Who is a composer?

If I asked you to **imagine a composer**, probably the first image that would come into your head is someone like Beethoven or Mozart - dead, white, a man and possibly wearing a wig!

At Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG) we play music by all kinds of composers, men and women from all over the world. Most of the music we play is created by people who are living today.

When you think about composing, the image you probably have is of someone at a piano or maybe writing on special 'music' paper. Some composers do compose like this but there are many different ways of composing and creating music. Drawing musical ideas, creating music on a computer, using an app or just playing around with sounds that you find.

Composing made simple

Composing can seem like something complicated that only people with special training can do or that you have to play a musical instrument to do it. **THIS IS NOT THE CASE**, everyone can compose, even very young children.

COMPOSING IS simply playing with sounds and musical ideas then putting them into an order that you like or that expresses something. What might that look and sound like?

- Playing them **backwards**, **upside down**, upside down and back to front
- Making ideas **louder**, quieter, faster, slower, **longer**, shorter
- Making an idea more **spiky**, soft, wobbly, **black**, shiny, angry, **calm**....
- **Adding** something new to the beginning, middle or end of an idea
- **Changing** the instrument the idea is played on
- **Layering** or **combining** with a different idea

A lot of composers find **setting limits or rules** helps them to compose and be inspired. This could mean making music that:

- Only uses a few sounds or notes
- Lasts for a predetermined number of seconds or minutes
- Has to be for a certain set of instruments

How can you get **better** at composing?

- Try to **imagine your music in your head** - not just little bits of it but also the overall shape
- **Play and experiment** with sounds and instruments around you
- **Get to know the sound of instruments** and other noise makers just like a painter would know their colours
- **Practice** different ways of playing around with ideas as suggested
- **Choose** your **sounds carefully** and with intention
- **Listen** to lots of other music
- Compose **every day** - even just a tiny bit
- Keep a **notebook of ideas** for music