

A to Z

BCMG Schools' Concerts 2006



A Introduction

On 8 December 2006 Birmingham Contemporary Music Group presented its first ever Schools' Concerts at the CBSO Centre. Young people were introduced to the exciting world of contemporary classical music. Elements of film and theatre interwove with the music taking the young people on a rollercoaster ride through a colourful and dynamic programme of music from the mechanical and rhythmic music of Louis Andriessen's *Workers Union* to the crazy and unique *Black Page* by Frank Zappa.

B Concert Programme

Iannis Xenakis	Rebonds B
Olivier Messiaen	Appel interstellaire
Tansy Davies	inside out ii
John Woolrich	An Open Door
Louis Andriessen	Workers Union
Frank Zappa	The Black Page

C The Resource Pack

Aims:

- To support children and teachers attending BCMG's Schools' Concerts
- To help children and teachers gain a deeper understanding of the music and of how to use the pieces as a stimulus for classroom activities
- To encourage children to think like composers
- To introduce young people to contemporary music

D Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

BCMG is one of the world's leading classical new music ensembles. Emerging from within the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in 1987, the Group quickly established a reputation for brilliant performances, ambitious commissions, innovative collaborations, and a vibrant learning programme. With a central commitment to composers and the presentation of new work, BCMG has premiered over 150 new works, many commissioned through its pioneering Sound Investment scheme. BCMG's open and inclusive approach takes people of all ages through the rich and fascinating world of contemporary music. BCMG has received a host of national and international awards, has an extensive catalogue of CD recordings and broadcasts regularly on BBC radio.

E CBSO Centre



F General warm-up games

At the start of a music session it is often a good idea to do some warm-ups. These encourage the group to listen and work as a team. They also help develop musical skills and introduce musical concepts. Assume unless otherwise stated all warm-ups should be done in a circle.

Follow Me (developing watching and co-ordination skills)

1. Stand with the children in a circle. Ask the children to follow what you do – all the movements and all the sounds you make. Go through a range of movements and sounds. For example:
 - Clap your hands and fingers
 - Slap or tap your head, knees, tummy etc.
 - Scratch your head
 - Click your fingers
 - Stamp your feet
 - Make different vocal sounds to match movements ...aaaah, ssssss, beep, beep....whoosh
2. The children must follow you exactly and change when you change sound or action as well as performing it at the same speed and dynamic.
3. When the children have played this game a few times ask them to lead the movements for everyone else to copy.
4. A variation of this game is to ask the children **not** to change action or sound when you do but to wait until you say the word 'change'.

Circle Clap (developing control skills)

1. Send a clap around the circle. Each child claps just once.
2. Send a new sound around the circle e.g. sshhh. Send it in the reverse direction.
3. Send one sound in one direction and send the other sound in the other direction.

Rainstorm (developing control and observation skills)

1. This game sends one sound (see below) around the circle. Each child joins in one at a time around the circle and continues the sound until the next new sound reaches them.
2. Send the sounds round in this order:
 - Finger clicks
 - Tapping with two fingers
 - Clapping
 - Slapping thighs
 - Stamping feet
 - Slapping thighs
 - Clapping
 - Tapping with two fingers
 - Finger clicks
 - Silence
3. Ask the children to think what these sounds remind them of.

G Conducting Games

These simple and fun games are wonderful ways of introducing conducting into your classroom and can be very useful in other contexts. Children love conducting. It gives them a sense of control over the sounds that the rest of the group is making. It also allows them to create short pieces of music immediately with the musical resources available to them.

Start & Stop

1. Ask each child to choose a funny phrase to say e.g. rhubarb and custard.
2. Explain the two conducting signals to the group. Wiggling fingers on both hands means play, and crossing and opening the hands (palms down) means stop.
3. Ask the children to start repeating their phrases when you give the start signal and keep repeating until you give the stop signal. When you are modelling this vary the length of how long you have the children playing. Also vary how much silence time you leave between each burst of sound. Lots of fun can be had with this.
4. Invite the children to take turns being the conductor. Maybe give the conductor a special hat, cloak or conducting baton!
5. Do this activity using musical instruments. The children can choose any instrument they like. Although the sound is noisy it is the control of the stopping and starting that is important.

Loud & Quiet

1. With the class, invent signals for loud and quiet. For example, hands in the air means loud, and hands towards the ground means quiet or crouching is quiet and stretching high is loud. Try out the children's suggestions and decide on the best one as a class.
2. Invent a signal for fast and slow. Think of a way to start and stop one person at a time rather than the whole group. Perhaps the class can find other signals with different meanings.
3. Build up the repertoire of ideas over time and do not attempt all at once.

Workers Union ~ Louis Andriessen

In *Workers Union* the musicians have a musical score like the one below. For those of you who are familiar with music notation you will notice there are no staves and therefore no pitches given, just a contour to suggest whether the music goes up or down. The score also does not specify which instruments play what so it can be played by any group of musicians. All the musicians play the same music but can interpret the contours in their own way and start on any note they choose. The music is intended to sound machine-like. Andriessen in his instructions says 'make the piece sound dissonant, chromatic and often aggressive'. And, 'every player must play with the intention that their part is an essential one... only then will the work succeed, just as in the political work.'

The image displays a musical score for 'Workers Union' by Louis Andriessen. The score is written on a single staff and consists of a series of rhythmic contours and dynamic markings. The contours are represented by lines that rise and fall, indicating the pitch direction of the notes. The dynamics include 'ff sempre' (fortissimo sempre) and 'ff pesante' (fortissimo pesante). The score is divided into sections labeled A through M. The notation is complex and dense, with many notes and rests. The overall style is machine-like and dissonant, as described in the text.

H Warm-up games:

Don't Clap That One Back (developing listening, rhythm and team skills)

1. Clap a four-beat rhythm and ask your class to clap it back immediately as an echo.
2. At some point clap the rhythm of the words *don't clap that one back* which goes long long short short long.
3. Set up a rule that whenever the children hear that particular rhythm pattern they remain silent.
4. If any child claps by mistake, you score a point, if nobody claps the class scores a point.
5. First to three points wins!
6. As it is a listening game you can also add rules which prohibit any visual signals or play the game with your eyes shut.

8's Game (developing listening, a sense of pulse, working as an individual within a group)

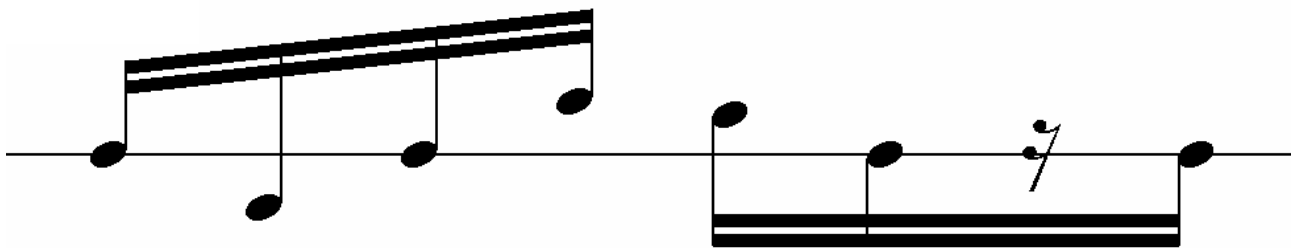
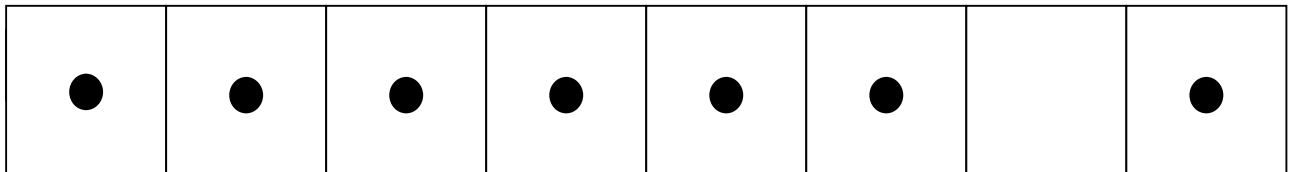
1. Using an instrument like a pair of claves or woodblock create a steady pulse.
2. With the children count up to eight over and over again all together with the pulse.
3. Ask the children to clap on one. Once you have become good at this try doing this without counting (instead counting in your heads).
4. Ask the children to find a second sound using either their voice or body percussion and ask them to choose another number to make that sound on. The children should not confer!
5. You will notice that there are patterns and silences that occur. Listening with eyes closed may help here.
6. You could also play this game using musical instruments with short sounds.
7. The children could also play this game in small groups.

I Learning rhythms from Workers Union

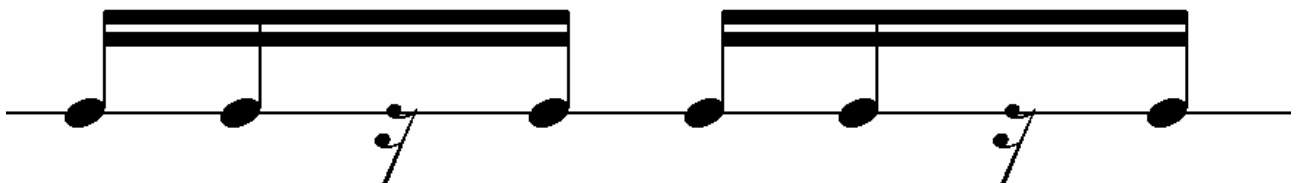
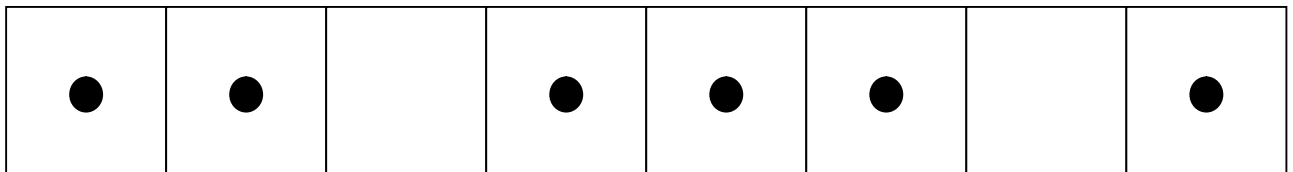
Resources needed: agogo bells, claves, woodblocks, wooden xylophone (any instrument with a short sound)

In the notation below each box equals one beat. If there is a black dot inside the box the player plays a note, if there is no black dot the player is silent. Below each rhythm is the actual notation from the score. This is very like the 8's game apart from the fact that the children need to read the rhythm. These rhythms can be found on resource sheet 1. We have broken what is a 16-beat rhythm in the score into two 8-beat rhythms.

Rhythm 1



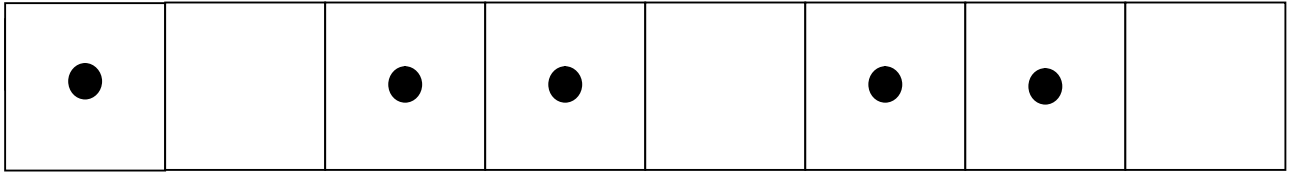
Rhythm 2



1. Ask the children to clap rhythm 1. You will need to play a pulse on an instrument like a set of claves or agogo bell. Keep this going and count the children in 1, 2, 3, 4.
2. Do the same with rhythm 2 then try and join the two rhythms together.
3. Ask the children to choose an instrument from the selection suggested above and try the rhythm using the instruments – again it might be better to do each rhythm separately before putting them together. After a while try it without you playing the pulse, encouraging the children to count in their heads.
4. In Workers Union these rhythms are very fast. How fast can the group play them without making a mess?!

J Creating rhythms inspired by Workers Union

1. Ask the children to create their own rhythm in pairs using dots and gaps. Photocopy resource sheet two. See example below.



2. Ask the children to clap their rhythms and play them on instruments.
3. The children could try playing them forwards and backwards.
4. Ask each pair to join up with another pair and explore combining their rhythms in different ways e.g.
 - one after the other
 - at the same time
 - one starting four beats after the other as a round either two pairs as a round or four individuals each starting two beats after the other
 - The children could use forwards and backwards here too.
5. Using the above ideas and resultant patterns ask the children to create a short piece to play to the rest of the group. Encourage the children to make their pieces sound machine-like with spiky short notes.

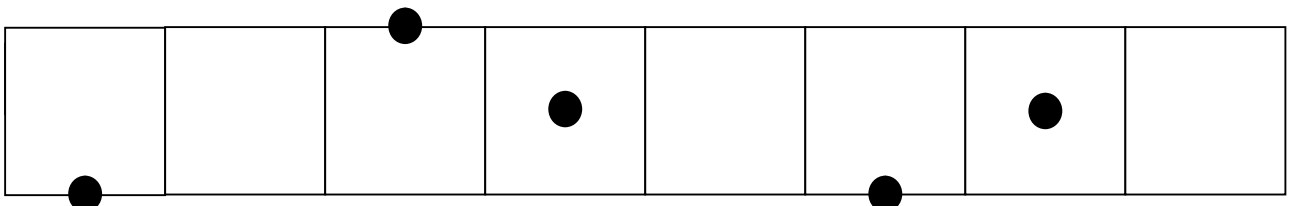
K More warm-up games

The magic finger game (developing creative imagination and a sense of relative pitch - high and low - and contour).

1. Ask the children one at a time to create a shape in the air with their finger, at the same time vocalising the shape i.e. if they go up their voice goes up, if they go down their voice goes down. You will need to model this first.
2. As it moves from child to child the children should touch fingers to pass the magic on. The idea is that the sound does not stop all the way around the circle.

L Adding a melody to our rhythms

1. Ask the children to get back into their original pairs and give each pair three different chime bars or similar.
2. Ask the children to arrange the chime bars from lowest to highest.
3. On resource sheet two, ask the children to decide whether each note should be high, low or in the middle and draw this on as shown below.



4. Ask the children to play their rhythm + melody on the chime bars.
5. Go through stages 3. to 5. of section J again.

M Another extension activity

Building a Machine

1. Talk to the children about machines – the sounds they make and the kinds of movements they make. In particular, talk about how machines are often repetitive.
2. Ask one of the children to go into the middle of the circle and make a movement and make a vocal/body-percussion sound like a machine – repetitive and simple.
3. While the first child remains in the middle, ask a second child to add a second movement and sound to the machine which fits in with the first, like another part of the same machine.
4. Keep adding children to the machine until it becomes too big and then begin a new one.
5. Encourage the children to:
 - Use all parts of their bodies
 - Sometimes make movements standing up and sometimes sitting or lying on the floor
 - Sometimes move across the space instead of staying in one spot
 - Make different, imaginative and distinctive sounds
6. Ask the children who are not part of the machine that is being built how they could stop and start it. Can they give the machine a name and decide what the machine does/makes?
7. Can the class find a way of speeding up the machine and slowing it down?
8. With older children divide them into groups of 4-5 and ask them to create their own machine. Ask them to think how they are going to start the machine and what will happen to it?
9. Perform the different machines to each other.

You will notice that these activities have also covered composing, reading and writing musical notation as well as performing.

Low ~ Gerald Barry

Low is a duo for clarinet and piano. The piece starts with low, short, quiet notes. The music gets faster and faster as it goes along. As Gerald Barry succinctly puts it, 'sometime it is high and sometimes it is low'. Although there is no conductor in this piece, it works well as a stimulus for conducting.

N Games exploring high and low

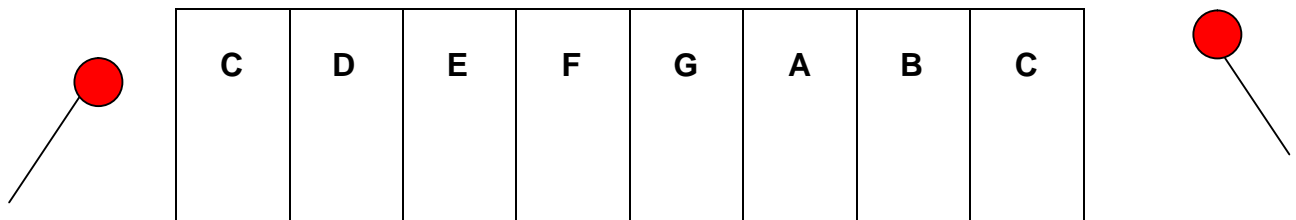
Over and Under

Resources needed: a long rope, a ball and a high sounding chime or other pitched instrument and a low sounding chime

1. Ask two of the children to hold the rope across the room.
2. Give one child the two chimes.
3. Arrange the rest of the class in two equal lines on either side of the rope in pairs. One of each pair needs a ball. OR with one ball, each pair takes it in turn at the rope.
4. If the child with the chimes plays the high chime the ball should be thrown over the rope. If the low chime is sounded the ball should be rolled under the rope.
5. As the children get better at this choose chimes which are closer and closer together in pitch.

Arrange the chimes

Resources needed: a scale of individual chimes



1. Hand out the chimes randomly to eight children.
2. Ask them to face away from the rest of the group and play their chimes one at a time.
3. Ask the rest of the group to organise the children with the chimes from lowest to highest and number them one to eight.
4. Once organised, playing the scale up and down. Ask 2, 4, 6, 8 to play up and down and then 1, 3, 5, 7 to play up and down.

Magic finger game (see before)

Musical conversations

1. Ask the children to work in pairs and give each pair three chimes and a beater for each child. Choose the chimes carefully so they sound good together.
2. In Gerald Barry's *Low* the clarinet and piano are in dialogue with each other at first taking turns to play. Ask the children to have a musical conversation using their three chimes.

inside out ii ~ Tansy Davies

inside out ii is based on a transformation of a musical line from one of Bach's Two-part Inventions, and the result is a layering of two kinds of music. The strings and "prepared" piano create an infectious riff of spiky rhythms and percussive sounds, while the woodwind and horn play a sonorous chorale. Both layers begin to converge, in a chaotic conflict. The piece generates an irresistible energy and playfulness.

O Making a melody

Resources needed: as many pitched instruments as you can find

1. Divide the class into groups of three. Give each group three notes and ask them to compose a melody (up to eight notes long). Each note can be used more than once. Make sure that everyone in the group can play the melody. It may be that each child wants to have one note each. In this instance, ask the children to play their melody with each child playing their note at the appropriate time. The children could also sing all their notes as they play them.
2. Ask the children to think whether each note is long or short. It might help if the children write this down (use resource sheet two) and use dots and dashes to indicate whether the notes are to be played long or short. See below.

D	E	E	G	D	E	G	
.	.	.	.	—	—	—	

3. Pick one groups' tune to act as a model.
4. Ask the children what different ways you could play the chosen melody or theme in order to create variations e.g. backwards, loud, slow, spiky, angry etc.
5. Tansy Davies describes how she transforms her melody and turns it *inside out* – ask the children how they think they could turn their melody inside out!
6. Ask the children to transform their melody (as Tansy does in her piece) to create three different versions/variations of it. Ask the children to make each one distinctive and interesting. They might like to add other instruments in here to heighten the effect. They might also pick a rhythm they have used and play it repeatedly under the melody.
7. Ask the children to decide in what order they are going to play their variations and how they are going to link them together to make a theme-and-variation piece.

P Theme and Variations

You can make variations by choosing a mood, using texture, choice of instruments, speed, dynamics and articulation to change the music. Here are some useful words:

- Slow, lazy
- Fast, energetic
- Sinister, creepy
- floating, dreamy
- angry, aggressive
- comical, light-hearted
- tragic, dramatic

Musical devices

Here are some further composing strategies for creating variations:

- **inversion** (go up instead of down, and v.v.)
- **retrograde** (play it back to front)
- **isorhythm** (double or halve how long the notes last)
- **articulation** e.g. play smoothly, spikey, with accents, etc.
- **dynamics** e.g. loud, quiet, getting louder, getting quieter, etc.
- **layering** (as in a round, different players starting at different times)
- **orchestration** e.g. which instruments play together – endless possibilities of combinations with different effects
- **pitch-shifting** (make the high note higher and the low note lower, etc.)
- **add** a second part to play at the same time (and a third, etc.)

Q Useful Music Vocabulary

Encourage the children to use the correct words for musical activities. Here are some words we use in this pack, and their meanings:

attack	how you play the note – gently, forcefully, spikey, etc.
conducting	leading the group, so that they start and stop together
contour	the shape of the melody, how high and low it goes
dissonant	clashing pitches that sound strange together, eg C and C#
duet	two people playing together
dynamics	how loud and quiet you play, how spikey or smoothly, etc.
imitate	copy someone else's music
melody	the tune!
phrase	like a sentence of music, each phrase has its own shape
pitched	using notes A B C etc.
prepared piano	a grand piano with things placed inside to make unusual sounds e.g. sheets of paper under the dampers create a rattling effect, blutack creates a damped effect
pulse	the beat
rest	a silence in the music
riff	a bass pattern that repeats
rhythm	something you can clap!
solo	playing on your own
theme	the main melody or musical idea
unison	everyone plays the same thing together
un-pitched	not using notes
variations	different versions of a melody or theme

The other pieces in the concert.....

R Rebonds B ~ Iannis Xenakis

Rebonds B uses 2 bongos, 1 tumba, 1 tom-tom, bass drums and a set of 5 wood blocks and has been described as an 'immense abstract ritual, a suite of movements and of hammerings without any folkloristic "contamination", pure music full of marvelously efflorescent rhythms, going beyond drama and tempest.'

S The Black Page ~ Frank Zappa

The Black Page was originally a drum solo to which Zappa then added pitches. There are lots of different versions as he altered it to suit whichever musicians he was working with, but the first version appeared sometime in the mid/late 70s. The first appearance of it on an album is on 'Baby Snakes' in a live version. It's the rhythmic complexity of the tune (as you'd expect from an ex-drum solo) that makes the piece so exciting and the fact that they all play it in unison.

T Appel interstellaire ~ Olivier Messiaen

Messiaen's *Interstellar Call* for solo horn, inspired by the echoes of American canyons, is a lonely collection of rumbles and reverberations and is part of a larger piece of music *Des Canyons Aux Etoiles*. The piece was written for the US bicentennial celebrations in 1976. In the spring of 1972, Messiaen travelled to Utah and discovered, inspiration for his new work in the colours of the rocks (in the canyons) 'red-violet...red-orange, rose, dark red carmine, scarlet red, all possible varieties of red, an extraordinary beauty which shone all the more brightly against the bright blue "big country" sky. Messiaen actually camped out in the canyon valleys so that he could submerge himself in his subject matter. With a tape recorder he captured not only the birdsong that would be transposed, like so many avian sounds before them, into melodies for his new work but the sound of wind whistling through the vast spaces and even the howling of wolves.

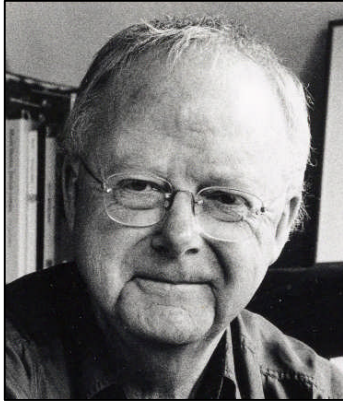
An interesting starting point for composing with your group might be using different colours to inspire sounds or the idea of recording sounds from the environment.

U An Open Door ~ John Woolrich

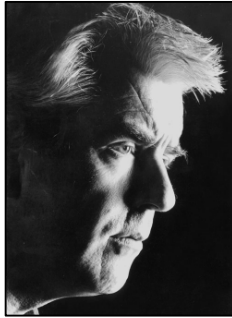
BCMG's Schools' Concerts will present the world premiere of John Woolrich's new piece *An Open Door*. John Woolrich has described it thus 'the extraordinary happens within the ordinary'. Kitchen utensils will be used as musical instruments!

Can your children find kitchen utensils which make interesting musical sounds and use them to create their own music?

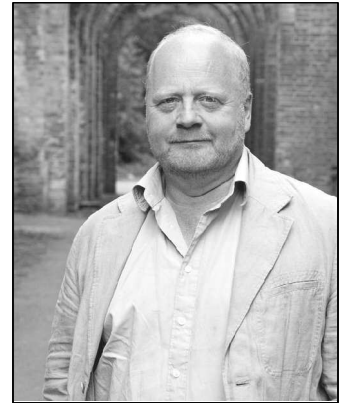
V The Composers



Louis Andriessen



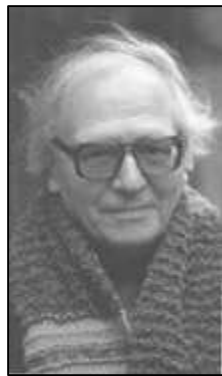
Gerald Barry



John Woolrich



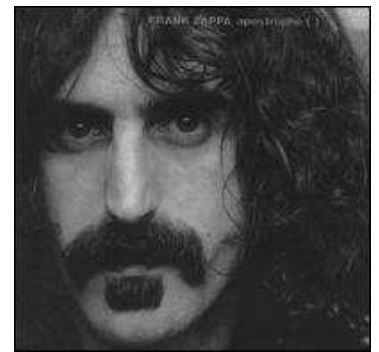
Tansy Davies



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Frank Zappa

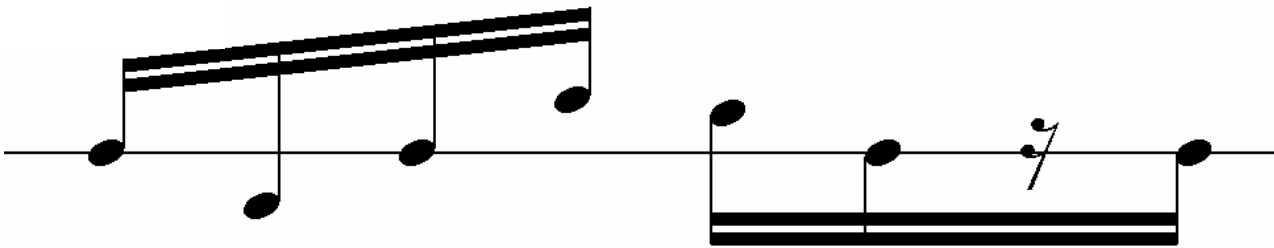
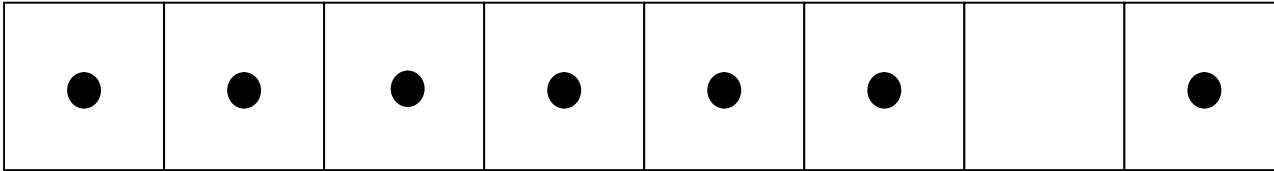
W The Conductor



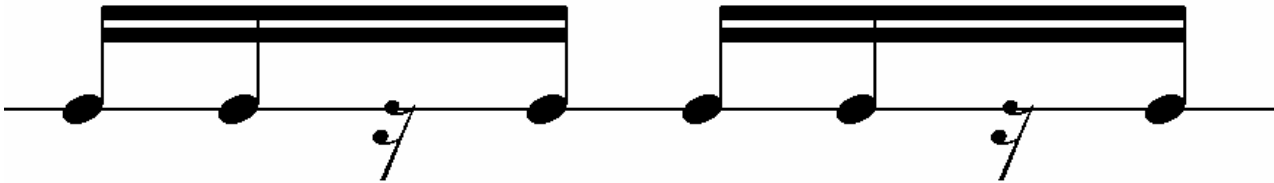
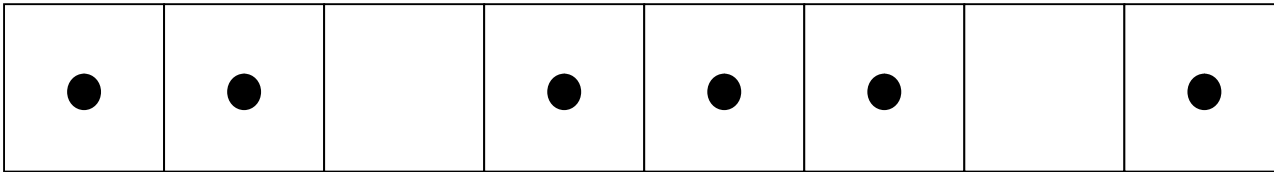
Dominic Muldowney

X Resource Sheet One

Rhythm 1



Rhythm 2



Y Resource Sheet Two

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Z Thank you

BCMG is grateful to the following for their support of this project:



The City of Birmingham Orchestral Endowment Fund

**Birmingham
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