



# Music Maze Guidance

This guidance gives a background to the Music Maze resources and supports their effective delivery. It includes information about: using existing repertoire as a stimulus; planning the delivery of activities; the composing process; and, pedagogy.

## Page 1 - About Music Maze

The Music Maze Resources on this website have been, and continue to be, created and developed as part of BCMG's project of the same name. Music Maze workshops have been running for 12 years and take place 8 times a year. Each workshop caters for 20-30 children aged from 8 to 11 and runs from 10am until 2.30pm with a performance for family and friends at 2pm. Occasionally other family members are invited to take part. There is wide range of musical experience and ability amongst the children - from children with ABRSM grade 5 to children with profound learning difficulties. About two thirds of the children play a musical instrument though this number changes from workshop to workshop. Each workshop takes a piece of repertoire from an upcoming BCMG concert as it's stimulus. All the children who take part in the workshops are offered a free ticket to the concert and a complimentary one for an accompanying adult.

From September 2012 - June 2014 the project was part of an action research project, Through the Music Maze, funded by Youth Music. The project leaders, BCMG Director of Learning, Nancy Evans and composer Liz Johnson worked with researchers Professor Martin Fautley and Dr Victoria Kinsella from Birmingham City University to examine their practice and to better understand children's composing, in particular composing inspired by existing repertoire. This Guidance is a result of that project.

## Planning

Each resource contains a number of activities stimulated by the featured piece and cumulatively lead the children towards a final composition. Sometimes that is a whole group piece, sometimes small group, sometimes individual and sometimes a combination. We have been reliably informed that the resources are flexible enough to work equally well an enthusiastic group of 8-11 year olds through to GCSE. Of course, this means a certain amount of altering will need to be done by the person leading the lesson/workshop.

The structure of the resources is based on delivering a day workshop from 10am-2pm. We decided that keeping this structure in the resources was the best approach as we would not have been able to cater for all the variables that teachers have to work with. We thought it best for individual teachers to think and plan how the activities might work across a series of lessons, in their individual contexts and with their children. Most of the resources would work well across five to six lessons but many could benefit for more time to listen, evaluate, refine, rework etc. You may also choose to just focus on one or two activities from any one resource.



## Page 2 - Using Repertoire as a Stimulus for Composing with Children

BCMG specialises in the performance of contemporary Western Classical music. The group performs music as early Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Webern but the core of the group's repertoire comes from the second half of the century through to the present day. Since BCMG was formed in 1987 it has given the world premieres over 165 new works.

Repertoire projects have been a staple of orchestral education work with the often cited aim of preparing the young participants to be an 'audience of tomorrow'. Whilst recognizing that this can be an excellent way to prepare young listeners, we are clear that the focus of these resources is on composing and the children's progression as composers. Similarly, the UK music curriculum has included set works which have provided the stimulus for a range of activity including composing.

These resources aim to go beyond creating a simplified replica of the chosen piece or a simple response to any extra-musical starting points. Instead the activities offer the distinct processes, techniques and starting points of the chosen work and composer to the children in order to support their development as composers. Our ethos seeks to challenge and expand young people's existing musical creativity and imagination through exposing them to the ideas and composing processes of professional composers. It is also very important to us that the children have ownership of the work created.

Across the life of Music Maze we have run workshops exploring close to 100 pieces of contemporary music. The pieces that feature on the Learning Resource Website were chosen for a variety of reasons:

- Contrasting composers
- Diversity of composing processes and starting points both within the collection of resources but also within any given piece
- Easy availability of a recording of the featured piece
- Pieces we felt were particularly successful when used in a workshop

Every time we approach a new piece of music these are the questions we ask:

- What in the piece might capture the imagination of the young people?
- What processes, techniques and starting points does the piece offer the young people?
- What is distinct about this composer and this piece?
- Does the piece offer something different from what we have explored before?
- What is the composer interested in exploring in this piece?

Using repertoire as a stimulus for composing is only one way to approach composing with young people and needs to be balanced with other types of composing activity.



## Page 3 - A Very Short History of Composing with Children

Composing can be a scary word conjuring up images of dead white men in ivory towers with reams of manuscript paper. It is often seen as an elitist activity that only 'specially gifted' people can do. The Music Maze Resources hold that musical creativity is something within all of us.

Composing has been part of the UK National Curriculum since 1987. However there have been notable initiatives/projects before this exploring composing with children in the UK since the 1940s starting with Carl Orff's Schulwerk and including: Peter Maxwell Davies's innovations at Cirencester Grammar School in the late 50s early 60s; the John Paynter led Schools Council Project Music in the Secondary School Curriculum; Jeanne Bamberger's research into children's invented notations in the 70s; and, the work of the Canadian composer and educator Murray Schafer. Other important figures include Ian Lawrence, Brian Denis, David Bedford, Bernard Rands, George Self and Gillian Moore in her role as Education Officer of the London Sinfonietta, the first such post in the UK.

Below is book list about composing with children at the end of this guidance. We would strongly recommend reading some of these books.

1. Pam Burnard & Regina Murphy. Teaching Music Creatively. Routledge (2013)
2. Maud Hickey (Ed.) Why and How to Teach Music Composition: A New Horizon for Music Education. R&L Education (2003)
3. Joanna Glover. Children Composing 4-14. Routledge (2000)
4. John Paynter and Peter Aston. Sound and Silence: Classroom Projects in Creative Music. CUP (1970)
5. Kashub and Smith. Composing our Future: Preparing Music Educators to Teach Composition. OUP USA (Jan 2013)
6. Kaschub and Smith. Minds on Music: Composition for Creative and Critical Thinking. Rowman & Littlefield Education (Jun 2009)
7. Brian Dennis. Experimental Music in Schools: Towards a New World of Sound. OUP (1 Feb 1970)
8. Murray Schafer. Creative Music Education: A Handbook for the Modern Music Teacher. Macmillan Publishing Co (April 1976)
9. George Self. The Sounding Symbol - Music Education in Action. Nelson Thornes (Sept 1995)
10. Fautley, M and Savage, J. (2014), Lesson Planning for Effective Learning (Abingdon: Open University Press).

## Page 4 - The Composing Process

The diagram on the following page is a simplified representation of the composing process. It suggests that the composing process is a linear one but the reality is much more complex and messy. Encourage children to think of composing more as a process of a collage that is being assembled rather than one where they start at the beginning and work through until

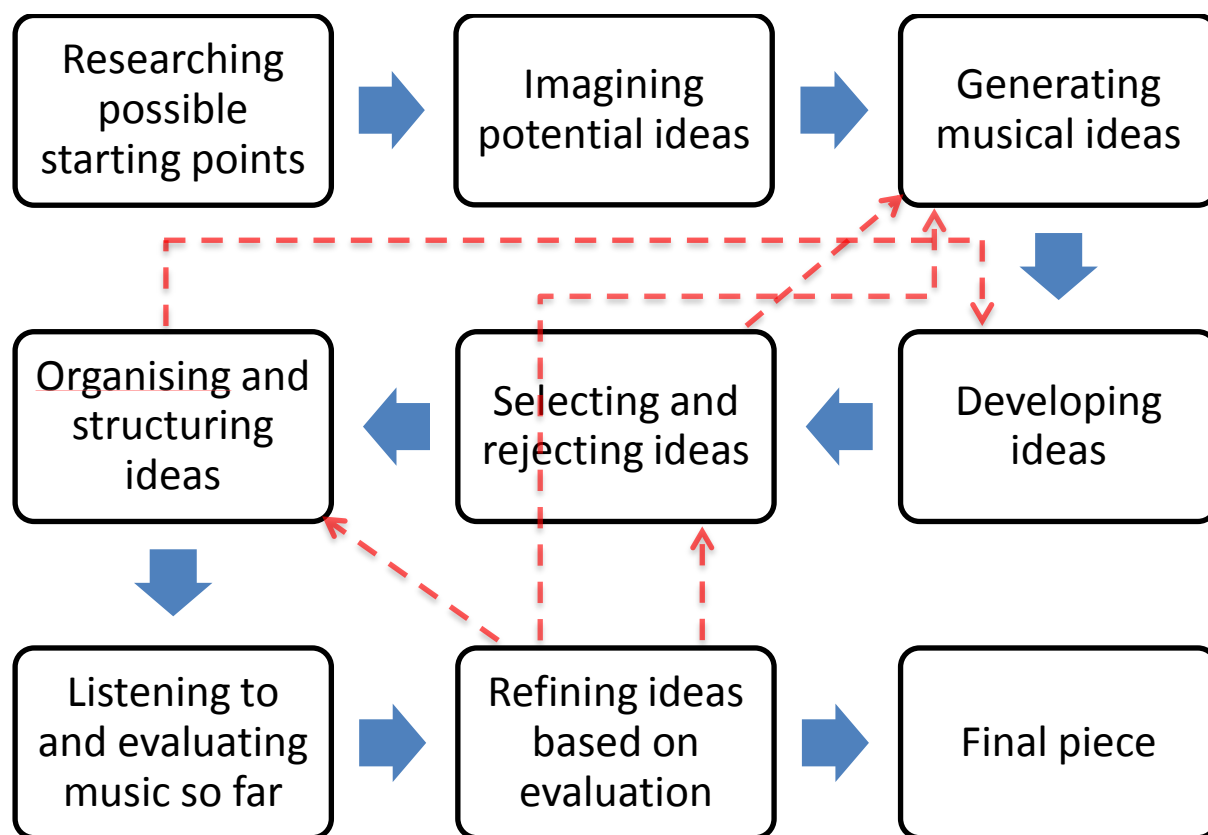


the end. Frequently, children, and the adults that work with them, get stuck on the generating stage of the process. It is important to support the children to be confident with the music material they have and close down generating new stuff. Support them to find many potential ways of developing individual ideas – more than they might need in their piece. Show them how much musical possibility there is in a simple idea and how that can create coherence in a piece of music rather than sequencing lots of different unrelated ideas – unless, of course, that is exactly what their intention is. Important too is giving time to think about structuring ideas. Again children are very good at generating ideas but find it harder/are given less opportunity to organise their musical material into larger musical structures. It is helpful to model this making your choices clear and thinking. Try out different ways of organising the same musical material as suggested by the children. Give the children time for listening to and refining their music. Don't always accept the children's first offering. Challenge them to make it better.

As with professional composers, some children respond better to being given tight parameters for composing where as others thrive by being a very open brief. It is important to offer both these possibilities to the groups you work with. Each Resource tries to offer both of these. It is easy to think in binaries of tight parameters being restrictive and open ones creative. This is not necessarily the case. With very open briefs the possibilities are endless and children can get lost. Tight parameters can offer the opportunity to be very creative within a small space. Tight parameters can also be a good way of teaching a particular composing skill or introducing a particular composing device.



## Page 5 - The Composing Process cont.



## Page 6 - Being a Composer

It is easy to think of composing of a series of techniques to be mastered - the 'doing' of composing. The Music Maze Resources explore techniques and processes but also explore what it is to think like a composer and even to encourage children to identify themselves as composers just as they might think of themselves as trumpeters or violinists. During the research project we thought about what might be some of the characteristics of composers and came up with this growing list:

### Thinking like a composer:

- Choosing sounds/musical ideas with intention using listening and aural imagination
- Understanding the effect of changing music elements within a composition
- Understanding the effect on the listener of their music
- Having a clear musical intention for the piece or developing one
- Knowing and understanding sound resource(s) available - instrument(s), voices, other sound makers - and using them effectively



- Understanding how to build and release tension through musical elements and pace of change

#### **Doing like a composer:**

- Being playful with and having many strategies for developing a musical idea e.g. back to front, upside-down, inside out, stretching, shrinking, extending, reducing, etc.
- Understanding how and having a repertoire of ways to structure small ideas into larger musical shapes
- Thinking about, imagining and planning the overall structure of a piece rather putting one thing after another - vertically and horizontally

#### **Identifying as a composer:**

- Articulating ideas and describing music in detail
- Critically reflecting on one's own music and the process of creating it
- Using oral, aural, verbal and graphic (pictorial) ways to communicate ideas to others
- Thinking about and imagining music outside of 'music time'
- Wanting to compose outside of sessions

These ideas are designed to support the adults leading the activities to reflect on the young people's composing and their progress as composers.

## **Page 7 - Organising Groups**

Much of the activity in the Music Maze Resources requires the children to work in groups. Careful thought has been given to the group sizes and their make up throughout the Music Maze Resources but this will vary from context to context and by how well you know the children you are working with.

Choices about group size are influenced by:

- How many adults there are to support the children – more adults means that you can have larger groups as they can help facilitate the discussion between children.
- The age of the children – older children will be more able to work in larger groups without adult supervision. Younger children working in groups of 4 or more will need more support from an adult unless very used to working in this way.
- Wanting to make sure all children are engaged in the activity – i.e. the larger the group the easier it is for children to not contribute.
- The activity – i.e. creating a texture or more complex piece of music is more effective with more children, but, creating a simple melody can be better achieved through working alone or in pairs.

The make-up of groups is influenced by:



- Artistic reasons e.g. a particular composer likes to work with sections of instruments – brass, woodwind, strings etc. – though this is never exact given the mixed make up of most groups. Or, the featured piece has one of each instrument, or specific instrumentation such as pairs of instruments etc.
- Decisions on whether to have friendship groups or not – sometimes this works sometimes not. This will also depend on context – is the composing being done in an out of school group or as a lesson in school?
- Decisions whether to have mixed ability or ‘streamed’ group – this will depend on the activity and whether extra adults can give extra support to particular children.

## Page 8 - Listening, Giving Feedback and Other Pedagogies

### Listening:

It is important to realise that just listening and giving your full attention to music young people create can be powerful.

### Giving feedback:

- Sometimes it is enough to just describe what you hear. This supports the children to develop their own vocabulary for talking about their composing/compositions.
- Give specific feedback e.g. ‘I like how you did xyz because.....’
- Use musical terminology making sure to explain any unfamiliar words, but also be imaginative with language and use the young people’s own descriptions/words.
- Labelling specific techniques, compositional devices etc. helps the children internalise them and makes them more likely to use them in new situations and with future composing.
- Invite the children to tell you (and other children) what they have done, how they did it, the choices they made etc. In this way all the children in the group benefit from each others ideas and collective knowledge is built within the group.

### Modelling:

Don’t forget you are a composer too. Model composing to the children making clear your thought processes and the thinking behind your choices.

### Differentiation:

Within any group of young people there will be a wide range of abilities and experience. Simplifying and extending activities needs to be part of planning. Simplifying might be done by giving the child fewer pitches to work with; learning part of a rhythm rather than all of it; creating a shorter melody/rhythm. With a child that needs stretching you might: ask for



more variations of an idea; ask them to notate the idea; or, ask them to create a contrasting section.

**Thinking time:**

Give the children thinking time without instruments at the start of composing and during the process.

## Page 9 - Questioning

An important part of the pedagogy of composing is asking questions. Simple guidelines would be to:

- Ask open not closed questions
- Give young people time to think on their own, in pairs or threes before answering. This way the children will have time to think of an answer, benefit from discussing their ideas before sharing them and consequently feel more confident.
- Welcome 'wrong' answers as well and 'right' answers. Sometimes there is interesting thinking to unpick in wrong answers.
- To ensure that it is not the same children answering all the time, choose children randomly. This also encourages every child to think of an answer.

Below is a set of useful question stems adapted and edited from Fautley, M and Savage, J. (2014), *Lesson Planning for Effective Learning* (Abingdon: Open University Press) that can be used to support children's composing.

**Knowledge/remembersing:**

- Describe what you are doing . . .
- Show me what you are doing . . .
- Can you remember how to . . .

**Comprehension/understanding:**

- What is the idea behind this . .
- In what ways is this at different...
- What is going on at this point .
- Can you demonstrate . . .
- Explain . . .

**Application/applying:**

- How will you go about . . .





- What will you do to . . .
- Analysis/analysing
- How might it have been different if . . .
- What happens in the bit when you . . .
- Compare that with . . .

**Synthesis:**

- What would happen if you were to put your ideas together with hers . . .
- What would happen if you changed that bit where . . .
- How could you do this differently

**Evaluation/evaluating:**

- What was successful . . .
- What changes might you make ..
- How do you feel about . . .
- Why do you think that . . .

**Creating:**

- Can you come up with a solution..
- How about a different idea. . .
- What would that sound like . . .
- How would that be made up . . .
- Can you produce . . .