

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.