Masks

In Lockdown, we have all become used to people wearing masks. Masks **change** how people look and can appear to give them a **different character** or **hide** what they are really thinking. In **theatre**, masks **transform** people into different characters.

Masks is also a piece of music for **solo flute** by the British composer **Oliver Knussen**. In the music, the solo flute player wears a mask and moves about the stage and becomes **different characters**. The composer described it as "a **dramatic miniature** enacted by the flautist". He was exploring how you could create a drama with different characters when there was only **one line of music** played by **one instrument**.

Listen to **BCMG flautist Tony Robb** playing two of the characters. Think of **three words** to describe each character. Think about each character's **personality** and how they might move. https://youtu.be/Mqurj17g5oU

The **flute** takes on different characters and **changes character** within the piece. Listen to Tony playing this section where it is as if two characters are having a **conversation**: https://youtu.be/RbKxzwnZzio


Here is the **music score** for this part. One character is the **top line** of the music and one the **bottom line**. You can see that each bit looks different. You can also see the instructions for the musician to face **R**ight or **L**eft:

Your Turn!

In this activity you are going to compose a piece of music that is a short drama between 3 characters. You will be the only performer and therefore play the music for all three characters. Think about your characters: how do they **move**? What kind of **personality** do they have? How are they **feeling**?

Sometimes it helps to develop a character by **moving around the room in character** - perhaps with a mask on. Now think about how you will **represent** the 3 characters **musically** in sound.

- Will your music be **fast** or **slow**?
- What **rhythms** will you use?
- Will it be **loud** or **quiet**?
- What **interesting ways** of **playing** and sounds can you find on your instrument or sound makers?
- How will the **notes** you choose give **personality** to your character?
- Will the **melody jump** around from **high** to **low** or use **notes** which are **close together**?
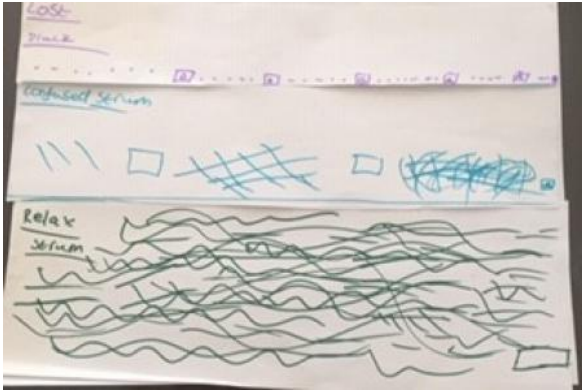

Once you have created the music for your 3 characters, **draw** your ideas on a piece of A4 paper (divided into 3) to show the **shapes** of your musical ideas. Use one section for each character and a **different colour** for each character. This is a graphic score. Here's one created by Sukhpreet in one of BCMG's Music Maze workshops:

1. Make a **second copy** of your graphic score
2. Cut one of the copies into **3 strips**
3. Put them in the **order** you would like to play them. This is the **Part 1** of your piece and will **introduce** your **3 characters**.
4. Now **cut the second copy into 3 strips** and then each strip into **2 or 3 smaller pieces**.
5. Put the small bits in an **order** that you like. You might just like the way it sounds or to help you decide on the order you might imagine a **drama**, **conversation** or **story** happening between the three characters. This is the second part of your musical graphic score.

Below is **Part 2** of the Sukhpreet's piece. In this one, Sukhpreet has decided to cut up her strips into fairly equal bits. You don't have to do this - some could be **short** and some **long**. Also, you can arrange them like this on a piece of paper or put them in a **long line**. Finally, decide on how you will **perform** your piece. You could....

- **Move** to different parts of the room
- **Face** different ways
- **Make** different **gestures** or **facial expressions**,
- Wear different masks

....to show which character you are at any point during the music. Now perform your final piece - **Part 1** and then **Part 2**. Please **send** any music you create to learning@bcmg.org.uk
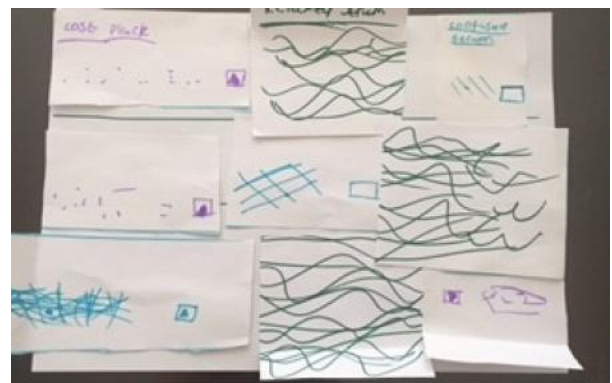
If you would like to **make masks** for your characters, there are some great ideas on the internet using recycled materials. If you do this, make sure you can still play your instrument with your mask on!