

Birmingham
Contemporary
Music Group



Box of Delights

BCMG Schools' Concerts
Resource Pack 2012



bcmg.org.uk

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.

CBSO Centre



Box of Delights - BCMG's Schools Concert 2012

In January 2012 Birmingham Contemporary Music Group presented its sixth annual Schools' Concerts conducted at the CBSO Centre following the huge successes of the last five years. The concert programme included:

Lou Harrison:	Fugue for Percussion
Iannis Xenakis:	Rebonds B
John Cage:	Second Construction in Metal
Steve Reich:	Music for Pieces of Wood
Morton Feldman:	The King of Denmark
John Woolrich:	After the Clock (BCMG Sound Investment commission / world premiere)
John Cage:	Living Room Music
György Ligeti:	With Pipes, Drums, Fiddles

Introducing the Pack

This pack contains a range of practical musical projects which can be accessed at different levels by KS2 children and their teachers. The activities include a wide range of performing and composing projects all based around different percussion instruments.

Aims:

- To support and prepare 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 explore different kinds of notation
- To encourage performing, listening, conducting and interacting as musicians
- To introduce young people to contemporary music

Myths and magic

There is often a sense of mystery about composing, with tales of the great composers being 'spoken to from on high' and music pouring out from them in a mystical way. In fact, all composers spend lots of time messing around with snippets of ideas, trying things out, playing around, and working out different possibilities – often starting with a small, relatively insignificant musical shape, pattern or fragment of melody. Mostly they do this by just trying things out on an instrument they have at hand, playing around with different versions, working through different composing strategies, as well as spending lots of time imagining and thinking. The phrase '1% inspiration 99% perspiration' is fairly accurate!

But I'm not a musician...

Another myth is that you need to be a musician to teach music, especially composing. Strangely, most primary teachers are happy to teach art, even though they may not be particularly artistic themselves. Teachers know there are many ways of allowing children to be artistic and enabling the talented individuals in their class opportunities to shine (and quite possibly outshine the talents of the teacher). There are tried and tested ideas and activities in art that will generate effective and artistically valid children's work, which the teacher can facilitate, explain and judge effectively. If you can identify a really good piece of children's art work, then you can also learn to identify a really good piece of children's composition or performance.

Acquiring tools

The projects in this pack will show you what to look for, what to listen for, how to talk about the children's music and their creative process effectively, whatever your own musical background. The large-scale projects are all divided into small achievable 'bite-size' steps, which will give you and your class experience of working with composition and creative music-making in several different ways. Each project builds up particular skills and experience with the children, and can be accessed at different levels. The pack will give you some practical tools with which you can use to go on to create your own creative composition projects with confidence.

Thinking like a composer

One of the key aims of the pack is to encourage children and teachers to think like composers – to go beyond the surface of the activities and delve into real composing. In order to do this it is important for the teacher to believe that their own ears are a very good judge.

Composing with children can be approached in different ways, so we will look at:

1. How to enable a range of musical thinking strategies in children.
2. Specific teaching strategies and teacher modelling which will support children's learning.

'Composely thinking' in children can be encouraged by finding ways for the children to:

- make informed choices based on focussed listening
- experience and explore sound in different contexts
- articulate their ideas and describe in detail
- use their aural imagination
- make use of the available resources effectively
- allow freedom to explore the potential of their ideas
- allow freedom to explore the potential of the resources available
- develop critical reflection and thinking skills
- use oral, aural, verbal and graphic (pictorial) vocabularies/representations
- allow time to practise, explore and internalise musical ideas
- structure small ideas into larger musical shapes
- be playful with musical ideas for example: turning them back to front, upside-down, inside out, stretching, shrinking, extending, reducing, etc.

How can I facilitate this as a teacher?

- do focussed listening activities, e.g. circle sounds, silent minute
- have discussions about selecting sounds, giving reasons why you like a particular sound more than another
- encourage finding the most sonorous sounds and ways of playing
- talk about specific aspects of the music rather than making generalisations
- discuss what might sound really effective
- think about which sound sources could be used
- encourage precision and deliberate choices
- try things out in different ways, on different instruments, back to front, inside out, upside down, with a playful approach

Often children will come up with imaginative and inventive ways of creating sounds that may seem unconventional. Be careful not to dismiss an idea because it is unusual.

‘Composerly teaching’ relies on:

- attentive and detailed listening
- modelling
- creating a musical framework to support children’s musical decision-making
- valuing children’s ideas, however simple
- giving descriptive feedback that highlights different musical aspects of the children’s work
- explaining your own musical decision-making
- creating a positive, supportive musical environment where children’s ideas can be explored, internalised and developed in different ways

Writing things down

Another common myth is that music has to be written down. In fact, it doesn’t – but it does need to be performed! Most of the projects here don’t involve any writing down of ideas, but instead work on building up the children’s musical memory so that the music is fixed, organised – and memorised along the way. The notation of music can be a useful part of the creative process, or can hinder the flow of musicality.

Notation is a tool, a code for remembering, and there are many different types of notation, each with its own specific uses. In this pack we explore some proportional notation in *Rebonds B* and graphic notation in *The King of Denmark*. No knowledge of staff notation is necessary.

Thinking like a performer

All the projects in this resource pack involve some aspects of performance and two of the projects focus entirely on performance skills. Performing is a skill that can be learned, improved and perfected without any specialist knowledge. Some people are natural performers and others have to learn how to, just like any other aspect of life. Musicians use a range of strategies in order to perform, which include:

- allowing time to practise, enabling them to internalise and memorise musical ideas and patterns
- accessing different types of musical memory: musical structures, muscle memory, patterns and shapes, visual memory
- using different kinds of cue: following a conductor, reading a score, taking cues from other performers, using aural cues within the music
- dividing music up into different sized sections to practise, such as: very short single bars or phrases, combined phrases, larger sections or whole pieces

Body-language

In a group performance, team work and co-operation are essential. Everyone has to know what they are doing and everyone has a specific role to play. Having a leader (or conductor) for a group can help with decision-making and keep everyone together. This type of leadership is not verbal, it is communicated through body-language and clear signals.

One of the most useful musical skills is watching closely. This sounds simple, but it has to be practised and needs to be highlighted to the class as a key tool for a successful musical performance. This is true for any size of group, from a group of two children to a whole class.

Some children find watching and following very difficult, especially when they are dealing with the physical co-ordination of hitting an instrument accurately at the same time. Sightlines are really important, and part of the teacher's role is to make sure that the physical arrangement of groups and individuals allows all of them to see. This might mean moving groups around, using tables to lift instruments up, putting the leader up on a box or sitting a group on the floor – depending on the situation.

Project One

Iannis Xenakis - *Rebonds B*

This piece uses a set of five drums pitched from low to high and five temple blocks pitched from low to high, all played by one musician. The musician uses two sticks to play with, and uses many different kinds of rhythm, pattern and physical movement throughout the piece. The quote at the beginning of the score describes the piece as:

'An immense abstract ritual, a suite of movements and of hammerings without any folkloristic 'contamination', pure music full of marvellously efflorescent rhythms, going beyond drama and tempest.'

Aims:

This project explores the physicality and potential of creating music for one musician only, using two sticks and five drums, focussing on these questions:

- What different patterns can be created with two sticks and five drums?
- What different types of movements can be utilised?
- What effect do different movements have on the sounds created?

In this composition activity the class are going to create their own individual pieces for five drums arranged from lowest (biggest) to highest (smallest). As it is unlikely that you have a set of five drums per child, the activity uses a set of 'mock' drums – using objects from around the classroom. This set of objects will help the children directly understand the physical challenges and physical possibilities encountered by the musician by being able to try things out themselves. This is a strategy used by many composers when they are writing for percussion. It is almost like creating 'choreography' for the musician, as the music and physical movement are directly interconnected. Composers often set rules or limitations on themselves when writing music. In this case, the limitations of a set of five drums for one musician provide challenges and also opportunities to discover new ways of meeting these criteria musically.

Skills	accurate listening	developing musical memory	interpreting a score
Knowledge/understanding	how music can be written down	how musical structures can work	
Experience	experimenting with organising material	a wide range of rhythmic patterns	
Non-musical	physical co-ordination		

Resources:

- A set of 'drums' - five small objects ranging from small to large per child, e.g. plastic cup, yoghurt pot, book, pencil case, water bottle, lunch box, etc.
- Pairs of 'drumsticks' – two pencils or chopsticks per child
- One set of five real drums ranging from low pitch to high pitch (you could include a tambourine, bongos, tambours, snare drums, etc.)

Warm Ups: Don't Clap That One Back; Shake Out

Excerpt from Xenakis *Rebonds B* Score

9

29

(W.B.L.)

31

33

(Peaux)

35

37

39

41

43

E.A.S. 18707

NB: Highlighted on the score are some of the bits we have selected to use with the children or very similar ones.

Getting Started...

1. Ask the children to create their own mini drum kit either on a table or on the floor. This should be organised from the lowest sound to the highest sound (use Resource Sheet 1). Explain that the children will use the 'instruments' to create their own patterns. Give out a pair of chopsticks to each child.

2. Ask the children to spend a few moments creating their own rhythmic pattern using their objects. Explain that the pattern should be short and ask them to memorise their pattern.

Some children will want to grip the sticks with a lot of tension in their hands. Encourage the children to hold the sticks lightly and to keep their arms, wrists and fingers relaxed. This enables the child to play faster and without getting tired.

Encourage the children to play rhythmically (with an underlying pulse) and to be inventive. At this point, we are interested in seeing what the children come up with, however simple it may seem. All the ideas will have some potential – some children may be more adventurous, and some others may copy or use ideas they have encountered before, such as in Don't Clap That One Back. These are all valid musical strategies. As this project goes on the children will all develop a broader range of rhythmic ideas.

3. Go around the class and listen to different children's patterns. As you listen, note which types of movements and patterns are being used, including the hand movements, the direction of travel and the resultant rhythmic pattern that emerges (Resource Sheet 2).

Describe in words what you hear and see to the children. Whenever a new type of pattern is suggested, ask the whole class to watch and listen carefully and then try to play it exactly the same themselves, all together, so the children are collecting and experiencing the physicality of different ways of playing. (Some individuals may find this physically very challenging as it requires quite complex co-ordination). Sometimes a child's idea can be a very long sequence of music which rambles on and on. As they play, try to pick out and remember one clear idea that could be used on its own as a pattern (this requires careful listening!) and show the child this simplified version, which they will find easier to work with.

Going Further...

4. Now with the children, look at Resource Sheet 3. There are four different kinds of pattern written down, with the highest sound drawn on the top line and the lowest sound on the bottom line. Ask the children to try playing one of the rhythms. When sharing the suggestions with the class encourage the children to explore the easiest or most natural way to use the LH/RH sticks, and practise all playing the pattern in the same way.
5. After looking at each one and playing it together as a class, explain that the children are going to write down their own patterns that they made up earlier using the same system as Xenakis (see score overleaf) i.e. using the top line for the highest drum and the bottom line for the lowest drum, reading from left to right. Model this with one of the ideas.
6. Put the children into groups of three and ask them to teach each other their pattern and to draw their friends' patterns on their sheet. Explain that the group are going to use a mixture of Xenakis's patterns and their own patterns to compose their own piece of music for 5 drums.
7. Ask the children to spend a few moments choosing their favourite three or four rhythmic patterns from their sheet,

What do we mean by interesting? – see Introduction!

thinking about which ones would sound interesting. When they have chosen them, ask them to cut out all those boxes (and discard the others). They should have 3 copies of each idea.

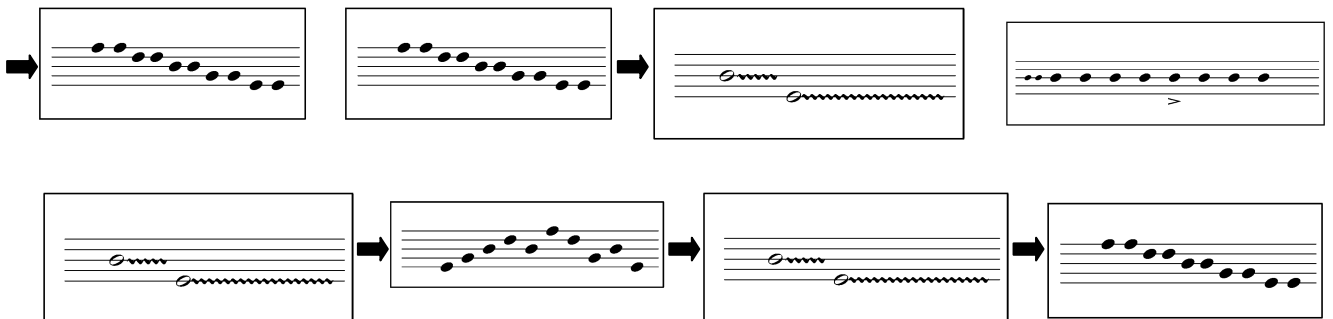
8. On a large blank sheet, the children are going to arrange their chosen boxes in a line to create a piece of music. To do this effectively they need to try different options, and to play around with the order of the sounds. Before you start this, model with the whole class how this can be done with 3 of the Xenakis patterns.

The choices made about the order of patterns will change the effect of the music and the atmosphere it creates. Ask the children to consider these questions:

- *How will the piece begin?*
- *How will it end?*
- *What will sound most effective?*
- *What musical shape would you like the music to have?*
- *How can you make a musical shape?*
- *What happens if you repeat an idea?*
- *What happens if you swap the ideas around?*

They can repeat one idea several times if they want to. Encourage the children to try out different orders by playing it through. When they have chosen the best order, ask them to stick down the boxes down in order, and practise performing the piece. They could either do this as a group or each individual could learn to play the piece on the five drums.

Below is an example just using the Xenakis rhythms:



And finally...

9. Collect the best percussion 'drum kit' from the musical instruments you have available at school and ask either the whole group or one individual from the group to play the piece to the class.

Resource Sheet 1: Home-made drum kit



Resource Sheet 2: Hands & Pitch

HANDS

Just the left hand

Just the right hand

A random mixture of both hands

Right and left hands playing at the same

A series of right hand notes, then a series of left hand

The right hand is more active, the left hand plays single notes in between

Alternating right and left hands

PITCH DIRECTION

Moving in order getting higher (1 or more taps on each drum)

Moving in order getting lower (1 or more taps on each drum)

Moving in order getting higher then lower and vice versa (1 or more taps on each drum)

Random order (1 or more taps on each drum)

Starting with both hands at either end and moving in (1 or more taps on each drum)

Keeping one drum the same whilst moving up the other drums, in order

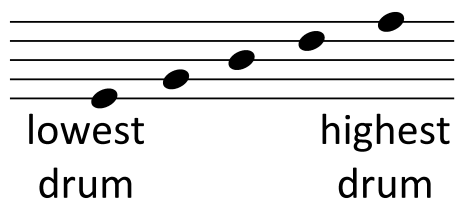
Keeping one drum the same whilst moving down the other drums, in order (1 or more taps on each drum)

Starting with both hands in the middle and moving out (1 or more taps on each drum)

Repeated taps on each drum moving randomly higher or lower

Resource Sheet 3: Xenakis Drum Patterns

5 drums
low pitch to high pitch

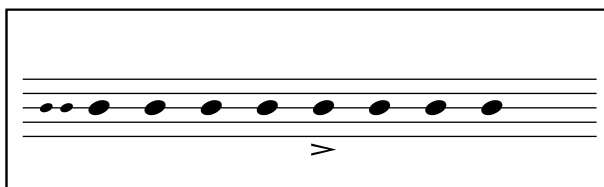


> = accent (strong)

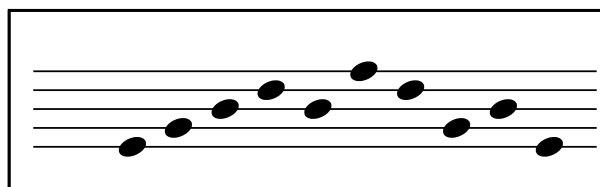
~~~~~ = play on the same drum continuously in a "roll"

•• = 2 fast, quieter sounds

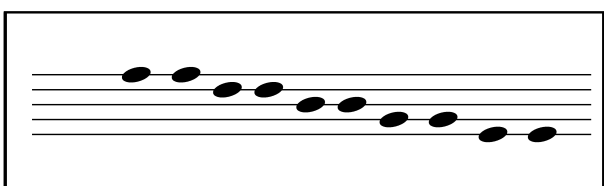
**A**



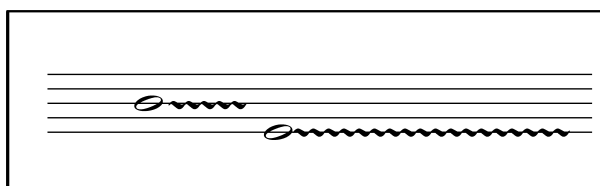
**B**



**C**



**D**



Name

Write down your own drum pattern here:

---

---

---

---

Name

Copy down your group's patterns here:

---

---

---

---

Name

---

---

---

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## Project Two

### Morton Feldman – *The King of Denmark*

In this piece the musician uses only their fingers and hands to play a huge collection of different kinds of percussion instruments. The composer asks the musician to only use the quietest sounds and notates the music through graphic symbols which can be interpreted in different ways. In an interview Feldman recalls:

*'I actually remember writing The King - on the beach on the south shore of Long Island and I wrote it in a few hours, just sitting comfortably on the beach. I wrote the whole piece on the beach. And I can actually conjure up the memory of doing it - that kind of muffled sound of kids in the distance and transistor radios and drifts of conversation'.*

The title came after the piece had been written. It refers to the King of Denmark who, during the Second World War went out into the streets of Copenhagen wearing the star of Israel that the Jews were forced to wear around their arm as a silent protest.

#### Aims:

In this activity you are going to interpret and then play a score in graphic notation which the class will use to create their own version of the music, using the very quietest sounds from a range of instruments.

|                                 |                                                 |                                                     |                                    |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Skills</b>                   | focussed listening                              | interpreting and reading a graphic score            | accuracy of touch                  |
| <b>Knowledge/ understanding</b> | how music can be written down in different ways | how music can create an atmosphere                  | the importance of silence in music |
| <b>Experience</b>               | playing as part of a group                      | the same music can be interpreted in different ways | interpreting a code                |
| <b>Non-musical</b>              | concentration and physical control              | a wide range of timbres                             | team work and awareness of others  |

#### Resources:

A range of wooden instruments; metal bells e.g. desk bells/chimes/gongs and other kinds of instrument e.g. drums; vibratone; clickit; triangles, etc.

**Warm ups:** Circle Sounds; 1 silent minute

## Getting Started...

1. Look at Resource Sheet 4. Each box contains signs and symbols telling the performer what, how and when to play. Each box lasts about one second. Ask the children what they think the symbols might mean. Then hand out the 'key' to the symbols (Resource Sheet 5) and discuss with the children how it works. Make sure the children understand what all the different signs and symbols mean - all derived from Feldman's original score (Resource Sheet 4).
2. Divide the children into 3s and give each group a range of instruments including some made of wood, some metal bells and some others, so that each group has at least seven instruments to share. Explain that no beaters are needed, as the sounds will be made only by touching with hands and fingers. The idea is that the whole group share the instruments and members of the group may play any of them, depending on the instructions on the score.

*Some groups may need help in the physical organisation of the instruments so the group members all have access to the instruments they*

*Remind the children that some instruments will be much more resonant if they pick them up to play.*

3. Ask the children to explore their instruments – how many different ways are there to make sounds using their hands?

4. Listen to some of the ideas, and promote sounds that are well controlled and use different types of touching, e.g. fingernail scrapes, fingertip taps, stroking, flicking, dabbing, rattling, etc.

*Make sure the room is completely silent as you listen. Ask all other adults to remain completely quiet as well, and wait for silence before you begin to listen. This adds a real focus to the quality of listening and allows the quietest sounds to be heard.*

## Going Further...

5. Explain that the children are going to read the score on Resource Sheet 4 with each child in the group reading a different line of music. Encourage the children to be precise in their timings (each box lasts one second), and to keep the sounds quiet and distinctive. After two minutes, ask one group to share the opening boxes with the whole class, to model the activity. Ask the whole class to follow the score as they listen, and to notice how the group is organised. Notice when the children are listening to each other.

## And finally...

6. Listen to each group play their full version, and encourage the class to follow the score as they listen. Each version will be different and should create an atmosphere, maybe magical or eerie. Ask the children to imagine what this music might represent.

*There are little challenges built into the score: sequences where one child needs to play after another; moments they have to all play together; and, times when they have to wait and then coordinate with their group.*

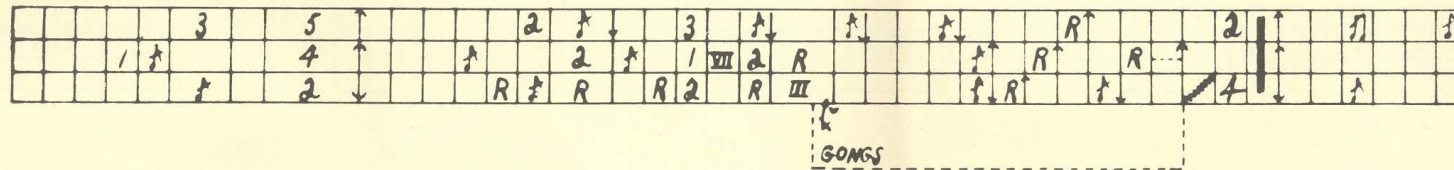
7. Play the score as a whole class, reading from the white board, and keeping all the sounds as quiet as possible. Record the class's interpretation of the score, and use the music as a stimulus for creative writing.

*To add intensity to performances, record them using a dictaphone or computer.*

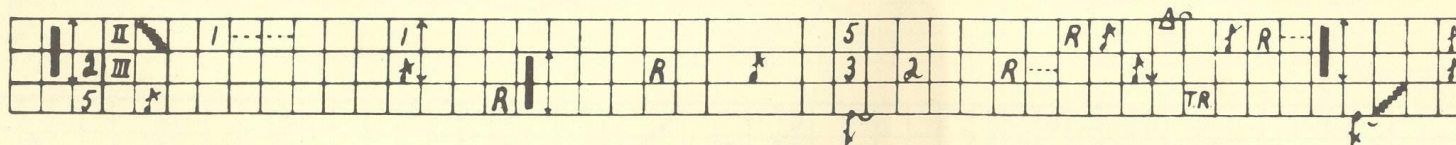
# Resource Sheet 4: The King of Denmark

## THE KING OF DENMARK

MORTON FELDMAN



GONGS



Edition Peters 6963

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70-30 80<sup>th</sup> Street, Glendale, NY 11385



# Resource Sheet 5: Key to Score

The picture on the opposite page is a graphic musical score very like the one composer Morton Feldman created. Along with the score is a key to how it should be interpreted. The different symbols, letters and numbers mean different things, like a code. The music is for 3 people to play. Each person reads a different line of the score, reading from left to right. Morton Feldman also asks the musician to use hands instead of drum sticks or beaters as he wanted the quietest sounds possible. Each box lasts about a second. If there are different sounds indicated at the same time the players must start at the same time.



= Triangle

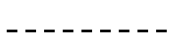
**B**

= Bell

**T**

= Tambourine

**r**



= Roll

**5**

= Number of sounds to play one after the other



= 1 sound



= Lots of sounds at the same time

## Project Three

### György Ligeti – *Síppal, dobbal, nádihegedüvel* (*With Pipes, Drums, Fiddles*)

In this music the singer sings a set of pieces using nonsense words and poetry in Hungarian and the four percussionists match or echo the sounds she makes with her voice. In the piece Ligeti mixes folk with the avant-garde styles.

Translation from one kind of sound to another is central to this activity, which involves some creative thinking, imagination, focussed listening and problem-solving. The music plays with the relationship between vocal sounds of the singer and the sounds of percussion instruments. In this composition project the class will experiment with inventing words, creating musical gestures and matching vocal sounds with instrumental sounds in different ways to create their own completely original pieces of music.

|                                 |                                   |                        |                    |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Skills</b>                   | accurate listening                | matching sounds        | performance skills |
| <b>Knowledge/ understanding</b> | organising material               | using musical contours | music is fun       |
| <b>Experience</b>               | vocal freedom and experimentation | performing as a group  |                    |
| <b>Non-musical</b>              | inventiveness                     | problem-solving        | teamwork           |

#### Resources:

- Scissors; glue; paper
- A wide range of percussion instruments including whistles and pipes

**Warm ups:** Sky sounds; Magic Finger; Name Shapes

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#### Getting started...

1. Give each group copies of the syllables grid (overleaf) and ask them to cut up the syllables and put them in a hat or a box. Explain to the children that they are going to create some nonsense words, selecting sounds from the hat.
2. Model creating some words with the whole class by inviting children to randomly select syllables from the hat. Make a short word, a three or four syllable word and a very long word.

az-fiiiii

broooo-pa-ti

ti-moooo-pa-do

3. Practise with the class saying each word in an unusual and fun way; ask for ideas about how you might say the same word in different ways, using physical movements or gestures to help emphasise the melodic and rhythmic shapes/contours of the sounds.
4. Now the children understand the possibilities of word inventing ask them to create their own crazy set of words by picking syllables out of their hat/box, and then to work out an unusual way to say them (ask them to select their favourite version of each word). Some children may find it useful to write the words down using shapes to highlight the contour

and loudness of the sounds (see Resource Sheet 7), others may prefer to use gestures to help 'fix' the word.

5. Explain that each group will perform their words to the class, and give them a minute to get their words into an order they like. Ask the groups to practice vocalising their words as a group, all together in unison.

*If a group finds it difficult to synchronise with each other, encourage them to watch each other closely, and possibly elect a leader of the group whom everyone else*

6. Listen to each group perform their words and encourage a confident delivery of the sounds, with lots of energy and variation in their voices. It should be very entertaining!

*An energetic performance can include quiet energy as well as loud energy.*

7. Now demonstrate to the class how to 'translate' an invented word (with its different components of sounds and syllables) into a version using only instrumental sounds. Taking one of the words you created at the beginning of the session, ask one group with a range of instruments to help show how to do this. There is no right or wrong way - you might use one instrument to play the whole word or three different instruments for three different syllables. Encourage ideas that roughly 'fit' the vocalised sounds i.e. match the melodic contour, dynamic, quality of sound, attack etc.

8. Explain that each group is going to 'transfer' their vocalised versions onto the percussion instruments. In Ligeti's piece there is an amazing range of percussion used and the suggestions here mirror his choices. If you don't have the exact instrument, find one with a similar sound.

9. Give each group access to a range of instruments to use, making sure that each group has an individual make up of instruments, so it sounds different and distinctive from anyone else's group. The instrument list on Resource Sheet 8 reflects Ligeti's choice of instruments.

10. Listen to each group play the instrumental versions. Remind the children they will need to watch each other just as carefully as they did in the vocalised version.

### **And finally...**

11. Ask each group to create a piece using their vocal and instrumental versions of their nonsense words. The idea is that, as in the Ligeti's piece the instrumental version follows the vocal version. There are different ways of organising the material. Have a discussion about how they could do this, and highlight the importance of thinking about what would sound best. Some of the decisions they need to make are:

- What order sounds best?
- Will they use some words more than once?
- Will they repeat some words consecutively?
- Will they repeat sequences of their words?

*You can model this with the words you created and 'translated' before, showing some of the different options available. Some of the groups might like to write down the order of their ideas in a simple way, others may not need to.*

|        |    |         |      |    |    |
|--------|----|---------|------|----|----|
| faaaaa | go | ooooom  | spla | ap | p  |
| kiiii  | do | oooooch | gru  | ip | th |
| mooooo | he | eeeek   | blo  | iz | k  |
| fiiii  | cu | troooo  | tra  | az | f  |
| caaaaa | ti | gliiii  | gla  | og | b  |
| gooooo | tz | shuuuu  | pla  | us | n  |
| hiiii  | pa | brooooo | sce  | ep | l  |
| teeeee | kr | straaaa | dra  | uf | d  |
| kuuuuu | vu | aaaaach | clo  | el | j  |



# Resource Sheet 7: Word Shapes

b a a a a C H o o o o c h

T e e e e e c U

br o o o o F

st r a a a a D O F

i z K i i i i

# Resource Sheet 8: Instruments



cymbals



tam-tam



castanets



woodblock



cowbell



slide whistle



Burmese gong



glockenspiel



siren whistle



tubular bells



tambourine



ratchet



vibraslap



ocarina



flexatone



thundersheet

# Project Four

## Steve Reich – *Music for Pieces of Wood*

This piece uses a constant pulse and repeating rhythmic patterns that build up in layers with several players all using similar instruments. One main rhythm is used to create a complex, mesmeric texture.

### Aims:

This is a performance project, using music that has a very strong beat with rhythms working across each other in loops, repeating the same rhythmic patterns again and again. The first two rhythms are taken from Steve Reich's music. The third rhythm is cumulative and as it moves through its cycle, the effect of the rhythmic patterns subtly changes. Performing this music takes concentration and focus, with each group's rhythm interlocking in an intricate and fascinating way.

|                                 |                                |                                     |                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Skills</b>                   | performance skills             | developing musical memory           | accuracy                       |
| <b>Knowledge/ understanding</b> | awareness of rhythmic patterns | awareness of strong and weak beats  |                                |
| <b>Experience</b>               | feeling a 'groove'             | performing as part of a large group | interlocking rhythmic patterns |
| <b>Non-musical</b>              | physical co-ordination         | sustained concentration             | teamwork                       |

### Resources:

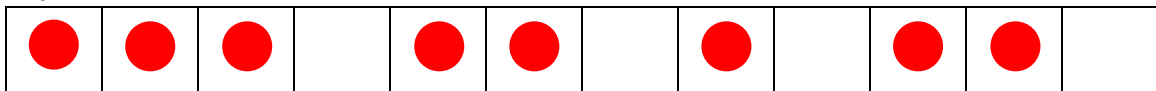
Drums; claves; temple blocks; wooden agogos; log drums and other wooden instruments

**Warm ups:** 12s; Don't Clap That One Back

### Getting Started...

1. Clap this rhythmic pattern to the children (see Resource Sheet 9):

*Rhythm 1*



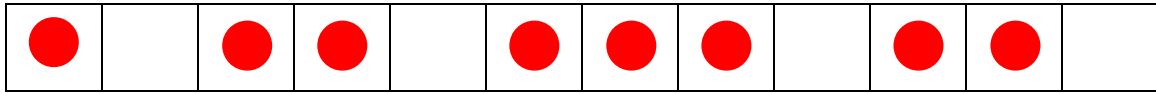
There are twelve quick beats in each cycle, some of which are silent beats. Each beat is represented by one box or one blob. Repeat the rhythm three times. Show the beginning of each repetition by either stamping your foot, nodding your head or clapping with a louder clap, to mark the beginning of each twelve beat cycle.

Now ask the children to mark the first beat along with you by clapping or stamping, so they can feel where the beginning of the rhythmic pattern is.

*This rhythm creates an unusual pattern and is actually easier to clap quickly rather than slowly. It may feel strange at first but try to feel the 'groove' of the pattern, which was inspired by complex African drumming rhythms.*

- When the children have done this see if they can do the same with this rhythm:

### Rhythm 2



It has the same number of beats (and is actually the same rhythmic pattern as before, starting half way through the sequence).

*If you find these rhythms too tricky to 'read' it can help to put words to the pattern, e.g. Rhythm 1: guinea pig – rabbit – cat – and dog, Rhythm 2: cat – rabbit – and chicken – and dog.*

- Now ask the children to clap the whole of Rhythm 1 with you, repeating it over and over again. As soon as the children are confident with it, practise Rhythm 2 in the same way.
- When the class are confident with both rhythms on their own, ask them to clap one of the patterns while you keep a constant quick pulse going on a woodblock or small drum. It's important to feel the 'groove' of these rhythms so you can try moving or vocalising as well, to help physicalise the patterns.

### Going Further...

- Divide class into three groups with sets of 'short' sounding instruments – e.g. Group 1 - drums, Group 2 – claves and unpitched wooden instruments, Group 3 - xylo bars upside down. Make sure you do not include any shakers or instruments that ring on, as you will need short, precise sounds for this activity to work well. Later on each group will be playing its own rhythm, so try to use instruments that make each group sound distinctive.

*Choosing beaters for instruments is really important – if you have very loud hard wooden beaters you may find the repeated sound soon becomes intolerable in this activity! And if you use a soft rubber beater, the instrument may be barely audible. There are a range of light plastic headed beaters that make a good crisp sound without being too penetrating – it's always worth trying out the beaters before you give them out.*

- Practise playing the rhythms on all the instruments repeating each one several times. Encourage accurate playing and make sure the pulse remains steady (there is a tendency for repeating patterns to speed up).
- Now the class is ready to try playing Rhythm 1 with one half while the other half of the class plays Rhythm 2. Decide with the class how many times to play the rhythms through, and start them off by counting in '10,11,12'

*Make sure you count in at exactly the same speed as the pulse of the rhythm.*



### And a bit further...

8. Now you can teach the class a new pattern, Rhythm 3, which uses a cumulative pattern, adding one beat in every cycle, using the same pulse. There are two identical sets of five beats in the pattern which is shown here. You will notice that the pattern starts with ten silent beats. Count the numbers of the beats out loud to start with like this: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 using the same quick speed of pulse as you had before, and clap or play on the notes, which build up one by one.

*Counting silent beats can be tricky; musicians often tap silently in the air to mark the silent beats.*

#### Rhythm 3

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ● | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | ● | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ● | ● | 3 | 4 | 5 | ● | ● | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ● | ● | ● | 4 | 5 | ● | ● | ● | 4 | 5 |
| ● | ● | ● | ● | 5 | ● | ● | ● | ● | 5 |
| ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |

This may look simple but needs real concentration! When the children are ready, ask them to count the empty beats silently, while you play a constant pulse on the woodblock.

9. Now divide the three rhythms so that Group 1 plays Rhythm 1, Group 2 plays Rhythm 2 and Group 3 plays Rhythm 3. Maintain the constant pulse on the woodblock, but remember that Group 3 are not using the same number of beats as the other groups and the 'strong' beats fall in different places as the music progresses – which is part of the fun! Allow each group some time to practise their pattern together, and encourage them to 'feel' their pattern as a group so they can stay together.

*Ask the children how many beats will be played before the cycle returns to the beginning again? Decide with the class how many times to run through the cycle and end with a loud, strong BOMP!*

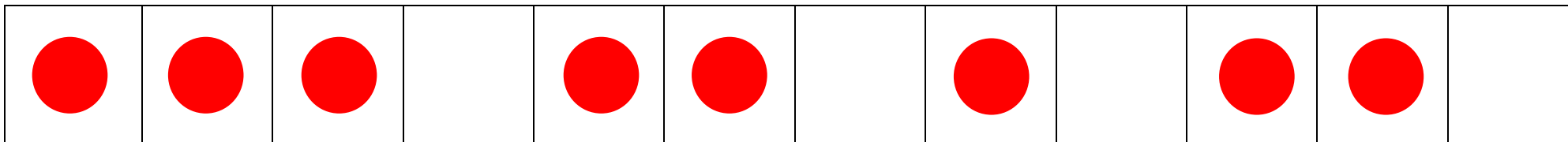
### And finally...

10. For a further challenge, give the children a chance to create their own rhythmic loops using the boxes on Resource Sheet 10 to perform in groups or use to compose bigger pieces.

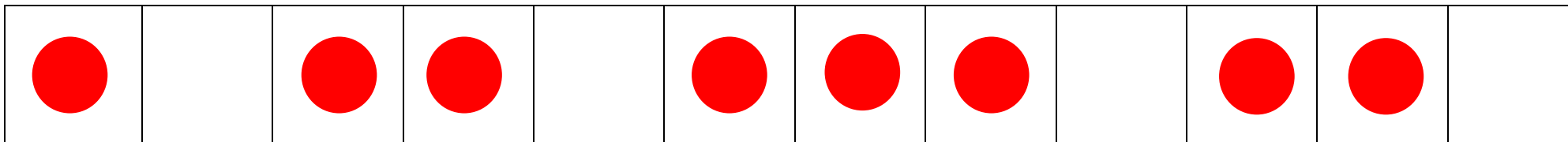
# Resource Sheet 9: Reich - *Music for Pieces of Wood*

 = clap/play       = silent beat































Rhythm 1



Rhythm 2



Rhythm 3 (count silently)

|                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1                                                                                   | 2                                                                                   | 3                                                                                   | 4                                                                                   | 5                                                                                   | 1                                                                                   | 2                                                                                   | 3                                                                                   | 4                                                                                   | 5                                                                                     |
|  | 2                                                                                   | 3                                                                                   | 4                                                                                   | 5                                                                                   |  | 2                                                                                   | 3                                                                                   | 4                                                                                   | 5                                                                                     |
|  |  | 3                                                                                   | 4                                                                                   | 5                                                                                   |  |  | 3                                                                                   | 4                                                                                   | 5                                                                                     |
|  |  |  | 4                                                                                   | 5                                                                                   |  |  |  | 4                                                                                   | 5                                                                                     |
|  |  |  |  | 5                                                                                   |  |  |  |  | 5                                                                                     |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |



# Project Five

## Cage – *Living Room Music*

This playful piece is for four musicians using ‘any household objects or architectural elements’ to perform with. Cage suggests magazines, newspapers, tables, books, doors, and windows, and there are performances on Youtube that use these and other items found in a living room: cups, table mats, bottles and so on. The musicians also whistle, sing and chant in some parts of the music. The composer asks that the musicians do not use ‘conventional’ beaters – but other improvised beaters such as pencils, chopsticks, and fingers – or anything else you can think of!

### Aims:

In this composition project the class will be creating, layering and sequencing patterns to make interesting musical structures found objects from around the classroom or from home to create their own ‘Living Room Music’.

|                                 |                                              |                                                |                                                    |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Skills</b>                   | composing rhythms                            | performance skills                             | conducting signals                                 |
| <b>Knowledge/ understanding</b> | counting and working in groups of four beats | how music can be built with layers of material | how a conductor can control the shape of the music |
| <b>Experience</b>               | following a conductor                        | experimenting with organising material         | playing in a large group                           |
| <b>Non-musical</b>              | teamwork                                     | observing skills                               | concentration                                      |

**Resources:** Items brought from home or found in the classroom

**Warm ups:** Conducting; Don’t Clap That One Back

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### Getting Started...

1. Ask each of the children to bring in an object from home that they can use as an ‘instrument’ with something to tap it with if needed. For example, a cheese grater with a wooden spoon, a saucepan lid, coasters, a plastic cup, cutlery, a book or newspaper etc. Bring your own as well! Classroom objects could also be used.
2. Discuss with the class how you might divide these objects into different categories, for example:
  - What is it made of? – wood, metal, plastic, paper, etc.
  - How do you play it? – tap, shake, blow, etc.
  - Which room did it come from? – bedroom, kitchen, living room, classroom...

Divide the class up according to their favourite categories, aiming to have three to five groups.

3. Using your own object create some short rhythmic patterns that last for four beats for the whole class or the individual groups to copy. The children should copy straight away and you should follow their reply with a new rhythm.

*To switch between playing with the whole class and individual groups use your body position to show who should copy, i.e. when you are facing the centre, everyone plays and when you are facing group one, just group one plays, and so on. The aim is to communicate without speaking, so clear signals and lots of careful watching is needed.*

4. Now ask the children to think of their own ideas for rhythms using their objects. Still working in their 'category' groups, allow them some time to experiment either as individuals or in pairs. The patterns need to fit over a four beat pulse so that they will all work together later. They can include silent beats and the patterns could last 8 beats (2x4) instead of four beats. As the children are practising, it might be useful for you to support them by playing a steady beat in the background and help them make it last for four beats.

*A pattern could be made up of different kinds of sounds, for example: (1) a long cheese grater rattle followed by three quick chinks with a teaspoon on a tea cup; (2) very active tapping including fast notes with chopsticks on a plate; (3) three short, loud sounds on a sauce pan lid with silences in between. See Resource Sheet 11.*

5. Listen to each group's different ideas one at a time and ask the whole of that 'category' group to copy the pattern. Choose two different patterns for each group, making sure that everyone in the group can play those patterns. These will be called *Rhythm 1* and *Rhythm 2* for each group. Practise stopping and starting the patterns. When conducting turn to the group you want to play and signal with either one or two fingers to signal which rhythm (1 or 2) you would like them to play. Then countdown to start the group.
6. Now create another rhythm pattern that everyone in the class can play together. Call this the 'Head' rhythm and point to your head before counting down to start the whole class playing this rhythm. You might use an idea that was suggested earlier, or create a brand new pattern. This could be played either in unison or by dividing the pattern up based on which instrument the children had i.e. everyone could play the whole rhythm pattern or different category groups could do different parts of the rhythm.

### Going further...

7. Practise changing from one pattern to another and layering the different patterns by conducting the groups. Try adding this new signal: if you want one group to keep going while everyone else stops, draw a round and round motion in the air with your finger pointing at the group you want to continue and give a 4, 3, 2, 1 to the rest of the class to stop.
8. You could also experiment with getting louder/quieter, which can be shown by raising arms up and out for louder and down and in towards your body for quieter.
9. As you are trying all these things out, talk about the different effects of music as it builds up. Talking about how and why you made your own conducting decisions helps the children to see the broad shapes that can be made, e.g.:
  - I wanted to build the music up layer by layer with a big climax in the middle and then gradually getting quieter towards the end.
  - I started loudly with everyone playing the Head three times, then I built up the patterns one at a time so we could hear each group on its own. After this I built up the groups in layers so it got louder and louder and I finished off with the Head just once to end with.



- I wanted all the groups to start with their Rhythm 1 and then one by one I changed them to Rhythm 2 so the music started to change gradually. To finish, we all played the Head.

In the same way, noticing and describing the musical choices that the children make when they are conducting highlights the potential for effective music-making, e.g. I liked the way you waited longer before you brought the third group in, and kept the music quiet until then. Maybe you could have used the Head at that point to make a strong contrast.

### **And finally...**

10. Explain that you are going to create a piece using all these ideas led by a conductor. Ask the children to suggest how to start the piece effectively, then think about how the music carries on and then discuss the best ending. This might be everyone playing together loudly three times, or might be the final group getting quieter and quieter. Ask one of the children to conduct their own version and record the class's performance.

# Resource Sheet 11: *Living Room Music*

1



2



3



**X**

**X**

**X**

# Preparation and Warm-up Activities

## Don't Clap That One Back

Context: feeling a pulse, using 4 beat patterns, focussed listening

1. Clap a four-beat rhythm and ask your class to clap it back immediately as an echo.
  2. Show the class the rhythm of the words *don't clap that one back* which goes: long - long - short short long. Explain this rhythm is a signal to NOT clap back the pattern. Practise the pattern a few times so the children can easily recognise it.
  3. Now play the game, clapping a few 4 beat rhythms then the *Don't clap that one back* rhythm. (Try not to change your body language when you do this!)
  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.
- 

## Shake Out 8s

Context: feeling a pulse, subdivision of 8 beats, building physical energy, muscle relaxation

1. Standing in a circle, ask everyone to raise their right arm in the air. Tell the class to join in counting with you and to follow what you do.
  2. Now count up to eight, and shake your hand in the air on each count. Then straightaway do the same with your left hand in the air, counting to eight again, then your right leg shaking your foot to eight and then the left leg.
  3. Without a gap start again with your right hand, this time counting up to four. Continue with left arm, right leg, left leg all counting up to four.
  4. Carry on with the right hand this time counting in twos, and finally count in ones. Finish off with an energetic 'Hey!'
  5. Practise the last section of 'ones' so that everyone does a really energetic 'Hey!' all at exactly the same time. Then play the game again.
- 

## Circle Sounds

Context: focussed listening, self-control

1. Sit in a circle with the percussion instruments. Each child will take turns to play one sound each around the circle.
  2. Explain that you cannot start your sound until the previous sound has completely died away.
  3. Before the game starts, ask the children which of them has an instrument that will sound a long time (e.g. gong, chime bar, magic chimes). Listen to that sound and count how many seconds the sound lasts. Remind the class that they can control how long or short their note lasts.
-

## Silent Minute

Context: focussed listening, raising awareness of sound and silence

1. Give out A4 paper and pencils.
  2. Explain that the class will spend sixty seconds just listening to the sounds inside and outside the classroom. Tell the class that whenever a sound is heard, to write or draw the sound on their sheet.
  3. Use a stop watch and wait for silence in the room before you start.
  4. After the minute is up, discuss the different sounds noticed.
- 

## Conducting

Context: conducting is a simple and fun way to organise and shape music on the spot, just by using a few simple signals. Sometimes the quietest children can make excellent conductors, as this is non-verbal communication.

1. Sit in a circle and give out 3 different groups of instruments, e.g. shakers in one section, drums in another section and chime bars in the third section.
2. Explain you will conduct the class with a start signal, when they can all play, and a stop signal when they must stop instantly. Show the class your signals, e.g.

Start and keep going = pointing both hands in front of you

Stop = pointing both hands up to the ceiling

Or, open hand = start, closed fist = stop)

Exaggerate and make your gestures very clear.

3. Practise starting and stopping the class, making sure they watch you very closely. Vary the lengths of sounds and silences to try to catch them out.
  4. Choose one of the children to conduct. Ask them to show the start and stop signal before they begin, to make sure the signals are clear, strong gestures.
  5. Now explain that the conductor will control the 3 different groups of instruments, starting and stopping the groups at different times. Try this yourself conducting first, and experiment with layering the different sounds on top of each other, as well as having each group playing alone. Now ask one of the children to conduct. (The conductor is now also composing, deciding which sounds to have next in the music!)
- 

## Eights

Context: feeling a steady pulse, internal counting, building patterns

1. Count 8 beats with a steady pulse. Use a woodblock or small drum to keep the beat (do this yourself as it is hard to keep it steady), repeating and keeping a steady pulse.
2. Ask the children to join in with the counting out loud and all clap on the first beat. You can help show the first beat with the woodblock by doing a larger movement on beat one.
3. Repeat this until everyone is confident with clapping on beat one. Then do the same thing without counting out loud (but counting internally).
4. As soon as the children are confident doing this, ask them to now choose another number from 2 to 8.

- The group will carry on clapping on number one, but on the other number each person has chosen, they will make up a vocal sound. So if one child chooses 2, and another chooses 6 it would sound like this:

| 1    | 2 | 3    | 4   | 5 | 6     | 7 | 8     |
|------|---|------|-----|---|-------|---|-------|
| clap | ● | ping | ●   | ● | ●     | ● | ●     |
| clap | ● | ●    | ●   | ● | click | ● | ●     |
| clap | ● | ●    | ●   | ● | ●     | ● | ●     |
| clap | ● | ●    | shh | ● | ●     | ● | ●     |
| clap | ● | ●    | ●   | ● | ●     | ● | woooo |

- Keep repeating this over and over again, always sticking to the same sounds and numbers. Listen for the patterns being created by the sounds, making sure that everyone is clapping together on beat 1.

NB You could use instruments instead of vocal sounds if you like.

### Sky Sounds

Context: creative vocalisations, careful listening, physical co-ordination, accurate matching of sounds

- Standing in a circle, ask the class to imagine the space above you has been filled with beautiful sounds floating above your heads, each with a long ribbon hanging down. Tell the class that when a ribbon is pulled down to the ground it makes a sound.
- Demonstrate by pulling down an imaginary ribbon and making up a vocal sound. Ask the class to reach up and all pull down different sounds at the same time.
- Ask the class to do this again, this time with a different sound.
- Ask if anyone would like to share their sound, and this time tell everyone to copy the exact sounds and movements made.

### Magic Finger

Context: developing creative imagination, vocal freedom, a sense of relative pitch (high/low)

- Sitting in a circle, explain to the class that as you draw with your 'magic finger' in the air, your voice matches the shapes being drawn. For example, a long sweep in the air could be a long 'Ooooo' sound, and drawing dots in the air could be short sounds: 'ping ping ting'.
- Tell the class that the magic will pass around the circle, with each person touching the finger of the next, going round one by one.
- Remind the class that they can do a simple idea, like a straight line 'shhhhhh' or a much more complex idea with lots of sounds – it's up to them.

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