Doodling Varèse

On May 4th 2020, **BCMG's oboe player Melinda Maxwell** performed *Sounding Out Varèse*. Melinda was also the composer of this piece! Her music was inspired by *Octandre*, a different piece of music by the composer **Edgard Varèse**. You can watch Melinda perform *Sounding Out Varèse* by visiting this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJvcJKvT8XA you can hear Melinda at 12:15

To compose her piece, Melinda took **short melody ideas** and **rhythms** from the oboe solo at the beginning of *Octandre*. Some of the musical ideas she prepared in advance and others she **improvised** in the moment. Listen to the original piece here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bdc8Fqrq9ag&feature=emb_logo

Varèse was a fascinating composer who was ahead of his time. He was the first composer to add **electronic sound** to his music. He also liked to find and use **new sounds** and **new instruments** in his music. Many of his pieces use lots and lots of percussion instruments.

Varèse described music as '**organised noise**' and talked about his own musical ideas as '**sound masses**' that travel through time and space.

In his pursuit of new sounds, Varèse worked with some **New York jazz musicians**. Not being a jazz musician himself but clearly having an idea about the shapes he wanted the musicians to make, he **drew** the ideas he wanted.

Below you can see a calligraphic copy of one of these 'jazz charts' created by Varèse's assistant, Chou Wen-Chung. How you think it would sound?
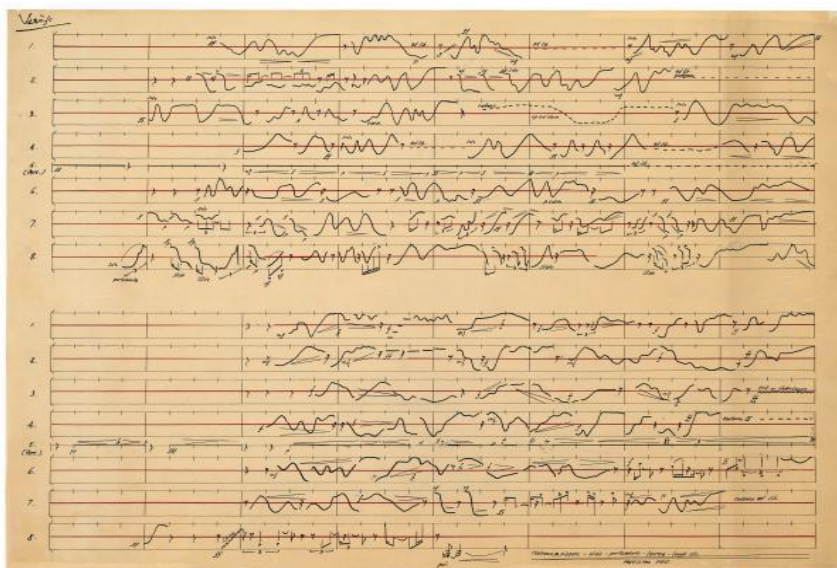
You can listen to a recording of Varese's jazz sessions by visiting the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-MIQ2R2KUA

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Your turn!

Listen to Melinda playing *Sound Out Varèse* or listen to *Octandre.* Or you could listen to some other of Varèse's music. My favourites *are Déserts* and *Ionisation* – you can listen to these pieces and many others by using this link:
https://open.spotify.com/album/1GVXkLXndn3JMWi9bftSZF

As you **listen** to Varèse's music, **draw** the **sounds** and **shapes** that you hear as they come into your **imagination**.

Now **make** a **cardboard picture frame** or two and use it to frame the part of your doodle you like best or think is most interesting.

Collect some **sound makers** from around the house and **play** the bit of doodle inside the frame using your sound makers i.e. **wiggly** line = wiggly music, **smooth** line = smooth music, **jagged** line = jagged music etc.

Other ideas you could try include:

- using **different sized** frames
- framing **different parts** of your drawing
- using a **magnifying glass** to make a section/idea larger
- **cutting up** your drawing and **rearranging** the pieces
- using a **mirror** to play your doodle **backwards**

For example, here is an enlarged part of the same drawing which has lots of interesting and contrasting shapes and lines:

Play and **experiment** with your ideas until you find ones you like. For your final performance you could **mix of ideas** you have already created (**composing**) and new ones that you make up in the moment (**improvising**) like Melinda did in her piece.

Please send any music you create to learning@bcmg.org.uk.