

Burn's Night Composition Project

Welcome to a 4 part lesson series created to help your class compose a special piece for a Burn's night celebration. These lesson plans take you step by step through a simple compositional process resulting in a unique piece of music with an A and a B section. Each lesson should roughly take between 40 - 50 minutes and contains a warm up activity, main task and extensions.

This project is designed to be delivered by anyone and only requires a little prior musical knowledge to assist with delivery. It should be a fun, free, creative experience for all and just requires enthusiasm and commitment to embrace the challenge.

Lesson 1

This lesson sets the scene for the project and we begin the compositional process.

Resources

- Burn's powerpoint (in pack)
- whiteboard
- speaker
- a couple of drums
- composition worksheet

Warm Up - Finding the heartbeat

Arrange the participants in a circle, sitting or standing and ask everyone to point to their hearts and to feel for their heartbeat. Can you feel it?

All music has a heartbeat like ourselves and it goes constantly through a piece of music. Sometimes it is fast and sometimes it is slow, it can also speed up and slow down like ours. After this exercise you may feel that yours has changed.

Play a piece of Scottish music from the list below and begin tapping your chest with 2 hands along to the beat. Check to see if everyone in the class is managing this before changing actions. Here is a selected list that have varying levels of complexity of fine and major motor skills. A mix of small and large actions should be used. Once the class have all demonstrated a sense of pulse the actions can be lead by them.

Extension - try with eyes closed.

- tapping head, shoulders, belly, knees and toes.
- Clapping
- Stamping feet (this is often more challenging to coordinate for young learners with the beat)
- Clicking
- Tapping finger and thumb together and changing fingers each time (works on fine motor skills)
- Tapping opposite elbows and then switching each time.
- Tapping the nose with one finger and changing hands each time.
- Tapping opposite shoulders and crossing over.
- Hopping on one leg
- Jumping

Suggested songs

Talisk - Pict

<https://youtu.be/WD5jloQhF7Y>

Rura - Malice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBVzZzZpA4o>

Woodstock Lenny - Mec Lir

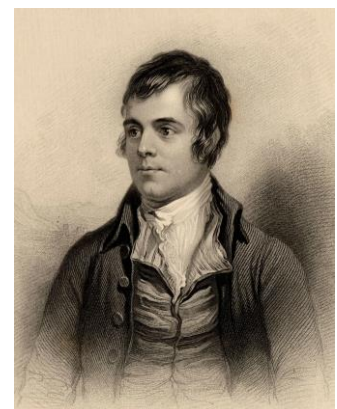
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y57JKlmziWg>

Main task - composing section A

To set the scene for the task discuss Burns' night using the first powerpoint slide. Who was Burns? What did he do? When did he live? Why do we remember him? Etc.

1. To begin writing, look at slide 3 and ask the class to identify some of the Scottish images on the board. Write these down on the whiteboard. Are there any other words that refer to Scotland that aren't on the board?

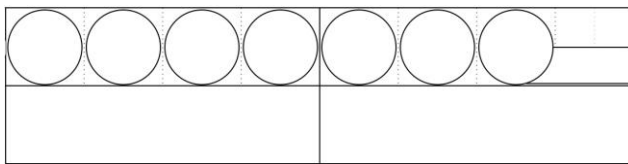
2. Once a large list has been written down, we are going to create rhythmic phrases or sentences with these words to create our song. This can be done as a class or split



into smaller groups depending on the age and independence of the group you are working with. A good starting example is...



'Scot-land, Scot-land, I love you'

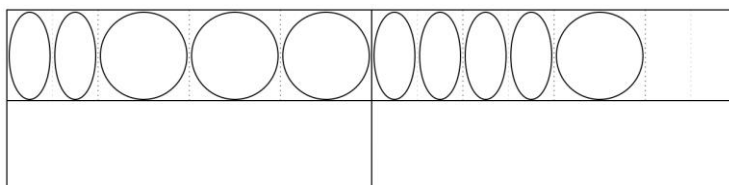


Get the class to say this after you rhythmically with a pulse on their chests. Once this has been established ask a volunteer to come and play the rhythm on one of the drums. Ensure that the volunteer continues to speak the words as they play.

As a class write some more phrases. With younger participants it could simply be just a list of words. For example they may pick *'Loch Ness monster'* whereas with an older group they may chose to write a sentence.



eg. *'Scary, green monster, lives near Inverness'*



Once the class have come up with a selection of sentences, speak them through to get used to the rhythms. I would suggest 4 sentences per verse however they can write more and then select the ones that they want to use. Once the sentences have been spoken through transfer the rhythms of them onto the drums. As a challenge see if a participant can play through all 4 lines in one go.

Here is an example verse written by S2 pupils at Park School, Kilmarnock.

Bagpipes, Bagpipes, play so loud.

The Scottish flag is so beautiful.

Loch Ness monster is very cool.

Scotland, Scotland I love you.

Extension: Depending on time this may have to be done in the next lesson. With older learners work through the sentences and work out the conventional musical notation for each sentence (as shown in the above examples) or the Figurenotes rhythmic notation depending on what the classes are used to using.

Make sure to keep a copy of the groups work for the next lesson where we will be assigning pitches.

Lesson 2

In the second lesson of this project the class will build on their compositions by adding pitch and learning them on tuned instruments.

- whiteboard
- speaker
- drums
- tuned instruments (eg. piano, glockenspiel, xylophones, thumb jam or piano apps on iPads)
- Drake Music Scotland Figurenotes dice or blank dice. (Provided in pack)
- Composition worksheet

Warm Up - Pass the heartbeat

This a simple game that builds on the sense of pulse that we started developing last week. Stand or sit in a circle and pass a clap round the circle. Aim to keep a steady beat all of the way round.

1. To begin, use claves or a drum to give a beat and see if the participants can pass the clap along with the given pulse. Vary the speed for a challenge.
2. Try and pass the beat round without a given pulse. See if the group can maintain a steady beat without your assistance. This helps to develop inner rhythm.
3. Now try and pass the beat round with a backing. Revisit one of the songs suggested above in the first lesson and pass the beat round in time.

If you want to add a competitive element, anyone that isn't concentrating and misses or delays their beat is out.

Main Activity - Adding pitch to our song

To begin, remind the class of their rhythms, take turns repeating the lyrics rhythmically as a class and reinforcing them on the drums.

Further activity

Rhythm relay - participants play and speak a line of the lyrics each on the drum and then pass the drum stick to the next person as quick as possible aiming to keep a steady pulse as they go.

Adding pitch

One of the challenges and barriers to composing music is choosing the notes. To dispel this notion one of the options for this project is to assign notes to the lyrics by

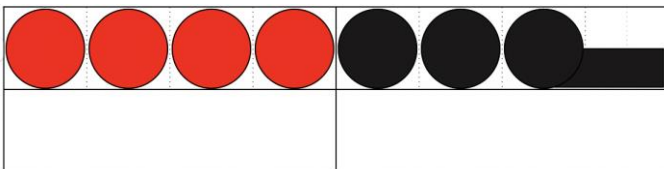
random using one of the Drake Music Scotland figurenotes dice that are part of this pack.

In groups roll the dice and assign two pitches per line. Either use the Figurenotes dice or the blank one and add your own pitches. For example...

'Scot-land, Scot-land, I love you'



C C C C G G G



Once the groups have rolled the dices and added the pitches you combine this with the rhythms of the words to

create the melody. This is the first part of the song.

Alternatives methods

1. If you are working with older participants you may want to alter how much is randomised. For example you could roll the dice for the first pitch of the line and then they choose the second that they think fits best.
2. Alternatively you could roll both pitches but then put them in any order for the words, it wouldn't have to be just one after the other. (C, G, G, C).
3. Let the class choose all the pitches.

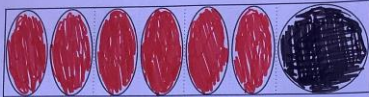
Notating

Once the the notes have been worked out write out the piece in whatever way will work best for the class. This could be using standard notation, Figurenotes or a graphic score. There is a composition worksheet in the pack that can be filled in if necessary.

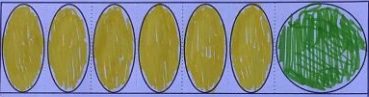
Here is an example of a Figurenotes melody written by P7 students at Park School, Kilmarnock.

P7 composition


Scotland, Scotland, I love you.



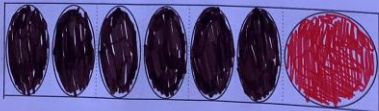
Bagpipes, bagpipes, hurt my ears.



Haggis, yum, yum, in my tum.



Scotland, Scotland I love you.



Playing the piece

Once you or the collective class have notated the piece begin to learn it together. Take 1 line at a time and play it slowly through. Always make sure to speak the rhythm before playing.

Lesson 3 - B section 'tartan improvisation'

The next section is a free improvisation based on the colours of a chosen piece of tartan. The class will discuss different sounds and how they relate to colours. It is an exploratory session and there are no 'wrong answers'.

Resources

- Burns night powerpoint
- A mix of percussion instruments and tuned instruments
- Ipad with Thumbjam
- whiteboard
- Composition worksheet

Warm Up - Don't clap this one back

This is a fun game for learning rhythms and developing pulse. It also focuses the class and can have a competitive element if required.

The class lead claps a 4 beat rhythm and the class should copy it. The only exception to this is the 'danger' rhythm. Alter the dynamic and speed for an extra challenge.



'Don't clap this one back'



Main activity - Tartan improvisation

To begin look at slide 4 and choose the class's favourite tartan. Once you have chosen a tartan there is an option on the worksheet to draw it in the provided box.

Once the class has completed this, pick 3 colours from the tartan to use for the improvisation. These will be our colours to improvise on.

In groups or as a class discuss how the colours make you feel, what they symbolise and what they might sound like. For example if black was chosen, the group may talk about the night sky, the dark and might suggest it sounds scary. The great thing about this exercise is it is completed subjective and allows the young people to be creative and think independently.

Once you have a selection of ideas and words for each of the three colours pick out some instruments and choose some sounds for each colour. Try and use a mix of percussion and tuned instruments so a variety of sound worlds can be explored. If

the class are struggling to decide on what notes to use, the Figurenotes colours can always be used as a starting point (eg. Black would be a G).

To make the improvisation as interesting as possible you also want a few different musical elements. This could include a melodic pattern, a drone, different percussive sounds, a rhythmic pattern on tuned and percussive instruments and a chordal element (this can be as advanced or basic as possible depending on the group).

Performance structure

Depending on the size of the group you can either split into 3 groups with one for each colour or if in a smaller group each participant has 3 instruments (one for each colour). Nominate a conductor to lead the improvisation.

Ensure there is silence in the room before starting and then indicate which colour to begin with using a whiteboard or coloured paper. The conductor then brings players in to play their chosen sounds on their instrument. The conductor can play around with dynamics by raising and lowering their arms and by changing the combinations of instrument playing by stopping and starting players. This means that everyone has to be focused and watching the conductor at all times. In their own time they can decide when to move on to the next colour. This section can be as long or as short as you want and will be different every time. Repeat this exercise a few times as it may feel strange to the participants to begin with. However with some familiarity the group will begin to feel more comfortable and be more confident improvising.

Lesson 4 - Performance preparation and delivery

To complete this creative process it is time to put the piece together and practice it so it can be performed. To begin refresh section A. This could be performed in two ways. First with just the words and rhythms on drums and then secondly some run throughs on instruments with added pitch.

Let the class decide on a structure, this may vary depending on the number of verses written and size of class. Below is a suggested structure as a guide.

Burn's composition structure

Section A

- Perform the melody or melodies written either individually or as a full class.

Section B

- Tartan improvisation section, a conductor comes out to the front to lead the groups through their chosen colour improvisations. (Display the chosen tartan on a projector if possible, this provides a nice backdrop for the performance)

Section A

- Conclude the piece with a final group performance of the melody.

Extension - if the class teacher has some harmonic music skills they can come up with some chordal backings to play with the class melody on piano or guitar etc. This adds an extra layer to the composition. This could then be taught to more advanced/experienced participants if taught over a longer period than the 4 weeks.