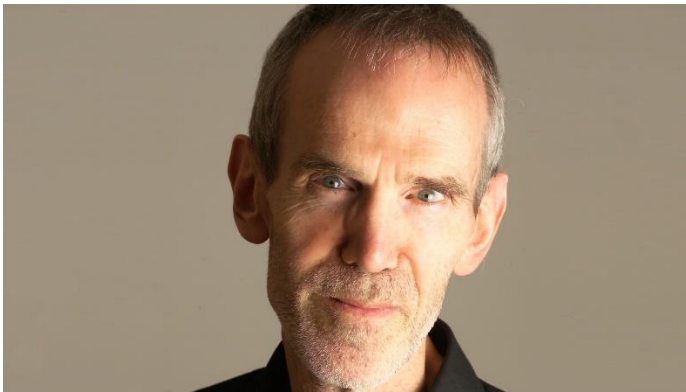# Ben Somewhen - Howard Skempton

In this activity you will create **simple melodies** decided by the toss of a coin and the roll of a dice. The activity is inspired by Ben Somewhen composed by **Howard Skempton**. Howard is 75 this year and we are celebrating his birthday with **concerts**, **workshops** and new **resources** of which this is one.

Ben Somewhen is inspired by **fifteen black and white drawings** of country life adorned with texts, by the artist **Ben Hartley**. The drawings and words are funny observations Hartley made of his life in **Devon** in the 1960s.

The 12 minute piece consists of **fifteen short contrasting musical episodes** which run without a break. Composed for **flute**, **clarinet**, **harp**, **violin**, **viola**, two **cellos** and **double bass**. The double bass has a central role in the piece and it interacts with different groups of the other instruments throughout the piece.

Listen to the piece here performed by **BCMG** and recorded by NMC recordings. To hear the full version you will need to have Spotify open:

https://open.spotify.com/track/7LTXLULmHfak2pxAxZld0k

As you listen **notice**:

- The **quirky** and **unpredictable** melodies Howard composes
- The different **character** of each section
- How the instruments **interact** with each other in each section - in particular the double bass.

Find out more about composer Howard Skempton HERE

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

Your Turn!

Print or **draw** a copy of Resource Sheet 1 and find a coin. **Toss the coin** 8 times to decide on **how long** each note of your melody will be. **Heads** = crotchet (1 beat long) and **tails** = minim (2 beats long). Each time you **toss** the coin, **fill** in the top row of the grid. Below is a filled in example. **Practice** your rhythm on one note.

Rhythm	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1
Pitch								

Now choose **6 notes** from the **C major scale**. Give each note a number from 1-6. **Roll the dice 8 times**. Whatever number you get will **decide** which of your 6 notes to play. - **the** note names to the **grid** or use **notation**. Here is our version:

Rhythm	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1
Pitch	C	E	C	F	A	B	E	B

Notated:

Rhythm: 2   1   1   2   2   1   2   1
Pitch: C   E   C   F   A   B   E   B

Now **practice** playing yours. Because you have used **chance procedures** (coin and dice) to decide on your melody, it will also have a **quirky** and **unpredictable** feel like Howard's melodies.

Now **look** at the **drawings** on the next pages. **Choose** one you like and **play** your **melody** with the character of the drawing. You could play around with **dynamics** (how loud or quiet), **tempo** (how fast or slow), **playing techniques** and **articulations**.

Hocketing means **dividing** a **melody** up between two or more players. If you have someone to play with, you could create a hocketed version of your melody.

Using your 'score', **decide who** is going to play **which notes** of the melody. **Play around with this** before deciding who is playing what notes. Mark on your 'score' in **different colours** who will play which notes:

Rhythm	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1
Pitch	C	E	C	F	A	B	E	B

Hocketed Melody

If you want to compose a **longer melody**, you could carry on for **16** instead of 8 **notes**. You could also create an **accompaniment** to the melody for a **2nd or 3rd musician** by using one of your notes as **drone** (long note) or by creating a simple **repeating rhythm pattern**.

The sun is strong

People are
followed by
their shadows

Come 'ere
Meg

or I'll crown yer

The House that Who built?
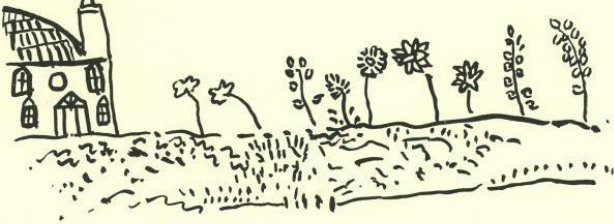
Gazebo in the Golden Privet —
Mrs Whist Drive
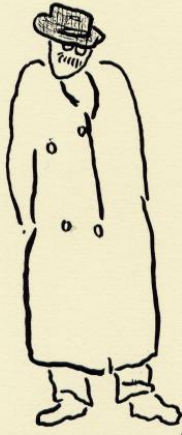in her Salad Sandwich

Sam

Jam for Tea
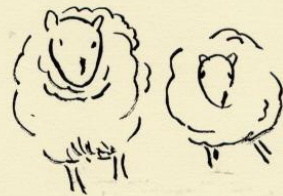
Lamb and dam
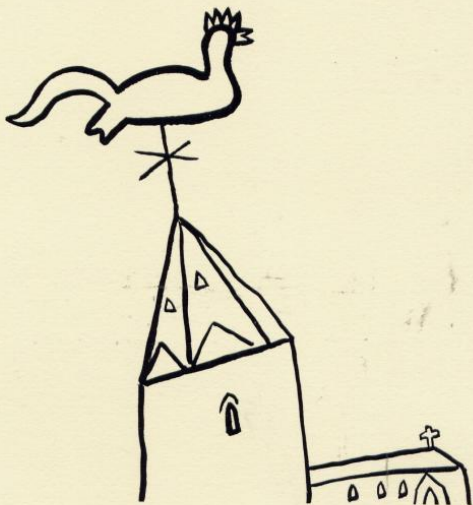in the road
LOOK OUT

who goes where?
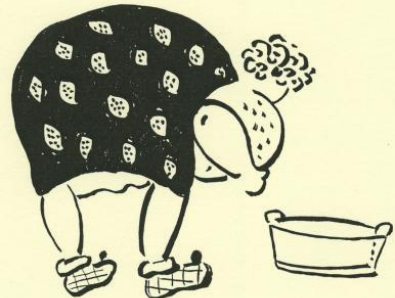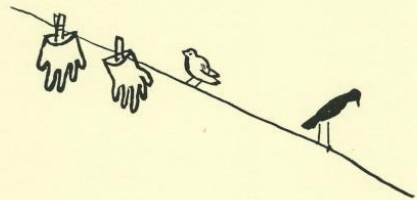
have you seen
a wireworm?

not a blackbird's
but a pram's
squeaking song
in the road

Heaven weather .....
On the wind
come the dandelion hours,
— blowing, blowing

Elderberries of September
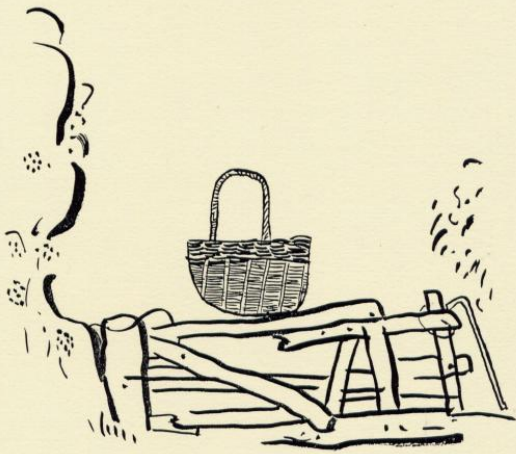
ready for the peashooters

A day of May

Green-leaved
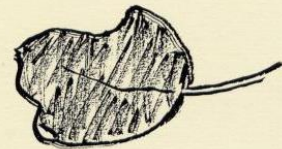Blue-skied

and everything alive

Absolutely March

First periwinkle flower
—and a sky as blue

Blue and white
Speckled skies
Purple and pink
stained hands
    blackberrying

October
turning the leaves
in the wind,—browne