

# Unit 11 The class orchestra

## Exploring arrangements

### ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit develops children's ability to create, combine and perform rhythmic and melodic material as part of a class performance of a song.

In this unit, children develop their understanding of how instruments can be used to accompany songs. They explore a variety of accompaniment devices, select appropriate phrases and patterns, and practise and rehearse towards a final class performance.

This unit should be revisited.

### WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit links to the ongoing skills unit (unit 8) by reinforcing understanding of all the musical elements and the use of the voice. It also enables pupils to explore musical devices such as introduction and ending (coda) that they can apply in later units. It builds on unit 6 and leads to units 17 and 20.

The unit links to English in the development of a presentation and the expressive use of the voice.

### PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children and teachers have:

- sung songs
- explored how musical elements can be used expressively
- created rhythmic ostinati
- developed skills through the activities described in unit 6
- developed an awareness of phrasing in a song
- used tuned instruments to develop awareness of pitch

### VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

- pitch, *eg melody, melodic phrase*
- duration, *eg rhythm, rhythmic patterns*
- dynamics, *eg louder, quieter*
- tempo, *eg faster, slower*
- timbre, *eg different instruments*
- structure, *eg introduction, interlude, ending, verse, chorus*
- processes, *eg rehearsing, arranging*
- context, *eg time, place, occasion, how the song might have been sung as a work song, nursery rhyme*

### RESOURCES

**Stimulus:**

- songs

**Sound sources:**

- voices
- classroom instruments
- own instruments

### EXPECTATIONS

#### at the end of this unit

*most children will:*

sing in tune; maintain a simple part within an ensemble; work with several layers of sound and have an awareness of the combined effect

*some children will not have made so much progress and will:*

follow the contour of the melody when singing; play with some sense of the pulse; perform with awareness of other performers

*some children will have progressed further and will:*

maintain a more complex part with awareness of how the different parts fit together and achieve the overall intended effect; suggest ways in which the piece can be improved and developed; help others to develop their ideas

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**POINTS TO NOTE**

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

**INTRODUCTION: HOW ARE SONGS ACCOMPANIED?**

- about musical accompaniments
- Play the children examples of music in which a song is accompanied in different ways, *eg by voices, by large orchestras, small groups, electronic instruments*. Identify some of the ways and talk about how sounds have been used.
- Select a song that contains memorable melodic and rhythmic phrases and repeated patterns and that is within the children's vocal range, so that they can sing it with confidence. Make sure the children learn the song thoroughly.
- Set the task of preparing the song for a class performance. Discuss the process of arranging music, *eg taking a given melody and finding ways to make it sound more interesting*.

- identify different ways sounds are used to accompany a song
- learn a song and sing it together

- Use a wide variety of examples from different times and places.
- Listen to different arrangements of the same song, *eg the same folk song sung by a folk group, arranged for orchestra, sung unaccompanied*.
- Help the whole class learn the song. It may be better to use a song that the children have already sung and enjoyed. It is important that the children respond to the song enthusiastically so that they want to practise their own parts and repeatedly rehearse the song together. A 'catchy' song with musical interest such as *Streets of London*, or one of the Beatles' songs, can be particularly effective.

**EXPLORATION: HOW CAN WE MAKE OUR OWN ACCOMPANIMENT?**

- to explore melodic phrases
- Ask the children to identify melodic phrases in the song and practise singing them on their own. Try to 'find' the phrase by playing it on a tuned instrument. [Link to unit 8: Listening, 'Play by ear']
- Ask the children to repeat the phrase to see if it could be played as an introduction, as an interlude between verses or as an ending. Explore different phrases to find those that are most effective.

- identify melodic phrases and play them by ear
- identify phrases that could be used as an introduction, interlude and ending

- Encourage children to use their own instruments to play the melodic phrases.
- More than one phrase can be used, *eg one for the introduction, another for interludes between verses and another for the end (the coda that can round off the piece)*.
- Encourage the class to try out many different ideas before they decide which sounds best.

- to explore rhythmic patterns
- Ask the children to play the pulse on different instruments. *Does this add to the performance or detract? Are there any parts of the song where it would add to the performance?*
- Ask the children to try playing the first beat of each phrase on different instruments, *eg using an Indian bell at the start of each line*.
- Ask the children to take word rhythms from the song and play these on untuned instruments. See if they can be repeated to form a repeated pattern (ostinato). Ask the children to take different patterns and try fitting these to different parts of the song. Ask them to try using different instruments.
- Ask children to try playing several patterns at the same time. Explore different combinations of instruments.

- identify and perform rhythmic patterns
- play repeated rhythmic patterns
- fit different rhythmic patterns together

- Use body percussion, *eg clapping, tapping knees*, so that the whole class can join in and explore the rhythms.
- **Extension activity:** Use a combination of different body sounds to create more interesting rhythm patterns.
- Making choices in class compositions can be difficult because some ideas will need to be rejected. However, selection is an essential part of the composing process and children should be helped to realise that it is sometimes necessary to abandon their own ideas in favour of something which may work better.

- to consider the intended effect
- Discuss the background of the song, *eg if it was a work song, when it would have been sung, and how it would have helped the singers work together*. Give the class information about the intended effect of the song.

- recognise how music can reflect different intentions

- The intended effect may not always be obvious, so provide information about how the song came to be written. This will enable the class to make decisions about how they will perform the music.

- about expressive use of elements
- Ask the children to think about the different verses. *Should they be performed in the same way or differently?* Try with different numbers of voices – small groups, large groups, soloists.
- Discuss the mood of the verses. Make the accompaniment reflect the mood. Refer back to the intended effect.
- Ask the children to try singing slower/faster, louder/quieter, stressing certain words, humming, speaking the verse to the song rhythm. Discuss different ways the song could end, *eg slowing down during the final phrase*.

- identify how different verses could be performed expressively

- Let children give their ideas freely. Try them out even if they do not seem appropriate – let the class learn from their mistakes, and discuss why their ideas did not work in practice. Let the children who made the suggestion give their views first.

- about presentation
- Explore different ways of presenting the performance of the song. *Should all the singers stand together, or should some stand apart? Where should the instruments be placed? Can all performers be seen?*

- perform in different ways, exploring the way the performers are a musical resource

- Consider the role of the conductor. *Is one needed? Could the introduction serve as the means to bring everyone in together? Should the song be announced? By whom?*

**BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: LET'S ARRANGE OUR OWN SONG**

- how to present a class performance
- Let the class decide how to arrange the song into a class performance, drawing on ideas explored during earlier lessons, *eg select appropriate tempo, dynamics, instruments*.
- Rehearse, improve, rehearse, record and improve. Perform to another audience, *eg another class, the school, and parents*.
- Discuss how it went. *What was good? What could have been better?*

- make musical decisions and create a class performance

- Note the children who make useful suggestions as well as those who lead by example, performing confidently.
- The class may need some help to ensure that the confident musicians are placed so that they can support the less confident.

## EXTENSION AND FUTURE LEARNING

In addition to the examples given in the 'Points to note' section, children could go on to:

- record the performance and save it for the following year to see how much the class has improved
- make their own arrangements of songs in smaller groups
- listen to a range of songs and comment on how they have been arranged – children could try to find the two most contrasting arrangements of the same song

When this unit is repeated, the focus will remain the same, that is, exploring arrangements, but the content and the expectations should change. The content is changed easily through the use of different songs. Expectations are changed by expecting more of the children to achieve the 'most children' and 'some children will have progressed further' statements and by placing greater emphasis on the extension exercises in the 'Points to note' section.

## ENRICHMENT

- The class could attend concerts that include vocal music with instrumental accompaniment.
- The class could work with live musicians in the classroom who add instrumental parts to the songs sung by the class.
- The class could work with a composer to create their own class or school song with arrangements made by the children and the composer. This process could include improvised ideas and given ideas. Non-western songs could provide a starting point.

