

Philharmonia

Orchestra Unwrapped

**Teacher
Resource
Pack
2026/27**

Welcome

How to use these resources

Welcome to Orchestra Unwrapped 2026/27 – 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 and, as such, when designing these resources, we have been mindful that situations in each separate school are likely to be vastly different. Some schools might have a 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 7 different pieces of music which will be played at this concert, plus an audience participation song. For each of the seven pieces, 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 possible ways the learning might be linked to other areas of the curriculum. Each section ends with a glossary of terms used in that resource to help with subject-specific vocabulary plus a range of sensory activities* for each piece.

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

**Sensory activities created by E. Ugbona*

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 2026

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 ►

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 Holst's *The Planets*. This extract shows the transition between two movements – the first (Mars) ends very loudly, and the second (Venus) starts very quietly. 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 Holst (where there are 3 shorter 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?



Theme of the concert

Out of this World!

The theme of the 2026/27 concert is 'Out of this World' – a chance to hear music that makes us look up and consider life beyond our immediate surroundings. We'll be traveling to space, learning more about planets and stars, and considering myths and legends that challenge the way we see the world we live in.

As an international orchestra, the Philharmonia travels a lot when touring around the world. They even recorded music and sent this into space! The pieces in this concert all have a link to being out of this world and these are outlined below:

Composer	Piece title	Date composed	Link to 'Out of this World'
Richard Strauss	Also sprach Zarathustra – 'Sunrise'	1896	This opening fanfare captures a sunrise and was used in Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film '2001: A Space Odyssey'
Jessie Montgomery	'Starburst'	2012	This music pictures the rapid formation of new stars in a galaxy
Gustav Holst	Extract from 'Mars', 'Venus' and 'Jupiter'	1914-1917	These three extracts are taken from a larger work picturing seven planets of our solar system (excluding Earth)
Eleanor Alberga	'Sailing on Tethys'	2022	This is the fifth movement from Alberga's Symphony No. 1 'Strata' representing the different layers of a planet. Named after the Greek water goddess, Tethys was a very old ocean which no longer exists in the modern world
Daniel Rosenfeld (C418)	'Minecraft Medley'	2011	The virtual world of Minecraft encourages players to build structures, extract raw materials and compete with others
Ludwig van Beethoven	Creatures of Prometheus – 'Overture'	1801	This is the opening piece from this Ballet, based on the mythical story of Prometheus who stole fire from Zeus to help make mankind
John Williams	Star Wars – 'Theme'	1977	Star Wars follows the story of the Rebel Alliance against the Galactic Empire in an epic science fiction film franchise

Strauss – Sunrise

Listening

Listen to the Philharmonia Orchestra play this music on the link [here ►](#)

Context

About the composer: Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Richard Strauss was a German composer and conductor who lived during the late **Romantic period of music**. He became famous for writing large-scale orchestral works that used instruments of the orchestra to tell stories and create vivid musical pictures. Strauss was interested in how music could represent ideas, emotions and scenes to tell stories. His music often uses powerful contrasts in dynamics, texture and orchestration.

About the piece: Sunrise from Also sprach Zarathustra (1896)

This famous opening section is known as 'Sunrise'. It was inspired by the writings of the famous philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and is intended to represent the rising of the sun and the start of a new day. You might recognise this music from films and adverts you might have seen on television.

Listening Guide

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:00-0:22	Low drone (sustained note) from the organ, double basses and low brass
0:22-0:33	Three rising notes from the trumpets with a crescendo (getting louder)
0:33-0:43	Two loud chords from the full orchestra with a crescendo and timpani notes with a rallentando (getting slower)
0:44-1:04	Repetition of the three trumpet notes and the orchestra chords
1:05-2:00	Repetition of the three trumpet notes, louder, with the orchestra extending their idea to include cymbal crashes, loud chords and dramatic crescendos, giving a sense of excitement, ending with a long major chord (listen out for the organ at the end!)

Key musical features

- **Instrumentation:** Full symphony orchestra including organ
- **Tempo:** Slow, broad tempo
- **Dynamics:** Strong contrasts between loud (forte/fortissimo) and soft (piano/pianissimo)
- **Texture:** Initially very thin but becomes gradually thicker as the music progresses
- **Rhythm:** Long, sustained pedal points with dramatic chords
- **Melody:** Simple rising brass lines - heroic
- **Mood:** Sense of wonder, excitement and power
- **Harmony:** Use of major and minor chords

Short 5-minute task: Sunrise Listening Challenge

Ask pupils:

“What do you think a sunrise sounds like?”

Collate responses to see what ideas and words your learners come up with. You might want to collate these on a board or similar, displaying their ideas.

Play the piece of music, perhaps selecting the opening 45 seconds, asking pupils 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 word, longer sentences or even as a doodle or drawing
- Discuss as a class

Add these ideas to the collection of thoughts on the board to create a word collage for the piece of music as a means of an introduction to the music.

Stretch and Challenge

- Challenge pupils to identify how Strauss uses the orchestra to create particular moods
- Challenge pupils to identify changes in texture and why this might happen (link to the movement from darkness into light, as the sun rises)

Support and Scaffold

- Consider use of picture cards showing the sun rising, mountains, the sky changing colour, space
- Use these to help identify the sun rising throughout the piece

Medium 20-minute task: Sunrise Soundscape Performance

This task looks to create a link between music and art, linking how Strauss uses music to paint pictures of scenes and emotions. This is often called programme music – where the music represents a scene, a story or an emotion – and it was very popular in the Romantic Period of music. This task looks to allocate contrasting sounds representing the sunrise to encourage pupils to think about creating their own sunrise soundscape.

This task would work in small groups, where pupils in each group are assigned different sounds. For example:

Sunrise Element	Sound idea
Night-time	Body percussion heartbeat
First light	Finger tapping
Birds waking	High pitched vocal sounds
Sun rising slowly	Glockenspiels/chime bars
Full daylight	Regular rhythm using clapping and stomps

The idea behind this soundscape is to layer the sounds on top of each other, starting with the night-time sounds, adding the first light, then the birds waking, and so on. This helps to introduce pupils to texture and how multiple layers can be put on top of each other to help tell a story – in this case, the sun rising. This is similar to how Strauss layers instruments together in his piece.

As an extension to this, you might want to ask pupils to represent their composition in the form of art – for example, a drawing or painting to depict the different elements of sunrise.

Stretch and Challenge

- Create varied rhythmic patterns
- Use dynamics, including crescendo and diminuendo, to create contrast
- Appoint pupil conductors

Support and Scaffold

- Use visual cue cards
- Allow pupils to copy ideas – e.g. an idea from a teacher
- Use one pattern which can be repeated

45-minute task: Performing and Composing a sunrise

Listen again to Strauss's recording. As a class, discuss:

- Why do you think Strauss chose brass instruments and an organ?
- Why are the opening notes so powerful in showing a sunrise?
- Why does the opening brass melody gradually get higher?
- What effect do the timpani have?

This task involves trying to perform some of Strauss's piece, before moving to write their own sunrise composition.

Performing a Sunrise

The opening section of this piece is really effective to try and recreate using body percussion, voices and instruments. There are four main elements:

1. A low drone on the note C
2. A rising 3 note trumpet melody, using notes C – G – C (where the last C is an octave higher)
3. Two chords – **C major** (CEG) followed by **C minor** (CEbG)
4. A timpani roll and dramatic moment using the notes C and G

The score below helps to show these different elements together. Try performing this as a class, using voices, body percussion and instruments that you might have available in your setting.

The image shows a musical score for the opening of Richard Strauss's 'Also sprach Zarathustra'. It consists of four staves, each labeled on the left: Trumpet, Organ, Full Orchestra, and Timpani. The time signature is 4/4. The Trumpet staff shows a rising melody: a quarter note C, a quarter note G, and a half note C (an octave higher). The Organ staff shows a low drone on the note C, represented by a whole note with a ledger line below the staff. The Full Orchestra staff shows two chords: a C major chord (C, E, G) and a C minor chord (C, E-flat, G). The Timpani staff shows a roll (a series of eighth notes) and a dramatic moment using the notes C and G.

Try swapping groups around so they get to experience the four different components that make up this piece, aiding their understanding.

Composing a Sunrise

This task looks for pupils to create their own sunrise theme, using similar ideas to those found in Strauss' piece.

Each composition then should be performed to the class. To scaffold the task, ask pupils to include:

- A quiet beginning using a drone and rising melody
- A crescendo
- A repetition with a thickened texture
- A loud, strong ending

You may want to give your class a free structure to work in, but if you need a little bit more of a scaffolded structure, consider:

Section A: Before Dawn – the Dark Night

- Quiet dynamics
- Drone on a low sound to create stillness
- Slow tempo – perhaps using a slow heartbeat as an ostinato
- Sparse texture with a rising melody

Section B: The Rising Sun

- Crescendo
- Add more instruments/sounds gradually over the top of Section A – using pitches which gradually get higher will help create the effect of the sun rising. Dropping the drone out for a few seconds will also have a big impact on the feel of the music!
- Clearer sense of a beat with repeated rhythms
- Increase in tempo
- Make the melody rise higher – like the sun in the sky

Section C: Full Daylight

- Loud dynamics
- Lots of instruments playing at the same time to create a dense texture, rich and full
- Confident ending using a rallentando and triumphant timpani stomps

Stretch and Challenge

- Consider use of ostinato patterns
- Use contrasting textures
- Compose a melody and sing or play this
- Conduct the ensemble
- Add pitches – consider using the pentatonic scale C D E G A to create a magical sound world

Support and Scaffold

- Use a fixed structure as a composition plan
- Use given rhythmic prompts – for example Ta Ta Ta Ta, Ta Ti-Ti Ta Ta

Links to other subjects

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

Subject	Links
PSHE	Use of descriptive language, development of speaking and listening skills, use of a narrative structure (beginning – middle – end)
Science	Reference to the rotation of the Earth and why we get sunrises (and sunsets)
PSHE	The emotional impact of music on the listener
Drama	Performing and expressing mood through movement
Art	Paint, draw or sketch a sunrise based on Strauss' music
Computing	Consider recording the composition if you have software available to be played alongside the artwork

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Drone	A long sustained note, often in the bass instruments
Crescendo	A dynamic marking meaning getting louder
Diminuendo	A dynamic marking meaning getting quieter
Rallentando	A tempo instruction to get slower
Romantic Period	A period of Western Classical music from roughly 1830-1900. This involved expanding the instruments of the orchestra (including instruments like the piccolo, cor anglais, contrabassoon, harp, trombones, tuba and lots more percussion instruments)
Ostinato	A repeated rhythm, melody or pattern
Programme Music	Music that represents a story, a scene or an emotion. Very popular during the Romantic Period of Western Classical Music
Pentatonic	Pentatonic A five note scale – e.g. using the notes C D E G A
Major chord	For example CEG – major chords often sound happy
Minor chord	For example CEBG – minor chords often sound sad

Sensory activities for all

Richard Strauss – Also sprach Zarathustra

Short task: Light and Dark

Sensory focus: Visual attention

Resources:

- Torches
- Fibre optic lights
- Bubble tube

Activity: Keep the room dim at the start. As the famous opening grows louder, gradually introduce more light until the room is bright, symbolising sunrise. Reduce the lighting again as the music becomes calmer.

Musical link: Responding to increasing dynamic level (volume) and texture (number of layers) in the music.

Medium task: Planet Discovery Trail

Sensory focus: Exploration and communication

Resources:

- Pictures or models of planets
- Space-themed sensory objects

Activity: Place different “planets” around the room. As the music plays, pupils move between stations to explore each one using touch, sight and (where appropriate) smell.

Development ideas:

- Include instruments at each station.

Resources:

- Chime bars
- Ocean drum
- Rainmaker
- Wind chimes

Activity: Invite pupils to choose an instrument that they think matches the planet or atmosphere. Explore playing quietly for calm moments and more boldly for dramatic sections.

Musical link: Develop knowledge of instruments and how to play them to fit with the mood of the music.

Longer task: Colour the Music

Sensory focus: Creative expression

Resources

- Large paper
- Wax crayons or paint sticks

Activity: Invite pupils to make marks that match the music:

- Big, bold lines for loud brass fanfares
- Gentle circles and swirls for quieter sections
- Dots or stars for sparkling musical moments

The focus is on responding to the music rather than creating a finished picture.

Musical link: Interpreting musical elements e.g. dynamics, tempo, instrumentation, through another art medium.

Montgomery – Starburst

Listening

Philharmonia performance ►

Context

About the composer: Jessie Montgomery (born 1981)

Jessie Montgomery is an American composer, violinist and music educator from New York City. Growing up in a creative and culturally diverse environment, she was surrounded by many different styles of music, including classical music, jazz, folk traditions and music from African-American culture. These influences can be heard throughout her compositions. Montgomery is known for writing energetic, imaginative music that often explores storytelling, community and identity. She studied at the Juilliard School and New York University and is one of the most frequently performed contemporary composers today.

About the piece: Starburst (2012)

Starburst is a short, one-movement work for string orchestra written in 2012 and commissioned by the Sphinx Organization, which supports young Black and Latino musicians. Montgomery describes the piece as a musical representation of rapidly changing colours and textures. Fast, explosive musical gestures are mixed with gentler, fleeting melodies to create an exciting and vivid soundscape. The title comes from the astronomical term “starburst”, meaning the rapid formation of many new stars within a galaxy. Montgomery also used the image of talented young musicians shining like new stars as inspiration for the piece.

Listening Guide

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:00-0:54	• Tempo: Lively and fast • Time Signature: 4/4 • Tonality: ambiguous and unclear, but the note A is important The lower strings start with an upward-rising pattern in fast semiquavers, passing this up to the viola, then the violins. The upper strings then play a staccato chord in quavers which is dissonant – i.e. it sounds a bit clashy. Underneath this, the lower strings have chord stabs and melodic fragments From 0:11, the lower strings use pizzicato – they pluck the string to give a different effect. The other strings play with the bow – this is called arco There are lots of changes in musical colours, some only lasting a few seconds, to create rapid contrasts. There are some particularly striking changes in dynamics too!
0:54-2:17	The music energy changes at 0:54 to give a short moment of rest, before launching again. There are some use of harmonics in this section, giving a space-like feeling to the music. There are some ostinato (repeated) rhythms in the violas and second violins to accompany this section
2:17-3:00	A return to the opening ideas, with new musical contrasts to keep the listener engaged
3:00-end	The lower strings start a new idea, acting as a coda (or ending section). There is lots of call and copy between the different instruments before they all settle on a chord to end the piece

Key musical features

- Rhythm and Tempo: fast, energetic opening ideas that seem to burst into life
- Dynamics: sudden changes in dynamics (loud and quiet)
- Melody: short musical ideas passed between different sections of the strings
- Texture: contrasting textures, from busy and exciting to calm and delicate

Short 5-minute task: Opposites Game

The aim of this game is for each student to create three musical words and to write them down. They then need to say their word to another member of the class, who tells them what the opposite to their word is. If the opposite is not known they can ask the student to reveal the answer.

Some examples:

- Major/Minor
- Staccato/Legato (short/smooth)
- High/Low (in pitch)
- Fast/Slow (in tempo or rhythm)
- Notes/Rests
- Forte/Piano (loud/soft)
- Crescendo/Diminuendo (get louder/get quieter)

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage more challenging vocabulary use, and ask pupils to define the terms when discussing

Support and Scaffold

- Give some of the options above for pupils to select from to enable them to engage

Medium 20-minute task: Creative Task

This piece is all about rapidly changing musical colours, linked to the idea of a starburst – where lots of new stars are born very quickly, and often in an explosive manner! As such the music changes quickly in its use of the musical elements, creating an interesting and complex piece of music.

This task asks pupils to listen to the music as a full piece and to respond to it in a creative way. This might be by drawing something based on the title and the music they hear, or a piece of creative writing, creating a dance or a dramatic short, or something else entirely, perhaps linked to the theme of ‘out of this world’.

The main focus is to ensure students understand contrasts and changes, and how these can occur in many different situations.

You might want to use the words below to help pupils with their creative process:

*High in the sky, a starburst grows,
Spreading its sparkle wherever it goes.
Twinkling and dancing, bright in the night,
Painting the darkness with magical light.
Shining like fireworks, bursting with cheer,
Sending its starlight far and near.
A glittering treasure, bold and bright,
A starburst sparkles all through the night.*

It would be useful to play the track for the class as they get to work, so they can become familiar with the music and the sudden changes.

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage pupils to extend their written skills – for example by writing a haiku or combining an artistic response alongside a written text response
- Encourage pupils to respond in a medium in which they are less familiar – for example exploring dance, drama, English to extend their skill set

Support and Scaffold

- Give pupils a specific task – e.g. using the poem above and trying to add a third stanza where each pair of lines rhymes (consider trying to end each line with the words ‘gold, told, see, glee’)
- Respond in a medium in which they are more confident initially, then move to a medium which might need more support – for example start by drawing, then add works to accompany the drawing

Longer 45-minute task: Composing and Performing

Having completed the tasks above, pupils should have a good idea of how contrast can be achieved in music.

This longer task asks students to compose and perform a piece of music they have created which demonstrates musical contrasts.

To do this, they should imagine they are writing 30 seconds of music, divided into three different sections, each lasting around 10 seconds. Each of the three sections should demonstrate different opposites, which the rest of the class need to guess.

For example:

- 0-10 seconds: high and low pitch
- 10-20 seconds: slow and fast tempo
- 20-30 seconds: piano (quiet) and forte (loud) dynamics

Students should have lots of ideas if they have played the short opposites game at the start of the lesson.

Students could use classroom instruments if available, or they could use their voices – any mix of instruments and voices will work in this challenge.

Stretch and Challenge

- More able groups could combine elements, so for example 0-10 seconds involves high and low pitch and getting louder/getting softer dynamics
- Extend more able groups by asking them to compose a fourth or fifth contrasting section

Support and Scaffold

- Start with one contrast first, then add another if there is time

Links to other subjects

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

Subject	Links
English	The music is highly descriptive and encourages imaginative responses, for example by using extended vocabulary linked to space and movement (for example, exploding, glimmering, shimmering, swirling), telling the story of a galaxy and being 'out of this world'
Science	The idea of a 'starburst' is the rapid formation of new stars in a galaxy, and this is a great time to explore space in more detail, learning about stars, galaxies and the solar system
Maths	The use of repeated melodic ideas (motif) can link to repeated patterns in maths
PE/Dance	Performing and expressing mood through movement, for example representing stars forming and exploding with fast and slow movements to picture changes in tempo and dynamics
Art	This piece shows rapidly changing colours and textures, and could be a good inspiration for pupils to create their own art work using pastel, paint or mixed-media whilst listening to the piece, showing the contrasts linked to the music
Geography	Use this piece to investigate where Earth sits with in the solar system, making comparisons between Earth and other planets

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Motif	A short musical idea that is often repeated and changed, developing it
Staccato	An articulation marking meaning 'playing the note shortly' to make it sound detached
Dissonant	A harmony word where the notes played together are clashing
Pizzicato	Plucking the string rather than playing with a bow. Playing with a bow is called arco
Harmonics	A glassy effect on a string instrument achieved by not fully pressing the string to the fingerboard – it makes the music sound 'out of this world'
Ostinato	A repeated pattern, similar to a riff in pop music
Coda	An ending section of a piece of music, similar to a conclusion in writing

Sensory activities for all

Jessie Montgomery – Starburst

Short task: Build a Constellation

Sensory focus: Fine motor skills and collaboration

Resources:

- Glow-in-the-dark stars

or

- Velcro stars
- Black backing paper

Activity: Each time pupils hear a new musical idea, they add another star to a shared constellation. By the end of the piece, the class has created their own “Starburst” inspired night sky, showing how many different musical ideas they heard.

Musical link: Recognise how musical ideas are used to structure a piece of music.

Medium task: Space Pebbles

Sensory focus: Tactile exploration

Resources:

A tray containing:

- Smooth pebbles
- Glitter balls
- Metallic fabric
- Sequins
- Soft pom-poms
- Crinkly foil

Activity:

Ask pupils to explore the tray while listening and choose the object that best matches each musical section. The constantly changing orchestral colours encourage pupils to notice different textures in both the music and the objects.

Musical link: Understanding music has contrasting sections and textures.

Medium/longer task: Twinkling Lights

Sensory focus: Visual stimulation

Resources

- Battery-operated tea lights
- Fibre optic lights

Activity: Invite pupils to switch lights on whenever they hear a sudden musical “spark” or accent. As the music becomes calmer, encourage them to gently dim, cover or lower the lights before the next burst appears.

Development ideas:

- Move onto instruments

Resources:

Small percussion instruments
(bells, chime bars, finger cymbals)

Activity: Listen for the orchestra’s sudden “spark” moments. Encourage pupils to respond with one gentle bell ring or chime whenever they hear an explosive musical accent, helping them anticipate and react to changes in the music.

- Composing

Sensory focus: Choice making and improvisation

Resources:

Selection of sensory instruments (bells, shakers, ocean drum, rainstick, finger cymbals)

Activity: After listening, invite pupils to create their own short “starburst.” Encourage them to begin with silence, add one sudden burst of sound, then finish quietly—just as Jessie Montgomery uses contrast to create excitement throughout the piece.

Musical link: Recognise changes in dynamics and articulation (the way notes are played e.g. accents)

Holst – Extracts from ‘The Planets’

Listening

The full recording of The Planets can be found on the link below, recorded by the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Full piece ▶

The Philharmonia produced a listening guide to the different movements which can be found here – these provide a great overview of the piece.

Mars ▶

Venus ▶

Jupiter ▶

This resource has three different medium tasks to allow pupils to hear each of the three different pieces.

Context

About the composer: Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Gustav Holst (1874–1934) was an English composer and music teacher. He is best known for his orchestral suite The Planets, composed between 1914 and 1917. Holst was fascinated by astronomy, mythology and astrology, and each movement in The Planets represents the character traditionally associated with a planet.

About the piece: The Planets – Mars, Venus and Jupiter (1914-17)

These three movements show tremendous contrast in approach to depicting three different planets.

Mars – The Bringer of War

- Powerful, aggressive and dramatic
- Features a relentless marching ostinato rhythm
- Uses brass and percussion to create tension and excitement

Venus – The Bringer of Peace

- Calm, gentle and reflective
- Features flowing melodies and delicate orchestration

Jupiter – The Bringer of Jollity

- Energetic, joyful and celebratory
- Contains lively dance-like melodies
- Includes the famous melody later used for the hymn “I Vow to Thee, My Country”

Short 5-minute task: colour challenge

Set up 3 different colour areas in your classroom – for example:

- The colour Red – to the right of the classroom
- The colour Blue – to the left of the classroom
- The colour Yellow – to the back of the classroom

You could use different coloured objects (e.g. paper or pens) if required.

Play a short 10 second extract from each of the three pieces, asking pupils to move to the colour area they think the music best represents. As they do this, ask them to explain their thinking, encouraging the use of musical vocabulary to support their answers.

Think about why we might associate these colours in this way:

- Red = Exciting/Dangerous
- Blue = Calm/Peaceful
- Yellow = Happy/Celebratory

Extend thinking by asking:

- Why did you choose this colour?
- What instruments can you hear?
- Which words describe the music?
- Which planet do you think it represents?

Some possible words are below to help:

- **Mars:** fierce, battle, march, powerful, threatening, brass, loud, menacing
- **Venus:** peaceful, floating, gentle, dreamy, relaxing
- **Jupiter:** joyful, energetic, triumphant, festive, cheerful

Stretch and Challenge

- Explain musical reasons for their answers
- Identify changes in dynamics or tempo
- Compare two extracts using musical vocabulary

Support and Scaffold

- Provide picture prompts
- Use sentence stems:
 - “The music sounds...”
 - “I imagine...”
- Limit vocabulary choices to three options

Medium 20-minute task: Rhythm Challenge (Mars)

This challenge looks at the repeated **ostinato** used in Mars to help invoke fear and a war-like atmosphere. Pupils may wish to do this in small groups or in pairs.

The challenge is to ask pupils to perform the ostinato, using only this music to help create contrasting scenes. For example:

- Whispered, ominously
- Tapped using body percussion

- Using a mnemonic – ‘*re-lent-less feet march in-to war*’ works really well
- Using **crescendo** and **diminuendo**
- Using **accents** to make certain syllables stand out



Once you have done this, have a listen to the piece to hear how Holst uses the repeated ostinato. Some things to notice:

- The unusual 5/4 time signature – 5 crotchet beats in a bar
- The use of a **triplet** on the first beat – three notes squeezed into 1 beat
- Use of **col legno** (‘with wood’) on the strings at the start – where the string players turn their bows over to hit the strings with the wood of their bow, creating a scary, out of this world, sound effect

Stretch and Challenge

- Consider if this piece would be as successful if it was written in a standard time signature (e.g. 4/4) and in a major key. What do your pupils think?
- How might you conduct in 5/4?

Support and Scaffold

- Consider pairing more and less able pupils together to support peer to peer learning and confidence
- Use the given mnemonic

Medium 20-minute task: Peace and War Challenge (Venus)

While Mars is all about war, Venus is all about peace. This challenge looks for pupils to make musical comparisons about both pieces using the opening 30-40 seconds of each piece to make comparisons. The table below is designed to help your thinking.

	Mars	Venus
Instruments	Percussion, Brass and percussive strings – full orchestra	Solo instruments – horn, woodwind – feels like a much smaller orchestra
Rhythm	5 beats in a bar – unnerving. Use of ostinato and triplets	Slow notes, 4/4 time signature, some ostinatos but very different effect
Tonality	Minor key	Major key
Dynamics	Sudden changes, often very loud (fortissimo)	Very quiet (pianissimo) with gradual changes
Tempo	Fast	Slow

Stretch and Challenge

- Use comparison language ‘while Mars does this, Venus does this’ – similarities, differences and justifications

Support and Scaffold

- Give choices between the two pieces based on the information on the table – e.g. Fast or Slow?

Medium 20-minute task: Story Builder (Jupiter)

This task encourages pupils to listen to the whole movement and to then respond, making a short silent drama or tableau inspired by the music. Given Jupiter is the ‘bringer of jollity’ it is a good idea to focus your pupils on a jolly scene like a village celebration, festival or fete, or a similar scene.

In their scene, pupils should look to include:

- Three frozen pictures
- One movement sequence
- No narration or voiceover

As pupils perform, play the track to help bring their scene to life. Then discuss as a class to understand how the music influenced the movement, encouraging pupils to use musical vocabulary to support their answers.

Some areas to consider:

	Jupiter
Instruments	Full orchestra, fast strings – exciting
Rhythm	Fast rhythms, syncopation – excitement
Tonality	Major key
Dynamics	Sudden changes, often very loud (fortissimo)
Tempo	Fast

Stretch and Challenge

- Encourage pupils to plan a contrasting middle scene to have a second movement sequence linking the 3 freeze frames

Support and Scaffold

- Scaffold the task to a single freeze frame, then add others if able
- Use a teacher-devised plot

Longer 45-minute task: What about Pluto?

In the 1930s, Pluto was discovered and was considered the ninth planet. This happened after Holst had finished writing his piece for the Planets, and is why Pluto does not have a movement of music written by Holst. However, in 2006, Pluto was reclassified when astronomers reclassified the term planet, and now it is not seen as being a planet because it has not cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit. As such, Pluto is now seen as being a dwarf planet.

This challenge looks to imagine what the music for Pluto might have sounded like. Pluto is very far away from the sun – dark, cold, and it takes an amazing 248 Earth years to do just one orbit of the sun! One day on Pluto lasts for 153 hours. Pluto is smaller than our Moon.

Step 1: Listen and Analyse

Revisit short extracts from Mars, Venus and Jupiter:

- How does Mars sound powerful?
- How does Venus sound peaceful?
- What makes Jupiter sound joyful?

Discuss the elements outlined in the medium task.

Step 2: What is Pluto like?

In small groups, consider what Pluto is like – the colours, the temperature, the landscape, the weather, who or what lives there... Respond to this by writing key words, a drawing, a table...

Step 3: Compose

Using body percussion, classroom instruments and voices, ask groups to perform music for Pluto. Their composition should include:

- A beginning, middle and end
- At least two contrasting dynamics
- An ostinato that is repeated
- A clear mood

Encourage pupils to borrow compositional ideas from Holst, for example:

- Repeated rhythms like Mars
- Flowing melodies like Venus
- Celebratory patterns like Jupiter

Step 4: Perform and Appraise

Ask groups to perform with the audience identifying if the 4 points above have been included in the composition to appraise the work.

Stretch and Challenge

- Create contrasting sections representing different areas of the planet
- Add notated rhythms or graphic scores
- Justify compositional decisions using musical vocabulary

Support and Scaffold

- Provide rhythmic patterns to copy
- Use picture prompts
- Restrict choices to loud/quiet and fast/slow
- Allow teacher-led composition
- Use body percussion rather than pitched instruments

Links to other subjects

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

Subject	Links
Art	Design and illustrate Pluto
English	Using subject-specific vocabulary, creative writing tasks and using descriptive language
Science	Space and the solar system, classification of a planet, planetary environments and conditions needed for life
Drama	Creating a scene to match the music

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Accent	A way of playing a note to make it stand out – represented with this symbol >
Crescendo	A dynamic marking meaning getting louder
Diminuendo	A dynamic marking meaning getting quieter
Ostinato	A repeated rhythm, melody or pattern
Major chord	For example CEG – major chords often sound happy
Minor chord	For example CEbG – minor chords often sound sad
Triplet	Three notes in 1 beat
Col Legno	To play a stringed instrument with the wood of the bow (literally means ‘with wood’)
Pianissimo	Very quiet
Fortissimo	Very loud
Syncopation	Off beat

Sensory activities for all

Holst – excerpts from ‘The Planets’

Mars

Medium task: Feel the Beat

Sensory focus: Vibration, touch, rhythm

Resources

- Drum
- Resonance board
- Therapy ball
- Large floor drum (if available)

Activity: Invite pupils to place their hands on the drum or resonance board while Mars plays.

During the louder sections:

- Tap the drum in time with the pulse so pupils can physically feel the vibrations

During the quieter melody:

- Use gentle rolling motions on a therapy ball or soft tapping

Musical link: Develop awareness of pulse through touch rather than hearing alone.

Venus

Medium task: Space Textures

Sensory focus: Tactile exploration

Resources:

Sensory tray containing:

- Foil
- Bubble wrap
- Cotton wool
- Organza
- Soft pom-poms
- Textured fabric

Activity: Invite pupils to explore different textures while listening.

Ask simple prompts:

Which texture feels like the stormy music?

Which feels soft and calm?

There are no right answers.

Musical link: Develop deeper understanding of descriptive nature of music through touch.

Jupiter

Medium task:

Orbit Walk

Sensory focus: Gross motor movement

Resources

- Floor spots
- Planet pictures

Activity: Create a giant orbit around the room.

As Jupiter plays:

- Walk
- Wheel
- Crawl
- Move with walkers

Encourage movement that matches the music:

- Big, confident steps
- Slow floating during the middle section

Musical link: Encourages awareness of pulse, rhythm and musical contrasts through movement.

All excerpts

Longer task:

Space Sound Makers

Sensory focus: Listening and cause/effect

Resources:

- Rainmaker
- Ocean drum
- Chime bars
- Bells
- Cabasa
- Tambourine

Activity

Pause the music between sections.

Ask: Which instrument sounds most like Mars/Venus/Jupiter?

Allow pupils to choose and explore freely.

Musical link: Develops knowledge of timbre (unique sound of an instrument) and how it relates to the mood of the music.

Alberga – 'Sailing on Tethys'

Listening

This movement can be heard on the recording below:

[Listen here ►](#)

Context

About the composer: Eleanor Alberga (born 1949)

Eleanor Alberga is a Jamaican-born British composer, pianist and musical educator. Born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1949, she later moved to London to study at the Royal Academy of Music. Her music often combines vivid storytelling, exciting rhythms and colourful orchestral sounds. She is one of the most significant living British composers.

About the piece: Sailing on Tethys from Symphony No. 1 'Strata' (2022)

Sailing on Tethys is the fifth movement from Alberga's Symphony No. 1, Strata (2022). The symphony explores different layers of planet Earth and was inspired by geology and sailing. Sailing on Tethys imagines a journey across the ancient Tethys Ocean, a vast prehistoric ocean that disappeared millions of years ago. Alberga combines graceful, dance-like fragments with dramatic orchestral effects that suggest shifting tectonic plates and changing landscapes.

Listening Guide

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0.00-0:56	Very quiet, string and wood wind sounds – sustained chords with bird-like melodies. A few pizzicato strings punctuate the texture. This creates a calm mood of gentle seas
0:57-2:00	A glissando is heard in the melody before the melody heads to the woodwind section. Notice the percussion at 1:29 giving a sparking effect
2:01-2:34	The music picks up pace and has more rhythmic drive, before going back to similar ideas to the start
2:35-3:05	A sense of climax with cymbals crashing, louder dynamics and increased use of brass instruments and timpani rolls, suggesting a more violent sea
3:06	Solo violin returns the music to a calmer tempo, with a sudden glissando and climax towards the end as the music rushes downwards

Key musical features

Flowing, wave-like melodies

- Changes in dynamics
- Contrasting moods
- Orchestral colour and texture
- Glissandos (sliding sounds)
- Music that feels like movement or travel
- Dance-like rhythms – like the sea moving
- Fragmented melodic ideas that appear, then vanish under the water

Short 5-minute task: Matching Moods

This is a short performance task to get your class thinking about the sounds linked to the ocean. Giving them only a very short time (2 minutes is perfect) ask your class to create sounds linked to the ocean. This could be using their voices, body percussion or classroom instruments depending on your setting. If you have time, you may want selected groups to perform to the class, or you might want to encourage class discussion. Some aspects that might help this discussion:

- Setting – deep ocean, by the shore, is land visible?
- Weather – calm or in a storm?
- Time – is it day or night?

Stretch and Challenge

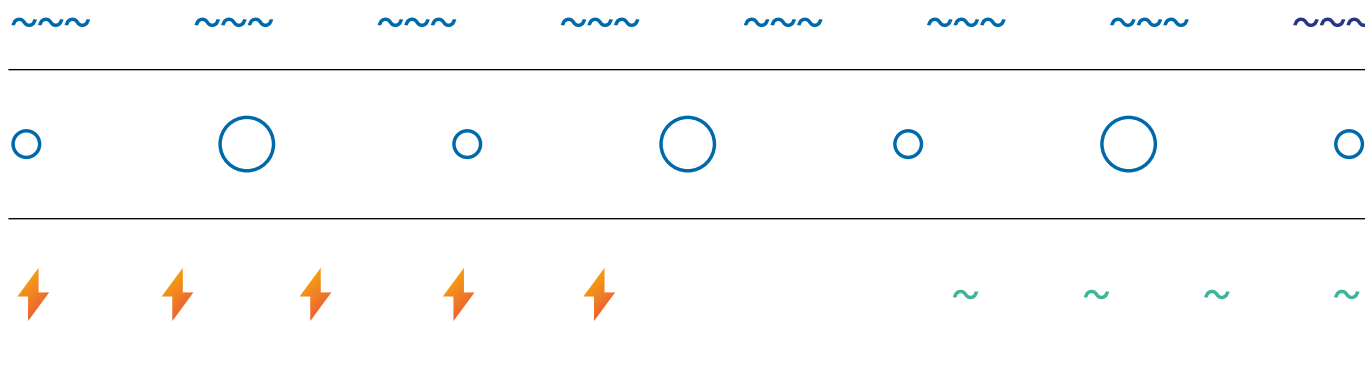
- Give a more challenging scene to represent – e.g. a calm ocean with flat seas, encouraging pupils to create a sound world similar to that of this piece

Support and Scaffold

- Give the scene to represent e.g. 'a storm at sea' and support with other vocabulary e.g. 'big waves', 'howling winds', 'waves crashing on the shore', 'thunder'

If you would like to take a more structured approach to this task, students can use the graphic score below for their performances.

Ocean Task: Graphic score



Waves = swishing sounds

Lightning = storm sounds

Bubbles = pops / clicks

Final waves = calm sea

Medium 20-minute task: Musical Fossils

Instead of asking pupils simply what the music makes them imagine, this task encourages pupils to behave like sound archaeologists. They listen as if the music is a fossil dug up from a lost ocean world. Their job is to identify what clues have been preserved inside it.

Play a short extract of the music. Ask pupils to imagine that this music has been discovered inside a rock from the ancient Tethys Ocean.

Pupils complete this sentence based on their listening:

“This musical fossil contains evidence of...”

They choose three from the list, or create their own:

- a vanished ocean
- moving rocks
- a creature no one has seen before
- a ship from another time
- a warning from the Earth
- a dance from a lost civilisation
- a storm under the sea
- a secret map
- a message from the deep past

Then ask pupils to add one musical reason to justify their answer:

“I think this because I heard...”

Examples:

- “I think this because I heard sliding sounds (glissando).”
- “I think this because the music gradually became louder (crescendo).”
- “I think this because the melody sounded like it was floating.”

Then ask pupils to focus on one of their musical reasons and ask them to compose a short piece of music to represent this area – e.g. using a glissando, a crescendo and so on. If you have time, perform these to the class alongside the musical justification to help develop musical confidence and vocabulary.

Stretch and Challenge

- Ask pupils to include a musical word in their explanation:
 - dynamics
 - texture
 - pitch
 - rhythm
 - melody
 - silence
 - contrast
 - glissando

Challenge sentence example:

“The music suggests a lost ocean because the sliding glissando sounds make it feel as if the Earth itself is moving”

Support and Scaffold

- Give pupils sentence starters:
 - “The music sounds like...”
 - “I heard...”
 - “It made me think of...”
 - “The mood was...”
- Provide picture cards: fossil, ocean, volcano, map, creature, storm, island
- Allow pupils to point to a picture rather than write
- Give a smaller choice of words: calm, spooky, loud, smooth, sudden, floating

Longer 45-minute task: The Tethys Transmission – Decode the Message

Pupils imagine that Sailing on Tethys is not music at all, but a mysterious radio transmission from an ancient ocean planet. They must decode it and turn it into a short spoken, visual and musical response. Pupil are encouraged to explore how music can communicate information, atmosphere and narrative without words.

It is useful if pupils have classroom instruments, paper (their pupil workbook) or mini whiteboards and pens.

Part 1: Listen Like Scientists

Tell pupils:

“Scientists have received a strange transmission. It seems to come from the lost Tethys Ocean. It may be a warning, a map, a memory or a message.”

Play an extract of the music.

Ask pupils to listen for changes. Each time they hear a change, they make a small mark on their paper in their workbooks.

Marks might include:

- a zigzag for sudden movement
- a spiral for swirling sounds
- a dot for quiet or mysterious moments
- a wave line for smooth, flowing sounds
- an explosion shape for loud or dramatic moments

This creates a quick **graphic score**.

Part 2: Decode the Transmission

In pairs or small groups, pupils choose what their marks mean.

For example:

Musical Sound	Musical Name	Possible Meaning
Sliding sound	Glissando	Tectonic plates moving
Few layers	Thin texture	Something hidden below the ocean
Sudden loud sound	Accent	A warning signal
Repeated rhythm	Ostinato	A machine, heartbeat or rowing pattern
High sound	High pitch	Light from another world
Low sound	Low pitch	Deep ocean or Earth's core

There is space in their workbooks to work on this. Groups should then complete this phrase:

“The message from Tethys says...”

Examples:

- “The ocean is disappearing.”
- “The islands are moving.”
- “Something is waking beneath the sea.”
- “Follow the currents before the plates collide.”
- “This world is beautiful, but unstable.”

Part 3: Perform the Transmission

Groups create a 20–30 second “transmission” using:

- voices
- whispering
- body percussion
- classroom percussion
- repeated words (ostinato)
- sliding vocal sounds (glissando)
- quiet and loud contrasts (crescendo and diminuendo)

They should include:

1. A mysterious opening
2. A coded repeated pattern (ostinato)
3. A sudden warning sound
4. A fading ending (diminuendo)

A possible example structure:

- Whisper: “Tethys... Tethys...”
- Tap a repeated pulse
- Slide voices upwards or downwards using glissando and ostinato
- Sudden drum hit or clap
- Fade to silence

Stretch and Challenge

- Ask pupils to create a more detailed graphic score using at least five symbols
- Include a clear change in texture, such as solo to group or sparse to busy
- Use a repeated rhythmic pattern as a “code”
- Add a spoken line using ambitious vocabulary, such as:
 - submerge
 - unstable
 - ancient
 - collision
 - drifting
 - vanishing
 - transmission
- Challenge pupils to explain how their performance links to Alberg’s music

Example:

“We used sliding voices because Alberg’s music includes sounds that feel as if the Earth is shifting”

Support and Scaffold

- Provide ready-made symbols pupils can copy:
 - wave line
 - dot
 - spiral
 - zigzag
 - triangle
 - explosion shape
- Give pupils a simple performance template:
 - Quiet sound
 - Repeated sound
 - Loud sound
 - Quiet sound
- Let pupils use body percussion only
- Give word prompts:
 - lost
 - deep
 - warning
 - moving
 - hidden
 - ancient

Links to other subjects

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

Subject	Links
Science	Signals and waves, Earth science, tectonic plates, oceans
Geography	Plates, oceans
English	Interpreting meaning, creating concise messages, speaking and listening skills
Art	Symbol design and implementation, visual communication and abstract representation of sound through drawing
Computing	How data can be represented, sequences, patterns and codes

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Crescendo	A dynamic marking meaning getting louder
Diminuendo	A dynamic marking meaning getting quieter
Rallentando	A tempo instruction to get slower
Ostinato	A repeated rhythm, melody or pattern
Pizzicato	Plucking the string on a string instrument
Glissando	Sliding between two notes
Graphic Score	Notating sounds using symbols and drawings
Accent	A note that is played louder to make it stand out

Sensory activities for all

Eleanor Alberga – Symphony No. 1, movement 5, Sailing on Tethys

Short task: Floating Boats

Sensory focus: Vestibular awareness, imagination

Resources:

- Beanbags or floor mats
- Small toy boats (optional)

Activity: Ask pupils to imagine they are floating on Tethys' water. Encourage gentle swaying, rocking or supported movement in time with the music, changing the size of the movements as the musical "currents" change.

Musical link: Encourages awareness of pulse.

Medium task: Ocean Waves

Sensory focus: Movement, visual tracking

Resources:

- Blue chiffon scarves
- Large blue fabric or parachute
- Small boat (optional)

Activity: Invite pupils to create waves that match the music. As the music becomes more energetic, make larger rolling waves. During calmer sections, create slow ripples, encouraging pupils to notice how the "water" changes throughout the piece.

Musical link: Responding to changes in musical mood.

Medium task: Wind in the Sails

Sensory focus: Air movement

Resources:

- Hand fans
- Feather fans
- Lightweight fabric

Activity: Adults or pupils gently create "wind" using fans as the music grows. Vary the strength of the breeze to reflect changing musical dynamics, helping pupils connect what they hear with what they feel.

Musical link: Develops understanding of dynamics.

Longer task: Ocean Sound Orchestra

Sensory focus: Listening and cause-and-effect

Resources:

- Ocean drum
- Thunder drum
- Rainstick
- Shakers
- Wind chimes

Activity: Pause after listening to short sections and invite pupils to choose an instrument that best matches the sounds they heard. Explore how different instruments can recreate flowing water, gentle rain or rolling waves. This can develop into a composition.

Musical link: Develops knowledge of timbre (unique sound of an instrument) and composing skills.

C418 – Minecraft Medley

Listening

In the concert this will be a performance for the full orchestra; at the time of writing, there is not a version of this available to listen to, but there is a version of the main theme for string orchestra which you can listen to on the link below.

[Listen here ►](#)

Context

About the composer: Daniel Rosenfeld (C418) (born 1989)

Daniel Rosenfeld, known professionally as C418, is a German composer who famously wrote the music for the video game Minecraft. This game is a large-scale community game made up of infinite terrain and challenges over raw materials and working against enemies. There are many different songs and pieces that make up the music to the video game.

About the piece: Minecraft Medley (2011)

The concert will feature different music from the Minecraft series to make a medley (a collection of songs put together). The main theme might be recognisable to your pupils, as many may have experienced playing the game at home. The music in the video game combines electronic and acoustic sounds, creating a peaceful and reflective atmosphere, mirroring the action on screen in the game play.

Listening Guide

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:00-0:37	Opening section for full strings, played arco (bowed). The music gradually gets louder (crescendo)
0:38-1:27	Use of pizzicato accompaniment and dotted rhythms in the melody, which moves from the violin to the viola. The texture here is lighter as the double basses do not play as often. There are louder chords at the end of this section, including a tremolo
1:28-2:22	A slower section more based around a minor key with the melody in the viola
2:23-3:51	A faster section with pizzicato accompaniment featuring syncopation in the melody line and a countermelody underneath. This section has a textural break when all instruments play pizzicato. The cello has more melodic movement in this section, based on broken chords
3:52-4:51	A more grand section based in the unusual time signature of 7/4, meaning 7 crotchet beats per bar. The instruments all play similar rhythms creating a grand texture. There are some strong dynamic contrasts at the end

Key musical features

- **Instrumentation:** Full symphony orchestra in the concert, string orchestra in the recording
- **Tempo:** Moderate tempo with changes for different section
- **Dynamics:** Some gradual contrasts including crescendo and diminuendo
- **Texture:** Textural variety achieved with use of pizzicato in the strings
- **Rhythm:** Contrast between longer note values and dotted rhythms in some melodic lines
- **Melody:** Short fragmented ideas, split between violins and violas
- **Mood:** Peaceful and reflective
- **Harmony:** Use of major and minor chords

Short 5-minute task: Listening Detectives!

Play a couple of different short excerpts from the piece, asking your pupils to become musical detectives to identify:

- What instruments they can hear
- How those instruments are being played
- If the music sounds busy or calm
- What might be happening in the video game during this music

As pupils investigate, encourage them to use musical vocabulary as outlined above.

Stretch and Challenge

- Consider how the music communicates a story without words
- How does this music link to the theme of being 'out of this world'? Explain using musical vocabulary

Support and Scaffold

- Offer mood words with choice – for example 'is the music calm or busy?' to help support
- Offer musical words with choice – for example 'is the music forte (loud) or piano (quiet)?'

Medium 20-minute task: The Landscape of Minecraft

Whether your pupils have played Minecraft before or have never heard of the game, there are lots of aspects of the game that can translate into musical expression. The Minecraft world is set up with lots of different geographical scenes – for example:

- Mountains
- Forests
- Oceans
- Caves
- Swamps

These different scenes and scenarios are ideal for creating contrasting dramatic and musical scenes.

Step 1: Scene Choice

Pick a different scene from the list above. What words describe the scene? What colours, textures, smells and sensations come to mind? If you had a few minutes to draw your scene, what would it look like?

Step 2: Create Movement

Now encourage your pupils to act out how they might react to their different scene – for example:

- Mountains – climbing up a steep mountain side
- Forests – walking through a still, dark forest
- Oceans – swimming with dolphins in the big sea
- Caves – crawling through a narrow dark cave
- Swamps – wading through still swamps with frogs as your friends

Step 3: Music Planning

Having acted out the movement, now encourage pupils to consider how they would use the elements of music to represent their movement in music. To help scaffold this task, consider giving pupils choices to select from rather than giving total free choice. They can use the grid in the Pupil Workbook to support their thinking.

Step 4: Discuss

Having planned the movement and music, ask pupils to discuss their ideas and share their thinking with the class.

Stretch and Challenge

- You might decide to do this as a whole class, splitting up different groups to picture the different scenes
- Aim to complete contrasting scenes to give a sense of journey

Support and Scaffold

- Give choices and model actions to support

Longer 45-minute task: Minecraft Film Composer Challenge

This longer composition task builds on the medium task, where pupils have started planning the contrasting scenes for a Minecraft scene. In this challenge they have considered different geographical features, and how they might represent this in movement and music.

This challenge looks to extend that thinking to create a musical soundscape linked to a Minecraft scene.

Step 1: The Musical Toolbox

Introduce 4 musical devices that composers use:

1. **Ostinato** – a repeated pattern, for example Ta Ta Ti-Ti Ta
2. **Drone** – a long held note to help create atmosphere, for example a low-pitched drone or a high-pitched drone
3. **Dynamic Changes** – crescendo (gradually getting louder) and diminuendo (gradually getting quieter), or sudden changes between quiet (piano) and loud (forte)
4. **Changing instruments** – changing between the different orchestral families and how these instruments are played (e.g. pizzicato)

Step 2: Scene Creation

Plan a story board. This could build on ideas from the medium task, or be brand new thinking.

For example:

	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3
What is happening?	Starting in a cold deep cave – full of mystery and a few scary noises	Encountering Danger – tense, dramatic, scary	Emerging to a new underwater world through the cave – joy, triumph, excitement
Musical features	Low drone, slow tempo, sudden dynamic changes to make people jump	Faster tempo, ostinato rhythms, crescendo, developing layers	Major key, ostinato rhythms, forte dynamics, fast tempo

Step 3: Compose

For each group composition, ask them to include the following as a check list:

- One ostinato rhythm
- One use of a crescendo
- One use of a diminuendo
- One use of a drone
- Two changes in the instruments/sounds used to give contrast

Step 4: Perform

Ask groups to perform their soundtrack with the audience acting as music critics to evaluate:

- Where the mood changed
- If there was an ostinato
- If there was a crescendo and diminuendo
- If there was a drone
- If there were at least 2 changes to instruments/sounds used

Discuss as a class to give constructive feedback on what went well and how the work could be improved going forwards.

Stretch and Challenge

- Compose a short melody using tuned percussion
- Use notation or graphic notation
- Create contrasting major and minor moods
- Use layered ostinato figures
- Conduct the performance
- Create a musical motif for a Minecraft character
- Explain compositional decisions using correct musical terminology

Support and Scaffold

- Provide a pre-made storyboard
- Supply rhythm cards
- Use body percussion only
- Give sentence starters:
 - “This music sounds...”
 - “We chose a loud dynamic because...”
- Allow pupils to copy and develop teacher models

Links to other subjects

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

Subject	Links
English	• Use descriptive vocabulary to explain the mood, atmosphere and emotions created by the music • Develop speaking and listening skills through discussion and performance • Create stories, narratives and adventure settings inspired by Minecraft • Sequence events and build story structures for musical compositions
Art	• Draw or paint landscapes inspired by the music • Design Minecraft worlds, characters and settings • Create storyboards to plan musical adventures • Explore how colour, shape and texture can represent musical ideas
Drama	• Use movement and role-play to respond to the music • Act out scenes from a Minecraft adventure • Explore characterisation and storytelling without words • Perform musical narratives for an audience
Maths	• Count beats and rhythmic patterns • Recognise repeated sequences and ostinati • Develop understanding of pattern, structure and organisation • Explore timing and pulse through performance activities
Geography	• Explore different landscapes such as mountains, forests, caves and oceans • Discuss how environments can influence mood and artistic choices • Compare real and imaginary worlds

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Drone	A long sustained note, often in the bass instruments
Crescendo	A dynamic marking meaning getting louder
Diminuendo	A dynamic marking meaning getting quieter
Arco	Playing a string instrument with a bow
Pizzicato	Plucking the string with your fingers
Tremolo	Rapidly bowing a note to create a shimmering effect
Syncopation	Off beat
Counter melody	A second melody working alongside the main melody
Ostinato	A repeated pattern

Sensory activities for all

Minecraft Medley

Short task: Explore Different Biomes

Sensory focus: Tactile exploration

Resources:

Create sensory trays representing different Minecraft biomes:

- Forest: twigs, leaves, pinecones
- Beach: sand, shells, pebbles
- Snow: cotton wool, white pom-poms
- Cave: smooth stones, foil, black fabric

Activity: As the medley changes between pieces, encourage pupils to explore a different biome, noticing how each environment feels and how the music changes the atmosphere.

Musical link: Understanding of the structure and mood of the music.

OR

Short task: Mine and Discover

Sensory focus: Cause and effect, tactile exploration

Resources:

- Sensory bin filled with kinetic sand, shredded paper or rice
- Hidden “ores” (painted stones, gems, wooden blocks)

Activity: Hide different “ores” in a sensory tray. As the music plays, pupils gently dig to discover them, encouraging slow exploration rather than fast searching. This reflects the calm, exploratory nature of the music rather than the action side of Minecraft.

Musical link: Reflecting the mood and pulse of the music.

Medium task: Pixel Art Creations

Sensory focus: Visual perception, fine motor skills

Resources:

- Coloured cubes
- Mosaic tiles
- Sticky notes
- Squared paper

Activity: Create simple pixel pictures while listening. Pupils might copy a Creeper, tree or flower, or simply arrange colours into their own patterns inspired by the calm music.

Musical link: The music provides the creative stimulus for the artwork.

Medium task: Pass the Emerald

Sensory focus: Turn-taking

Resources:

- Green sensory ball or soft gemstone

Activity: Pass the “emerald” slowly around the circle. Encourage pupils to notice the gentle pulse of the music and pass when they feel ready, creating a calm shared rhythm.

Musical link: Develops awareness of pulse and rhythm through touch rather than hearing alone.

Longer task: Storytelling Journey

Sensory focus: Communication and imagination

Resources:

Picture cards showing:

- Home
- Tree
- River
- Animal
- Mountain
- Friend
- Treasure

Activity: Invite pupils to arrange the pictures into a journey while listening. The gentle, reflective music provides a calm backdrop for storytelling, with no right or wrong sequence.

Musical link: Responding to the character of the music.

Beethoven – Overture to The Creatures of Prometheus

Listening

This piece was recorded by the Philharmonia during the Covid-19 pandemic. The video below contains the full piece:

[Listen here ►](#)

Listen out for the introduction from 2:11 and the Overture from 5:37. The introduction does look at the possible different plots and contains some animations to explain the plot which might be useful for your pupils to access the music, but please do watch the video introduction prior to showing your class to ensure it is appropriate for them.

Context

About the composer: Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Beethoven was a German composer who is considered one of the greatest musicians of all time. He lived during the transition between the Classical and Romantic periods of music and is famous for works such as his Fifth Symphony, Ninth Symphony and Für Elise.

Beethoven was known for his powerful musical ideas and his ability to tell stories through music. Despite gradually losing his hearing, he continued to compose some of the world's most famous music.

About the piece: Overture from The Creatures of Prometheus (1801)

The Creatures of Prometheus is a ballet written by Beethoven in 1801. A ballet is a story told through dance and music. The story is based on Prometheus,

a figure from Greek mythology. According to legend, Prometheus stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans, helping them gain knowledge, creativity and civilisation.

The Overture is the opening music to the ballet. It introduces the dramatic mood of the story and prepares the audience for the adventure ahead.

Listening Guide

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
5:37-6:40	Adagio (slow) tempo for this section. The piece opens with fortissimo (very loud) chords from the full orchestra followed by a much quieter (piano) section based in C major
6:41-7:05	Allegro (fast) section. This has very fast violin writing with the woodwind and brass having chords above. These are sometimes syncopated (off beat) to give the music even more energy
7:06-7:24	The fast tempo remains, but the music changes character with woodwind having an ascending melodic idea. The major key remains but we are now in G major , a closely related key to C major
7:25-8:16	From 7:25 there is more of a hint at minor tonalities and chromatic melodies before the brighter major key returns. There is strong contrast between fortissimo (very loud) and piano (quiet) in this section before the opening allegro idea is hinted at
8:17-8:42	A return to the opening Allegro idea (6:41). There are some changes to the music to keep the listener on their toes and keep the excitement up
8:43-10:22	A repeat of the music from 7:06 but now in a different key (C major). The music to the end builds on the music from before, finishing triumphantly in C major with the full orchestra

Key musical features

- **Instrumentation:** Full Classical orchestra including strings, woodwind, brass and timpani
- **Tempo:** Opening Adagio (slow), then Allegro (very fast)
- **Dynamics:** Sudden changes between fortissimo (very loud) and piano (quiet) sections
- **Texture:** Mostly melody with accompaniment, becoming richer as more instruments join
- **Rhythm:** Strong, driving rhythms with syncopation that create excitement and momentum. Lots of fast quavers in violins
- **Melody:** Memorable melodic ideas passed between different instruments
- **Mood:** Heroic, adventurous, exciting and dramatic
- **Harmony:** Clear Classical harmonies creating tension and resolution, based around C major

Short 5-minute task: Heroic Listening Challenge

This task acts as an introduction to the piece, looking at the way the music makes the characters appear.

Play the opening 90 seconds of the piece. Ask pupils to consider:

- Is the character brave or frightened?
- Is the character a hero, villain or explorer?
- Which musical features helped you decide?

Discuss your ideas as a class and as a means to introduce the story of Prometheus, and how he stole fire from the Gods. For a more creative response, ask your learners to consider responding by:

- Drawing a hero symbol
- Writing three describing words
- Freezing in a dramatic pose showing the character

Ask pupils to explain their thinking, linking to the music they have heard.

Stretch and Challenge

- Ask pupils to justify their answers using musical vocabulary
- Compare Prometheus with another mythical hero
- Identify when the mood changes and explain why

Support and Scaffold

- Provide word banks: brave, strong, mysterious, exciting, magical
- Allow pupils to point to picture cards showing emotions
- Discuss ideas with a partner before sharing

Medium 20-minute task: Out of This World Art Challenge

This task looks to allow pupils a chance to listen to the full piece, perhaps two or more times, whilst they create a piece of art to represent the story of Prometheus stealing fire from the gods. You could ask pupils to respond to the title theme of the concert – ‘Out of This World’ – to give inspiration to their thinking. This could then form part of a display in school if you have the space for this, encouraging pupils to understand more about the plot and the myths of the ancient world.

This task allows for clear links to Art and History as explored below. If pupils need some inspiration, consider the following moments from the plot to help pupils to think creatively!

- Prometheus climbing Mount Olympus
- Sneaking past the gods
- Stealing fire
- Escaping from the gods

Stretch and Challenge

- This could be extended to a piece of creative writing, or a scene from a play for pupils keen to explore different creative pursuits

Support and Scaffold

- Give a clear plot of what to draw – Prometheus stealing fire and the other God being annoyed and firing lightning bolts at him in revenge

Longer 45-minute task: the Magical Quest

“Imagine you are creating a new mythical adventure with the title ‘out of this world’. Your hero must travel through the stars to bring a magical gift back to Earth.”

Step 1: Listen and Gather Ideas

Listen to different sections of Beethoven’s overture – for example, the opening adagio, the start of the allegro and the final 30 seconds.

Discuss:

- How does Beethoven create drama?
- How does he show action?
- How does the music sound heroic?

Consider the following to help your pupils understand the music:

- **Instruments:** Full Classical orchestra including strings, woodwind, brass and timpani
- **Tempo:** Opening Adagio (slow), then Allegro (very fast)
- **Dynamics:** Sudden changes between fortissimo (very loud) and piano (quiet) sections
- **Texture:** Mostly melody with accompaniment, becoming richer as more instruments join
- **Rhythm:** Strong, driving rhythms with syncopation that create excitement and momentum
- **Melody:** Memorable melodic ideas passed between different instruments
- **Mood:** Heroic, adventurous, exciting and dramatic
- **Harmony:** Clear Classical harmonies creating tension and resolution, based around C major

Step 2: Plan a Musical Journey

Groups create a four-part story, to include a narrator outlining what is taking place with the music accompanying:

1. The hero begins the quest
2. A challenge appears – for example, an enemy blocking your path
3. A magical object is discovered – it holds the power to the universe!
4. The hero returns triumphantly

Step 3: Compose Music

Using voices, percussion (tuned or untuned) and/or classroom instruments (if available), create music for each section.

Encourage pupils to include:

- Loud and quiet sounds (dynamics)
- Fast and slow sections (tempo)
- Repeated rhythms (ostinato) – long chords and fast repeated ideas
- Contrasting moods (major and minor keys, high and low pitches)

Step 4: Perform

Groups perform while another pupil narrates the story. Ensure pupils are being active listeners by asking them to spot the criteria below:

Performance Criteria

Did the groups...

- Create contrasting sections?
- Work together effectively?
- Use dynamics purposefully?
- Match music to the story?

Discuss as a group to give feedback on the music composed and performed by the groups.

Stretch and Challenge

- Consider creating a leitmotif for the main character
- Consider changing this leitmotif as the character's story develops
- Direct the ensemble
- Notate the composition using graphic score or staff notation
- Answer how the music matched the story using musical vocabulary

Support and Scaffold

- Ask pupils to create two contrasting sections and then add a third if they are able
- Using body percussion and unpitched instruments initially to give confidence
- If moving to pitched instruments
 - e.g. glockenspiel – consider using 2 or 3 different notes initially

Links to other subjects

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

Subject	Links
Art	Through the art challenge and drawing the plot outlining the mythical story
History	Exploring myths and legends through the plot
English	Through exploring a creative writing task linked to the plot
Drama	Through exploring a possible scene linked to the plot

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Classical Period	A period of Western Classical music from roughly 1750-1830. This period involved the use of the orchestra in pieces like symphonies, where there were 4 instrumental families (woodwind, percussion, brass and strings) sounding together
Romantic Period	A period of Western Classical music from roughly 1830-1900. This involved expanding the instruments of the orchestra (including instruments like the piccolo, cor anglais, contrabassoon, harp, trombones, tuba and lots more percussion instruments)
Major chord	For example CEG – major chords often sound happy
Adagio	A tempo instruction meaning slow
Allegro	A tempo instruction meaning fast
Chromatic	Moving up by semitones – e.g. C, C#, D, D#, E, F..
Syncopated	Where a rhythm is played off-beat, creating energy
Fortissimo	A dynamic marking meaning very loud
Piano	A dynamic marking meaning quiet
Minor chord	For example CEbG – minor chords often sound sad

Sensory activities for all

Beethoven – Overture to the Creatures of Prometheus

Short task: Wake Up the Creatures

Sensory focus: Body awareness, movement

Resources

- None (or soft mats)

Activity: At the start of the music, invite pupils to pretend they are sleeping statues. As the orchestra begins, encourage them to gradually “wake up” by opening their eyes, stretching their arms, reaching upwards and beginning to move as the music becomes more energetic.

Musical link: Understanding of the structure of the piece – the overture begins with a slow introduction before bursting into lively, energetic music.

Medium task: Musical Statues with a Twist

Sensory focus: Listening, gross motor skills and self-regulation

Resources

- None

Activity: Instead of stopping the music, encourage pupils to become “statues” whenever they hear a quieter or gentler musical phrase. As the lively music returns, the statues “come to life” again.

Musical link: Responding to changes in dynamics and musical character.

Medium task: Invent Something New

Sensory focus: Creativity and problem-solving

Resources:

- Loose parts (blocks, tubes, fabric, connectors)

Activity: Inspired by Prometheus giving creativity to humanity, invite pupils to invent or build something new while listening. There is no right answer—it could be a sculpture, a machine or an imaginary creature.

Musical link: Celebrates creativity, one of the central ideas behind the story.

Longer task: Conduct the Orchestra

Sensory focus: Confidence and expressive movement

Resources:

- Baton, ribbon or conductor’s stick

Activity: Invite pupils to become the conductor. Encourage pupils to make large, energetic gestures during the lively music and slow, flowing movements during the quieter introduction, noticing how the music changes.

Musical link: The overture’s clear contrasts make it easy to match movement to the music.

Williams – Main Title/ Rebel Blockade Runner from Star Wars

Listening

Listen to the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by the composer, play this music on the link here:

[Listen here ►](#)

Context

About the composer: John Williams (born 1932)

John Williams is one of the world's most famous film composers. He has written music for many blockbuster films including Star Wars, Harry Potter, Jurassic Park, E.T., Jaws and Indiana Jones. His music is known for its memorable melodies, powerful orchestral sound and ability to tell a story without words. This is similar to programme music where music is used to tell a story or picture a scene or emotion.

About the piece: Main Title/Rebel Blockade Runner from Star Wars (1977)

This piece opens the original Star Wars film (1977). The music immediately creates a sense of excitement, adventure, and heroism. Williams was inspired by the large-scale orchestral music of composers such as Gustav Holst and Richard Strauss – both of whom also feature in our concert.

Listening Guide

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:00-0:09	Opening fanfare played fortissimo (very loud)
0:10-0:28	Main theme – heroic leitmotif (main theme representing a character) played by high trumpets with syncopated (off beat) chords in lower instruments and snare drum
0:29-0:51	Contrasting section – strings with glockenspiel
0:52-1:43	Repeat of the Main theme – few new features like the harp glissando creating a sense of excitement, moving towards a more mysterious section that is played piano (quietly) with a solo piccolo, suggesting the stars in the sky
1:44-2:15	The music builds rapidly with upward figures in the strings. Use of gong and ominous rhythm with dissonant harmonies, rallentando (slowing down) and a pause
2:16-2:36	Battle section with a fast tempo and an ostinato rhythm in the bass (on the note C) with dissonance brass over the top

Key musical features

- **Instrumentation:** Full symphony orchestra
- **Tempo:** Fast and energetic
- **Dynamics:** Strong contrasts between loud (forte/fortissimo) and soft (piano/pianissimo)
- **Texture:** Mostly thick, with many instruments playing together
- **Rhythm:** Bold, driving rhythms, syncopation to give energy
- **Melody:** Memorable brass fanfare
- **Mood:** Heroic, adventurous, exciting, dramatic

Short 5-minute task: Space Explorer Challenge

This challenge looks to help pupils understand more about how to create music that describes a particular story, scene or emotion.

To set the scene, encourage your pupils to think about going to space on an epic adventure as if they were starring in a film. Think about the scene – the words to describe it, what they would need to bring, what they would see and hear, what happens in the adventure. Note all their ideas on the board, creating a class word bank. As you go through, think about what music might help to accompany their epic adventure.

Some possible describing words – heroic, exciting, powerful, dramatic, adventurous, triumphant...

Some possible music words – fanfare, loud, fast, brass, contrast...

Play an extract from the piece – for example the opening 30 seconds – to see if pupils think that music would help to accompany their scene.

Stretch and Challenge

- Consider how orchestral instruments could help to tell the story
- Compare the music to music from another film they might have recently seen
- Identify changes in the musical elements and how these can be used to tell the story

Support and Scaffold

- Provide a list of describing words to choose from
- Use sentence starters 'The scene has...,' 'The music sounds...'

Medium 20-minute task: Galactic Rhythm Orchestra

This challenge is all about taking rhythms used in the piece to create a class performance, developing ensemble confidence and getting to know the piece of music. The rhythms used here are from 2:15 in the recording.

Try performing the rhythm which can be heard in this section. You might want to do this using the lyrics or using body percussion/unpitched percussion if this is available to you.



Things to notice about this rhythm:

- 3/4 time – 3 crotchet beats in each bar
- 2 crotchets on 'Star Wars' - strong, march-like feel
- Use of a triplet for 'Adventure' - 3 notes crushed into 1 beat
- This is repeated to form a 1 bar ostinato

Then try adding the brass line over the top, splitting the group in 2:

STAR WARS Ad-ven-ture STAR WARS Ad-ven-ture STAR WARS Ad-ven-ture

Having practised this, consider asking pupils to create their own rhythms over the top of this ostinato figure to help set the scene. Using mnemonics can be helpful here, for example rhythms on the following phrases:

- Luke Skywalker
- Princess Leia
- Rebel Alliance
- Death Star
- Obi-Wan Kenobi

Stretch and Challenge

- Create longer mnemonics to extend the ostinato – for example to 2 bars
- Try layering different ostinato rhythms together
- Try notating their ideas using graphic score or staff notation

Support and Scaffold

- Keep a steady pulse over the original rhythm
- Copy teacher-led rhythms
- Consider pairing with a more confident musician to gain peer support

Longer 45-minute task: Create your own Space Adventure Soundtrack

This task looks to explore more of Williams' music to encourage pupils to create their own space adventure soundtrack. You might want to ask your pupils to do this using their voices or body percussion, or by using classroom instruments or computer-based instrumentation if this is available in your setting.

Part 1: Listening and Discussion (10 minutes)

Play a selection of different excerpts from the piece, using the listening guide to help you find contrasting sections. For example:

- Extract 1: Opening Section (0:00-0:09)
- Extract 2: Mysterious Section (1:33-1:43)
- Extract 3: March Section (2:15-2:26)

As you listen to each, ask pupils to consider:

- What story is the music telling?
- What picture does the music create?
- What instruments can you hear?
- What words would you use to describe the music?

Part 2: Story Creation (15 minutes)

In groups, ask pupils to create a short space adventure story with a clear beginning, middle and end. This can be based on a story of their choice, but some ideas are below to help support if needed:

- Landing on a new planet
- Escaping an asteroid field
- Meeting an alien civilisation
- Defending a space station

Pupils may want to plan their ideas in the Pupil Resource.

Part 3: Compose a soundtrack to the story (15 mins)

Having created the story narrative, pupils should now try to plan and explore their musical ideas to accompany their story. You could give more able pupils freedom to explore this independently, but the structure below might be useful to get all learners going with the task!

Beginning	Middle	End
• Quiet dynamics • Drone • Slow tempo	• Use of ostinato • Louder dynamics with crescendo	• Celebration fanfare • Very loud dynamics • Triplet rhythms

Part 4: Performance and Evaluation (10 mins)

Ask each group to perform their piece to the rest of the class. As the class listen, ask them to be active in their listening by asking them to consider specific questions, for example:

- What story was happening?
- How did the music represent the story?
- How did the music create different moods?

Stretch and Challenge

- Ensure contrast between sections
- Record ideas using graphic score or staff notation
- Create contrast by changing the way the elements of music are used
- Develop a reoccurring 'hero theme' as a leitmotif

Support and Scaffold

- Use storyboard and planning ideas above to give a structure to work from
- Use three different sounds to make the task accessible
- Use teacher-led modelling

Links to other subjects

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

Subject	Links
English	Use of descriptive vocabulary to explain mood and character, developing creative writing skills and developing speaking and listening skills through class discussion
Art and Design	Create storyboards to outline action – this could be extended to creating a film poster for their story, linking music, English and Art together
Drama	Consider acting out the scenes inspired by the music
Science	Links to space, Earth and the possibility to discuss real-life space missions
Maths	Counting beats and rhythmic patterns, recognising repetition and sequences
Computing	Chance to compose using computing equipment – for example by recording composition ideas

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Fanfare	A celebratory piece of music, often played by brass instruments, to get people's attention
Fortissimo	A dynamic instruction meaning very loud
Leitmotif	A melody to represent a character or emotion
Syncopation/ Syncopated	A rhythmic device meaning 'off-beat'
Glissando	A slide
Piano	A dynamic instruction meaning quiet
Dissonant	Harmonies that clash together
Rallentando	A tempo instruction to get slower
Ostinato	A repeated rhythm, melody or pattern
Programme Music	Music that represents a story, a scene or an emotion. Very popular during the Romantic Period of Western Classical Music
Triplet	Fitting three notes into 1 beat

Sensory activities for all Williams – Star Wars

Short task: Hero Poses

Sensory focus: Body awareness and confidence

Resources

- None

Activity: When the main theme reaches its biggest moments, encourage pupils to create their own “hero pose” by stretching tall, standing proudly or raising their arms. Hold the pose until the music changes.

Musical link: Reflects the bold, triumphant brass melody.

Medium task: Planet Texture Trail

Sensory focus: Tactile exploration

Resources:

Create sensory stations representing different planets (this activity works just as well using sensory trays):

- Sand
- Pebbles
- Metallic fabric
- Bubble wrap
- Soft fleece
- Crinkly foil

Activity: Travel between each “planet” as the music plays, exploring different textures (and smells where appropriate) and discussing which part of the music matches each environment.

Musical link: Responding to changes in musical mood.

Medium task: Star Map Adventure

Sensory focus: Communication and sequencing

Resources:

Picture cards showing:

- Planet
- Moon
- Star
- Rocket
- Home

Activity: Arrange the picture cards into a journey inspired by the music. Pupils can describe, point to or use AAC to explain where their spaceship travels next.

Musical link: Interpreting the structure and narrative of the music.

Longer task: Galaxy Orchestra

Sensory focus: Listening and musical response

Resources:

- Bells
- Shakers
- Tambourines
- Chime bars

Activity: Assign an instrument to different sections of the music. For example, pupils might play bells when they hear the soaring melody or shake instruments during the powerful rhythmic sections, encouraging active listening.

Musical link: Recognising different parts of the music e.g. melody, repeated rhythms, specific instrumentation or timbres.

Women Composers

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.

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	- 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	- 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	- 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	- 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	- 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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