

Exchanging Notes

THE PROJECT

Exchanging Notes was an exchange of ideas between teachers and composers designed to strengthen and investigate new strategies for the teaching of composition across the secondary music curriculum. The emphasis of the exchange was to develop practical teaching strategies that could be utilised within any scheme of work, and it took the form of four days of workshops facilitated by Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Birmingham LEA.

The project team, consisting of three composers, four secondary teachers and two postgraduate students was assembled by Nancy Evans, Education Manager of BCMG and Robert Bunting, Music Adviser for Birmingham LEA, in response to research findings which indicated that music in school is poorly regarded by young people and that teachers lack confidence in teaching composition. The team met over the course of four one-day sessions at the CBSO Centre, Birmingham between March and June 2002. The intention of this publication is to share the ideas that emerged more widely and to inform further professional development with a wider pool of teachers and composers working in education, as well as other interested organisations.

During the four days each member of the team was asked to contribute a lesson or workshop activity which would address and stimulate discussion on four key questions and which would be evaluated afterwards.









THE FOUR KEY QUESTIONS

- How do teachers ensure that pupils use whatever stimulus or inspiration they have as their starting point to create useful and interesting musical ideas?
- What teaching strategies will develop young people's aural imagination?
- What teaching strategies will best help young people:
 - to experiment?
 - to make good decisions?
 - to develop ideas?
 - to evaluate?
- Independent group work is the norm. But what role is there for individual work and for whole-class teacher-led work?

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The pack has been organised into eight colour-coded sections each of which addresses a different aspect of the composing process.

-  **Generating**
USING STIMULI TO CREATE INTERESTING MUSICAL IDEAS
-  **Managing**
STEERING THE PROCESS WITH A CLASS
-  **Doodling**
BRAINSTORMING, EXPERIMENTING OR EXPLORING
-  **Choosing**
SELECTING THE BEST IDEAS AND MAKING DECISIONS
-  **Developing**
TAKING IDEAS FURTHER
-  **Reflecting**
AFTER CREATING A PIECE
-  **Imagining**
DEVELOPING THE ABILITY TO INTERNALISE AND HEAR SOUNDS IN THE INNER EAR
-  **Thinking onwards...**
SOME KEY ISSUES TO DEBATE