

Philharmonia

Orchestra Unwrapped

Teacher
Resource
Pack



Welcome

How to use these resources

Welcome to Orchestra Unwrapped 2025-26 – we are excited to be working with you and your students this year!

These resources are designed to help teachers plan lessons to familiarise pupils with the music we'll be listening to in the concert.

Music as a subject is under increasing pressure in schools across the country, so when designing these resources, we have been mindful that situations in each school are likely to be vastly different. Some schools might have dedicated music curriculum time led by a music specialist; others might have no regular contact time with the odd off-timetable day where music features, delivered by non-subject specialists.

As such, these resources are not prescriptive but rather lay out potential activities and tasks that you could use with your students.

Guide

There are 8 different pieces of music which will be played at this concert. For each piece, there are three **resources**:

- **Teacher Resource Pack**
- **Student Workbook**
- **Presentation**

Teacher Resource Pack

This contains information and tasks to support your teaching of the piece of music. Each piece has:

- Short 5-minute task
- Medium 20-minute task
- Longer 45-minute task

You might choose to do all three tasks for a piece of music, or you might just decide to do one of them. Each task has ideas to support and scaffold, and to stretch and challenge, with a range of tasks based around research, listening, composing, performing and linking to other subjects more widely.

- Research, Analysis and Listening Tasks are based around listening to the music and understanding the musical detail of the music – for example, how the instruments are being used
- Composing Tasks are based around creating your own musical ideas, often based on a given stimulus. This might involve writing the composition down or performing the composition in real time.
- Performing Tasks are based around making music. This could involve performing compositions written by other people or performing composition ideas written by the student.

There is also a Listening Guide for each of the pieces which highlights the main musical ideas linked to the YouTube clip at the start of the Teacher Resource Pack. There are also possible links to other subjects contained in the Teacher Resource Pack to enable you to see some ways the learning might be linked to other areas of the curriculum.

The ideas for each piece are often interchangeable; if your pupils responded well to a task in Beethoven for example, this could be reused for another piece in the set.

Student Workbook

The workbook is for pupils to work through the tasks outlined in the Teacher Resource Pack. These could be printed if you have access to this, but do not need to be if this is not required in your setting.

Presentation

The ideas from the Teacher Resource Pack and the Student Workbook are combined into a Power Point Presentation to make presenting the ideas to the class easier.

Other sections

There are also some other resources to help you deliver musical content and excite your learners about the world of orchestral music. These include:

- A Concert Etiquette guide to understand what happens in a concert – how do the orchestra get on the stage, tune and when does the audience clap? This includes a Teacher Resource Pack, Student Guide and Power Point presentation with activities to support teaching and learning.
- SOW Information, including how the resource links to the National Curriculum, the Prevent Duty, British Values and Differentiation – all useful if you have a more formal lesson observation

- Vocal Exercises as a warmup to get your class all working together at the start of a lesson
- What is an orchestra and a guide to the instruments of the orchestra
- Key words and music theory
- A section on Women Composers. This includes a Teacher Resource Pack, Student Guide and Power Point presentation with activities to support teaching and learning.

We hope that these resources are useful in giving you the confidence to teach this exciting topic within a hugely important subject area, and that they help to engage your pupils with the cultural significance of orchestral music-making. Making music is fun and here's to lots more children being able to experience that!

Richard Bristow

August 2025

Theme of the concert

Music, Identity and Legacy: the Philharmonia's 80th Birthday

The theme of the 2025/26 concert is centered around the history of the Philharmonia Orchestra, which was founded in 1945 by Walter Legge and is 80 years old in 2025. Legge worked for a company called EMI, which was responsible for making recordings of classical music.

Many of you will listen to music on a daily basis – perhaps through the radio, television, games or online, depending on your age. Sites like Spotify, Apple Music and Youtube have millions of users

across the globe, giving you instant access to so many different artists. Before these online systems were invented, music of all genres could be bought physically – initially on an LP disc, then cassette tape, then CD. It is amazing to think how much this area of life has changed in the last 80 years!

The theme of the concert is 'Music, Identity and Legacy' – or in other words 'It's Our 80th Birthday!'. The pieces have been selected to take us on a journey through time linking to the exciting history of the Philharmonia, from 1945 to today – a history you are all part of by being part of the *Orchestra Unwrapped* project!

The pieces in this concert all have special meaning to the Philharmonia during its 80-year history and these are outlined below:

Composer	Piece title	Date composed	Link to Philharmonia
Mozart	Don Giovanni (Overture)	1787	Performed at the first Philharmonia concert in 1945.
Beethoven	Symphony No. 5 (Movement 1)	1804-08	The Philharmonia recorded this piece, and it's on the Voyager Golden Records which were sent into space in 1977.
Stravinsky	The Firebird Suite (Finale) (1919 version)	1910 with revisions in 1911, 1919, 1945	Performed in Leicester's De Montfort Hall for the first performance there by the Philharmonia in 1995.
Elgar	Enigma Variations (Theme, IV, XI, VII)	1898-99	Performed in Bedford's Corn Exchange for the first performance there by the Philharmonia in 1995.
Ortiz	Papalotes	2012	Gabriela Ortiz is the Philharmonia's Featured Composer for the 2025/26 season.
Shigihara	Grasswalk from Plants vs. Zombies	2009	Music in gaming points to the future and how classical music is part of new technologies.
Silvestri	Theme to the Avengers	2012	The Philharmonia has recorded over 150 film soundtracks, and this piece from <i>The Avengers</i> is a good example of their work in this area. The Philharmonia were the orchestra performing much of the music for the film <i>Avengers: Age of Ultron</i> . Check out more here ►
Bizet	Carmen Suite (Les Toréadors)	1875	This piece was played in the first <i>Orchestra Unwrapped</i> concert in 2012.

Concert Etiquette

Tuning

At the start of the concert, the orchestra will need to tune their instruments to make sure they are all tuned to the same pitch.

Watch here ►

The video above shows the orchestra tuning – look out for:

1. The leader of the orchestra (first violin) entering to applause, bowing and the standing and looking to the oboe
2. The oboe playing the note A – this is the note all the instruments tune to. The oboe has a relatively stable pitch and can be heard easily over the other instruments, so it is a good choice to tune to.
3. The woodwind tune first, then the brass, then the strings
4. Once the orchestra have finished tuning, the conductor will walk on stage.

The Conductor

The Orchestra Performance video to the Mozart piece is an excellent video to watch to understand how the start of a concert works.

Video of performance:

Watch here ►

Notice the following in the video:

1. The audience clap as the conductor walks on stage.
2. The conductor then shakes the hand of the leader of the orchestra (the first violin) before bowing to thank the audience.
3. The conductor then stands on the small raised stage (called a podium) - this is so the conductor can see and be seen by everyone in the orchestra.
4. As they move to the stage, the clapping stops and the orchestra prepare to play their instruments. You can see this as they raise their instruments ready to be played.
5. The conductor then starts conducting using their baton to start the music!

When do I clap?

Sometimes there are small pauses in the music, and it can be tempting to clap at these points. However, the music is not over yet. The conductor will stay animated during a pause, and this is a clue to the audience that the music is not yet over, and they should not clap. When the conductor relaxes by lowering their baton (and the players relax and put down their instruments), that is usually the time to clap!

The activities below might be useful to help your learners to understand more about concert etiquette to help ensure the concert is an enjoyable experience for everyone.

Short 5-minute task: Orchestral Fails

Watch the video below, which is a performance of Stravinsky's *The Firebird*. This extract shows the transition between two movements – the first ends very quietly, and the second starts very loudly. When a piece has more than one movement, the audience does not clap until the very end.

In our concert, all the pieces are standalone except the Elgar (where there are 4 short separate pieces, so please clap after the final one).

Watch here ►

When you watch the video, ask students to watch what the orchestra, audience and conductor are doing.

Medium 20-minute task: Role play and rules

This is a great task to try before heading to the concert hall.

Firstly, set your classroom space up as a concert hall, aiming to have:

- A stage area at the front from performers, facing the whiteboard
- An audience area with rows of chairs facing the stage area

Divide your class up into different groups and ask them to read a different scenario. The idea is that each group takes turn to act out their scenario, with the rest of the class trying to guess what the scenario is. They can record this as thumbs up (for behaviours we wish to encourage!) and thumbs down (for behaviours to avoid). This is even better if you can play a clip of music on the whiteboard during their task – a great piece is the storm from Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 **found here ►**

Scenarios might include:

1. The audience talking through the music
2. The audience start clapping when the music goes quiet, but has not finished
3. The audience sit quietly and listen to the music
4. The audience are restless and moving about on their chairs
5. The audience keep turning round to the person behind them
6. The audience gets up out of their seats and goes to the toilet

For each scenario, ask pupils to give thumbs up for good behaviours and thumbs down for bad behaviours.

As you discuss as a class, create a Dos and Don'ts for how to behave in a concert. As your class have then created it, it becomes easier to work together on when at the concert itself. There is space to do this in the Student Workbook, or you could create your own and display it in the classroom.

Thumbs Up

- Sit still and quietly in your seat
- Clap at the very end of the piece when the conductor relaxes
- Listen carefully and enjoy the music
- Turn off mobile phones (if you have them)
- Show respect to the musicians and staff
- Wait to leave until your teacher tells you to
- Say thank you to the staff at the end

Thumbs Down

- Fidget, wiggle or leave your seat during the music
- Clap in the middle of the music when the conductor is still animated
- Talking, whispering, making noises during the concert
- Laugh, point or distract others
- Stand up or wave during the performance
- Not following instructions

Longer 45-minute task: mini concert

This is a great task to try, not only to practice concert etiquette but also to bring music into your school.

If you have any pupils at your school who play an instrument or sing, this could be a great way of doing a short concert where your class can practice being an audience and celebrate their peer/s performing.

If you do not have performers available in your setting, this can be achieved using the music you will hear in the concert using the YouTube links in the Teacher Resource Guides.

Start by reviewing the key rules for a concert – the Dos and Don'ts – that you created in the task above.

Then, assign your class different roles:

- Audience
- Ushers

The ushers help guide the audience to their seats, perhaps handing out a programme and remind the audience where the fire escapes are in case of an emergency.

The audience sit and wait for the concert to start following the rules. Ensure they clap at the right time!

Encourage the audience to behave using the rules you have created while they listen to the performances. If you are using recordings, you could use any of the pieces that will be used in the *Orchestra Unwrapped* concert to help students to get to know the music.

At the end, review with your class. What behaviours did they get right? What areas need a bit more focus going forwards?



Mozart – Overture to Don Giovanni

Listening

Orchestra Performance ►

Musical Score Performance ►

Context

Mozart was an Austrian composer who lived between 1756-1791. Despite only being young when he died, he wrote a significant number of symphonies, operas and chamber works.

This piece lasts for around 6 minutes and is an overture (the opening introduction) to an opera. An opera is where actors are on stage presenting a story, but unlike in a play, they sing all their words. A musical (e.g. *Les Misérables* or *Six*) is similar to an opera, but usually has a mix of speaking and singing.

Don Giovanni is a nobleman who acts in a naughty way to those around him. He eventually gets his comeuppance at the end of the opera. The opera is full of comedy, melodrama and mystery.

This piece was played by the Philharmonia in their first ever concert in 1945.

Short 5-minute task: Listening and Responding

- Listen to the opening 30 seconds (from 0:40 – 1:10 in the Orchestra Performance Video above). Ask students to consider:
 - Is the music loud (forte) or quiet (piano) at the start? Does it change?
 - Is the tempo of the music fast or slow?
 - What instrument families are playing?
 - What kind of feeling does the music give you?
- Ask students to write their thoughts down – this could be a single words, longer sentences or even as a doodle or drawing.
- Discuss as a class.

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage full sentences with justification i.e. ask students to give a reason why to support their answers

Support and Scaffold

- Give options for pupils to select from – for example, list the four families of orchestral instruments (Strings, Woodwind, Brass, Percussion) or suggest a range of emotions (Happy, Sad, Scared, Excited...)

Medium 20-minute task: Footsteps Composition Challenge

- Listen to the music from 0:40-1:24 in the Orchestra Performance Video above
- The opening uses two long sustained chords lasting for 5 beats – this is a dramatic moment, perhaps as a door is pushed open to reveal the main character.
- From 0:59 the music uses a dotted rhythm in the strings – long/short, long/short – and evokes a sense of nervous excitement, almost as if the main character Don Giovanni is creeping around the room having made a dramatic entrance
- Clap, tap or sing these two contrasting rhythms
 - Sustained chord – start the clap on 1 and hold the clap for 5 beats
 - Dotted rhythm – clap on 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and
- In pairs or as a group, try to create your own short rhythm pattern using long notes and dotted rhythms to represent Don Giovanni's footsteps. Ask students to consider the effect they are going for – is the character sneaky, powerful, scary?
- Perform the rhythms to the rest of the class and ask the class to name the effect the music had on them before the group reveals what effect they were aiming for. Do they match? Discuss it as a class.

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage students to add a second rhythm which could represent a second character, responding to Don Giovanni. How does their new rhythm represent this new character?

Support and Scaffold

- Introduce the sustained chord first, then introduce the dotted rhythm
- Clap each rhythm for students to copy

Longer 45-minute task: Composition – Who is Don Giovanni?

The overture gives clues about Don Giovanni's character. Mozart uses dramatic changes in dynamics (loud/quiet) and changes in tempo (slow/fast) throughout. Listen to the whole piece as a class, and then consider:

1. Listen and Discuss (10 minutes)

- a. Based on the overture, what do you think Don Giovanni is like as a person?
- b. What kind of story might the opera be about?
Is the opera likely to be a comedy, a love story, or full of drama?

2. Compose your scene (25 minutes)

- a. Set out 3 moments in your story – for example:
 - i. Don Giovanni enters
 - ii. He causes trouble
 - iii. He leaves the scene
- b. Using classroom instruments (if available) or body percussion/voices, compose music for each of the 3 moments. Consider:
 - i. Tempo (fast/slow)
 - ii. Dynamics (loud/quiet)
 - iii. Pitch (high/low)
 - iv. Texture (how many different kinds of sounds at the same time)

3. Perform and reflect (10 minutes)

- a. Ask each group to perform to the rest of the class
- b. Ask the class to describe what they have heard regarding tempo, dynamics, pitch and texture

Stretch and Challenge

- Consider if the group needs a conductor to keep everyone in time – if so, could the conductor change the performance with their actions?
- Ask pupils to justify their musical decisions – ask 'why'?

Support and Scaffold

- Reduce the 3 moments of the story to two contrasting moments and introduce the elements of music (Tempo, Dynamics, Pitch and Texture) gradually, one by one, to develop confidence.

Listening Guide

Timings based on the video link at the top of this section for the Musical Score Performance to enable pupils to see the music on the page.

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:00-0:15	Loud sustained chords from full orchestra (Strings, Woodwind, Brass and Timpani Percussion). This uses a chord of D minor (DFA) and then A major (AC#E). The tempo is Andante – moderately slow. The music is in the key of D minor – a dark, scary key.
0:15-1:12	Quiet dotted rhythm in strings with a creepy syncopated (off beat) violin melody. Strong contrast between loud and quiet.
1:13-1:39	Melody now has a rising and descending scale in the flutes and violins alternating between loud and quiet
1:40-4:06	The tempo changes suddenly to being very fast (Molto Allegro). We are now in D major – a brighter and happier key. The woodwind, brass and timpani percussion sound triumphant, interrupting the strings. There are strong dynamic contrasts between loud and soft. The music is exciting and makes the audience excited for what is coming next!
4:07-5:41	The music from 1:40 repeats with some small changes to keep the audience on their toes! The piece ends in a different key (F major) – remember this is an overture to a bigger musical piece, so while this would be unusual if the piece was on its own, it is very normal in an opera to keep the audience excited for what is happening next.

Links to other subjects

This piece can link well to these other areas of the school curriculum:

Subject	Links
PSHE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The subject matter of Don Giovanni can be linked to the PSHE programme especially regarding respectful relationships (for example, respecting others even when they are very different from us e.g. physically, in character, personality or background). This can also be expanded to discussions around self-respect and happiness.
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This piece was first performed by the Philharmonia in their first ever concert in October 1945. You can read more about the history of the Philharmonia here ► What else was happening in 1945? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> World War 2 ended in May 1945 (Europe) and August/September 1945 (Pacific) The United Nations (UN) was formed and still exists in 2025

Beethoven – Symphony No. 5 (Movement 1)

Listening

[Philharmonia Performance ►](#)

[Score Performance ►](#)

Context

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was a German composer who composed during the late Classical and early Romantic periods of music. His music is seen as being transitional – moving from the Classical period to the Romantic period. Beethoven experienced the first symptoms of hearing loss in his late twenties, and was profoundly deaf by the time of his death aged 56.

A symphony is a piece for orchestra that usually has 4 separate movements. This first movement is one of the most famous pieces of music ever written and was composed between 1804-08. In 1977, the Philharmonia's recording of it was sent into space on board the Voyager Space Craft (as part of the Voyager Golden Record). The music is out of this world!

Short 5-minute task: Musical Motifs

The movement opens with a very famous musical idea (sometimes called a musical motif). This has 3 short notes, followed by a longer note, and is repeated a tone lower:



For this short task, play the opening (0:00-0:28) using the video link above. Ask your students to count how many times they can hear this motif. They can use their fingers to count, or can make a tally if they prefer to write things down. By our count it is 14 times in the first 28 seconds!

Stretch and Challenge

- Are all the times we hear the motif the same? Encourage pupils to look at the score on the score link to see if they can identify the changes – for example, repetition 9 keeps the rhythm the same but adds an extra note, while repetition 10 changes the direction to ascend rather than descend.

Support and Scaffold

- Try doing this as a class as a fun initial activity. If needed, shorten the extract up to 0:20 (8 repetitions and easier to count on your fingers!)

Medium 20-minute task: Art Challenge

This movement lasts just under 8 minutes. Consider playing the piece twice through, asking students to respond to it by creating a picture which depicts what the music makes them think of. There is no right or wrong answer here but the artwork needs to be finished by the time the second performance has finished.

To help with inspiration, the following videos might be useful:

A graphic score of the movement ►

Line Rider animation of the movement ►

Fantasia (Disney) animation ►

If you have time and space, ask students to display their artwork in your school.

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage pupils to explain what they have drawn and explain how the music inspired their creation

Support and Scaffold

- Allow pupils to work in a medium in which they are confident, and consider using a reduced extract (for example the first 90 seconds) rather than the full 8 minutes.



Longer 45-minute task: Morse Code Alien Communication

Combining the opening 4 note motif and the fact this piece was sent into space, this challenge looks at making a code to communicate with alien life-forms in outer space.

The 3 short 1 long motif translates as the letter V in morse code. This challenge encourages your students to use morse code to create a composition which uses musical motifs to communicate a message to alien life forms.

Step 1: In pairs, try communicating a common word like 'Hey' or 'Cat' using body percussion, blinking or using your voice. Can the other person guess your word?

Step 2: then try to make a melody out of this rhythm using different pitches

Step 3: then add different dynamics and tempo changes to add more complexity

Step 4: try to then do this with a longer phrase to communicate to the aliens

Morse Code Directory:

A	■ ■■	N	■ ■■ ■
B	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	O	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
C	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	P	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
D	■ ■ ■ ■	Q	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
E	■	R	■ ■ ■ ■
F	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	S	■ ■ ■ ■
G	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	T	■ ■ ■ ■
H	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	U	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
I	■ ■	V	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
J	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	W	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
K	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	X	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
L	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Y	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
M	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Z	■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage students to compose more complex words or phrases, using dynamics, pitch, texture and tempo changes to make their work increasingly complex.

Support and Scaffold

- Encourage students to spell their name using morse code and body percussion or their voices.
- If pupils are finding the morse code too complex, use the V code/4 note motif as a basis for composition.
- Encourage pupils to use dynamics and/or changes in pitch to add variety to their composition.

Listening Guide

Timings based on the video link at the top of this section. This piece is written in a structure called Sonata Form which has 4 main sections – Exposition, Development, Recapitulation and Coda. This structure is used by loads of composers writing pieces like this. If you want to find out more about this important form, the [video here ▶](#) gives a useful history.

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:00-1:31	This section is called the Exposition. First idea using 4 note motif. Loud dynamics, C minor – serious, angry, passionate. A second melody idea, contrasting to the first, starts from 0:53 in a contrasting major key.
1:31-2:55	The opening section repeats with no changes.
2:56-4:18	This section is called the Development. This section develops the opening motif, with lots of changes in key moving the music away from C minor.
4:19-5:52	This section is called the Recapitulation. A repeat of the opening section in the home key of C minor. A few small changes in the melody to give a contrast in character, including an emotive oboe solo. The second melody idea is repeated in a different major key
5:53-end	This section is called the Coda. This section rounds the movement off, exploring the opening 4 note idea again in different ways.

Links to other subjects

This piece can link well to these other areas of the school curriculum:

Subject	Links
PSHE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Discussions around disability (hearing loss) and acceptance of difference, or the potential health impacts of listening to music that is too loud and how this can impact hearing of students (how to manage risk).
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Voyager Programme is a great opportunity to explore more about the exploration of space – the short video here ► gives some highlights of the programmeThis could be linked to learning about the Space Race as a part of the Cold War between the USA and USSR.

This piece is also covered in *BBC Ten Pieces* and there are lots of different resources on this piece which can be accessed [here](#) ►. This includes arrangements of the piece for different instruments and standards if you want to try performing the piece as a class.



Stravinsky – The Firebird (Finale)

Listening

Orchestra Performance ►

Musical Score ►

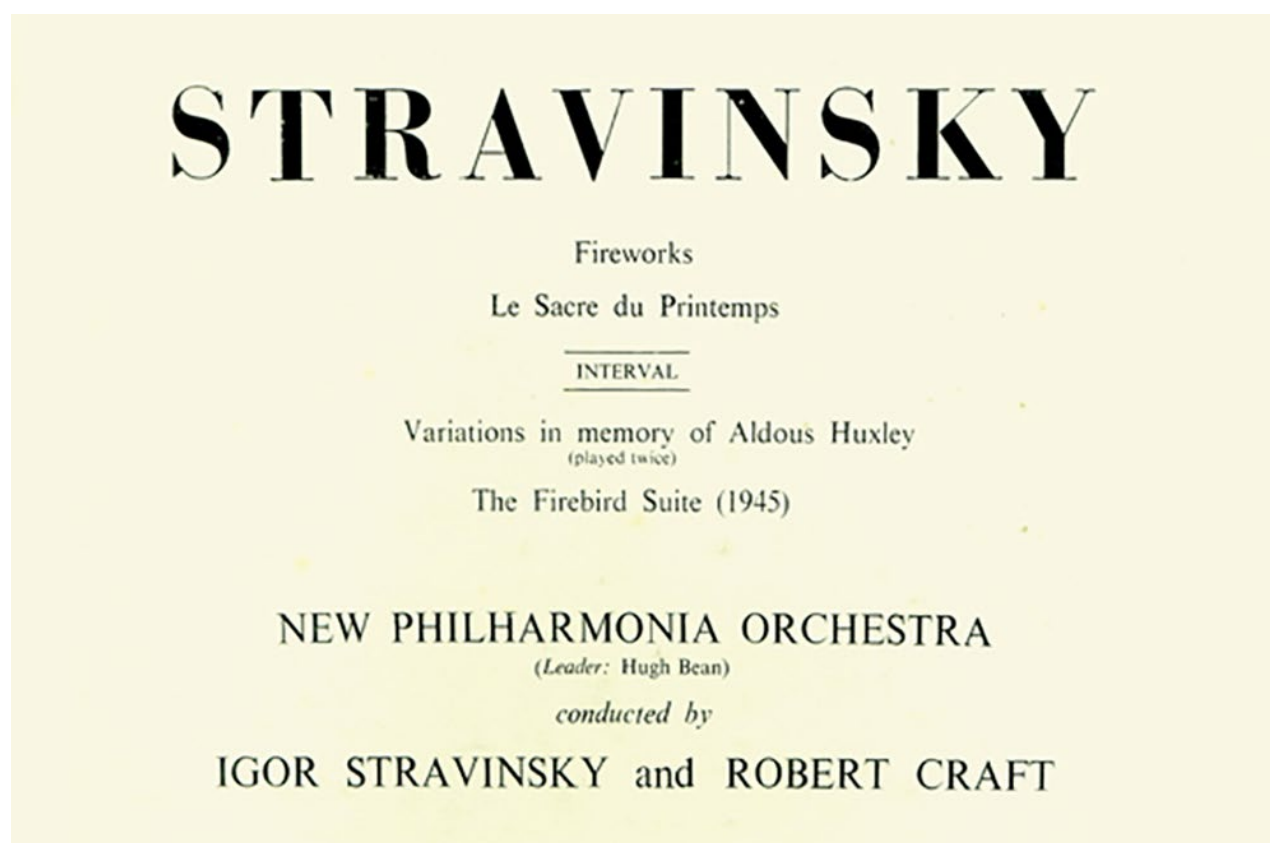
Context

Stravinsky was a Russian composer who lived between 1882 and 1971, who had a huge influence on classical music in the twentieth century.

The Firebird is a magical ballet written by Stravinsky in 1910. In a ballet there is dancing on stage with music, but no words are spoken. Stravinsky later edited the music to become an orchestral suite in 1919 – this means the music was made shorter, and the ballet dancing was removed. This enables orchestras to programme it in concerts.

This piece is the finale of the suite. It is a thrilling ending where the magical Firebird helps Prince Ivan to defeat the evil wizard and bring peace to the kingdom. It's a little bit like the plot of *Wicked*!

This piece was performed by the Philharmonia in their first concert in De Montfort Hall, Leicester, in 1995.



Short 5-minute task: Musical Moods

Stravinsky's music is vivid, dramatic and full of musical colour. The finale has three main sections giving contrasting moods:

1. A gentle, shimmering beginning like the rising morning sun
2. A build up (called a crescendo) getting the audience excited as the music gets louder
3. A bold and joyful ending to celebrate victory

For this task, try playing 10-15 seconds of each section asking pupils:

- What do you think is happening in the story during this music?
- Is it quiet or loud (piano or forte)?
- Is it calm or exciting?
- Is the tempo fast or slow?
- What instruments can you hear?

For more practical reactions, ask pupils to respond in different ways, for example:

- 'Show me the music with actions only!' (e.g. wide eyes of surprise, big smile for triumph)
- 'Draw the music with your hands!' (e.g. swooping arms for the crescendo)

For the 3 sections, use 10-15 seconds of the clips below:

1. **A gentle, shimmering beginning ►**
2. **An exciting crescendo ►**
3. **A bold and joyful ending ►**

Stretch and Challenge

- Ask students to justify their answers using musical vocabulary (e.g. 'as the tempo increases, the tension rises')
- Identify specific instruments ('The horn is playing the melody as a solo')
- Ask more demanding questions for example how the instruments are being played – string trills (rapidly alternating between two notes), string mutes (to make the sound quieter), harp slides (glissando).

Support and Scaffold

- Ask more entry level questions and give pupils options to choose from – for example 'is the music loud or quiet?' to support their understanding.
- Consider using visual cues – e.g. cards with 'happy/sad', 'loud/quiet', 'fast/slow' for pupils to choose from
- Give multiple choice for describing instruments – 'is the melody played by a brass or string instrument?'

Medium 20-minute task: Firebird Sounds

Divide the class into four different groups. Give each group a different role from the Firebird story and use any classroom instruments or body percussion to try and create the soundscape:

- Firebird (magical) – shimmering glockenspiel, vocal trills
- Prince Ivan (hero) – fanfares on brass, drumbeats or claps
- Evil wizard (danger) – low pitches sounds, stomps, clashes
- Final celebration (joy) – percussion (maracas, tambourines, triangles), rhythmic dancing

It is helpful if you have played the piece to students beforehand, so they have something to base their ideas on.

Ask the groups to then create a 15-30 second musical moment to represent their character, choosing the sounds they will use and the order they will perform in.

Make sure everyone in the group is contributing.

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage more able pupils to work in a structure – e.g. ABA where the opening ideas return at the end of their composition
- Add dynamics and changes in tempo to build contrast
- Add texture by layering ideas on top of each other.

Support and Scaffold

- Use pre-selected instruments e.g. 'shake the tambourine to make a magical sound'
- Use modelling from teacher or other pupils to give an example for pupils to follow



Longer 45-minute task: Firebird Story

This task looks for students to work in small groups to create and perform a musical version of *The Firebird* story, using sound effects, music and narration.

To start, outline the story of the Firebird:

1. Prince Ivan meets the Firebird – magical
2. The Firebird agrees to help Prince Ivan – they work together
3. The Evil Wizard appears – danger!
4. The Firebird casts her spell – magical, tension
5. Celebration – the kingdom is saved

Assign each group of students to one of the five scenes above. Students then work on creating a short performance (1-2 minutes) for their scene, which might include:

- Narration, drama or ballet
- Instrumental or body percussion/vocal sounds
- Changes in mood to help tell the story
- Art work using the template in the student resource

Then put the 5 scenes together as a class to give a whole-class performance of *The Firebird*.

The video from *Fantasia 2000* here might be useful. It uses music from earlier in the suite before ending with the **Finale ►**

Stretch and Challenge

- Think about using motifs (recurring musical ideas, like in the Beethoven) to represent characters
- Use dynamic contrasts, tempo changes and silence for effect
- Add a conducting role
- Create a graphic score of their music using shapes to represent the different ideas

Support and Scaffold

- Structure the composition e.g:
 - 1. choose a low, slow sound
 - 2. add a high sound for magic
- Consider using sound buttons or recorded samples if you have the technology (e.g. keyboards) for this
- Pre-select sounds for pupils to experiment with

Listening Guide

Timings based on the video link at the top of this section.

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:00-0:57	Shimmering strings (playing tremolo) with a quiet melody on a solo horn. Initially it is not clear what the beat of the music is. Harps slides (glissando) and string trills to make the dawn shimmer as the sun rises.
0:58-1:34	Music gradually crescendos (gets louder) with more instruments being added. The music gets increasingly excited. The beat of the music becomes clearer to hear. A sudden drop in dynamics at 1:30 builds tension even more.
1:35-end	Brass enter with a triumphant melody using a mirrored pattern (the beats work as 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 to keep us on edge!) This is very rhythmic and contrasts with the earlier sections. There are significant changes in tempo, shimmering trills, loud dynamics, and a triumphant close!

Links to other subjects

This piece can link well to these other areas of the school curriculum:

Subject	Links
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider asking pupils to ask questions of different characters seen in the Firebird (character hot-seat!) with pupils answering the questions in character.You could also ask pupils to write a creative response to the story – for example a poem or short story, exploring fairy tales as inspiration.
Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider asking pupils to colour in the firebird drawing in their student workbooks which could be used to display different art techniques.
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider comparing dance and storytelling traditions in different cultures – for example the Russian Firebird, the Chinese Dragon, West African trickster tales.This piece was written in 1919 – during the First World War. As such there is a chance to look at the wider history of this period and how Stravinsky's music might reflect the challenges of the period.
PSHE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The themes of the story link to bravery, kindness, trust, and good vs. evil. There is also a link about how we can use music (and art as a wider concept) to express ourselves, supporting our health and wellbeing.

The 1911 version of this piece was also used in the **BBC Ten Pieces** ►, and there are several different activities there which you might find useful.

Elgar – Enigma Variations

Listening

Full piece ▶

Theme ▶

Variation 4 ▶

Variation 9 ▶

Variation 11 ▶

Context

Sir Edward Elgar was a British composer born in 1857. He is one of the most famous British composers writing at the end of the Romantic period and into the twentieth century.

In 1898, Elgar wrote a set of musical pieces called *Enigma Variations*, completed in 1899. He based it on a mysterious theme (that's the 'enigma') and then created 14 variations, each one a musical portrait of a friend or loved one. In the concert we're going to explore:

- **Theme** – the musical idea Elgar used for all the variations
- **Variation 4 ("W.M.B.")** – lively, bouncy, and a bit cheeky
- **Variation 9 ("Nimrod")** – slow, noble, emotional (and Elgar's most famous)
- **Variation 11 ("G.R.S.")** – elegant and graceful, with a stormy middle section

You'll hear the music of the theme again in the variations, but the theme will use the elements of music in different ways to create variety.

Remembering the work we did in the Concert Etiquette section – remember to only clap at the end of Variation 11, when the overall piece finishes in this performance.

This piece was played by the Philharmonia in 1995 in their first concert at Bedford's Corn Exchange, marking the start of an exciting partnership which continues some 30 years later.

Short 5-minute task: Matching Moods

This could be done using flash cards, a central whiteboard, individual whiteboards or paper around the classroom. The challenge is to display different moods and ask students to select the mood they think is being represented by the music they are hearing. If you have space (for example, use of a hall) this is a great one to get students moving around the space.

Some moods to consider using:

Calm, Proud, Cheeky, Graceful, Restless, Angry, Nostalgic

Play short (5-10 second) extracts from the theme and 3 different variations and discuss as a class. Remember, each of the extracts is based on the same theme but uses the musical elements to create variety.

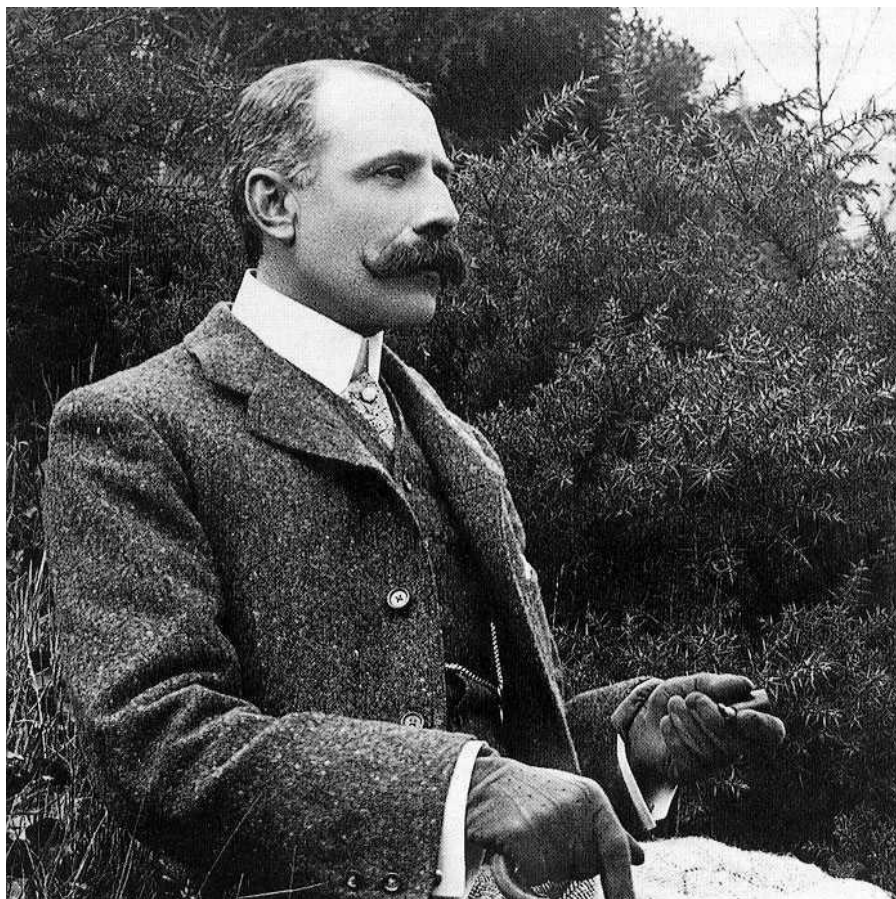
If you want a practical way to achieve this task, ask pupils to dance and move to the music. What links can they make between their movements and the music they hear?

Stretch and Challenge

- Introduce more complex descriptive words to expand vocabulary
- Ask students to justify their reasons using musical vocabulary ('I think it is restless because the tempo changes from slow to fast to slow')

Support and Scaffold

- Use more appropriate vocabulary, perhaps linked to other learning that has taken place to ensure students can access the task.



Medium 20-minute task: Listening to Variations

Having established that the variations have different moods linked to Elgar's friends that they represent, this task takes a well-known tune (Happy Birthday – after all the Philharmonia is turning 80!) and asks students to consider how they might change the melody to create variations, listening to some examples. This will help to equip students to create their own variations in the next task, should you wish to explore that with them.

This theme is well-known – try singing it as a class and following along with the music above.

However, what if you were to create variations on this melody? The composer Heidrich did just that, creating variations on this famous theme in the style of different composers and themes.

Check out the versions based on the Polka (6:40), Film Music (7:34), Ragtime (8:31) and Tango (9:03) to hear how the famous melody has been varied.

[Listen to the music here ►](#)

Polka	Film music	Ragtime	Tango
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starts with a pop – like a cork popping from a bottle Tempo changes Melody is ornamented Waltz accompaniment – omp – pah – pah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cinematic sustained strings Lots of pauses Chromatic accompaniment and clashes Expansive high pitched violin line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ragtime accompaniment – stride bass (low/high chords) Off beat rhythms – syncopation Use of pizzicato (plucking strings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor key Dramatic Pauses Syncopated rhythms Tempo changes

How might your class create a variation to this famous melody? See what they can create using their voices to help create variations.

Stretch and Challenge

- If students have access to music technology (e.g. through a phone at home) they might want to explore making remixes of a melody of their choice to learn how to create variety. Programmes like GarageBand (Apple) or BandLab (Android) are popular free apps where students can experiment with sounds and creating variations.

Support and Scaffold

- Give students more multiple-choice questions – e.g. loud/quiet, slow/fast, happy/sad initially to support their analysis
- Encourage students to use pre-recorded loops if using Apps

Longer 45-minute task: Musical Links

This task asks students to create a musical representation of either themselves, or a friend or relative, similar to the way Elgar wrote his variations. You might even try to do this for animals, as that can be a bit easier to articulate (consider listening to *The Carnival of the Animals* if you are planning on asking for animal portraits!)

This encourages students to think about the character of the person/animal they are describing musically, and then to link to the musical elements to aid their composition.

Choose:

- **Mood:** Is the person loud, funny, quiet, dreamy?

Then consider how to achieve this mood musically:

- **Tempo:** fast/slow?
- **Pitch:** high or low sounds?
- **Instruments:** what instrument suits their personality?
- **Dynamics:** loud/quiet?
- **Rhythm:** sustained chords or dramatic beats?
- **Melody:** smooth (like a scale) or jumpy with leaps between notes?

Students should then plan their composition and have a go trying to put some ideas together using the equipment you have available in your setting.

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage more able students to use the theme from Elgar's piece for the basis of their composition
- Ask students to notate their ideas using graphic score
- Encourage structure – e.g. ABA with a contrasting middle section

Support and Scaffold

- Encourage students to use the opening bar of 'Happy Birthday' to start their composition
- If using animals to support their composition, compare Saint-Saens's *Carnival of the Animals*
 - Elephant (using the low double bass to suggest a big animal)
 - Fossils (using the xylophone to suggest a brittle material)

Listening Guide

The composer notes here have audio files linked to the score and description of the music which might be useful for more able learners:

Composer notes ►

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
Theme	The first theme is slow and in a minor key – it sounds emotional The second theme feels more exciting, rising in the violas and clarinets The first theme returns with a new melody to develop the music.
Variation 4	This is faster and full of energy and still in a minor key. This variation ('WMB') is dedicated to William Meath Baker. When Elgar visited, Baker was known to charge in and out of rooms making lots of noise.
Variation 9	This is the most famous variation and uses the first theme only. It is called Nimrod as Nimrod was a great hunter in the Bible, and it is remembering Elgar's friend August Jaeger; Jaeger is also a German word meaning 'hunter' hence the title. The music is slow, in a major key, with focus on the strings and a rousing climax at the end.
Variation 11	This variation - 'GRS' - does not actually link to George Sinclair but his dog, Dan, who fell into a river and rejoiced as he managed to get out. Can you hear this in the music? The music is fast combining the two themes from the opening freely.

Links to other subjects

This piece can link well to these other areas of the school curriculum:

Subject	Links
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Character descriptions can be linked to imaginative writing or poetry creation
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Elgar was writing in the late Victorian era, and this piece could be linked to a historical study of this period
Computing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">If using music technology (GarageBand or BandLab) this could be linked to computing lessons, if this happens in your setting

Ortiz – Papalotes

Listening

[Listen here ►](#)

Context

Gabriela Ortiz (born 1964) is a composer from Mexico and she is a leading voice in contemporary classical music. In 2024 her music won three Grammy Awards, including for Best Orchestral Performance, with the famous conductor Dudamel conducting her composition *Revolución Diamantina*. You can read more about Ortiz on her website [here](#) and about Dudamel on his website [here](#).

Ortiz's composition *Papalotes* was written in 2012. The word *papalotes* is a word used in Mexican Spanish to mean kite.

Ortiz is the Philharmonia's Featured Composer for the 2025/26 season, so do stay tuned on YouTube to hear more from her over the course of the year.

Short 5-minute task: Kites

Using an extract of the first few minutes of the piece, tell your class that the title of this piece is *Papalotes*, which means kites in Mexican Spanish.

In their view, how does the music match the title? Ask students to respond in any way they wish, preparing for a discussion.

Stretch and Challenge

- Via questioning, asking students to justify their thoughts using musical vocabulary.

Support and Scaffold

- Via questioning, supporting pupils via scaffolding to incorporate musical vocabulary into their responses.



Medium 20-minute task: Kite Orchestra

The idea of this task is to understand how music can be used to describe and picture different actions – in this case, the actions of a kite. The task is to try and show musically three different kite moves. Students can work in groups or on their own to devise ideas for this task. Students will:

1. Choose three different kite actions – for example struggling to get airborne, the wind catching the kite, it crashing to the ground
2. Match these actions to a specific sound – this could be body percussion, vocally or using classroom instruments
3. Perform their three-part kite story to the class and ask the class to articulate what is happening from their music.

If your students are looking for inspiration, consider playing them a video of kites flying, perhaps on mute, allowing them to see what they should create music to. **This video might be useful ►**

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage adding dynamic changes, changes in tempo and layering (if working in a group – having 2 or more sounds at the same time)

Support and Scaffold

- Use predefined kite actions to ensure time is spent creating music rather than devising the plot
- Give a sound menu – for example ‘use this instrument to represent the wind’.



Longer 45-minute task: Creative Writing

This task looks for pupils to create a piece of extended descriptive writing using the idea of kites and Ortiz's music as inspiration. This might be a poem, a piece of descriptive writing, or linked to another subject area depending on your school situation. This might be a good task to link to English, following the way you teach creative writing in your school.

A possible outline that might be helpful to follow is below.

Initial Thoughts

Using the video of kites above, ask pupils to imagine they are a kite flying in the sky.

Prompting Questions

- What can you see from the sky?
- What do you feel as the wind carries you?
- What is around you?
- Who is holding the string to the kite?

Building Vocabulary

Use this time to create some exemplar material as a class, using rich language – for example:

*The kite soared above the rooftops,
its tail flickering like fire in the wind.*

*Below, the beach sank into a blur
of sounds and colours...*

Remind the class about use of adjectives, similes, verbs and prepositions to help with their work

'The Story of the Kite'

Students then consider what perspective of the kite they wish to use:

1. As the kite (first person - 'I soared')
2. As the person flying the kite ('I felt my kite tugging on the end of its string')
3. As an observer (narrator watching the person and the kite, third person - 'He watched the kite climb')

From there they get to work writing their perspective on the kite – the student workbook helps students to think about this to set the scene, awaken the senses and to think about interesting words or phrases they wish to use. A suggested structure would be:

1. Beginning (take off)
2. Middle (adventure during flight)
3. End (the kite returns to the ground)

Reflection

As students finish their ideas, ask them to share a sentence from their work they are proud of with the rest of the class.

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage use of metaphor and personification
- Encourage a twist in the story – what if it does not land?

Support and Scaffold

- Create a word bank on the board
- Consider use of sentence starters
- Use visuals to support imaginative thinking
- Consider use of TA or scribe if available to support pupils

Listening Guide

Timings based on the video link at the top of this section

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:00-2:06	Excited musical figures, repeated using changing rhythms – like the kite trying to get in to the air. Brass and woodwind interjections show the unpredictable nature of the kite; dynamics frequently change. The dynamics get louder and the melody gets higher in pitch as the kite gets higher in the sky.
2:06-4:10	Woodwind dominate the melody initially, and then the full orchestra adds further colour. There are strong elements of folk music here. It is hard to hear a regular beat. From 3:16 there is a drone in the bass with woodwind solos over the top showing the kites jostling about in the sky. This idea is then taken up by the strings. This section ends with a diminuendo (gradually getting quieter).
4:11-6:05	The solo bassoon opens this section with pizzicato (plucked) cellos and basses. The tempo picks up and the music becomes a bit more frantic before the strings again enter with folk-like melodies. Rhythmic shapes are repeated and from 5:45 opening ideas return.
6:06-end	Timpani rolls mark the start of a new section, again with repeating irregular rhythmic shapes. The melody gradually ascends before dying away again as the kite catches another gust of wind. From 7:40 the music feels more celebratory including trills before a final chord ends the piece.

Links to other subjects

This piece can link well to these other areas of the school curriculum:

Subject	Links
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The creative writing task naturally links to English, and combining these subjects here would be worthwhile.
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand more about Mexico. This could involve locating Mexico on a map, discussing the traditions of the country and linking to MFL if Spanish is an option within your setting.

Shigihara – Grasswalk

Listening

[Listen here ▶](#)

Context

Laura Shigihara is an American composer with heritage from both Japan and France, where her parents came from. She wrote the music for the game *Plants vs. Zombies* which was released in 2009. Shigihara has also composed music for several other video games, including *World of Warcraft*, as well as being a game developer herself.

Plants vs. Zombies involves a zombie apocalypse with the player needing to defend their home from

the zombies by planting plants which attack the zombies. If the zombies reach the house, the game is lost. The game is age rated 10+, so be aware of this when teaching this to your learners.

'Grasswalk' is the main theme of the game – it is fun, quirky and catchy. Its purpose is to accompany video game play, so therefore it is repetitive, using layers and some contrasts to match the action on screen.

We are proud to be playing this *BBC Ten Pieces* work, and as a *Ten Pieces* champion, we encourage all schools to explore all the pieces on offer.

B B C

[BBC Ten Pieces ▶](#)



Short 5-minute task: Sound Detective

Using the first 16 seconds of the track, ask students to label the score in their workbook of the instruments they can hear playing the piece.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, marked piano (p). The first staff includes a first ending bracket over the final measure. The notation features various note values, rests, and accidentals (flats) across both treble and bass clefs.

Guide:

- Opens with piano only (bars 1-2)
- Pizzicato strings in bar 3
- Low strings play the end of bar 4 to connect to the repeat
- Bar 5 repeats bar 1, now with sustained string chords
- Pizzicato strings in bar 7 (same as bar 3)
- Low strings play the end of bar 8 to connect to the repeat (same as bar 4)

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage pupils to follow the score
- Encourage more able pupils to play the score on available instruments, if appropriate
- Consider if these are real instruments or sounds made using a computer

Support and Scaffold

- Some learners might not want to use the score, in which case ask them to identify instruments from a choice – e.g. 'does a piano or trumpet start the piece'

Medium 20-minute task: Rhythm Composition

The opening 4 bars of this piece contain some instantly recognisable rhythmic patterns. This task aims for groups to use one of these rhythms to create their own composition using unpitched instruments or body percussion. You can use any of the rhythms from the score in the previous task, or the example below which uses the rhythms from bar 1:

1 2 and 3 4 = walk, run-ning, walk, walk
crotchet, quaver quaver, crotchet, crotchet

Ask pupils to extend this bar to a 4-bar pattern, aiming to use a balance of repetition and contrast to keep the listener interested.

If you want to stretch your students, try introducing different rhythms like using a triplet (say the word 'gal-op-ing' in one beat) or even using semiquaver rhythms like the ones below (say 'run fast-er' in one beat):

Stretch and Challenge

- More able pupils can be encouraged to use syncopation (off beat rhythms) or to layer 2 rhythms on top of each other, creating a polyrhythm.

Support and Scaffold

- Use the structure of repeating the same bar 3 times, with one bar using a different rhythm (out of the 4 repetitions, make the 3rd bar the one with the different rhythm)

Longer 45-minute task: Build a Battle Scene!

In groups, ask students to choose 2-3 instruments or sounds to use for their composition and performance.

Students should create a short musical story based on a level of the game:

1. Start calm with the house and plants enjoying the sunshine
2. Add a middle section where the zombies appear
3. Add an ending – do the zombies reach the house, or do the plants win and save the day?

Students can use rhythmic ideas from the opening section of 'Grasswalk', or create their own ideas from scratch. They might decide to use rhythms only (unpitched), or for added challenge to add pitched melodic ideas.

Stretch and Challenge

- Use pitches to add melodic character to the rhythms
- Explore tempo changes
- Use ostinato and riff – repeated rhythm patterns usually lasting 1 bar – with new melodic ideas layered on top

Support and Scaffold

- Use unpitched rhythms initially
- Groups could work on one aspect of the story initially, then combining with other groups to perform the whole scene and break the task down

Listening Guide

Timings based on the video link at the top of this section

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0.00-0.58	Use of piano, pizzicato strings and low strings – these instruments are not acoustic (live) but made using computer software. The music has a cheeky and slightly creepy feeling owing to the use of strings. Lots of repetition features, with an oboe solo in the middle section and cymbal rolls for drama!
0.59-1:46	The accompaniment now switches to pizzicato strings alternating bass – chord, bass – chord on the beat. The melody is in the bass strings. More layers are added to the music on the repetition, including an oboe solo.
1:47-2:19	A new piano idea, containing 4 descending notes, is introduced with sustained strings – this reduces the musical temperature. The low strings enter later, gradually rising, along with the oboe and percussion – building tension.
2:20-4:39	Drum kit enters and the music from the opening repeats. At 3:18 the music from 0:59 repeats, complete with drum kit backing. At 4:06 the music from 1:47 repeats with drum backing.
4:40-end	A repeat of the opening with gradual fade out. From 7:40 the music feels more celebratory including trills before a final chord ends the piece.

Links to other subjects

This piece can link well to these other areas of the school curriculum:

Subject	Links
Computing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">If your pupils study coding or computing, there is a good link to video game production and sequencing music digitally using apps like GarageBand or BandLab.
Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students could act out their ideas for the composition to help visualise the movement.
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider researching the history of video games, right the way from the 1950s (not long after the Philharmonia was formed) to the present day.

Silvestri – Theme to ‘The Avengers’

Listening

Orchestra Performance ►

Musical Score ►

Context

Alan Silvestri (born 1950) is an American composer who has written music for films including *Back to the Future*, *Forrest Gump* and *The Avengers*, where he wrote the main theme song, as well as lots of other music used in the film. The Avengers are a team of superheroes who work together to protect Earth from various different attacks. Tony Stark, Thor, Captain America, the Hulk, Black Widow and Hawkeye are all characters within this universe. It's highly likely your students will be able to tell you more!

The Avengers as we know it today started in 2012 – an important year for the Philharmonia, as this was the year of their first *Orchestra Unwrapped* concert. The music uses a full symphony orchestra, with the brass and percussion featuring heavily to give an epic and heroic sound world – perfect for superheroes! Films often use different instruments to create different sounds and characters – for example:

- String chords = romance
- Woodwind trills = comedy
- Brass = heroism
- Percussion = suspense and drama

Short 5-minute task: what happens next?

This task is based on playing from 0:18-0:26 on the orchestra performance video above and asking your students to describe what they can hear and imagine what happens next.

What can I hear?

- Repeated rhythms in lower strings
- Percussion – drums, timpani accenting first chord
- Melody rises and falls – possible link to James Bond theme?
- Tempo – fairly fast

What happens next?

- Any ideas are good, but some guidance below
- Repeats, layers added, gets louder
- Builds to include brass melody
- Heroic, major key

Stretch and Challenge

- Include musical vocabulary
- Dynamics – forte (loud), piano (quiet), crescendo (get louder), diminuendo (get quieter)
- Melody – ascending, descending
- Tempo – Allegro, no changes

Support and Scaffold

- Give direct choices for example
 - Is the rhythm at the start repeated?
 - Does the melody stay on the same note or change?
 - Are the woodwind or strings playing the opening rhythm?

Medium 20-minute task: Superhero Melodies!

Many themes from action movies use the same interval – the distance between two notes. The interval of a fifth is common to many film tracks. The notes C – G are a fifth apart, as are a D and A, E and B and so on. There are many examples of this – including the theme to *The Avengers*.

The video below looks at some examples of this – the opening section gives some examples before the video looks at why this interval is so important to this kind of music.

Watch here ►

Other examples of music using the interval of a fifth:

- **John Williams – Superman ►** (opening)
- **Michael Giacchino – the Incredibles ►**
- **John Williams – Jurassic Park ►**
- **Alan Silvestri – The Avengers ►**

In this composition challenge, students experiment creating their own melody to represent a superhero, using the interval of a fifth. Students could use their voices, or, if available, use classroom instruments to support their learning.

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage more able students to understand why the interval of a fifth is so important, using the full video above.
- Consider why the interval B-F is not the same (hint, it is a smaller interval as it only has 6 semitones between the B and F, rather than 7 in D-A, and as such it sounds different. B-F sharp is a fifth.)

Support and Scaffold

- Ask students to use the notes C and G to create a heroic theme.
- Add in dynamic contrasts and changes in pitch for variety.

Longer 45-minute task: Performing The Avengers Theme

Get your class used to reading musical notation by trying this vocal warm up which is based on rhythm ideas from *The Avengers*:

[Watch here ▶](#)

Having done this, using pitched instruments, or voices, try playing/singing along to the main tune, using the scrolling video below:

[Watch here ▶](#)

Section 1: 0:00-0:52

This section is based in G minor. It uses the notes G A B flat C D. Ask students to use the following fingering:

Note	Play with this finger
G	First (Thumb)
A	Second
B flat	Third (Middle)
C	Fourth
D	Fifth (Little)

Section 2: 0:52-end

This section is a little harder, based around the key of E minor:

Note	Play with this finger
E	First (Thumb)
F sharp	Second
G	Third (Middle)
A	Fourth
B	Fifth (Little)

There are some notes that fall outside of this – for example a low D and high C sharp – which can be left out if your students find this too much, too soon. However, practice makes perfect and the melody is likely one that will be known by some of your students, so give it a try!

Stretch and Challenge

- Try playing the melody at the same times with both hands
- Support others if working in pairs or small groups

Support and Scaffold

- Consider using a keyboard or instrument which has the names of the notes on to help, learning the A section first

Listening Guide

Timings based on the video link at the top of this section

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:18-1:17	Repeated rhythm in low strings (ostinato) with percussion, tremolo violins = excitement! Brass melody based around notes of G minor, initially in horns then adding trumpets.
1:18-end	Horns have short motif using a perfect 5th with string accompaniment – sounds loud, heroic. Full orchestra added to end.

Links to other subjects

This piece can link well to these other areas of the school curriculum:

Subject	Links
English and Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Create a short comic strip featuring a superhero and a villain, complete with a story and associated drawings.
Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider dressing up as a superhero and acting out their signature moves and musical themes during the day.
PSHE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Working as a team in the performance challenge, exploring how music can enhance a scene and make people feel emotions.
Computing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">If students have access to computing software, they could compose the medium task using available software. The video here ► is a really short guide on how to do this

Bizet – Carmen

Les toréadors and Habanera

Listening

Les Toreadors ►

Habanera ►

Context

Bizet (1838-1875) was a French composer. His most famous work is the music for the opera *Carmen*. We looked at opera when we studied Mozart and this is very similar – actors on stage singing with musical accompaniment. In *Carmen*, there is some spoken dialogue between the musical numbers.

The opera tells the story of Don José and his complications with love. The opera had its first performance in 1875 and received scandalous reviews – mainly because it has a tragic ending and the main character, Carmen, was not seen to be a virtuous character, but rather a rebellious one.

If you are looking to explore the idea of scandal in music further, do look at ‘Riot at the Rite’ which tells the story about the first performance of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* – where the audience rioted at the first performance of the ballet. Check it out [here](#) ►. This could lead to a wider conversation with your class about how we, as humans, react to new art, or other things that aren’t how we expected them to be.

Similar to Stravinsky’s *The Firebird*, Bizet later created orchestral suites of extracts of the music from the opera. These were written just for orchestra without the singing. It is these versions we will hear in the concert.

Extracts from *Carmen* were played by the Philharmonia in their first ever *Orchestra Unwrapped* Concert in 2012.

Short 5-minute task: Class Percussion

Listen to 'Les toréadors' on the link above, using 0:00-0:32. Divide the class into two groups:

- Group 1: Triangle (finger clicks) [top line of score below, syncopated off beat rhythms]
- Group 2: Cymbals (hand claps) [bottom line of score below, accenting end of each 4 bar phrase]

Try to then play along with the opening with the groups playing each part. The score below might be helpful if you want to introduce pupils to musical notation.

If your class are enjoying this, consider changing groups around and then adding a third group to play the timpani part, which uses the notes A and E. Students could do this vocally or using instruments, or complete this using foot stamps.

Stretch and Challenge

- Allocate a conductor to keep the music in time

Support and Scaffold

- Start with the cymbals, using teacher modelling and the video to support.



Medium 20-minute task: Comparison Task

The two pieces from the opera might come from the same overall composition, but they sound very different. In this task, play the pieces to your class and ask them to note the similarities and differences between them.

You might decide to use a 30 second extract, or to use a longer segment.

Musical Element	Les Toréadors	Habanera
Tempo (Speed)	Fast and lively	Slow and smooth
Mood (Feeling)	Exciting, brave	Mysterious, cheeky
Rhythm	Strong marching beat	Steady, swaying rhythm
Instruments (Sound)	Lots of brass (like trumpets) and drums	Softer sounds with strings and woodwinds
Dynamics (Loud/Soft)	Loud and powerful	Gentle, with some louder bits
Melody (Tune)	Bold and catchy	Smooth and flowing – chromatic scales
Dance Style	Like a march or parade	Like a Spanish dance (Habanera)
Character Theme	For the bullfighters (toréadors)	For Carmen – the main character

Stretch and Challenge

- Try to encourage more able pupils to make direct comparisons using musical vocabulary to justify their responses – for example Les toréadors is loud (forte) while Habanera is quiet (piano).

Support and Scaffold

- Give direct options – ‘is the music loud or quiet?’ to break the task down further.

Longer 45-minute task: Composition Contrast

This task looks for pupils to compose a piece of music with a contrasting middle section, creating an A B A form. This is often called Ternary Form.

Part 1: Introduction & Warm-Up (10 minutes)

1. Explain ABA Form (3 minutes)

- a. A section = first musical idea
- b. B section = contrasting second idea (different mood, tempo, volume, or sound)
- c. A returns = repeat of the first idea
- d. Example: Sing *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, which is in ABA form

2. Warm-Up Activity (7 minutes)

- a. Call and response using voice and body percussion (e.g., clap-stomp-pat patterns).
- b. Quick game: “Echo Me” using voice dynamics (soft/loud, high/low, fast/slow).
- c. You could also use activities from the vocal warm up section of this resource.

Part 2: Composition Task (25 minutes)

Step 1: Get into groups (2 minutes)

- Divide the class into small groups (3–5 pupils).
- Each group collects 2–3 different types of sound-makers (pupils can use their voices, body percussion and classroom instruments, if available)

Step 2: Create Section A (7 minutes)

- Students create a short pattern (4–8 beats) using any combination of:
 - Body percussion
 - Instrument rhythm or melody
 - Simple vocal chant (e.g., “We like to play!” or invented syllables)
- Encourage steady pulse and repetition.
- Practice and refine as a loop.

Step 3: Create Section B (the contrast) (7 minutes)

- Must sound different to A in at least two ways (teacher supports ideas):
 - Change in tempo (faster/slower)
 - Change in dynamics (louder/quieter)
 - Change in instrumentation (e.g., no voice, only percussion)
 - Change in mood (e.g., playful → mysterious)
- Create a new 4–8 beat idea.

Step 4: Rehearse Full ABA Structure (5 minutes)

- A → B → A
- Decide how to move between sections (e.g., short pause, signal).
- Practice the full structure smoothly with group roles clear.

Step 5: Optional Extras (4 minutes)

- Groups can add a movement or visual element.
- Assign a conductor or leader to cue sections.
- Consider making small changes to the second repeated A section. These are called musical developments and are used by many composers.

Part 3: Sharing & Reflection (10 minutes)

Group Performances (6 minutes)

- Each group performs their ABA composition for the class.

Class Feedback & Discussion (4 minutes)

- After each performance, ask:
 - “How were A and B different?”
 - “What instruments or sounds stood out?”
 - “Did it feel like a complete piece?”

Stretch and Challenge

- More able students could add a C section (ABACA) creating a rondo form
- To add even more challenge, ask students to make small changes to the repeated A sections to keep the listener interested.

Support and Scaffold

- Start with modelling ideas – e.g. A section using claps and stamps, B section using finger clicks.
- Use repetition of ideas rather than needing to create ideas from scratch.
- Instead of an open ended task, give specific choices e.g. ‘would you like to use a drum or tambourine?’

Listening Guide

Timings based on the video link at the top of this section

Les Toréadors - Rondo Form

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:00-0:34	A section Lively, major key, 4 bar phrases, trills, exciting. The section is repeated.
0:35-0:51	B section Quieter, more reflective, use of flute melody, minor key. This section is not repeated.
0:52-1:07	A section A repeat of the opening A section but this time it is only played once.
1:08-1:56	C section A lyrical new melody in the strings over a short accompaniment (played staccato). The melody is repeated louder and an octave higher.
1:57-end	A section This section is repeated again, but is only played once. There are a few new bars of music at the end to act as a coda and finish the piece off.

Les Toréadors - Rondo Form

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
4:44-5:51	A section Minor key, Habanera rhythm (dotted crotchet, quaver, 2 crotchets [1 (2) and 3 4]), chromatic melodies, use of pizzicato strings and glissando (slides)
5:52-6:19	B section Moves more to a major key, lyrical, flowing, more smooth (legato), contrasts with A section in the melody even though the accompaniment stays the same. Some dramatic changes in tempo.
6:20-7:00	A section Repeats the opening with some additional ornamentation and in a major key, not a minor key like the opening.

Links to other subjects

This piece can link well to these other areas of the school curriculum:

Subject	Links
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students could create a character profile for Carmen or the toreador, Escamillo. You might ask them to write a diary entry for either character to develop their descriptive writing.
Geography and MFL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand more about Spanish and Cuban traditions – the Habanera is a Cuban dance rhythm, and <i>Carmen</i> is set in Seville in Spain. This could involve locating both on a map and discussing the traditions of the different countries.
PE/Dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Choreograph simple movements to the habanera rhythm and contrast this to the faster 'Les toréadors' piece. How might the dance movements change?
PSHE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Carmen's message in the opera can be seen as an expression of freedom, acting on your emotions and making choices. Music often allows for feelings and emotions to be expressed.

Women Composers

There are two pieces of music in this concert composed by women. The role of women composers is hugely significant to the history of music; ensuring that these perspectives are heard is important and benefits us all.

We wanted to highlight these perspectives, just in case you did not study all the works of the concert and as such might have missed out on this exciting chance to look at the changing nature of music history.

Listening to the pieces by Gabriela Ortiz and Laura Shigihara pieces is a good time to discuss the role of women in classical music, and why there might appear to be so few pieces written by women composers in the popular canon of music. Significant amounts of work have been happening in recent years to address this and ensure space on concert programmes for women. Importantly it is not that the music does not exist – it does – but rather that the view of society on the role of women was such that writing music professionally was not an option for many women, and even when they did compose, women's music wasn't performed or programmed as often as music by men. Below are some resources that might be useful in having this valuable discussion with your students.

A short introduction to Women Composers

The video here from the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment looks at some of the issues experienced by women in music, as well as highlighting some of the pioneering women who, despite the challenges, wrote fantastic music.

[Watch here ►](#)

Challenging gender roles

An interesting task to try with your class is to ask your students to draw people doing different jobs; you could ask them to draw a firefighter, a surgeon, a fighter pilot, and then ask them to give their character a name. Have they drawn a man doing the role? The video below, which uses this idea, then has students meeting the people doing these roles, all of whom are women. It is a powerful moment – if you can run something similar in your school it will be an important and transformational moment for your students and their learning.

[Watch here ►](#)

BBC Ten Pieces 2024

If you are interested in your pupils knowing more about music written by female composers, the *BBC Ten Pieces 2024* looked at ten female composers throughout history, with lots of excellent resources to support learning. The video game music for *Minecraft* and *Plant vs. Zombies* was composed by Laura Shigihara and features in this resource – It's likely some of your students already play these games online.

[Check it out here ►](#)

Short 5-minute task: discussion

Question: 'Why do you think there have been fewer famous women composers than men throughout history?'

Guided prompts for the teacher to aid the discussion:

- Has education always been open to boys and girls?
- Have women always had the ability to choose a career?
- Can you name any composers who are women?

Students might think that women have only recently started composing music – but that is not the case! There are some great examples from the *BBC Ten Pieces 2024* which look at the role women have played in music over the course of centuries.

The main take away is that women have not had the same opportunities as men to learn music or to share their work as a career; however, this did not stop women from composing some amazing music.

Medium 20-minute task: Listen and Draw

Play extracts (1-2 minutes) from some or each of the pieces below:

- **Gabriela Ortiz** – *Altar de Neón* ►
- **Laura Shigihara** – 'Everything's Alright' from *To the Moon* ►
- **Miriam Makeba** – *Pata Pata* ►
- **Lena Raine** – 'Resurrections' from *Celeste* ►
- **Tania León** – *Stride* ►

As students are listening to the tracks, ask them to draw what they imagine – this might be a scene, feeling, a colour. Ask them:

- What do you see in your mind when you hear the music?
- What colours match the music?
- Where does the music feel like it comes from (e.g. continent, country)?
- Is it calm or busy?

Ask students to share their ideas with the class and describe their creative process with the other students.

Longer 45-minute task: composition

The objective of this task is for pupils to work in small groups to create their own composition inspired by a female composer.

1. Warm Up (5 minutes)

- a. Use a vocal warm up of your choice using the vocal warm up resources

2. Group Task (30 minutes)

- a. Split the class into small groups. Ask each group to:
 - i. Choose a mood for their composition
 - ii. Choose 3-4 instruments or sound sources (e.g. singing, body percussion and any classroom instruments you might have available)
 - iii. Compose a 30-second piece inspired by the composers you listened to for the short task
 - iv. Encourage students to create a graphic score of their composition using lines, shapes and icons to represent the contrasting sounds

3. Performance (10 minutes)

- a. Ask each group to perform their ideas to the rest of the class
- b. Ask the audience to consider WWW – What Went Well and EBI – Even Better If to appraise the performance



SOW Information

This section is hopefully useful for more formal lesson planning, if needed in your setting.

KS2 National Curriculum Outline

[Click here ►](#) for link

Key Stage 2 pupils should be taught to:

- Sing and play musically with increasing confidence and control
- Develop an understanding of musical composition, organising and manipulating ideas within musical structures and reproducing sounds from aural memory
- Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
- Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music
- Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
- Use and understand staff and other musical notations
- Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians
- Develop an understanding of the history of music

Differentiation

This SOW is broad and aims to appeal to many different schools. As such there might be aspects that are too easy, or some that are too hard for your students. Feel free to swap and change as appropriate, adding and/or subtracting details to fit.

At the end of each task there are ideas on how to increase support and to extend the most able. These are ideas to help make the SOW accessible to all. Many of the activities outlined can be used for all the pieces in the programme, so if your class responds really well to one task, consider reusing it for a different piece in later lessons.

There is also a section on music theory which can be used to help extend more able pupils as well as providing scaffolded support for those who are accessing music education for the first time.

The Prevent Duty and British Values (BV)

The Prevent Duty

According to Ofsted, fundamental British values are:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith

This includes complying with the Equality Act 2010 and preventing discrimination against those with protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Applying British Values to Music

Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studying the historical context of set works and appreciating how the law of different cultures has changed from the past to the present day Separating fact from opinion when analysing music and critiquing live and/or recorded performances and compositions Understand intellectual property rights with regard to recording public performances and artistic license
Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil liberties are discussed as a context for musical understanding The discussions surrounding music from different cultures allow teachers to challenge the use of stereotypical cultural references and discuss how it can lead to discriminatory and prejudicial behaviour with the student
Individual Liberty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance and composition tasks through the key stages all for individual freedom in choice or repertoire, style of performance and the composition process Group work is often encouraged for performance at KS2, with pupils choosing which roles they take within the ensemble
Tolerance and Mutual Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Music is a broad subject with a rich cultural history which involves performances, compositions and musical analysis from a diverse range of people Pupils are immersed in a world of giving and accepting positive feedback (WWW – What Went Well) and listening to constructive feedback (EBI – Even Better If) for a wide variety of musical topics, including performance and composition. This promotes mutual respect, a positive learning environment, and tolerance for others Analysis of set works involves discussion of historical context, perhaps including studying music from different cultures, historical periods and gaining an appreciation on how the situation surrounding performance might have influenced the writing
Challenging Extremism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils are encouraged to think critically, considering if the information they have is full and accurate, and how they know this. This is particularly evident in group discussions, feedback and responses to given stimuli Pupils are actively supported to consider alternative view points and interpretations, including if historical sources (especially in older age groups) have bias and why this might be

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