical content in Back to Bass works from the bottom up. Fix the lowest voice or instrument in your music and then the remaining parts flow freely from this. It uses this principle in the creation of pieces of music that describe the local area around your school, or base, in the past as well as the present.

It is this local area and its history that forms the basis of the cross-curricular work that you can link to Back to Bass. Mathematics, Science, Literacy, History...

The suggestions in these resources for work away from music will be familiar to many teachers. They are not intended to create more work for you to do, rather they are designed to help you to integrate music activity into the already intense demands of the primary classroom. Skills of collecting and presenting data, of reading and writing, of exploring history in local, national and global contexts are all vital to work across the age range in primary education.

Of course, with each year group the manner in which you want to tackle these tasks will vary, and you may want to adapt the activities to meet the particular demands of your class. Indeed, you may want to leave out some of the tasks completely if a particular area is useful to you in your wider teaching and demands the extra focus. The key to Back to Bass is to make teaching and learning these vital skills easier and more engaging through the added dimension of creative engagement in music.

STRUCTURE OF SESSIONS

Back to Bass is intended to be taught in six music sessions of around an hour each. These sessions would normally be delivered weekly, but the work could also be used to form an intensive project during a creative arts week or similar. In each session some extension work is included that creates material for an additional session should you want to use the ideas over a longer time frame.

Each session in Back to Bass is built in the same way. It starts with a warm up which will then be of use in two related music activities. The warm up and activities can each be completed in 15-20 minutes but could also be expanded to create a longer music session if desired. There is then a piece of listening connected to each session (I talk about the chosen pieces on page 8).



The cross-curricular activities are not intended to be delivered within these sessions. They cover ground that is integral to work in many primary schools and offer teachers a degree of flexibility in focusing on areas that are most appropriate for their class.

There will be a variety of outcomes of this music work from school to school, from class to class and of course from pupil to pupil. This will be very familiar to teachers across the curriculum but music does have its own peculiarities. Each session contains a guide to the outcomes that you might expect to have achieved. Below are some general indicators that might help you:

- In music, it is the simple things that are hardest! Repeating a simple tune, holding a pulse, playing the cymbal at the end would seem very straightforward but are almost impossible for some.
- Pupils who find the above difficult will benefit from having a freer role in the music. Making up a tune using a pentatonic scale (page **31**) would seem to be the harder role but it is perfect for those that will follow intuition rather than intellect.
- Never write off a piece of music if it sounds “a mess”. Some of the greatest pieces of music started off just that way – and some people would say that they still are a mess! If you can, look at the intention of each pupil in what they are playing rather than the sound itself.
- If this intention is good and clear and the sound is a mess, there is material in the resources section that should help you to tidy it up. The most common issues are pulse and reducing the notes that are available. Beyond that, the most common issue in music with a class of perhaps 30 children is that there is too much going on at once. Spacing things out, allowing for a bit of time, can often be a great help.
- Visual signals can be a great help. For example, counting the 10 times that a bass line happens before a change can be stressful and often leads to difficulties. Carrying on until there is a signal to change calms things enormously.

CREATIVE RESOURCES

Over and above the material contained in the project teaching guide, Back to Bass contains some background creative resources (page 27) to ensure that all teachers have the knowledge required to make Back to Bass a success with their classes.

These resources appear in the order that you are likely to need them. The first three parts of the creative resources are central to all of the work in this project. The fourth part, on selecting which notes to use (page 31), will become relevant by Session 2. The fifth part, on musical structures (page 32), will become relevant from Session 3 onwards.

RECORDING YOUR WORK

Integral to each session is recording and listening to the work that you are developing. Recording technology has moved on a great deal in recent years and digital recording at relatively high quality is readily available. You may want to use one of these devices to record:

- Mobile phone or tablet.
- A computer. Free recording software is available (Audacity is available for PC and Mac). For most desktop computers, you will need a microphone to plug in.
- A video camera.
- A dedicated recording machine such as those made by Zoom, Sony etc. These are the audio equivalent of a digital camera and provide great ease of use and very high quality for relatively low cost. Easy as it is to record, playback can be more complicated. Listening to your work by plugging your recording machine into the best speakers available to you will give a much better impression of your work.

Your school IT coordinator will be able to guide you towards the best option available in your school.

INCLUSION OF ALL PUPILS

It is impossible to target work at every single child in primary education. If you are using Back to Bass in Reception and Key Stage 1, you may want to simplify the project in a few areas:

- A new warm up activity is included for each session. Younger pupils may benefit from repeating the same activities rather than moving on.
- Some of the compositional work involves structuring music into separate sections: focusing on a single short section will be easier.
- Back to Bass moves flexibly between work with voices and instruments; emphasising the vocal side will be a successful strategy with younger pupils.

None of the musical ideas in Back to Bass are completely new, although I hope that they are brought together in a new way. The musical techniques have all been tried out in a variety of settings, and in particular in schools for pupils with special education needs. I can be very confident that they will give a platform on which all of your pupils can build.

SELECTED LISTENING

At the end of each of the six sessions is a suggested piece of listening. These pieces come from a broad range of traditions and times although all are from the British Isles. You may want to listen to this music during the main music session. They could equally well be used at a different time from the main music activity, either before or after.

I have selected these six pieces for a variety of reasons. Some are pieces that pupils and teachers alike will have heard before. This work will allow you to listen to them in a new way. Others are likely to be unknown to you. I hope that they will open the door to an ever wider range of listening. This project is about place and time and for this reason, each of the pieces comes from the British Isles. Ireland, Wales, England and Scotland all feature and all in ways that depict the place that they are linked with. I have gone back in time about 300 years to Henry Purcell and tried to select music at key points between then and now. Please go back even further if you wish. The work of Thomas Tallis and William Byrd would take us back another 100 years. They wrote amazing music.

Above all, all of this music grows from the bass, from the lowest voice in the piece. As it is this technique that we will be exploring, they will all give you pointers as to ideas that you and your pupils would like to include in your own work.

The pieces are:

1. PETER MAXWELL DAVIES - An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise, 1984

Peter Maxwell Davies was an inspirational composer in the classical music world from the 1960s onwards. He was also one of the leading figures in revitalising music education. “Max” lived in the Orkney Islands and much of his music is related to the magic of this place. An Orkney Wedding is unusual in orchestral music for including the Highland bagpipes.

2. ROD TEMPERTON/HEATWAVE - Boogie Nights, 1976

You may not have heard of Rod Temperton, a keyboard player originally from Cleethorpes, but you almost certainly know his music. Boogie Nights was a hit in 1976. His music attracted the attention of leading music producer Quincy Jones and, after leaving Heatwave, Temperton went on to write enormous hits for Michael Jackson and many others. Thriller is perhaps the best known and biggest selling Temperton song.

3. HENRY PURCELL - Sound the Trumpet, 1694

Musicians from around the world who are interested in the Baroque period will purr at the mention of Henry Purcell. His music combines unbelievable measures of simplicity and beauty. An hour spent with a collection of Purcell’s greatest hits will be a memorable experience. Purcell held many important posts, including being organist at Westminster Abbey.

4. IVOR NOVELLO - Keep the Home Fires Burning, 1914

Novello was born in Cardiff in 1893 and benefited from the technological innovations of his time, being a hugely successful composer of shows and songs before going on to be an acting star of theatre and cinema. Keep the Home Fires Burning became one of the small number of songs that seem to encapsulate the spirit of the First World War.

5. THOMAS MOORE - Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms, 1808

Thomas Moore moved from Dublin to London in 1799 and his collections of Irish Folk songs were published many times over. The popularity of this particular song has never really gone away and you are far more likely to be able to whistle its tune than to remember its title.

6. ADELE / PAUL EPWORTH - Skyfall, 2012

Monty Norman’s original James Bond theme is one of the great icons of film music. It is to the credit of subsequent composers that the long line of Bond Movie theme songs has only served to enhance the reputation of this original theme, each one being linked to it in one way or another. Skyfall is one of the very best, fully deserving of the Oscar that it won.

PROJECT TEACHING GUIDE

SESSION 1 - SUNRISE: SIMPLE BASSES

The warm up will ensure that pupils are familiar with the instruments that are available to them and can use them flexibly. [Activity 1](#) looks at a vital musical ingredient in helping us to play in groups – a pulse. [Activity 2](#) adds a second vital element and begins to lead us towards an exploration of musical bass. The cross-curricular work begins to prepare the way for making music about your local area in [Session 3](#).

WARM UP: Passing instruments

This activity will help pupils use instruments in a focused way, exploring the range of sounds each instrument can make.

Sit with your class in a circle with a selection of percussion instruments placed in the middle (page 27).

Ask a pupil to choose one of the instruments. They play a note or two on this instrument and then pass it to their neighbour in the circle. This next pupil has to play the same instrument in a different way, making a different sound before passing it on again.

It will get harder and harder to keep finding new ways of playing: once you feel that it is time, ask the next pupil to swap the instrument for a new one. Keep swapping instruments as often as you feel is necessary.

ACTIVITY 1: Playing together with a pulse

It is easy to play together but harder to make it sound good! The first bit of musical glue that you can use to unite different sounds is a pulse.

Give an instrument each to half of your class, keeping a large, deep sounding drum for yourself. Some classes will be comfortable choosing their own instruments. Play together.

Ask the others in the class what they think of the music that you have made. It may not be that positive... Swap over and repeat the activity so that the listening group have the chance to play and the players can listen. Now let each group play once more. This time you start off the music with your drum. You play a regular pulse, at about the same speed as seconds ticking on a clock. For the second group, try the pulse a little faster and see what difference it makes.

ACTIVITY 2: Adding a drone

The second bit of musical glue is a drone, a single held note that is there throughout your music.

Repeat the last phase of Activity 1. However, this time use as many pitched percussion instruments as you have available (page 27). Restrict these to the natural notes. Use a low pitched instrument to play your pulse on a single note, ideally the note C or A. This is your drone.

When both halves of the class have played over a drone, you may want to experiment. Try different drone notes, or different pulses with a single drone. With each experiment, ask the listening group to say how they think the mood of the music has changed.

LISTENING: Peter Maxwell Davies – An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise, 1984

A recording of this piece can be found via this link:
(www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkioMJJaz1I)

The whole piece lasts around 12 minutes. It is the last two minutes that will be helpful to listen to. This is the "Sunrise" in the title and Peter Maxwell Davies introduces bagpipes into the music. The bagpipes have their own drone and this is reinforced by gigantic drones in the orchestra. There is no doubt that the sun rises, but the music stays grounded and strong.

OUTCOMES

At the end of this session, pupils will have increased familiarity and flexibility with percussion instruments. You will have played together in groups and explored how some restrictions in music can help freer elements to fit together. The restrictions that you have used are pulse and drone.

Points to look out for:

- The warm up should be straightforward and fun. The key is changing instruments often enough that it is never too hard yet pushing pupils to find interesting sounds from instruments. Often using a different sort of beater or changing from using a beater to a hand to play can create huge variations of sound.
- Activity 1 should sound chaotic, but less so when you have a pulse. It is to make this easier to manage that I have suggested that you split the class into two for this work. Establishing a signal for silence before you get started will help some groups.
- In Activity 2, you will not yet have a polished piece of music. What you are looking for is the progression from playing with no limits to now, with a pulse and a drone underpinning your work.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

Where are you?

For the first cross-curricular activity investigate the area that the pupils are growing up in, the area around your school.

Gather data on local plants, animals, size of city/town/village, population of city/town/village.

- How many new buildings are there in your area?
- How far do pupils travel to school and how long does this journey take?
- What are the noise levels in the area surrounding the school and what makes all the noise?
- How many computers do the pupils have access to?
- What are the meals that pupils typically eat?
- Is it possible to describe their diet?

Are there any photographs, drawings, pieces of writing that describe the area in which you live? Pupils could make a portfolio of collected works as well as creating their own new pieces.

EXTENSION

Keep playing over drones in groups. There are three good additional experiments that you might want to try.

When to play? Add in a key decision that each pupil has to make: when to play and when not to play. Up until now, most pupils will have played most of the time during their pieces. It will have a big effect on their music if they play only when they feel that the music needs them to.

How do you stop a piece? There are many ways of ending: drop out one by one, get slower, all join together, a big bang... Can groups find ways for their music to end naturally?

Split the class into four groups and give each group time to make their own piece over a drone. Each piece should last about one minute.

SESSION 2 - NIGHT: FIRST BASS RIFFS

Some of the best rhythms come from words and the warm up uses our own names to start exploring this. Then, in Activity 1, we borrow from a masterful funk bass in Boogie Nights to make our own bass line while Activity 2 allows us to experiment with this as a starting point in our music.

Boogie Nights takes us back a generation and the cross-curricular work follows suit, asking pupils to explore the past of your local area. This will guide your music in Session 4.

WARM UP: Name game

This game will start us in the process of making bass lines and in making simple compositions in small groups.

Divide the class into small groups of around five or six pupils. Each group will use their first names as the ingredient to work with.

Give a steady pulse on a low drum at about two beats per second. The groups have three minutes to find their favourite way to say their first names. They speak all together, saying their names one by one, each name once. They can play with the order the names come in and the rhythm for each name. Each name piece will last between five and ten seconds.

Let the groups hear each others' ideas. For each group take suggestions for which were the favourite bits and for how the group could further develop their work.

Give the groups another three to five minutes before listening to their final versions.

ACTIVITY I: Make the bass

The first simple bass lines will be short, again between five and ten seconds. Repeat over and over again.

The whole class should learn to sing the main bass line from this session's listening, Boogie Nights: "Got to keep on dancing, keep on dancing". You might listen to a snippet of the recording or sing it to them.

Take one of the group chants from the warm up, with a few changes if you wish. Alternatively make up a new short phrase about the the city/town/village your school is in, from the last session.

How many different ways can pupils perform this bass line? Speaking, singing, clapping/body sounds, drums, piano, pitched percussion instruments. If you are using piano or pitched percussion, you can limit the number of notes that are used in a selected scale (page 31).

ACTIVITY 2: Arrangement

This activity takes this simple bass line to form a first piece of music.

Together with the pupils, choose your favourite way of performing your bass line. Practice singing/playing it over and over again so that it becomes a repeating pattern. Musicians will call this a riff or an ostinato.

Can you add in some hand percussion instruments over the top of your bass line? It might be that some groups provide the bass while others play along. If children need guidance on what to play on their percussion instrument, each could play a repeating rhythm. This could be of their own name or of something about your local area.

Once you have your definitive version, record this first piece of work and listen to it together. It will be very interesting to hear again once you are at the end of the work as a guide to the progress the class has made. It will also be useful in Session 4.

LISTENING: Rod Temperton/Heatwave – Boogie Nights, 1976

A lot of recordings of the song are available on the internet (www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlHV9_R4ZwU). Watch out for one with good sound. If it comes with a video of Heatwave performing, Temperton is on keyboards.

You have already sung the main bass line together. Have a listen through to this song once and then sing along to the bass on a second hearing.

OUTCOMES

At the end of this session, pupils will have extended their use of drones from Session 1 into more sophisticated bass lines. While they are not yet producing structured pieces, they have used a simple, repeating bass line as the main element of their music, playing freely over the top of it.

Points to look out for:

- If pupils struggle with the warm up, it will be because they are making it too complicated. The best name chants will be very simple.
- The Boogie Nights bass is quite captivating and you may find it hard to get away from in Activity 1. You might work with a slightly slower pulse just to change to feeling.
- In Activity 2, the temptation will be for the pupils that are playing hand percussion to play too much. Pupils could be split into small groups and each group has their turn to play over the bass.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

Where would you have been in 1976?

Investigate how the area around your school has changed since 1976. This may well be a time that some pupils' parents remember well.

Start with all of the data and other information that you found for the area in the present day and look at what has stayed the same and what has changed.

How do these changes effect the lives of adults and of children?

EXTENSION

Your composition so far includes a single bass line. If you add another, you can begin to have a piece with a more developed structure.

Play the music that you have already made in Activity 2. This will be Section A.

Find a second bass line to use: this could come from another of the group chants that you made or it could come from another phrase about your town.

Make a new section of music with this new bass line, much as you did with the first. This will be Section B.

Try playing your music in the order Section A, Section B, Section A. Does this work well? What happens if you swap A and B around or find a different way to order them? Try A A B A – that is how a lot of music goes and you could make the second Section A just a little bit different from the first.

Record your piece, listen back to it and modify it as you wish.

SESSION 3 - SOUND THE TRUMPET: MUSIC FOR NOW

So far we have concentrated on the bottom layer of the music, on the bass. In this Session we explore a simple structure to use alongside this: that of question and answer. This, alongside research into the local area, allows for the composition of a first piece about your local area. Henry Purcell's *Sound the Trumpet* uses question and answer in a very rich way, but he was writing hundreds of years ago. Looking at your local area in his period will give an interesting perspective to your research, particularly as this was before the industrial revolution. It will also give you a variety of possibilities for composition in [Session 4](#).

WARM UP: Question and answer

The simple structure of question and answer is very common in music and is easy to use. It gives us a good first way of organising the music that goes over our bass lines.

Work in a circle. Clap a short pattern (the question) that the class clap back to you (the answer). Question and answer might each last for four beats in your pulse. Try with a few different patterns and using claps and other body sounds such as stamps, slaps etc.

Once the class has got the idea, each pupil around the circle can have their turn at asking the question.

Repeat the warm up, this time using simple percussion instruments rather than body sounds.

ACTIVITY 1: Questions for now

Work from the bass line that you like the best from [Session 2](#). Make sure it is a good length for you to work with: once again between five and ten seconds will be easiest. This will form the backbone of your piece of music about your local area in the present.

Decide which group of children will sing/play the bass line. While they practice this, other groups (about five to six pupils in each group) should each make their musical question using percussion instruments. The questions must be short, between four and eight beats will work well. Try out the questions one at a time over the bass line, with all the children who are not playing the bass line giving the answer.

Choose an order for your questions and try out q1/a1, q2/a2... over your bass line. Record this, listen back and make any adjustments that you wish. In particular, listen to see if it creates the feel that you want for your local area in the present. The easiest adjustments to make will be to tempo (how fast it is) and dynamic (how loud it is).

This will be Section A of your piece of music about your local area in the present (page 32). You will want it to last for between one and two minutes. If that means not everyone has a turn, don't worry, they can be accommodated later on in Activity 2.

How many different ways can pupils perform this bass line? Speaking, singing, clapping/body sounds, drums, piano, pitched percussion instruments. If you are using piano or pitched percussion, you can limit the number of notes that are used in a selected scale (page 31).

ACTIVITY 2: Music for now

This activity uses the slightly freer idea of musical conversations to make a new section.

You can either work with the same bass line or use a second one that you like from your previous work. Try individual pupils asking musical questions over this bass line. These questions are much the same length as in Activity 1. However, this time it is an individual pupil that responds. The response does not have to be the same as the question but is whatever the pupil wants to play: it could be an imitation or a contrast...

The music can pass back and forwards between two pupils to form a conversation and Section B of your piece is a series of conversations between different pupils over the bass line. Try out all of your music in the order Section A, Section B, Section A (page 32). Record, listen and edit.

LISTENING: Henry Purcell – Sound the Trumpet, 1694

There is a lovely version of Sound the Trumpet performed by Alison Balsom and Iestyn Davies with The English Concert on (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wa2vzx-aNrw)

Sound the Trumpet starts at 43 seconds although pupils may enjoy all of this short film.

Purcell's bass line is very simple and it hardly changes at all (can pupils spot the tiny changes?), but what is remarkable is Purcell's inventiveness in the conversation that goes on over the top.

OUTCOMES

At the end of this session, pupils will have built on the experiments in Sessions 1 and 2 to compose their first piece of music, a piece about your local area in the present. The first element in the composition is a bass line that you feel fits the character of your area. The music uses question and answer as a device to fix what goes over your bass line. The piece lasts four to six minutes and is in an ABA structure.

Points to look out for:

- In your warm up, keep the change between question and answer as regular as possible. If you feel that some pupils will find it hard to do the questioning, omit the second step and move straight to percussion instruments.
- Take some time in choosing your bass line. It could be that this expands to be a piece of work by itself, with the remaining work for Activity 1 then replacing Activity 2 which you can leave out if necessary, or save for another moment.
- Musical conversations can be much more interesting for those taking part than for people listening. Keep Activity 2 moving so that a lot of pupils have a go. Conversations could easily form a term's music work by themselves.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

Historical changes to your local area

You have a perspective about your local area from the present and from a generation ago. Henry Purcell lived from 1659 to 1695. What would he have found in the area during his lifetime?

Specific data going back as far as the 17th century may be hard to gather but a good picture can be built up from changes in life expectancy and general health, population levels, political structures, major inventions, local landmarks or diet.

The 17th century was a period where the arts flourished in Britain and there is a lot of architecture, writing and painting, as well as music, that can help build up a picture of your area at that time.

EXTENSION

It is a short step from a musical conversation to individual pupils playing a short solo by themselves. This may not be for everyone but it is often surprising who finds it easy.

You are going to add in a Section C to your piece of music. This works exactly as Section B but instead of pupils passing ideas back and forwards to each other, one pupil at a time plays for longer to make a more sustained solo. You could use the Section B bass line or pick a new one.

The easiest instrument for pupils to use will be pitched percussion played with a single beater. They should start off with a short pattern of three or four notes and then see what happens as they play around with that pattern. Try it higher or lower, transformed in any which way. Often the easiest is not to think, just play.

Run through your piece in the following order of sections: A B A C

SESSION 4 - THE HOME FIRES: MUSIC FOR THE PAST

Your class is playing music more and more as a group: the warm up aims to improve how they listen as they play. The work in the two Activities repeats much of the same ground as in [Session 3](#), but this time the music is tied to your local area in the past. Repeating the same idea should give pupils the chance to take more control of their work.

Your local area will have been hugely changed by the major, global events of the past few hundred years. The cross-curricular work gives the chance to cast an eye over the key moments that have shaped our modern world, with Keep the Home Fires Burning giving a particular focus on the First World War.

WARM UP: Follow the leader

While most people think that skill in music depends on singing and playing, in putting music together musicians actually depend on their skill at listening to each other more than anything else.

With everyone in a circle, use claps or other body sounds, start a short, simple rhythmic pattern that repeats over and over again. It will last between four and eight beats. Once the class have heard it, they should join in with you.

After three or four repetitions, the pattern will be strongly established. The class remain on the same pattern but you change to a new one. Keep the two patterns going for a few repetitions so that the class can hear the new idea. When you shout “change”, the class join you in your new pattern. Repeat this idea. If the class find it too straightforward, increase the complexity of the new patterns.

ACTIVITY 1: Bass for the past

Back in [Session 2](#), you generated lots of bass riffs. Now we need to find a new one to use.

This activity can start with listening to any recordings that you made at the end of [Session 2](#) and considering all of the research that you have done into your local area in the past.

Do you think that any of these bass lines from [Session 2](#) will be useful to you in creating this piece of music about past times? If not, what changes do you need to make? What can you learn from the piece of Purcell that you listened to in [Session 3](#)?

Use this information to find two bass lines to use in your music about the past. Like your last piece, this piece will have two sections, so having two bass lines will be a very good start.

ACTIVITY 2: Music for the past

This is about filling in the music over the bass lines to complete a new piece.

Repeat any of the processes that you used in Session 3 to complete your music. Repeating the same working method is a great way to consolidate the work with your class. They can take on a bit more of the leadership role the second time around.

While you are working, try to avoid re-inventing the wheel: a lot of the decisions that you make about how to organise questions and answers/ conversations/solos or about how to order the different sections can be developed through this process.

Record, listen and edit.

LISTENING: Ivor Novello – Keep the Home Fires Burning, 1914

I would suggest that you listen to two versions of this song, especially as your work has started from differences between past and present.

(www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDb4QQdTQ0s) is a recording of the song from 1917 made by John McCormack, one of the biggest stars of his time.

Katie Melua's version (www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bbF8IulkJg) shows a very different perspective, looking forward 100 years.

As an interesting aside, you might investigate the differences in how recordings were made in 1917 compared to now. A lot of the differences in these two recordings are due to the technical flexibility available to Katie Melua.

OUTCOMES

At the end of this session, pupils will have consolidated much of the work from Sessions 1-3, using the same technique to make a second piece about your local area, this time looking at your area in the past. Once again the piece will have an ABA structure and last for approximately four to six minutes (page 32).

Points to look out for:

- In the warm up, don't insist that the original rhythms are always correct.
- For the Activities, it is amazing the big effects that small changes can have. Spend time thinking about how you want the music to change for the past and then create new work based on these differences.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

Major historical events

We have looked at change on a local level, but what about major historical events?

Henry Purcell was alive in the second half of the 17th century. Since that time, which are the major events that have had a national or even a global significance? World wars, medical advances, the industrial revolution, the rise of computers, the Enlightenment, the rise and fall of European empires.

The First World War is an easy event to look at in detail as there is so much documentation available. Poetry and art abound and there is much documentation about the lives of combatants. However, how was life affected in your local area? Diet, the changing role of women, the shifting of political power? There may well be a war memorial in your area. Why was this the first war after which so many memorials were built?

EXTENSION

You already have two pieces of music about your local area: in the past and in the present. A third piece will give the whole project a much broader balance.

Choose the period that you want your piece to be about. Once you have your bass lines on instruments or voices, work with voice rather than instruments. Question and answer will still be very useful to you but you will need to create a simple text to work from. I would recommend a text of no more than eight lines.

SESSION 5 - BELIEVE ME: REFINING YOUR MUSIC

This session is a gathering together of all the new work that you have explored together, particularly in Sessions 3 and 4. It gives the opportunity to collect up ideas and begin to prepare them for presentation, both in music and across the curriculum.

The warm up and the listening are the only new elements and these should be fun, particularly the amazing journey of Believe Me from Irish folk tune to Hollywood gag.

WARM UP: Riff game

This game is a development of the warm up activity that you used in Session 4.

With everyone in a circle, start off a simple rhythmic pattern with claps/body sounds. The pupil to your right copies this and then teaches it to the pupil on their right and so on until the whole group are clapping the same pattern.

Repeat with a new pattern but this time, when about ten pupils are on this pattern, start passing a second pattern to the right.

Each pupil should stay on whichever their pattern is until the new pattern is taught to them as it travels round the circle. You might get three or four patterns all travelling at the same time.

ACTIVITY 1: Listen and play

You have made two or more pieces in Sessions 2 and 3. Now is the time to check them out. You will need to decide whether to work on one piece at a time (slower but easier if memories are hazy) or on all of your pieces together.

Listen to the recordings that you made. Use them to remind yourselves who was playing which instruments, what they were playing and what order the music came in.

Play your pieces. This is a very easy statement to make but it may take a couple of goes to get everything how you wish.

ACTIVITY 2: Refine

Do your pieces actually do what you want them to do? Do they fit together how you want them to fit together?

This is the first time that you will have heard all of your music at one time. The process of refinement, of editing, is vital in creating music as in so much else. Now is the moment to make any adjustments that could make all the difference to the music that you have created.

These adjustments need not be dramatic: it is often tiny changes that transform a piece of work. Take a look at beginnings and endings, how long each section goes on for, dynamics (loud and soft) and tempo (fast and slow). Major changes can be very hard for everyone to remember so it is important to keep things simple at this stage.

LISTENING: Thomas Moore – Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms, 1808

While *Keep the Home Fires Burning* may have changed a little in meaning over the last 100 years, the song *Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms* has also gone on a massive journey since it was first a hit in the late 18th century.

Rather than listening to a single recording, see if you can use the internet and other resources to find out quite how much and in how many ways this song has been used.

Three pointers for your exploration: John McCormack (the singer from [Session 4](#)), Harvard University and Bugs Bunny all feature...

OUTCOMES

At the end of this session, the class will have a clear idea of the final versions of the pieces that they developed in [Sessions 3](#) and [4](#). They should be able to play through the pieces without stopping, even if there is still a further step to achieving a finished performance.

Points to look out for:

- This warm up game is the most complex in this programme of work. If you doubt that it will work well with your class, you could repeat the warm up from [Session 4](#), perhaps using hand percussion instruments instead of clapping.
- While remembering work from previous sessions, some pupils will be helped by making a chart giving the structure of the music.
- Allow for pieces to be different each time they are played. A few key moments where everyone knows precisely where they are in the music will be very helpful.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

Gather together your work

You have researched data, collected and created new artistic work and writing. Now is the time to gather all of these ideas together and consider how best to present them as this will be part of your work in Session 6:

- Is data best displayed in tables or charts?
- How are these best presented?

They could be on paper or made into computer presentations. Differences such as change in average height could be shown physically with models or demonstrations by pupils.

Writing, both collected and newly created, could be collected in a book or could be read out in conjunction with any musical recording/performance. Similarly, art work could be displayed as an exhibition, collected into a book or projected onto a screen.

EXTENSION

If you have been doing the extension work in Sessions 1 – 4, this work will have naturally expanded to fill a first and a second session at this point. You will have more than enough to do.

One extra consideration will be fitting all of your pieces together. Can they be structured together to make one larger piece about your local area over time? The section on Structures on page **32** may be useful here.

SESSION 6 - THE BIG PICTURE: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Rehearsal and performance are the lifeblood of music, but are also great social skills for pupils to develop. This session is about consolidating the work you have already done, with a great Adele song added in to inspire pupils to perform as well as she does.

WARM UP: Favourites

Rather than always moving on, this is the perfect moment for you and your pupils to choose your favourites from the warm up exercises and use them again. You have tried:

- Passing instruments (page 9)
- Name game (page 12)
- Question and answer (page 15)
- Follow the leader (page 18)
- Riff game (page 21)

ACTIVITY 1: Rehearse

It is clear that this is the next stage in your work, but how to rehearse is an art in itself. Repetition is key, but balancing repetition with the need to keep the attention of all of the pupils is not easy.

Talk through your piece by asking a series of very simple questions. Who starts? What do they play? Who joins in next? How long do they play for? These questions should be as easy to answer as possible. Pupils can answer individually or work in small groups to find the answers.

Play your music. Try and go through each piece without stopping, even if things do not go according to plan. Once you are at the end, discuss the things that went well and work on the areas that need attention. Then play again. Repeat this as often as you need until the performance of the music is stable and as you all want it to be.

ACTIVITY 2: Record/perform

You have recorded the music at every stage of your work and it would be good to make a final recording. You may have the additional opportunity to perform your piece. If so...

Who do you invite? Other classes in your school may want to hear your work but it might be of real interest to older generations. Can parents and grandparents come in to school to listen? If so, they may be able to give their thoughts afterwards in a discussion about how your local area has changed.

What do you include in your performance? Your music by itself may be quite short, but making it the focal point of a wider performance would work very well. You might play recordings of some of the listening pieces from the project while art work or data is being projected, or read out some of the written work. The audience might arrive at the performance through an exhibition of the cross-curricular work that you have explored.

LISTENING: Adele / Paul Epworth - Skyfall, 2012

(www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXvl1_lgGml)

This is a really clever song. It has its place in the long line of fabulous songs from James Bond movies but this is outstanding and was the first to win an Oscar.

The song alternates verse and chorus, as often happens. It uses two bass lines. They are both very simple and in fact are transformations of each other. Pupils may well spot how they are related.

More than that, the main bass line follows the same underlying harmonies as the original James Bond theme although it sounds completely different. This means that when the James Bond theme comes in, the song doesn't miss a beat and the Skyfall theme and the James Bond theme fit together perfectly.

Then there is the performance. A professional singer with live musicians and backing singers, all is very slick. Every gesture, every word can be heard and has its place. You and your class could be inspired to perform as well as this!

OUTCOMES

At the end of this session, pupils will have a polished performance of their pieces of music. The pieces might still vary slightly with each performance, but these variations should be within a range that means that pupils always know where they are in their performance and what happens next.

Points to look out for:

- Try to avoid worries at this stage! Session 5 should have laid the ground for this moment and solved the major issues. If any worries remain, look to simplify those particular moments.
- Keep control of time. I never rehearse without a watch in view, just to keep track of the need to get everything done.
- The way that you organise your performers on their "stage" will make a big difference. There are no rights or wrongs here and you will have a lot of information to draw on from all of the activities over the last few weeks.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: Presentation

As I mentioned above, your cross-curricular work deserves its place in any recording and performance every bit as much as your music. It will need planning and rehearsal in much the same way.

EXTENSION

Go on tour!

Repeating a performance in a new venue is thrilling and requires a great deal of discipline and concentration. Music for Youth offers lots of performance opportunities to groups of young musicians at any stage of their musical progression. Visit our website (www.mfy.org.uk) to see where you could perform at one of the Music for Youth Regional Festivals each spring.

Also, if you have performed in your own school, is there a neighbouring school that you can visit to give your performance? Maybe they have also followed the project and could perform to you? Or perhaps you could visit a local community group?

Rather than seeing your performance as a one-off, enjoy sharing it with a couple of different groups. Include an exchange of ideas about your area in the performance and the work will stay alive and evolve each time you share it.

CREATIVE RESOURCES

PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS

Percussion instruments form the vast majority of instruments found in primary schools. They are instruments that you hit, with your hand or with a beater, to make a sound. They are really easy to play, to start off with anyway, and yet have enormous possibilities.

Many musical traditions are based almost entirely around percussion: steel pans from the Caribbean, Brazilian Batucada, Gamelan music from Indonesia and a vast range of drumming styles from across Africa are among the traditions that you may want to seek out.

Here are a selection of the instruments you are most likely to have in your school. To play them you will need a good selection of soft and hard beaters. I will start with pitched percussion as these are the instruments that you will probably find most useful.

PITCHED PERCUSSION

Chime bars are individual notes with a metal bar over a small resonator. Bass chimes are much the same but are much larger and will therefore give a lower note. On these the bar will be made of wood or metal.

Xylophones and metallophones are sets of bars, made from wood and metal respectively, which are grouped together over a single large resonating box. They come in a range of sizes, once again getting lower in pitch as they get bigger. The type most commonly found in schools allows you to remove individual notes.

Bells and hand chimes give a single note, usually ringing on for a long time.

DRUMS AND TAMBOURINES

These come in all shapes and sizes and can be found from musical traditions all around the world. A few, such as timpani, can be tuned to play a particular note. The key to a good and long lasting drum is the quality of the drum skin which may be natural or artificial. Either is fine but if it is not of good quality, it will last for very little time.

CYMBALS AND GONGS

These are wonderful instruments and can create moments of magic in your music. They can also be uncomfortably loud. Using really soft beaters is very helpful here. As an alternative, cymbals and gongs can be scraped with a beater, with a cymbal brush or with finger tips and will give a very different range of sounds.

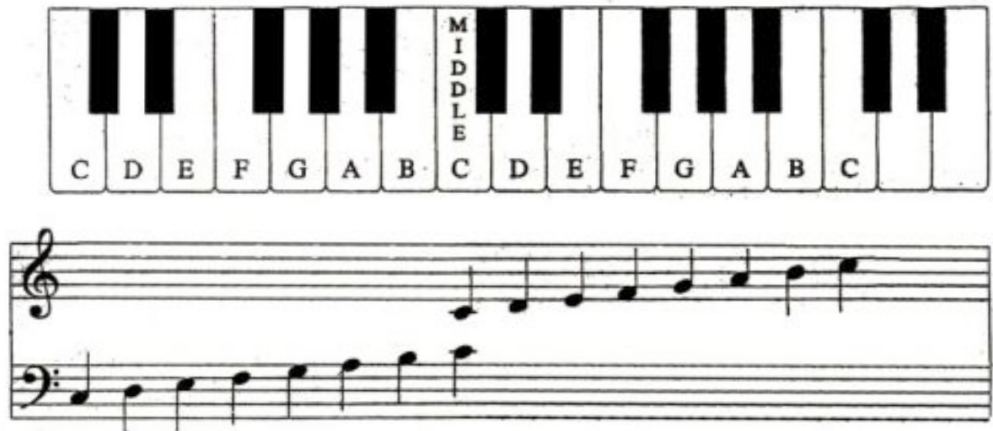
HAND PERCUSSION

Shakers, maracas, rainsticks, triangles, cabassas (instruments with beads) and guiros (scrapers) will all add much more to your music than would appear possible at first glance.

PIANOS AND KEYBOARDS

Pianos and keyboards are very common in schools but are often left exclusively to the “experts” to use. This is a great shame because they are almost always of higher quality than the other available instruments and they can provide a great basis for exploration. Check the section on Sets of Notes for some easy ways to use a piano (page 31).

The keys on a piano or keyboard are always laid out in the same pattern:



The black note immediately to the right of a white note is a sharp, e.g. to the right of C is C sharp. The black note immediately to the left is a flat, e.g. A flat. This means that some of the black notes have one alternate names: F sharp is the same note as G flat.

PIANOS

A piano keyboard will respond immediately to the way in which it is touched. A gentle contact will produce a gentle sound, a harsh contact will produce a harsh sound. This straight away makes it an invaluable resource. Whenever a key is pressed, a hammer hits the strings to play that note. As the key is released, a damper touches the strings to stop the sound. There are between one and three strings for each note.

In addition, the piano will have two or three pedals. Unless the instrument is of extremely high quality, it is only the right hand pedal that will be of interest. This is called the sustain pedal and it stops the dampers from working, meaning that notes will ring on until the sound naturally stops.

An electric piano will have a pedal that plugs in to the instrument and imitates the effect of a sustain pedal. Electric pianos will often provide extra sounds such as an organ, a harpsichord etc.

KEYBOARDS

These look much the same as electric pianos but will have additional functions, often at the expense of the quality of the keys themselves. They will make hundreds of different sounds and be able to provide background rhythms and automatic chords. They will often record and play back as well.

In practice, the difficulty in using keyboards is often limiting the functions that are available. They are at their most effective being used simply as a piano.

LISTENING

We all hear vast amounts of music through television adverts trying to seduce us, car radios keeping us from boredom, shopping centres luring us to spend our money and so on.

It is much less common that we really listen to music in a focused way. Each of the sessions of work in this project includes an element of listening, in this case to a recording. How can you ensure that this is a valuable experience for pupils and that they get the most information from the music that they hear?

INFORMATION

Having something to listen out for can be a great help. What structure the music is in. The story that the music tells. The context of the music: the time and place in which it was written. If there are words in the music, they are not always clear: going over the text first can clarify the meaning.

It doesn't seem relevant to me that Purcell was a "great composer" if I am listening to Sound the Trumpet. However, that he lived over 300 years ago might help me to look out for changes in the instruments that he used. Knowing that the bass line repeats over and over again might help me focus on the invention over that bass – and knowing that the bass changes just once might raise the question: what difference does that change make?

QUESTIONS

"Did you like that?" can be a terrible question to answer. Much more concise questions can help a great deal in focusing listening:

Which instruments are playing?

How many different sections are there?

What is the story or mood of the music?

How is this piece like/different from another you have listened to?

I like to ask the questions before listening to the piece so that pupils can think about them while the music is going on. As a variant, I might listen to the piece once, ask some questions without looking for the answers and then listen again so that pupils can consider their responses.

ACTIVE LISTENING

It is not always easiest to listen while sitting still. Moving with music can be great but this tends to lead to a collective response. To work on a more personal level, I like to try ideas such as giving pupils plasticine and asking them to make an object while the music is playing, or a paper and crayons and asking them to draw. There is no right or wrong here and the activity that you choose will depend on the pupils' experience in different areas.

SETS OF NOTES

If you play the note A on a piano and move to the right note by note, including the black notes, you will have played 12 notes by the time you reach another A. This second A looks the same and it sounds almost the same. It looks the same simply to help you play. It sounds so similar because it vibrates at exactly double the speed of the first A. Our ears and brain work as one to pick up that they fit together.

Making music with all these 12 notes is a complicated business and often involves a number of rules and regulations. However, simplifying the music by reducing the number of notes that you use can be a fantastic way to make music easier to devise play. You have taken away the “wrong” notes. The pitched percussion instruments that you have in school will be designed so that you can remove individual notes for this very reason.

When you do remove notes, you have to remove all of that particular note, high or low. So if I suggest that you play with D E F A B, you would have to remove (or not use) all of the black notes and any Cs and Gs (I like this set a lot).

Here are some other sets that you might find useful:

- The white notes, also called the naturals, with A the main note in the bass. The A will help to give some sense to all of the other notes. This is very easy to use on all instruments.
- The white notes, the naturals, with C the main note in the bass. This is much the same to use but will create a slightly different emotion in the music.
- The pentatonic scale. Penta-tonic just means five-note. On pitched percussion instruments, use the notes C D E G A. On pianos and keyboards, you might use plasticine to show the notes to avoid. This scale is so easy to use that it is the basis of folk music from all around the world.
- The black notes. This is especially useful on pianos and keyboards. In fact, it is the same pentatonic scale as above but transposed to start in a different place.
- Any set of five notes. Different sets of notes will work in much the same way as different palettes of colour for painters. Each set will give the music a particular mood. You can chose a set by trial and error, experimenting until you get the effect that you want. The trick is to make sure that only these five notes are used on all of the instruments that you have.

Here is a set to try: C E F F sharp A sharp

This set may sound strange at first but it can be ideal for scary, mysterious music.

STRUCTURES

It is not straightforward to write two minutes of music. However, break that two minutes up into thirty second sections and the task seems much simpler. What is more, these sections might well be related to each other so that you may only need to devise two sections of thirty seconds each to make a two minute piece.

Not only does this make creating music easier, but it makes the results more satisfying to listen to. Repetition and structure are vital in music. Our ears crave a return to musical ideas that we have already heard.

Below are some of the structures that you might find most useful in your work. To make the structures easier to follow, I shall label sections A B C and so on, where each letter represents a new musical idea. The length of each section will vary greatly with the piece of music that you are making but might be between thirty seconds and two minutes.

TERNARY FORM: A B A

Despite being so simple, this structure is surprisingly common and very strong. A clear contrast between the two sections works best.

SONG: A A B A

This is much the same as ternary form but the repeated A section makes a big difference. Whenever you use it, it feels right.

CHORUS/VERSE: A B A B A

Most of the pop songs that you know will follow this pattern and it has been used for centuries. Typically each verse will have different words. One verse may be an instrumental solo. The chorus remains unchanged.

RONDO: A B A C A D A...

The A section is called the Rondo Theme and the others are known as episodes. This structure can be very useful in an educational setting: the whole class works on A under the direction of their teacher. Then small groups repeat the same basic process by themselves to make the episodes.

THEME AND VARIATIONS: A A' A'' A'''...

Here you are working with a single idea that changes with each repetition. Again, this can be a very useful educational tool as well as providing a very strong musical basis. It is found almost everywhere in music and is the route of most jazz.