

IMAGINE COMPOSE

Research Report

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**Imagine
Compose**

Birmingham
Contemporary
Music Group



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Executive Summary

Imagine Compose (IC) was a project undertaken by Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG). It is described on the BCMG website:

Imagine Compose is a partnership project with Birmingham Music Service funded by Youth Music that aims to encourage and nurture beginner instrumentalists to compose and improvise from the beginning of their musical lives. The two year project is led by composer Liz Johnson and will consist of workshops, professional development sessions for teachers and emerging professional composers and the development of online composing activities for young people. BCMG is working with four ensembles: Handsworth Area Ensemble; Gilbertstone Area Orchestra in South Yardley; Anderton Park Ensemble in Balsall Heath; and Harborne Area String Ensemble. (BCMG Website)

Imagine Compose ran over two academic years, ending in the Summer term of 2014.

The Imagine Compose project trod new ground in many ways. We know that composing in classrooms in the UK is now well-established at secondary school level. We know too that musical engagement with the National Curriculum in primary schools can probably be best described as being ‘patchy’, with there being something of a lottery, depending on whereabouts an individual pupil lives, and where their primary school is located. However, this is all about curricular composing, in Imagine Compose we have what might be termed extra-curricular composing, with pupils who are near the novice end of the novice-expert continuum, and who are in receipt of lessons which are either based on, or focused around an instrument. This distinction is important, as formal music tuition (FMT, in some literature, (*inter alia* Seddon & O’Neill, 2006)) is normally built on what has come to be thought of as a traditional model of instrumental instruction. It is important to note that in the Imagine Compose work a number of pupils had come to their instruments through widening participation routes of whole class instrumental and vocal ensemble work, also known as ‘first access’ or ‘wider opportunities’ (WO). In the Birmingham version of the WO model, pupils can elect to continue after their initial year of WO teaching and learning, these groups being known as ‘electives’. Interestingly, despite an initial report by Bamford and Glinkowski (2010), we do not know a great deal about pedagogies and practices entailed in WO and elective learning nationally. This is an important distinction, as many of the pupils participating in Imagine Compose had come via this route, and although we know very little about the nationwide practices in this regard, nonetheless we believe that in many cases very little individual or group composing takes place during the course of the interactions.

Issues arising

The main issue of concern which arose from the evaluation was:

- What are the differences between ‘workshopping’ and composing?

Workshopping as a music generation methodology is well understood by the community of practice which utilise it. It may, however, be less familiar to those outside this community. Here is what one of the ensemble leaders said:

Time to refine compositions would have been good – to work on one piece and develop it over time.

There were a great many positive aspects of Imagine Compose that emerged during the course of the project. These include the young people involved having:

- Heightened awareness of creative aspects of music making, not solely focussing on re-creation of extant works
- Exploration of personal instrumental techniques
- Thinking about music, learning things for a purpose rather than because they are in a tutor book
- Engagement with new forms of notation
- Meeting positive role models (other than their instrumental service teachers) engaged with process of creating new music
- Taking responsibility and ownership for their own music-making
- Performing in public works which have never been heard before, and which were created specifically for the young people in the project
- Explored playing in different ways from the norm

Recommendations

For recommendations arising from this report, please turn to the *matrix of recommendations* towards the end.

1. The Project

Imagine Compose (IC) was a project undertaken by Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG). It is described on the BCMG website:

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Imagine Compose ran over two academic years, ending in the Summer term of 2014.

As can be seen from the BCMG website description, this was a project which involved a range of distinct stakeholders, each with their own perspectives and positions. The principle stakeholders were:

- Pupils: This group consists of young people who were members of one of the Birmingham Music Service's area ensembles. They can be characterised as being at a post-beginner stage, but still nearer the novice end of an instrumental playing continuum.
- Teachers: This group is made up of the instrumental music teachers from Birmingham Music Service (BMS) who organised and ran the various ensembles. Most of these groups had one teacher who was the lead for that ensemble, although other peripatetic music may have joined in with them on either a regular or an ad hoc basis.
- Shadow Composers: This is a non-coherent grouping of four composers at or near the beginning of their careers as composers. Each shadow composer (SC) was assigned to one of the area ensembles, and worked with that ensemble alone.
- BCMG Musicians: The groups had a musician associated with BCMG assigned to work with them on occasions when the composer was present.
- Area Ensembles: The four area ensembles identified for participation in the IC project were all located in separate geographical areas of Birmingham. The commonality was that they are all located in different areas of social deprivation within the city.

- The composer: Liz Johnson, who undertook the main aspects of working with the ensembles, and helping the trajectory of the shadow composers

In addition to these identified cohorts, the participating organisations, BMS and BCMG, can also be viewed as having an interest in the ways in which the IC project progressed.

2. Report Methodology

This report uses a primarily qualitative methodology to unpick the various perspectives operating during the course of the IC project. It involves the following data collection modalities:

- Direct Observation
- Interviews with teachers
- Interviews with shadow composers
- Interviews with significant actors in IC
- An on-line survey of ensemble lead instrumental teachers
- Case studies of pupils

In many ways the Imagine Compose evaluation research is unusual as a huge amount of data was collected. This report utilises much of it, but there is still more that has not made its way into the report.

The on-line survey also gave rise to some statistical data. As the sample size is restricted to the lead instrumental teachers from the ensembles ($n=4$), this data, although by definition quantitative, is not sufficiently large to be considered to be significant. However, adopting what might be termed as a somewhat modified phenomenological perspective, the perceptions of the respondents can be taken as being representative of their various realities, and so can be used in this way as a useful informant for analysis.

One aspect of this report requires some clarification, this is the use of reported speech. Clearly there are issues with this in methodological terms, as with so few participants there is a danger that individual teacher-respondents, who had been assured of anonymity, could be identified from their responses. We have done our best to mitigate against this effect, and feel that there is much to be gained from participants responding in their own words. However, in order to address identification, we have occasionally edited individual utterances. We believe the importance of what the various stakeholders had to say has not been muffled by this process. This is not the case with the composers and shadow composers, who are clearly named in the project documentation on the website, and whose compositions it would be invidious to anonymise, so these people are consequently named when quoted and discussed.

3. Composing – The Context

Historically speaking, the word ‘composer’ can be problematic as it sometimes evokes a number of preconceptions and stereotypes. A number of musicians and teachers have commented on these stereotypes, such as Hickey:

‘...music composition has been put on a pedestal and viewed as a specialist skill that only an elite few could do. (Hickey, 2012 p.11-2). Mills describes how a lot of music is ‘misunderstood’: ‘People think that...you have to be Mozart to compose.’ (Mills, 2005 p.5). The Romantic image of the ‘heroic’ composer or ‘the mythical star’ (Rzewski in Laycock, 2005 p.41) was very significant in the 19th Century. Built into this was the notion of composer as lone genius struggling against overwhelming odds

The concept of the composer ‘genius’ and musical ‘masterpiece’ was born and with it the creation of hierarchy of composers as the producer of these masterpieces, the performer as a conduit for the composer and the listener as the receiver of the musical ‘message’. (Spruce, 2001 p.120)

Today the role of a composer in the 21st Century is varied and requires a diverse range of musical and social skills. Laycock viewed composers as needing to be ‘more socially conscious and less self-obsessed ...whose role is to stimulate musical creativity in others.’ (Laycock, 2005, p.25). A flexible approach to what the role and meaning of ‘composing’ means is necessary in order to adapt to the requirements of the 21st Century:

The old hierarchical relations of composer, conductor performer and listener give way to a new paradigm, which is collective, consensual and co-operative in nature’ (Howard Jones, on CoMA.org).

Composer, Howard Skempton commented that composing requires:

... a practical approach, rather than a theoretical approach, and I associate the theoretical approach with the ivory tower I'm afraid. I associate the practical approach with a sort of social [approach].
(Skempton, personal communication, 14.08.14)

The Imagine Compose project placed emerging composers in a situation where the traditional framework of the ‘composer’ was diminished. Some composers suggest that a composer has to take a more practical and ‘hands on’ approach when composing for non-professionals:

As soon as you’re working with amateurs you have no choice but to think about the people you’re writing for, no choice. (Skempton, ibid).

There have been a number of alternative composing projects to encourage composers to create new works with non-professional musicians such as the ‘Adopt a Composer’ scheme run by the London-based organisation Sound and Music and ‘Chamber Music 2000’ run by the Schubert Ensemble. Alongside these are the many examples of work undertaken by Birmingham

Contemporary Music Group itself, including, but not limited to ‘exchanging notes’, ‘resolution’, ‘zig-zag’, ‘music maze’, and many others.

There is also a considerable literature on composing in classroom situations. Pamela Burnard, both working by herself and with others, has undertaken a considerable amount of work in this area, looking at ways in which children and young people create music (Burnard, 2000b; a; 2002; Burnard, 2006; Burnard, 2012; Burnard et al., 2010; Burnard & Younker, 2002; 2004; 2008). In Scotland, Charles Byrne has investigated a range of compositional process, (Byrne et al., 2001; Byrne et al., 2002; Byrne et al., 2003; Byrne & Sheridan, 2001), whilst in the USA Maud Hickey has pioneered composing as part of the curriculum there. (Hickey, 2001; 2003; 2007; Hickey, 2012). Also in the USA, Peter Webster has published a corpus of work on creative thinking in music. (Webster, 1992; 2003a; c; Webster, 2003b). Back in the UK, one of the Authors of this current report has also published on composing for children and young people, often, but not always, focussing on assessment (Fautley, 1999; 2002; 2004b; a; 2005b; a; 2006; 2007; Fautley, 2010; 2014; Fautley & Savage, 2008; Savage & Fautley, 2011).

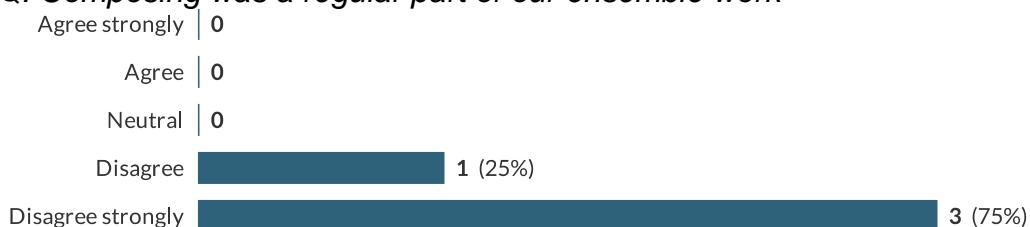
4. Outcome Indicators for Imagine Compose

In the original planning for the IC project, a number of outcome indicators were suggested. In this section these are considered in terms of perceived efficacy, and issues that arise from them.

4.1 BMS teachers report greater skills and willingness to deliver composition activity

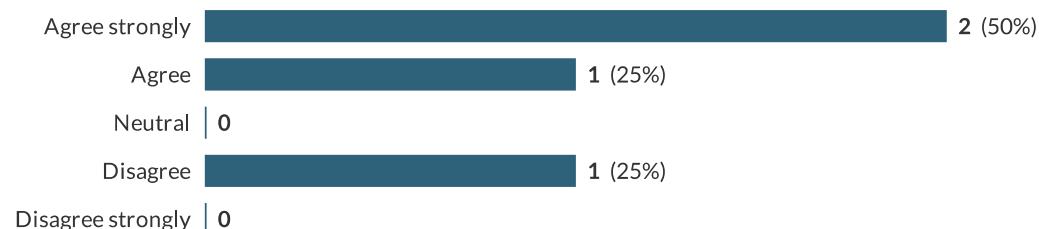
In the online survey, the ensemble leaders were asked about composing taking place before the IC project began. From their responses it is safe to assume that this was not a feature of the work which they did:

Q: Composing was a regular part of our ensemble work



This contrasts strongly with responses to a similar question about improvisation:

Q: Improvising was a regular part of our ensemble work



Beginning from a base where very little composing work took place, it becomes possible to see what sorts of effects the project had on those involved. One tutor observed that s/he

...would now use composing in a large ensemble situation. Not just seeing it at a hour 'rehearsal'....Predictable learning and non-predictable learning – often had to add to the learning objectives after the sessions as they learnt things we weren't expecting¹.

¹ Stylistic note: We present quotations from participants in italics, to distinguish them from extracts from texts.

4.2. BMS teachers have a greater understanding of how to support beginner instrumentalists' composing

One tutor reported that s/he now:

....uses some of the introductory/beginner composing games (e.g. one note [piece]) – very useful in difficult situations (students forget their music, mixed abilities etc.)...this could be the biggest legacy; gives teachers tools to take into everyday work.

Another observed that s/he

...had seen students compose before [the project] but not encouraged by traditional instrumental lessons as teachers [are] not sure how to develop it ...

One tutor observed that they have started to

...completely re-examine how instrumental teaching works – should composition play a much larger part of young musicians? Can composing become central?

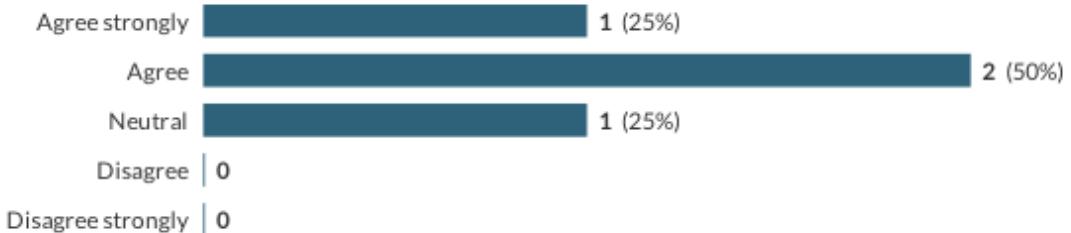
They also reported that they have

...earned strategies and adapted them. General principals and starting points, this has given [me] tools and confidence.

4.3 Composing takes place between workshops and post-project

The on line survey gives a good overview of this issue:

I think they now believe composing to be a normal activity



This point was also made by one of the ensemble leaders, who reported that after the Imagine Compose workshops students in their instrumental music lesson would often come to a lesson saying 'look what I have written', and that the student would be very excited and proud.

4.4 BMS teachers share ideas with their colleagues and composing happens in ensembles not involved in the project

Birmingham music service organised an in-service training (INSET) day for all of their staff, both full-time and part-time, numbering well over one hundred. At this INSET session, teachers, composers, and researchers involved in the IC project presented findings to the staff (the PowerPoint slides used for this are to be found in the appendix). Following the presentation, the instrumental teachers then divided into smaller groups, working with teachers and composers, looking at ways in which composing could be introduced more widely into both instrumental music sessions and learning ensembles. There was a great deal of positive feedback following this session, and many instrumental teachers were keen to develop their professional practice further in this regard.

4.5 BCMG feels confident to employ shadow composers on future projects

The role of shadow composers was a significant one in this project. The shadow composers produced pieces of music which were performed by the various ensembles (see below). The shadow composers were briefed by the project manager in terms of what to do, what to expect, and how they might be involved in the musical aspects of the project. They were asked to compose specific pieces for the ensemble they were involved with. Their role was much appreciated by the schools, for example:

They [the pupils] seemed to develop trust in Jeremy throughout the project. Jeremy went a number of times to work on the piece – they [the pupils] said they would give him “10 out of 10”. He performed in the piece and was engaged in the project.

4.6 Young people and teachers report greater enthusiasm for and skills in composing

The words of the teachers themselves are of interest here. The project developed the teachers' confidence to 'try things out' - the last session 'forced' them to deliver a session but in a 'safe environment'. It was a Good atmosphere as 'nothing was ever wrong' for the staff and the students. They felt the last session was very helpful to have feedback.

Sometimes, however, the ensemble leaders felt there was less of an understanding concerning what was going on. It must be remembered that much, if not all, of the music that pupils have learned from in lessons, and play in ensembles, is from a clear tonal tradition. The sound of the music made in some of the IC session may have come as a surprise to some of them. In interviews, the teachers talked a lot about 'just making odd sounds' or the music feeling 'random'. They felt the pupils needed a story or picture to

understand it. The word ‘random’ in relation to the workshops occurred frequently.

4.7 35% of the young people compose independently of the sessions As one ensemble leader observed:

Children [are] naturally inquisitive and compose spontaneously (look what I have written down) – but now they would say they have ‘composed’ something. The language and understanding had developed.

Statistically it is hard to pin down exactly the proportion of pupils independently composing as a result of the IC project, but certainly a number were. However, as discussed below, there may be issues with the ways in which composing was approached and developed in some locations.

4.8 Young people compose a piece for themselves, one for a BCMG musician and contribute to a group composition

Operationalising the project as it happened meant that a number of changes occurred between conceptualisation and actualisation. Often there were constraints of time, for some of the ensembles the strictures of having to prepare material for a forthcoming concert could impede creative input, and for some there were issues of regularity of member attendance. However, the vast majority of the pupils did participate in group composing, producing a piece for their own ensemble, and many also produced ideas for the BCMG musicians to play. These were not always notated, or produced in repeatable format, but they certainly did them. Many, as we have seen above, also produced pieces for themselves to play, and shared them in their instrumental music lessons with their teachers.

4.9 Young people’s musical understanding develops

Comments from two ensemble leaders:

It [the project] had a significant impact on the students, especially with regards to confidence, they are now much more willing to play on their own. They all got time to play individually which is rare in an ensemble.

It helped to integrate the students by working in non-friendship groups. The students in this ensemble are from a number of different schools so it helped them to get to know each other, and made them work together as a team.

4.10 25% of the young people access BCMG's out-of-school workshops or family concerts

And...

4.11 BMS teachers have a greater understanding of BCMG's creative music workshops for young people and are readier to recommend them to their pupils

All of the ensemble leaders said that they now encourage their students to go BCMG's out-of-school workshops, such as *Music Maze* or *Zig Zag* and a few students have started to go as a result. Although leaders knew previously of BCMG events, they now have more knowledge about both the tutors and what to expect, so they can prepare students.

4.12 Shadow composers report greater confidence and skills delivering composing workshops

This was generally felt to be the case. Detailed comments on the shadow composers and their role are to be found in specific sections below.

5. Discussion

The Imagine Compose project was treading new ground in many ways. We know that composing in classrooms in the UK is now well-established at secondary school level. We know too that musical engagement with the National Curriculum in primary schools can probably be best described as being ‘patchy’, with there being something of a lottery, depending on whereabouts an individual pupil lives, and where their primary school is located. However, all of this relates to curricular composing. In Imagine Compose we have what might be termed *extra-curricular composing*, with pupils who are near the novice end of a novice-expert continuum, and who are in receipt of lessons which are either based on, or focused around an instrument. This distinction is important, as formal music tuition (FMT, in some literature, (*inter alia* Seddon & O’Neill, 2006) is normally built on what has come to be thought of as a traditional model of instrumental instruction. It is important to note that in the Imagine Compose work a number of pupils had come to their instruments through widening participation routes of first access to whole class instrumental and vocal work, also known as ‘wider opportunities’ (WO). In the Birmingham version of the WO model, pupils can elect to continue after their initial year of WO teaching and learning, these groups being known as ‘electives’.

Interestingly, despite an initial report by Bamford and Glinkowski (2010), we do not know a great deal about pedagogies and practices entailed in WO and elective learning nationally. This is an important distinction, as many of the pupils participating in Imagine Compose had come via this route, and although we know very little about the nationwide practices in this regard, nonetheless we are convinced that it is a safe assumption that very little individual or group composing takes place during the course of the interactions. It is for these reason that the work undertaken in Imagine Compose can be viewed as being ground-breaking in many ways.

What is composing?

In this evaluation report, it seems reasonable to ask the question of a composing project involving a variety of stakeholders “what is composing”? This question was certainly very much to the fore in the minds of some of the participating pupils. One way in which this could be seen to be manifested was in the use of what has come to be known as ‘workshopping’. We know from work done by BCMG, Sound and Music, and others, that what has come to be known as ‘workshopping’ is an established practice (Laycock, 2005 p.90 et seq) for the production of new music. Evaluation questions which might usefully be posed here include:

- How does workshopping become composing?
- Is external agency required for this to happen?
 - If so, what, when and by whom?
- What is it reasonable for novice instrumentalists to be expected to know about new music making?

- What is it reasonable for novice instrumentalists to be expected to know about the conditions and mores of what can be termed contemporary classical music?
- How much ‘unpacking’ does new music need before pupils (and teachers?) can take full ownership of their work?

From an evaluative perspective it seems that these are important questions, and ones which would benefit from addressing in some ways in future work.

Negative issue from the evaluation process

The main issue which arose from the evaluation was a discussion concerning the nature of composing. In essence this can be distilled to asking this question:

- What are the differences between ‘workshopping’ and composing?

Workshopping as a music generation methodology is well understood by the community of practice which utilise it. It may be less well understood by those outside this community. This is one negative amongst many positives, but it is worthy of consideration, as it stands out so. Here is what one of the ensemble leaders said:

Time to refine compositions would have been good – to work on one piece and develop it over time.

This gets to the heart of the matter between workshopping and composing. If we take composing to be a process which involves revision and elaboration, the time is needed for ideas to be worked on. The project report for “Listen Imagine Compose” (Fautley, 2014) goes into some detail regarding this, in this evaluation it is worth pointing out that in this Imagine Compose project the methodology of longitudinal composing was not always clear. This was, however, by no means a generality in the IC project.

Positive aspects from the evaluation process

Having sounded a negative note in the previous section, it is worth pointing out that there were a great many positive aspects of Imagine Compose that emerged during the course of the project.

These include children and young people having:

- Heightened awareness of creative aspects of music making, not solely focussing on re-creation of extant works
- Exploration of personal instrumental techniques
- Thinking about music, learning things for a purpose rather than because they are in a tutor book
- Engagement with new forms of notation

- Meeting positive role models (other than their instrumental service teachers) engaged with process of creating new music
- Taking responsibility and ownership for their own music-making
- Performing in public works which have never been heard before, and which were created specifically for the young people in the project
- Explored playing in different ways from the norm

Each of these are explored in different ways as this report unfolds, but it is worth stating upfront that the positive aspects far outweigh the negative, and that, as has been seen, this work was ground-breaking in many ways.

6. Impact on pupils

The impact on the pupils of Imagine Compose has been significant. Here are some themes which emerged from interviews with ensemble leaders.

Confidence and Social Skills

A very common theme was the development of individual confidence:

Their engagement and confidence has increased significantly

This is a large group – individual confidence has developed

*Impact on the students - Confidence - more willing to play on their own.
They all got time to play individually which is rare in an ensemble.*

This is a significant finding from this work, in that it seems that engaging with creative music making and composing has had a significant spin-off in terms of individual instrumental and personal traits as a result.

Related to this, and commented on by one ensemble leader, was that the IC work had helped with individual attitudinal development too:

One particular student – this had a big impact – they are disruptive, disengaged and difficult to keep on task normally. During a particular session involving discussion in small groups he fully committed and contributed more positively – attitude changed even when working on traditional music. This definitely links to the Imagine Compose work.

In a similar vein, another ensemble leader noted that IC had

...engaged students who are often more difficult.

Whilst another saw that there was

...increased engagement in students, they enjoy the freedom of a composition type task, and not being told to do a specific thing.

In other areas, social skills were more generally mentioned:

The Imagine Compose work developed their [the pupils] language skills - this school has a high mixture of students from different backgrounds, with many Muslim and EAL children. Students had to think about descriptive words and describe their intentions. This was developed due to the project.

Social skills developed – they respect each other and give each other time to play. Working in groups and making decisions.

All of this is interesting, bearing in mind that these were pre-existing ensemble, not ones which has been created specially for this project work. Social skills which were developed were seen as being transferable:

These skills transferred to other areas when working in a more traditional way, as was commitment.

It was not only social and other ‘soft’ skills that were developed by this project though, there were specific benefits noted for musical learning and development too.

Musical learning development

There were considerable musical learning skills which were developed by the Imagine Compose project.

One area which was mentioned was that of staff notation, and its use, or moving away from it:

Students moving away from traditional notation helped stimulate their imagination

Most music they play is arranged with crotchets, minims etc. Asked to compose rhythmic ideas, some included syncopations spontaneously. If syncopation was written down in an arrangement they would not be able to play it

Class of saxophone students struggled with reading the ledger lines. Gave them a task to only compose music using ledger lines. Improved their learning and technique. Composing with a specific aim to improve technique, not just ‘creativity’.

Related to this, composing was seen to be

A way of introducing more complex ideas. The composing unlocks unconscious musical ideas that they have in their head.

Again, this is interesting. There has long been the philosophy in music education that there should be “sound before symbol” (e.g. Odam, 1995; Swanwick, 1999), and these findings underscore that. The syncopation issue also shows us that young people are capable of far more than we might give the credit for sometimes. After all, they are surrounded by syncopation in the music they listen to, so it seems entirely reasonable that they would include it in their own pieces. Complexity was also commented on:

Students can develop more complex ideas or techniques

Aspects of structure were also remarked on as developed by the IC work:

Musically, a knowledge of putting together pieces. How to start pieces. How music works. Moved them on more in this way.

Exploration was also important:

Instruments can be explored in different ways. Response of the bow – more used to the feel of it...Unconventional uses – not see as ‘wrong now’

As was instrumental technique:

Clarinet student was struggling with wide intervals, got them composing with leaps and wide intervals. Can develop these skills.

Pupil Case-Studies

In addition to the outcomes noted above, a number of session-specific case-study observations were undertaken, tracking the actual activities of named pupils. The pupils have been renamed so as to anonymise them for the purposes of this research. Methodologically, there are slight differences in the ways in which the was undertaken for each group. This is because the shadow composers (SC) were tasked by the lead researcher with observing two named pupils for two sessions, the SCs then negotiated how they would go about this in ways that would work for them their context, and the young people they were observing. One SC decided to use a to use a tracked time-chart and record against it what pupils were doing during the course of a session. Other SCs adopted a more free-form observation schedule. There are clear benefits and limitations in all these methods (Cohen et al., 2007). What was felt to be important here was that the SCs should be comfortable with what they were doing. This work had the subsidiary benefit in that it required the SCs to really focus their attention in on individual pupils, rather than seeing the group as a potentially amorphous mass!

Two pupils at a time were tracked in this way, and the results give a fascinating insight into what was actually taking place, and what they were doing throughout IC sessions. They are reproduced in their entirety here, and afford a window into the differing ontological perspectives at play in each session.

Firstly, the observations using time-tracking are presented.

In the first column the minutes of the session are marked, the second shows whether Individual (I) Small Group (SG) or Whole Group (WG) activity taking place. The third and fourth columns are for the individual pupils.

Case Study 1: Wendy and Elaine I

Minutes	Group Setting	Pupil: Wendy	Pupil: Elaine
1	WG	Talk about BCMG. BCMG Musician talks about the cello.	<<<
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8		4 beat pattern copying exercise	
9			
10		Wendy didn't grasp exactly what to do and didn't get the pulse straight away. Initially she 'spilled over' into the next set of phrases. Adding rests and long notes into the pattern -> got rests and waited in the rests.	
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17		Discussion about what was happening in the 4 beat pattern.	
18			
19			
20		No hands up or reaction to Liz's questions.	
21			
22		Riff Circle Exercise	
23		Adults model	
24			
25		In discussion about riff circle – Wendy grasped how the patterns stayed the same	
26			
27			
28			
29	WG		
30			

31		Just played one long note through the whole thing	Played an open string repeating pattern but again didn't seem totally convinced of herself within the group – facial expressions/body language and the way she is playing.
32			
33			
34	I		
35		Think or your own four beat pattern.	
36		Wendy looked really confused about the task she was set (she was sat on her own and didn't discuss with anyone about the task), I went over to talk to her about what she was supposed to be doing and it took a lot of convincing and coaxing to get her to even begin to play to work something out.	Elaine discussed with her friend about the task and began to work out her own individual pattern. When asked if it was four beats long she couldn't tell. When aided with beat counting and playing along she realised that her pattern was four beats long.
37			
38			
39			
40			
41			
42	WG		
43			Plays pattern exactly back in the sharing.
44			
45			
46			
47		Liz selects three pupils patterns. BREAK	<<<
48			
49			
50			
51			
52	SG		
53		Learns riff of Elaine. Has a less defined idea of getting louder.	Elaine works out the chosen rhythm devised by another pupil and teaches rest of group.
54		Catherine gives two bars after passing round idea.	Has passing round and splitting in half ideas.
55		Structure of piece to include whole groups other idea suggested by Liz	
56	WG	Plays in group successfully and comes in and out at the right time.	Plays in group successfully and comes in and out at the right time.
57			
58			
59			
60		Seems to be aware of how the three group ideas are fitting in.	Seems to be aware of how the three group ideas are fitting in.

Case Study 2: Wendy and Elaine II

Minutes	Group Setting	Pupil: Wendy	Pupil: Elaine
1	WG	Circle Game of passing note round the room.	<<<
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8		Asked to make up own sound.	<<<
9		Practices own sound but doesn't offer it up to be shared with the group.	Practices own sound but doesn't offer it up to be shared with the group.
10			Doesn't seem to be paying much attention to the warm up beginning activity.
11			
12		Other pupil shares his sound.	
13		Follows sound round the room.	
14			
15		Doesn't copy pupils long down bow sound correctly – uses up bow instead of down bow.	
16			
17		When asked a second time – doesn't share her sound.	
18			
19		Liz introduces cross the circle game – adults model playing what Liz does.	Begins to pay more attention and engage with what is going on.
20			Seems more timid in reaction than Wendy but follows Liz and peers movements with her playing. Doesn't volunteer to go in circle.
21		Laughter initially but understands and get the concept. Volunteers to go in circle but isn't chosen. Lots of smiles.	
22			
23			
24			
25			
26		BREAK	<<<
27			
28			
29			
30			

31			
32			
33			
34			
35			
36	WG	Back in whole group two young people do movement activity in the circle.	Seems more concentrated on the activity – comes up with trill idea to emulate panting.
37		Lots of giggling.	
38			
39			
40	SG	Create a piece using a movement word. W&E in same group – chooses 'Slithering and Teetering'.	Seems distracted initially and just plays along – doesn't offer up an idea until the group gets to deciding how to end. Lets the group wash over her and joins in throughout the playing.
41			
42			
43			
44		Mirrors harps harmonic glisses. In group gets picked to lead – this was really interesting she didn't seem aware that she was the leader and wasn't aware of how to do so once she realised she was the leader.	
45			
46			
47			
48			
49			
50			
51			
52			
53			
54			
55		Plays successfully as a leader in the sharing with the whole group – needs a lot of encouragement to lead.	Plays successfully as a lead in the sharing with the whole group.
56			
57			
58			
59			
60			

Now, the case study notes from one of the free-form observers.

Case Study 3: Miriam and Danielle

Session 1 – Building Layers

During this session I identify the two pupils I would be observing: Miriam and Danielle. Miriam – Her rhythm is chosen to be used for their group. Initially she struggles to remember it. When the group move to a different room Miriam keeps her rhythm going with other rhythms onto of it. When sharing the groups work she leads her group. When asked how each small groups piece could fit together to make a larger piece she suggested the groups overlapping over the top of one another and having a big build up towards the end. Danielle – There are two very dominant girls with lots of ideas in Danielle's group so she doesn't offer up any ideas or get a chance to share her own. There is a lot of discussion and although she seems to be on the edge of it and a little distracted she seems involved.

Session 3 – Conducting Signals

Miriam – In initial discussion she identifies that she has done composing before. In a whole group activity with a peer leading Miriam still looks to follow Liz. Throughout this session Miriam is engaged but on the periphery. She doesn't volunteer but follows her leaders once she has got used to following a peer. Danielle – Arrived late to the session but picks up the activity quickly. During a chops conducting exercise (directing a whole group with a chop action to play short sharp stabs) Danielle confidently directs the chops and it is evident that she is carefully considering their placement. When conducting Danielle looks at the floor and doesn't react until Liz suggested for her to do so. Even after Liz's suggestion she is still absorbed with the sound of the group she is controlling. In a larger group conducting activity Danielle follows Liz's signs however she struggles to differentiate the type of thing she is playing to match the gestures. During the whole group sharing Danielle is obviously pulling apart how the music is fitting together. So her musical instrument ability is not holding back her compositional ability as even though in larger group playing activities her playing isn't reflective of the activity.

Session 4 – Visual Stimulus

Miriam is away on a residential this week.

Danielle – This was a very small group (less than 20 pupils) and I think Danielle really benefited from this smaller scale session. She is involved a lot in the discussion about using a picture and is often reluctant to demonstrate with her instrument and prefers to direct a peer or teacher. When conducting the class she again 'plays the group' for a long period of time and it is clear she's not sure how to end, when prompted she stops and thinks for a moment and uses the same stop signal she used in the previous session. In a group layering exercise after suggesting a compositional idea of 'using yellow colours to be bright and happy' Liz directs the group and Danielle begins with her idea but as the music build ups and gets more layered she struggled to

lock in her playing with everyone else. She is still obviously listening and interacting with it internally. Later in the session she has a really clear structural plan for her groups piece and suggests that it is the repetition of material that makes it a piece.

Summary

Danielle is an older violinist in the area orchestra. When I first observed Danielle the group was very large and often her ideas and thoughts would get lost in larger group sessions, even when the group was split into smaller groups of 5 or 6 she seemed to not feel able to express her ideas. Later on in the year the orchestra suffered a huge decline in numbers, the group roughly quartered in size, leading to Danielle becoming a more dynamic member of the group. She often has compositional ideas beyond her instrumental ability. The sessions where the groups were much smaller had a positive impact in Danielle's level of engagement and input and she appeared to feel much more confident with this.

I feel unable to write a detailed description about Miriam.

The fact that this observer is unable to comment in detail on one of the case-study pupils due to attendance issue shows the difficulties of undertaking this sort of work, but what does emerge is a fascinating study of participation.

Finally in this section, two case-studies of pupils written again in a free-form fashion.

Case Study 4: Participant A

Participant A is a male saxophonist who has been learning for under a year, who has limited technical ability.

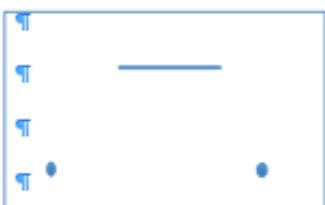
Session 1 – Composing using Movement

The first activity of this session involved a participant making a movement within the circle and the other participants copied the gesture in sound on their instruments. Participant A was not afraid to try out his ideas in front of the rest of the group, however his attempt had poor resemblance in sound to the movement. This was due to his limited technical ability i.e. he had an idea which he expressed in words, but when he tried to play it, he just blew the same note a few times.

Session 2 – Composing for a Professional

The workshop began with an introduction to the Bass Clarinet, which held the whole group's attention and they engaged with questions. After playing a copying game, where much of the copying was relatively accurate, the participants were asked to draw graphic representations of musical gestures

performed by adults in the room. Participant A was happy to be involved although his representations were quite simplistic – for example:
Short low sound – silence – high long sound – silence – short low sound:



My representation



Participant A's representation

The participant was able to show the pitch aspect of the gesture but not the other detail such as silence and duration.

Next the participants were asked to compose their own gesture or pattern on their instrument. Participant A created:



Teacher selected gestures from individuals who then went into small groups to decide how to play them. Participant A was happy to share his ideas, even when through discussion his ideas may not have been selected. He tried out his ideas on his instrument and played them to the other participants. When asked at the end of the session, Participant A didn't think he had composed during the session although he had actually made lots of compositional decisions. The workshop leader pointed out to the group that this decision making is actually composing.

Session 3 – Composing Using a Familiar Tune

At the start, the group was asked whether they'd done any composing outside of ensemble and Participant A said he had been composing at home using patterns e.g. high low high high low. Participant A was very engaged and able to be more vocal, making suggestions for which familiar tune to use. This workshop began with all the participants joining in to play a well known tune – in this case Feed the World. If the tune was too difficult, parts were modified to make it accessible to all. This happened with Participant A who was unable to play all of it. He was assisted to choose a certain section which has could then repeat. Participants all ended up with their own ideas of various modifications to make to the melody and then in pairs they worked out how to put these together. Participant A and his partner worked out playing it in turns worked very musically. As a whole group, ways of orchestrating the ideas were discussed. Participant A was keen to input his ideas, one of which was taken on by the group. This was a very musical idea of a sequence of trills. Although he did not use that vocabulary his idea was specific and he was able to

describe it and then see it tried out, although personally he found it difficult to achieve what he wanted.

Session 4 – Musical Inspiration

The first activity was ‘Copy my Mood’ where participants had to copy a mood that one of the adults conveyed on their instrument. Participant A was not confident in offering suggestions, until the participants were given 2 minutes to work something out on their own. He needed space to work on something privately. Participant A wasn’t so engaged during this session. He had to leave half-way through which may have acted as a distraction during the first half.

Case Study 5: Participant H

Basic profile data:

- a. Gender: Female
- b. Age: 10/11
- c. Ethnicity: White British

At the beginning of the project, Participant H had already been attending her local area ensemble for a year. The ensemble is made up of a mixed instrumentation of strings, woodwind and brass, although with a larger brass attendance than the other sections. The ability levels of the young musicians vary between those just starting and those who have been learning for a couple of years. The ensemble rehearses after school at a local primary school from where most of the young musicians are drawn, with the remaining participants travelling from other schools in the area.

Participant H plays trumpet and is one of the more advanced performers in the ensemble. She is outgoing and engaged and seemed to relish the opportunity to contribute to the sessions. She likes making new music, seeing different instruments and playing extra things outside lessons. The first session was based on movements. Participant H jumped at the chance to show off movements and have other people copy her on their instruments. She used varied and expressive movements around the space. She was keen and enthusiastic and this encouraged everyone to have a go at trying something. She copied other people’s gestures on her own instrument with good accuracy and when describing her ideas she was confident although not quite able to perform them due to her own technical limitations. This was a feature across the ensemble, where many imaginative ideas were conceived, but technical limitations inhibited the realisation of the ideas. Participant H noticed that one of the gestures played sounded like the Jaws theme which shows she was listening and making connections, and proposed ideas without much input from adults.

In one of the later sessions there was not quite enough time to complete a group activity. Participant H had engaged fully with the activity but the group didn’t finish their ideas. They struggled to agree on an idea but eventually did decide on something. They then were worried that they hadn’t practiced it.

They wrote and defined their ideas but had no time to actually try out the ideas. When it came to sharing back with the whole group they used the basic idea and then improvised the rest. Interestingly, despite worrying about this, the group performed with confidence and obvious enjoyment.

Participant H told us what she liked about the *Imagine Compose* sessions was that ‘you get to play music/compose music with other instruments, not your own make [type].’ That she enjoyed this was apparent in the sessions, particularly in small group work where she was actively engaged in suggesting ideas to other participants and getting them to try out ideas on their instruments.

Outcomes:

- The project has given her skills and confidence to compose on her own in between sessions and outside of lessons.
- By the end of the project she showed us that she not only knew what composing or improvising was but that she sees herself as a composer. When asked what a composer was she said it is someone who ‘makes music, has some ideas and is creative. Go with the flow!’
- Participant H now sees composing as part of her development as a musician rather than something other people do.
- It is evident that without this project, Participant H would not have developed this avenue of musicianship to the same extent.

Conclusion to pupil case-studies

The work done by the shadow composers in presenting these pupil case-studies adds considerably to our understandings of what was going on at a variety of stages and across a range of the projects. It is rich ethnographic lived data which reveals a great deal of close observation material.

7. Impact on ensemble leaders

As was observed above, ensemble leaders were offered anonymity, and so the material in this session has been anonymised. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the comments reported throw considerable light on aspects of Imagine Compose. All of the ensemble leaders were interviewed using a semi-structured interview technique, where the same root questions were asked of each, but the interviewer had the option of following up with supplementary questions should they feel it appropriate.

One of the common observations was that the Imagine Compose work developed and extended the thinking of the ensemble leaders.

Got me out of my comfort-zones! I would now use composing in a large ensemble situation. Not just seeing it a hour 'rehearsal'.

I use some of the introductory/beginner composing games (e.g. one note) – very useful in difficult situations (students forget their music, mixed abilities etc.). [I] think this could be the biggest legacy; gives teachers tools to take into everyday work.

I'm completely re-examining how instrumental teachings works. Should composition play a much larger part in the education of young musicians? Can composing become central?

The project made me consider composing in instrumental teaching more fully.

I learned strategies and adapted them; general principals and starting points, tools and confidence.

Some tutors had tried some of the tasks in both class tuition and wider opportunities saying it was good at the beginning of a term as it was a good way at getting pupils back to work. In a year 4 wider opportunities class the teacher used the whiteboards in groups of four to compose four ideas to put together. The teachers said how they had already been using some exercises (e.g. 'don't clap that one back') but it was good to know they were doing the 'right thing' already. Although they already include composing tasks in small group tuition, one teacher said pupils compose more and s/he now allows more freedom for students, and is more 'hands off' in terms of teaching skills.

Another area which was commented upon was the notion of planned learning. For example:

Predictable learning and non-predictable learning; I often had to add to the learning objectives after the sessions as they learnt things we weren't expecting.

The ensemble leaders were also very positive about the project as a whole, and many commented on how they had enjoyed observing and the creative energy of the sessions.

When asked about the project highlights for them, ensemble leaders had a range of responses:

The best bits have been in delivering strategies for working with a group of players without notation. It has bolstered engagement, listening, watching, following directions from a conductor. This has given me a lot of strategies to use with children in the early stages of learning an instrument.

Seeing the engagement of pupils. Seeing pupils taking responsibility for their music making in a meaningful way. Seeing that pupils are really engaged in listening, discussing ideas and making musical decisions. Seeing an increased level of commitment and musicianship in their music-making generally. In composition work, improvising and playing from notation. Seeing pupils recognising composition work as a natural part of their ensemble experience.

The children discovering that they can use their instruments in a creative way and as a collective group; Watching their enjoyment whilst discovering new sounds; watching the pupils be inspired by the BCMG musicians; seeing the pupils enjoy conducting the ensemble, making decisions about the content and final piece.

They have engaged more fully with their instrument - exploring it imaginatively to make sounds. I could clearly see them wanting to play these sounds with intent.

8. The shadow composers and their role²

The Imagine Compose project took the shadow composers and music service teachers out of their comfort zones and created a space for them to learn from each other. There were a number of challenging aspects to the collaboration, and one of the most commonly discussed issues that concerned composers in the Imagine Compose project was the idea of ‘compromise’. A number of questions were raised such as: ‘What is the role of the composers?’ ‘Is it purely to produce a functional product that ‘works’ for the students?’ ‘Will the piece of music produced for the young musicians still resemble the composers’ style?’

The composers were all aware that they would be required to alter their usual composing process due to the students’ limited instrumental techniques and, for some, their lack of ability to read standard musical staff notation. The question: *‘How do you convey information in a succinct and effective way?’* (Liz Johnson) was important to all composers as they could not rely on producing a conventional musical score. The traditional composing process, of composing the music away from the ensemble and returning with a score for the ensemble to rehearse, was not necessarily considered as being the most appropriate *modus operandi*:

...the working model of the practice of the composer has for a long time been that of someone writing things down. There is a modern notion that the very best practice of composing is in isolation and in silence, committing to paper what is heard within the head. (Odum, 1995 p.43)

The composers attended a number of workshops to get to know their allotted ensembles, and developed the piece alongside the students, responding to their need and ability. A lot of the music was not composed ‘in isolation’, but was undertaken actively with the young musicians. As many students could not read staff notation alternative methods of conveying a musical idea had to be explored in a way that:

‘...children could access [the music] easily, teachers as well’
(Liz Johnson).

Some of the notational methods were quite exploratory and new to both teachers and students. Workshop leader, Liz Johnson commented on how some of the teachers ‘...literally just had a panic attack’ in response to viewing the score for the first time. The final scores for the ensembles showed a variety of different approaches to notation each having advantages and disadvantages. Different approaches to composing for non-professionals have been categorized by David Bedford. The scores produced in the ‘Imagine Compose’ project are categorised in this report with relation to the ‘Bedford Categories’:

² This section has largely been authored by Kirsty Devaney, one of the shadow composers, but also working as research assistant on this project. She has adopted an ethnographic, and at times autoethnographic approach. Hence her writing about her own work is done in the first person.

Table 1: Bedford Categories

- BC1. Interpretation of a fully written score.
- BC2. Score containing opportunities for improvisation
- BC3. Written score which includes creative ‘windows.’
- BC4. Material generated in workshops (composer provides framework)
- BC5. Fully creative project (all aspects devised within the group)

(Laycock, 2005 p.138)

The composers had to provide a careful balance between acknowledging the performance capabilities of the young musicians, whilst at the same time exploring areas of music that interested themselves as composers. Conductor Howard Jones described this concern as ‘walking a tightrope between the composers’ intentions and the performers’ capabilities’ (CoMA.org). Howard Skempton comments on the balance between considering the needs of the musicians one is working with, whilst keeping one’s own interests as a composer alive:

You're mindful of what would be a useful exercise for them but I don't think that's the answer, that's my feeling and of course an awful lot of pieces for teaching are to do with developing skills and not to do with providing something that is musically rewarding and imaginative... I would always want to produce something...that would be interesting for me as a composer to listen to. (Skempton 2014: Personal Interview)

‘Compromise’ and ‘boundaries’ are concerns that all composers consider in all types of commissions, however when working with non-professional musicians there is perhaps a stronger emphasis on purpose and the need of the work. The word ‘job’ is used frequently when talking about commissions and new works for non-professionals, compared to standard commissions for professionals:

It's still my job to provide the performers with all the information they need to prepare and perform the music that I have conceived (Howard Jones, CoMA.org)

...the first job of any composer writing for them (amateur musicians) is to make them sound as confident and as good as possible at all times' (www.CoMA.org)

‘I felt like this this was more of a job’ (Jeremy Clay)

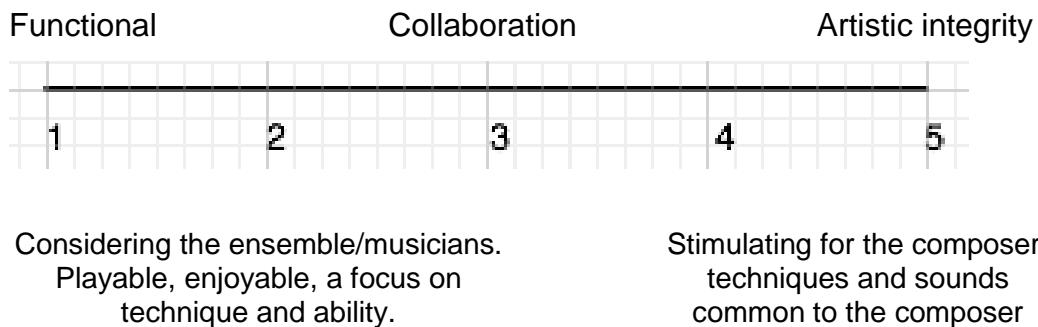
‘I have a responsibility as a composer to produce music for these people – that’s what a composer does. There is a real need to provide music’ (Skempton 2014, Personal Interview)

The word ‘job’ implies a focus on the functionality and requirements of the piece, rather than the artistic aspects. This is perhaps why the issues concerning ‘compromise’ are more prominent when composing for non-professional musicians. However composer Howard Skempton commented that:

Compromise is not part of my thinking. I think you've got to be practical. It's a question of turning things to your advantage, you don't compromise. (Skempton 2014, Personal Interview).

The composers on the project had varying opinions on how they viewed their own role in the project and how they viewed the idea of 'compromise'. The two main views can be represented as a spectrum that ranges from composers who focussed purely on composing a functional piece for the ensemble, to those who concentrated purely on considering their own composing interests, with those in the true spirit of true collaboration finding a balance between both aspects. Each piece by the composers on the Imagine Compose project will be placed on this 'consideration spectrum' (see fig. 2), designed specifically for this research analysis, alongside the Bedford Categories delineated above.

Figure 1: Spectrum of consideration for composing



By combining the consideration spectrum as the x-axis of a graph, and using the Bedford categories already described as the y-axis, we can place each of the pieces created by the shadow composers into one of four quadrants, enabling discussion and analysis of each to take place.

Piece 1: Waves – Ruta Vitkauskaite

Ruta spoke about how she had concerns about her musicians' abilities, and that she had an element of compromise in terms of notation in the young people being able to overcome certain issues in terms of technical ability and ability to read notation:

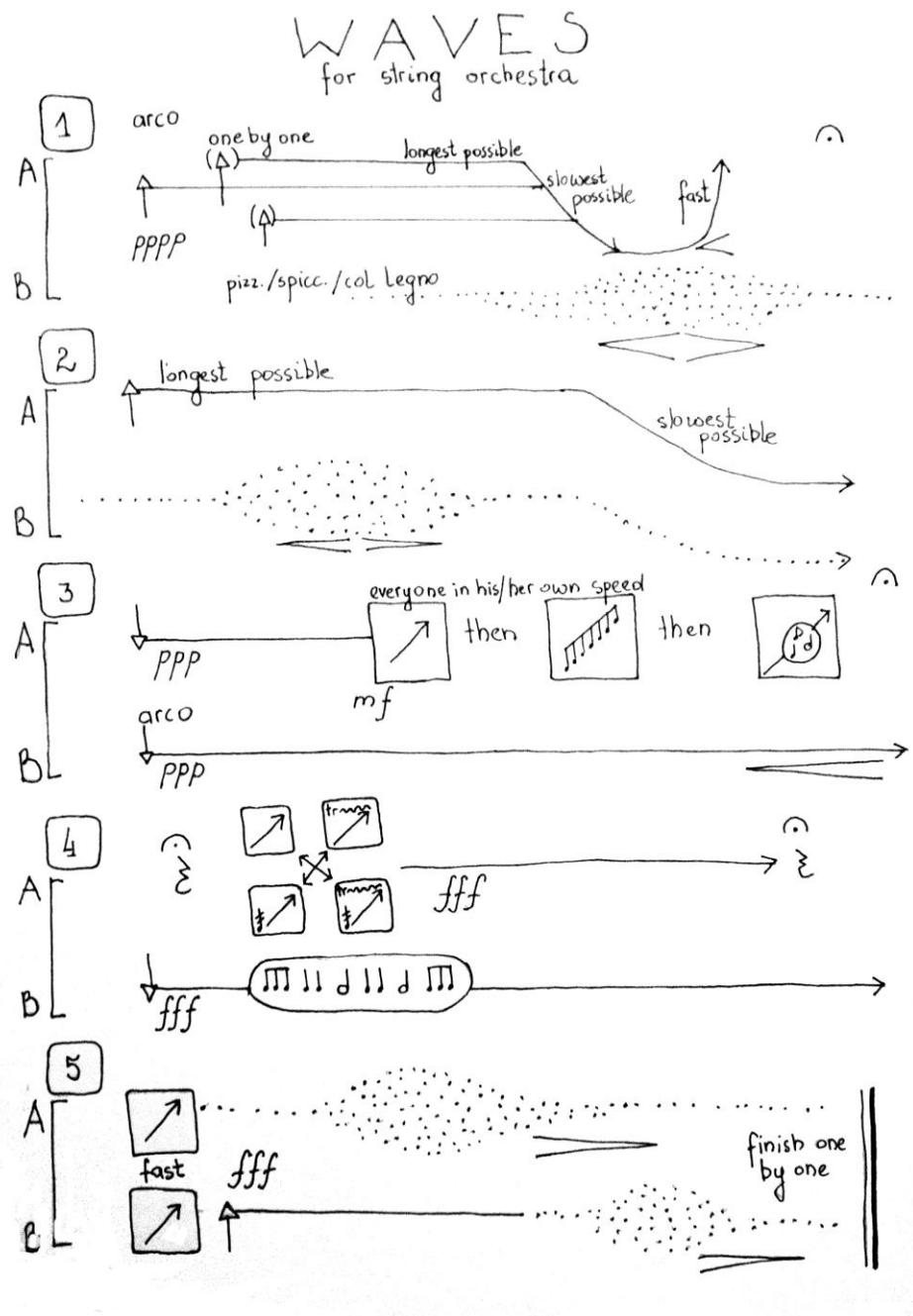
...how big of a compromise I have to do because with amateurs you need to compromise because they might not be able to play something. (Ruta Vitkauskaite).

However, sonically she felt the music reflected her style and interests as a composer as a result of using graphic notation:

...I would like to write something quite experimental and something I can enjoy listening to as a composer...I will probably have to compromise because when it comes to music notation, I will just have to lose something...it actually does sound like my music, quite a lot.

Ruta found that in order to create the sound that she wanted, she had to 'compromise' in notation by using graphical notation and text (see score 1).

Score 1: 'Waves' score by Ruta Vitkauskaite.



Ruta explained that her decision to create a graphic score was as a result of a number of exploratory workshops with the ensemble. Without this close collaboration at the start of the composing process she says the piece would have been 'almost impossible' and she would have avoided graphic notation. Her main concern with using graphic notation was that the teachers may have viewed the music as 'random' or may think it had been rushed: '*I was really working for months on it.*' In the 1970's many composers, notably John Paynter, used graphic scores in the classroom (Paynter, 1972; Paynter & Aston, 1970). Although using graphic notation in the classroom was described

by Laycock (2005) as “revolutionary and liberating” he argues that adopting it “encouraged the lazy presumption that the disciplines of music are no longer necessary or relevant” (p.139). Ruta’s worries about this negative perception of graphic scores could have stemmed from this.

The collaborative process was a major part of Ruta’s approach to the score. She describes how she was:

...not focused on the result but on the process, which was part of my score.

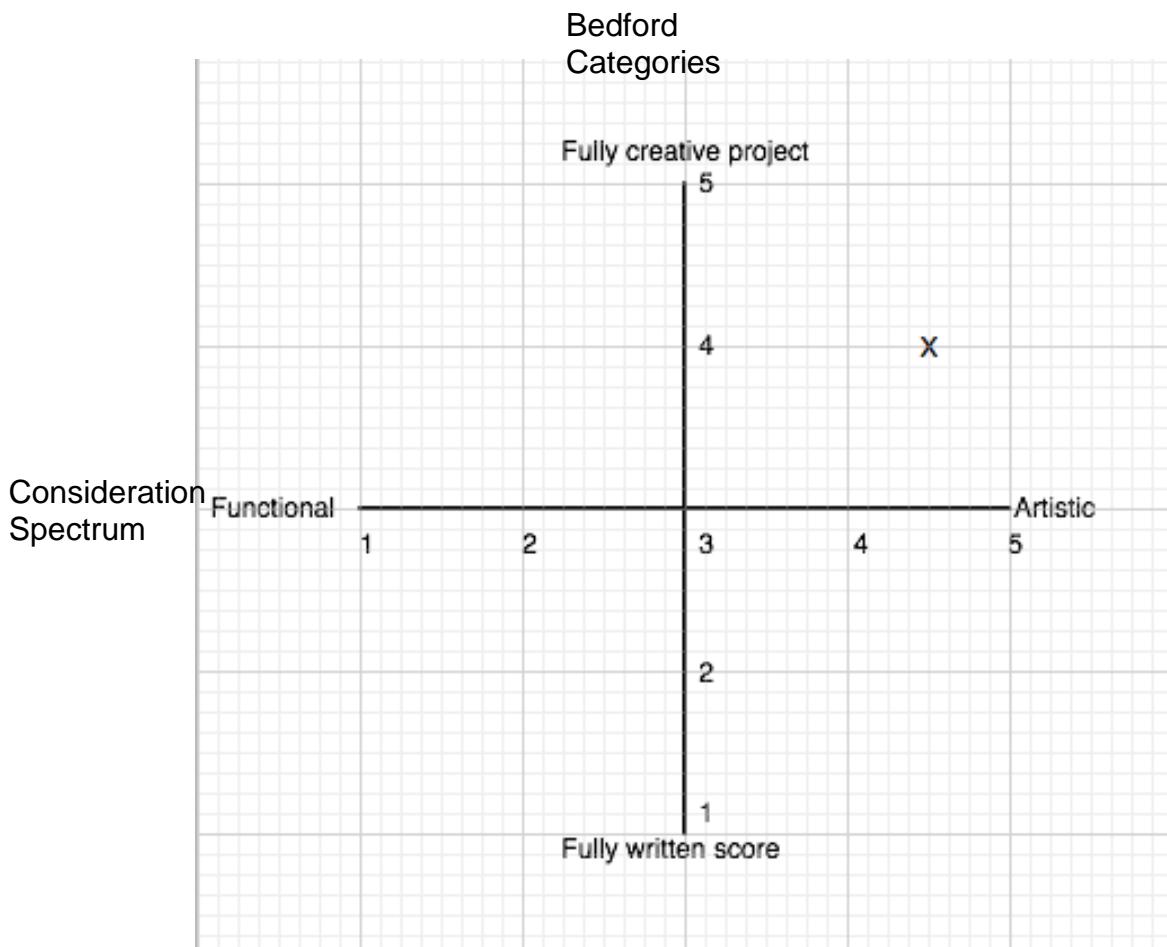
Focusing on the process rather than the product was ‘*something new*’ to the composer. A lot of material was explored in workshops prior to the finished score and using the Bedford Categories her approach to composing ‘Waves’ would fit into BC4 (‘Material generated in workshops - composer provides framework’).

Ruta felt that the piece she composed for the group reflected her own compositional style. However although the ensemble tutor was positive about the score, the tutor was not convinced that the piece would aid her students’ progression musically or technically due to the use of extended techniques:

...there is nothing more satisfying than making a beautiful sound on a stringed instrument, which her piece has involved, different sounds from what you would call lovely ones... (Ensemble Tutor).

Playing the instrument conventionally was still given priority. With these aspects in mind, ‘Waves’ would be placed to the right of the considerations spectrum (see fig. 4):

Figure 2: ‘Waves’ by Ruta Vitkauskaite on the considerations spectrum



Piece 2: Bee Waltz – Jeremy Clay

In contrast to Ruta, Jeremy viewed his composing experience differently in that he:

...felt conceptually something that my brain would normally think about...but sonically I wouldn't have written something that sounded like that for a professional ensemble...I don't think mine did [sound like me].

Jeremy said that he felt: ‘*like this was more of a job*’ and focused more towards the functionality of the piece rather than his own artistic interests.

His score used a combination of graphical elements alongside more standard notation for his work ‘Bee Waltz’. The graphical element indicated the pitch for ‘guided-improvisation’ and the conventional notation indicated chords and rhythm (see score 2).

Score 2: 'Bee Waltz' score by Jeremy Clay

2 1st time: Accompaniment only
 2nd time: Bee solos, small group accompanies

D Follow Conductor B $J=120$

Bee solos

Follow Conductor A

High: D A F D A F E B G E B G C A E C A E C G# D C G# D

Low: f 1st time, p 2nd time

Follow Conductor A

Low: f 1st time, p 2nd time

E

Bee solos

High: C G# F C G# F C G# F B G# E B G# E D A F D A F E B G

Low: p. p. d. d. p. p. d.

F

Bee solos

High: E B G C A E C A E C G# D C G# D C G# F C G# F C G# F

Low: d. d. p. p. d. d. p. p.

G Follow conductor

Bee solos

High: B G# E B G# E D A F D A F E B G E B G

Low: p. d. p. p. p. p.

One of the main challenges Jeremy faced was that the instrumentation in his group changed dramatically over the two years. His solution to this challenge was to use 'flexible scoring' to ensure that the music could be performed by any combination of instruments. Although this method solved some issues it also caused one main problem:

I found that quite difficult working out how things were going to balance and hearing it in my head was a bit more tricky...the audible 'surface' of the music is so unpredictable. (Jeremy Clay)

Another issue with using ‘flexible scoring’ for beginner musicians is that every instrument has different notes that are easier to play, for example an E on the violin is relatively easy due to it being an open string, whereas an E on the flute requires more training. Jeremy successfully avoided creating a problem with this by including optional notes so that the young musicians could choose the notes they were comfortable with playing.

Jeremy discussed how at the beginning of the project his ensemble leaders did not feel comfortable suggesting changes to the score:

I don't know whether that was because they were worried that I wouldn't be happy with what they were doing to my piece or whether if they made changes to it, it would ruin it (Jeremy).

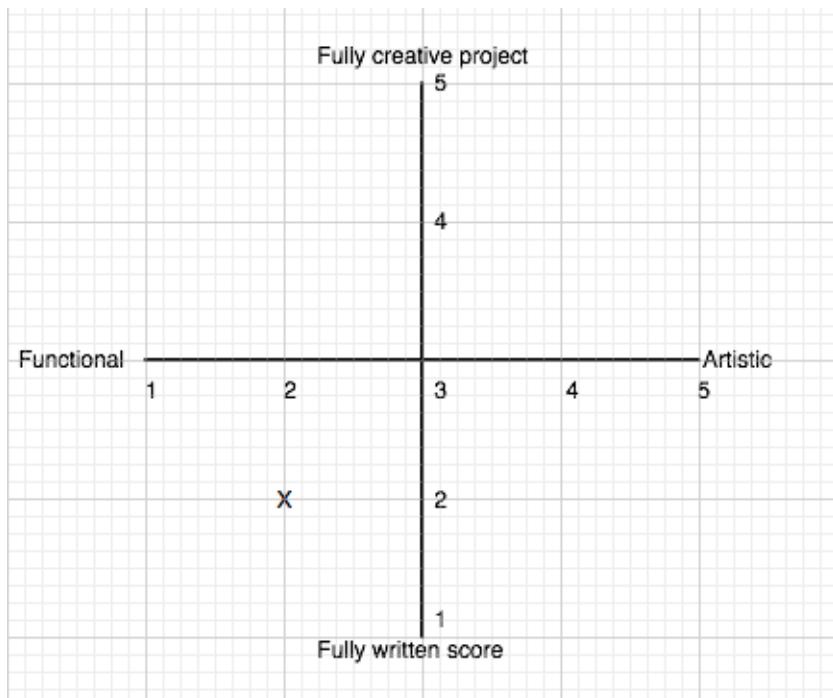
Establishing the roles and boundaries of the collaboration, along with trust, took time. Jeremy explained that he encouraged the tutors to give feedback on the piece, however it took a long time for the ensemble leaders to communicate openly with him:

It helped that the teachers did get on board with it and rehearsed it...but it took more sort of cajoling than I'd anticipated...Eventually when they did get it, that was fine and they sort of took ownership of it...when they got on board with it they were able to get the best out of the children and ensemble, once they got to treating it like it was one of their normal pieces, I think that changed things when it just got to be a piece that they rehearsed, rather than this ‘other thing’ that they had to do. (Jeremy Clay)

Once the ensemble leaders had the trust and confidence to communicate with the composer they could help the development of the piece. The moment the ensemble took ‘ownership’ of the piece, and treated it as another work in the repertoire collaboration was more successful.

‘Bee Waltz’ is a good example of BC2 ‘Score containing opportunities for improvisation’ from the Bedford Categories. Jeremy considered the practicalities of the piece in detail and admitted that the brief for the project did lead the composing process more than his own interests of a composer. Moreover, Jeremy explained how he wanted to make a piece that was effective for the ensemble, which the young musicians enjoyed, rather than music that represented him as a composer. For this reason ‘Bee Waltz’ can be placed towards the left of the considerations spectrum (see fig. 5).

Figure 3: ‘Bee Waltz’ by Jeremy Clay on the considerations spectrum



Piece 3: Travelling Music – Kirsty Devaney

I felt, as a composer on the project, that my role and view of the composition brief changed over the 2 years. At the beginning of the project the brief and functionality of the work took priority, as a result the piece was playable by the musicians but did not include my own musical interests as a composer. The second draft of the work focused much more on my own compositional style but it was too complex for the musicians to perform. Finally, as we worked together on the piece, I found that the piece started to reflect both my own interests and was performable by the ensemble. I found that I did compromise some of my usual composing interests to ensure the piece could be performed:

‘...the final piece is in 4 distinct sections. A lot of my music for professionals does not use clear-cut sections, but instead grows and develops gradually. I chose to go with the 4 short sections, as it was easier for the student’s to grasp and memorise what they had to do in each section.’ (Kirsty Devaney, personal reflection diary)

My own score ‘Travelling Music’ (see score 3) used a combination of text, symbols, standard notation and repetition of musical ‘cells’. I found the repetitive nature of the cells very effective.

Score 3: 'Travelling Music' score by Kirsty Devaney

The score consists of four staves, one for each instrument: Flute, Violin, Guitar, and Cello. The Flute staff shows a sequence of eighth-note patterns. The Violin staff includes two measures of eighth notes followed by a measure with a grace note and a trill. The Guitar staff has two measures of eighth notes with a 'Repeat notes ad lib. leave lot of silence' instruction above them. The Cello staff shows a bass clef staff with two measures of eighth notes.

All getting Faster and Louder

Flute

Pizz Repeat notes ad lib.
Violin leave lot of silence

Guitar Repeat notes ad lib.
leave lot of silence

Pizz Cello

The students were all beginner musicians and their notation reading skills were very basic so I could not rely on a conventional score. The composing process with the ensemble made me question the fundamental reason for notation in composing and music. Before the project I never questioned the purpose of conventional notation as, for me as a composer, standard notation was adequate. This project moved me away from my comfort zone and made me explore other types of notation. Janet Mills (2005) describes her opinion on the role of staff notation as:

Staff notation is simply a means of recording some types of western music. It is not a code that music must be understood before any purposeful musical activity can take place... Thus the study of written notation is not relevant to all forms of music making... (p.100)

The final score and parts eventually looked different from each other as they provided different functions: the score gave the conductor an idea about the sound and texture that should be produced so that they could lead the ensemble, whereas the parts were a set of instructions to help the students remember what they needed to play (see fig. 4).

Figure 4: Example cello part from 'Travelling Music'

1. Bouncing

Slide up (ear to tummy)



G A

Slide down (tummy to ear)



2. Flying



A
G

Tremolo!



This notation method worked well as it ensured that the students were given enough information to remember what to play but gave the ensemble leader a clear idea of the intended outcome of the piece. The combination of the different types of notation was novel for me, and has influenced how I notate for both amateur and professional ensembles since completing the project (see score 4):

Score 4: 'Tiny Creatures in Long Grass' by Kirsty Devaney

Alto Saxophone Trumpet in B_b Electric Guitar Piano

A Circular breath if possible no vib. **B** lip bends - follow graphic
circular breathe straight mute slow lip bend half cover sim.

A play notes in any order & varying the speed
use both hands - constantly changing, no regular pulse **PPPP**
very quiet tapping sounds on the strings

A play accented notes in order **B** *5*

C > > **D** > rhythmically uneven timbral trill
fp fp — ppp *fp* *half lift* *fp* *fp* *3* *pp*
slow lip bend *harmon mute* *vib.*
pp — p *slow gliss with bottle top* *p*

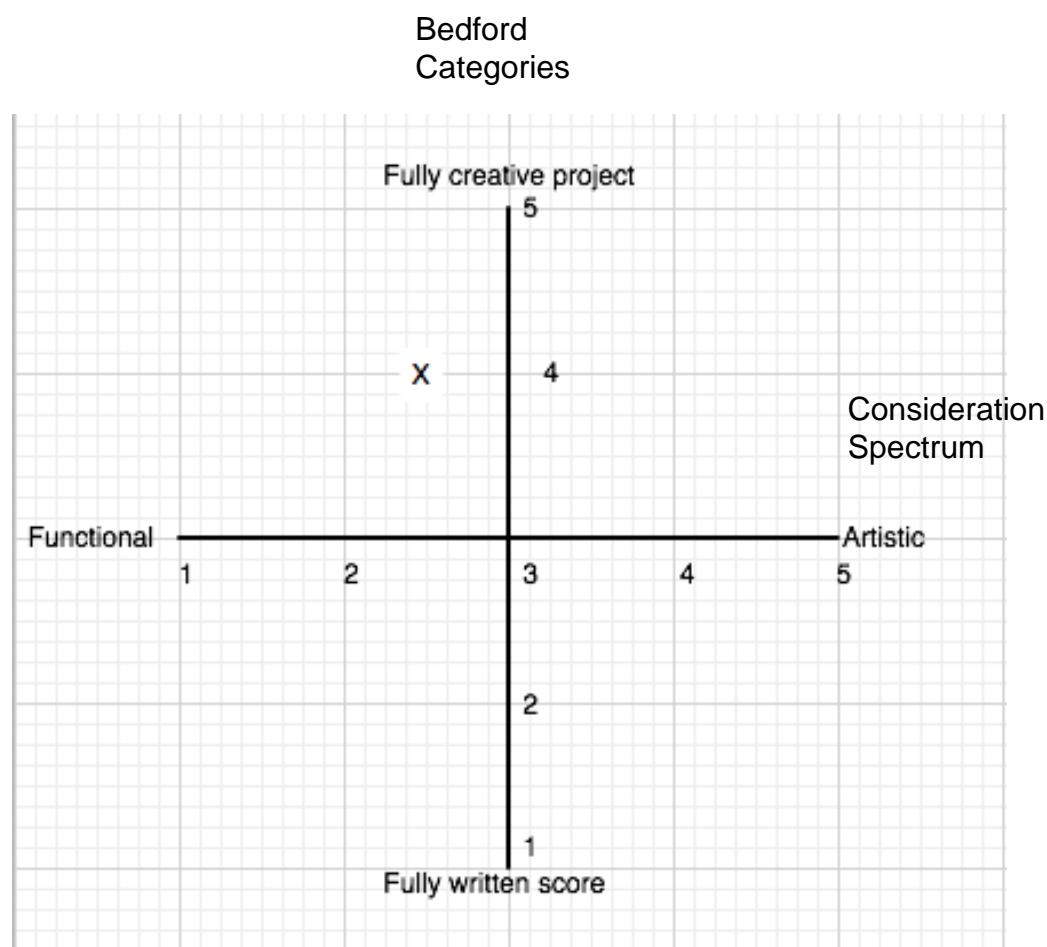
C *5* **D** *5* *ppp*

Early on in the project I visited the ensemble to discover what they could play and what they enjoyed playing. I then used their ideas and preferences as a starting point, for example the flute players enjoyed playing trills and got a good sound quality playing trills, therefore the music used trills as a main feature. The ensemble leader, explained this process as building a:

'...composers notepad from their capabilities...structuring that for them in a way that you felt had your own musical stamp on it.' (Ensemble Leader)

'Travelling Music' was a score created with 'material generated in workshops' and therefore BC4 on the Bedford Scale. The instrumental tutor in the ensemble ensured that I had considered what instrumental techniques the students were learning in the piece; therefore functionality of the piece was very present when composing the work. As a result I would place 'Travelling Music' towards the left side of the consideration spectrum (see fig. 5).

Figure 5: Kirsty Devaney piece on Consideration Spectrum



Role of the Shadow Composers - Conclusions

'I hope that when they're writing for young people, the idea of working alongside the young people to create new music, is well embedded, rather than creating something for them – the idea that that's a creative process.' (Nancy Evans).

This comment from the Director of Learning and Participation at BCMG describes what she hoped the composers would gain from the project. Overall the composers articulated a careful balancing between acknowledging the practicalities of the piece of music (making it playable for the musicians) but also incorporating their own voices and interests as a composer. The project made each composer consider in detail the role and methods of notation used in composition. What might have initially felt like a compromise in the music actually encouraged the composers to move beyond staff notation in their attempts to collaborate with the beginner musicians. Each composer came to realise what was important to him or her in the project brief and consequently none of them completed the project feeling that they had 'compromised' their music or dedication. The workshop leader on the project commented on how the pieces were:

'...great examples of totally different ways of writing for young people, in terms of notation, content and everything about them, they are all just totally different.' (Liz Johnson)

What emerged out of the discussions held as part of the research was that although the word 'compromise' had negative connotations for the composers they eventually viewed it as a positive and a normal part of their process:

'...where their ability is really limited, you have to compromise on your ideas and that's not necessarily a bad thing...I quite like having boundaries' (Jeremy Clay)

'With professionals I also always go into compromise because they might not be able to experiment very much, so it's always a compromise somewhere.' (Ruta Vitkauskaite).

The project showed that successful collaborations between instrumental tutors, beginner musicians and composers is possible, but that adequate time is required to develop the trust that meaningful collaborations always require. One of the pivotal points in the project was when the instrumental tutors took ownership of the composer's piece and treated it like a 'normal' work in the ensemble's repertoire. Some of the ensemble leaders commented on the success of the collaboration:

...that's the strength of the way the project worked – was that it was collaborative and people were thinking musically.

I don't think any composers wrote anything for the children that was unplayable which I think evidences the fact that the partnership worked.

Collaboration with the ensemble leaders meant that it forced shadow composers to consider aspects they might not have felt were as important prior to participating in the project. It also encouraged the shadow composers to explore new methods and solve complex composing problems. All of the considerations and developments that came out of the project raised questions about what it is to be a composer in the twenty-first century, not just for those working with young musicians, but for composers working with professional musicians.

'What's been so important about the process is being in the real world, working with real teachers and real groups.' (Liz Johnson)

9. Impact on BCMG

Somewhat unusually for an evaluation, this report also asked the organising body, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, in the person of Nancy Evans, what she thought about the ways in which the project had developed. Nancy talked about a range of administrative issues, of how organising so many different stakeholders was challenging, and ways in which this was managed. She also spoke of one of the key pieces of administrative learning:

BCMG learnt about the pressures on the music service staff - they have to cope with changing groups of young people - help me design better projects. Massive range of experience in the music service - how to work with all of the different scenarios.

What was clear for BCMG was that the notion of 'shadow composers' was a key one, and one which could be developed in future work:

Shadow composer [is] a clearer pathway for us. However, there is a tension between training the shadows, or giving the best workshop. Will look in future at more ways of training the shadow composers

Another area of significance was that of the structured reflection, where all concerned met to discuss the work done, and that which was to be done:

Necessary to have structured reflections. these really progressed, and working with BCU helped to create pro-formas to try to get teachers to go beyond clichés. This helps demonstrate through the data the impact composing can have

When asked about the highlights Nancy was quite clear:

...hearing the teachers speak eloquently about what they learnt in the training and inspiring their colleagues. [One ensemble leader] having a revelation, wishing s/he had done it much earlier. Also having emails from other teachers being thoughtful about what they were doing.

But there are still concerns for the future of this type of project, and Nancy described some of her worries"

Why is there not much composing? Maybe it hasn't featured in the teachers own development. I have worries about children doing things that are not good for their technique. We need to set parameters, not to confuse those for the child. Time pressures, concerts, lack of resources, not occurring to people, not believing that children can compose, children's music not being valued, listening to the child's music, dismissing messing around on an instrument.

This is a comprehensive list, but is important for the ways in which future projects can be organised, and provides things to think about.

10. Summary, conclusions, and recommendations

Imagine Compose has been a significant piece of work in many ways. From the perspective of the BCU evaluation team, the amount of time and access given to the research and evaluation components has been far greater than is often the case, allowing, we hope, for the production of this much more in-depth report.

From our observations we are able to make a number of observations. These are:

- Composing has been undertaken in instrumental ensembles for the first time in many cases
- This has been successful
- Pupils have found the experience valuable
- Ensemble leaders have received useful CPD
- Shadow Composers have been enriched

This work is, however, very fragile. We are at a difficult stage in the development of music education, and with the increasing commercialisation of teaching and learning provision, things which are seen as simply ‘good’ in their own right may become increasingly hard to justify. We know already from school experiences that league tables, reflecting pupil attainment in tests has become almost the only thing that matters. The place of instrumental music in an audit clear could be viewed as precarious.

Finally, resulting from our analysis of what took place in the Imagine Compose project, we can suggest some recommendations. We are doing this in the form of a matrix, with thematic suggestions for different groups of stakeholders, music hubs, schools, arts organisations, and policy makers. We begin with questions for music hubs to consider, and then recontextualise the issue as questions for the other groups. All of these have arisen directly from evaluated aspects of the Imagine Compose project, and we hope that they will be of use to those considering further work not only involving composing in schools, but music activity more generally.

Matrix of recommendations arising from Imagine Compose evaluation research

Topic	Music Hubs	Schools	Arts Organisations	Policy Makers
<i>Composing</i>	Have you considered how composing fits into your overall work-plan?	What do schemes of work involving composing entail? How does extra-curricular music fit with these?	How do you view composing projects with novice ensembles?	Creativity matters to the UK. How are you fostering it in young people?
<i>Ensemble Music</i>	Have you considered how ensembles might function as learning groups, as opposed to performing only modalities?	How does cooperation work with regards to ensemble music making? Does this affect how you view ownership? How do you assess group work?	How can you interact with extant ensembles, especially in hard-to-reach areas?	Young people making music together is a worthwhile activity. How can you help it happen?
<i>CPD</i>	Have you addressed how instrumental music teachers might need focussed CPD to be able to work in new ways?	Class teachers, especially in primary schools, will need major subject-specific CPD to help them develop this work when music hub staff are not at hand	Are you providing CPD for the creative agents you work with? How do you know if it meets the needs of the end-user?	Education needs highly-trained staff. This takes money, but, importantly, time. How can you help this to take place?
<i>Music Programmes</i>	Published ensemble music programmes may not feature composing, how will you address this?	How do you liaise with visiting instrumental music staff? How can you help your pupils between sessions?	How does what you offer fit with what schools want? Do you know? Have you asked?	Many arts organisations offer programmes for schools. How can you encourage this?
<i>Time</i>	Introducing new ways of working needs planning and reflection time built in. Have you done this?	How can everyone involved in a project get together. Does it rely only on goodwill?	If musicians are being paid to spend time reflecting, but school staff are doing it in their own time, is this equitable?	How can school budgets allow for time for creative work? How does the EBacc impinge upon this? What about Progress 8?
<i>Joined up provision</i>	Hubs might need to think about music provision as joined-up whole, rather than focussing solely on re-creative aspects of performance. Is this the case for your hub?	How do schools make best use of their local music hub services?	Are all the hub partners aware of what each other are doing?	Are hubs enabled (and funded) to work properly across all areas that they are required to do?
<i>Valuing composing</i>	Hubs may need to find ways of valuing the creative musical utterances of novices - do they figure in your area concerts, for example?	How do schools celebrate the music that their pupils have produced?	How do you present composing and creative work done by school pupils?	How is musical creativity showcased locally, regionally, nationally and internationally?

In addition to these recommendations, we also suggest some specific suggestions for composing with young people:

- View composing as a collaboration between the composers and ensemble. Get to know the young people involved
- Have a clear knowledge of the technical abilities of the performers and tailor the music to their skills and interests.
- Be flexible and open to suggestions.
- Think about how young people might react to new music – if it is really new to them, do they need help to understand it?
- Consider how enjoyable the music is to play for the musicians.
- Consider a ‘way in’ for the musicians to help them get to understand your music
- Try to convey an understanding of your intentions as a composer
- Have a clear focus.
- Ensure the composition is practical for the ensemble and consider what the musicians will get out of the piece.
- Build trust between all of the stakeholders
- Involve other adults as musicians
- Involve all stakeholders

11. Endnote

The evaluation team would like to thank all of the participants, schools, teachers, ensemble leaders, children and young people, composers, shadow composers, BCMG musicians, and everyone involved in this project for allowing us complete access to everything that went on during it.

Finally, we hope that in a time of worldwide austerity, funding can be found to undertake innovative arts in schools projects such as this, so that the learning experiences of all of our young people are suitably and appropriately developed and enriched.

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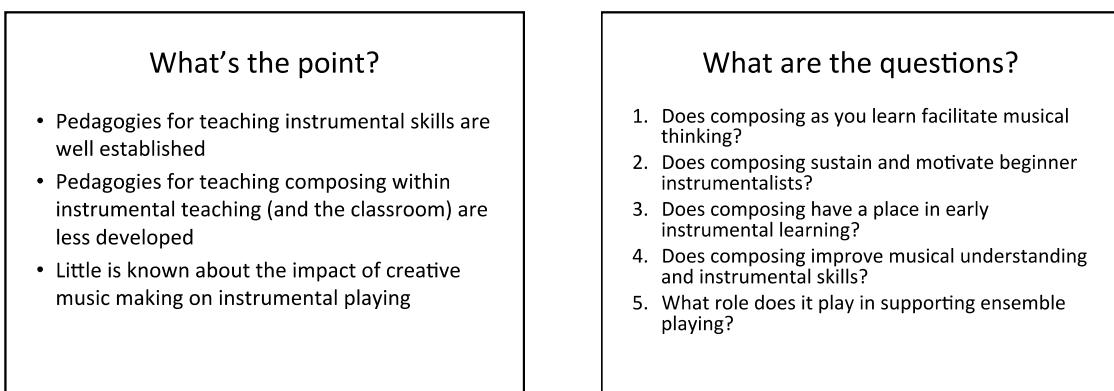
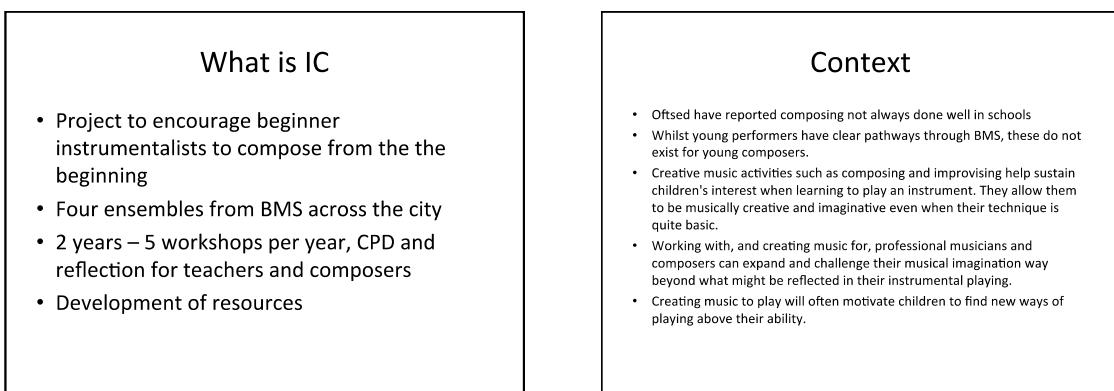
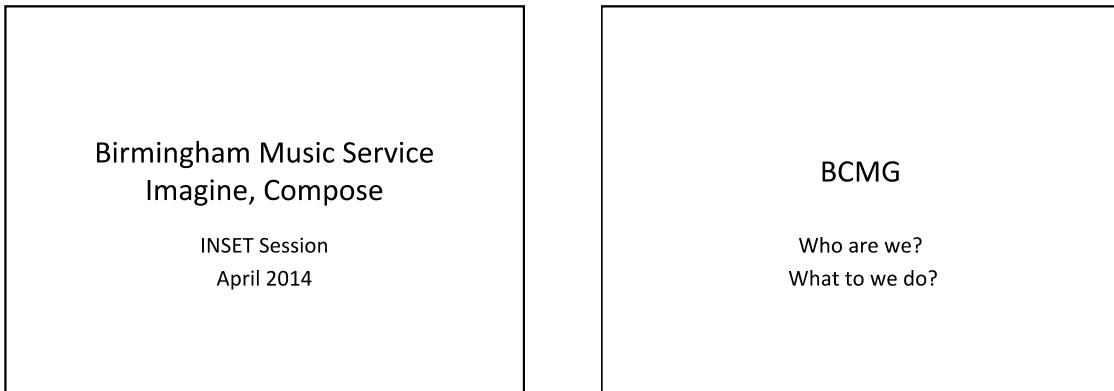
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Appendix:

PowerPoint Slides used in Presentation for Birmingham Music Service



What have we found?

1. Does composing as you learn facilitate musical thinking?

- *'they were exposed to ways of thinking that simply playing music does not allow'*
- *'They learnt how music works from the inside out'*
- *'They had to use their ears'*
- *'They engaged in discussing the music in ways which they had not hitherto'*
- Children in their instrumental lessons often think of the music that they read or that you teach them aurally as a set of instructions. Whereas the fact that they've tried to write down and expressed their ideas they've thought of. Makes it possible for them to see the music as a set of sounds and feelings, so it's a different way to look at what's on the page.'

2. Does composing sustain and motivate beginner instrumentalists?

- 'Well I've always done composing. Why? Because when they can only pluck open strings it can be a little dry.'
- '*the children* played VERY expressively rather than worried about the notes they were playing'
- 'We're going to do a high note, cellist never played there before, 'Am I allowed to?' 'WOW this is amazing'. Permission to use the instrument in the different ways.'
- 'there is increased engagement in the students – they enjoy the freedom of a composing task where they are not being told to do a specific thing.'

3. Does composing have a place in early instrumental learning?

- 'composition is a way for me to understand that my students know what they are doing – it shows ownership of their skills.'
- 'If you allow them to develop their music imagination its bound to develop their playing because their musical imagination should be an important part of developing their playing skills.'
- 'what they did get was a much better handle on their descriptive words and their descriptive language. So when I was teaching in a lesson I don't have explain what staccato was I could talk about the feeling of it I wanted it to be bouncy and light and they would get it then, they would access the language easier.'
- '*'It has enabled them to explore many more sounds and techniques than they would have through conventional weekly lessons'*

'When you're getting them to compose, you use very expressive words, and they'll say I want this to be angry, right you're talking about emotions. So when you've got kids who are playing grade 2-3 pieces and you start talking about phrasing and emotion and they look at you like 'it's a g!'. And it's like no but what does it mean, how does it make you feel? and they look at you blankly. When they've composed something and they've been like 'I want this to be angry' you can say well you wrote this and this expressed you angst and anger. And now this little grade 2 piece someone else wrote this and to them this is how it made them feel.'

4. Does composing improve musical understanding and instrumental skills?

- 'If you can imagine the potential of your instrument it's likely to lead your hands in the right direction. But if you can't imagine it then you're just back where you started.'
- 'I'm an instrumental teacher so I use composition as a tool to help my pupils become better players, because that's my job.'
- 'Students developed more complex ideas that included included syncopation which they would have been unable to play from the normal crotchet and minim based notation they are used to'

5. What role has it played in supporting ensemble playing?

- ‘it has developed engagement – listening, watching and following directions from a conductor’
- ‘it has delivered strategies for working with a group of players without the need for notation’
- ‘Helped to integrate the students by working in non-friendship groups – helped them get to know each other and work as a team’

What now?

- Smaller groups
- Explore some of the tasks and think about the learning within them
- Consider the challenges of composing with beginner instrumentalists
- Opportunity to ask questions of those involved
- Think about how they might integrate some of the ideas into their own practice
- Think about what this offers their practice as teachers

IMAGINE COMPOSE

Research Report

Birmingham, England
June, 2015