

Unit 17 Roundabout

Exploring rounds

ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit develops children's ability to sing and play music in two (or more) parts. They explore the effect of two or more pitched notes sounding together – harmony. They experiment with clusters of pitched notes and discover which combinations are 'comfortable' (concordances), and which 'clash' (discordances). They sing rounds and experiment with melodic ostinati to provide accompaniments. They play drones and single note accompaniments. This unit should be revisited.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit links with and builds on the ongoing skills unit 15 and relates to the unit based on pentatonic scales, unit 12 ('Dragon scales'). It also links to previous units based on class performance, that is, units 6 and 11, and leads on to unit 20.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children and teachers have:

- sung a range of simple rounds in two parts
- had experience of playing a range of pitched percussion instruments, eg *chime and tone bars, glockenspiels and xylophones*
- developed skills through the activities described in units 6 and 11

VOCABULARY

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

- pitch, eg *melody, melodic phrase, melodic ostinato, scale, chord, interval, unison, harmony*
- processes, eg *arranging, adding accompaniment*

RESOURCES

Stimulus:

- songs, words

Sound sources:

- a range of pitched percussion instruments and beaters

EXPECTATIONS

at the end of this unit

most children will:

hold their part in a two-part round with confidence, and appreciate the effect of the harmonies produced; sustain a drone or melodic ostinato to accompany the singing

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

hold their part in a two-part round with support; sustain a simple drone to accompany the singing

some children will have progressed further and will:

hold their part in a two-part round, singing solo and in a small group; appreciate the harmonies produced and work out drones and melodic ostinati and use them to accompany the singing

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION: PLAYING NOTES TOGETHER

- about the effect of different pitched notes played together
- Set out an octave of chime or tone bars, C D E F G A B C', facing the children. Play them slowly from the low C to the higher C. Ask the children to sing as you play, first to 'lah', then using the note names. Sing down from the high C to the low C. Tell the children that they are singing a scale. Prepare other pitched instruments with the scale of C major, and put them in the music corner. Encourage the children to sing and play up and down the scale. [Link to unit 15: Singing, Listening]
- Tell the children that in this unit they are going to create musical harmony. Invite a child to play any two notes in the scale together, several times. The other children listen carefully and describe the effect. Is it comfortable, relaxed (concord) or uncomfortable, clashing and tense (discord)?

- describe the effect of different combinations of pitched notes using the terms tense, relaxed, tight, loose and comfortable

- There is no right or wrong answer, but the majority of the children will probably identify concords as C and E, E and G, C and A, A and C', and maybe the octave C and C. The discords will probably be any two notes next to each other: low C and high B, or low D and high C.
- Extension activity:** Explore three notes played together. This will provide a wide variety of different effects and children will probably give very different responses. This should be encouraged to allow the children to recognise that we do not hear the same sounds in the same way.

EXPLORATION: SINGING SIMPLE ROUNDS

- about rounds
- Teach the children to sing a simple round, eg London's burning. Discuss the structure of the round (rounds are usually made up of four parts/phrases – A B C D). Sing it through in unison, all singing at the same pitch, and mark the phrases by drawing rainbows/arcs in the air. Sing in two parts, the second part coming in half-way through. Ask the children to listen to the effect of the two sets of voices singing together – the two-part harmony. [Link to unit 15: Singing]
- Describe each of the melodic lines or phrases in the round, eg *smooth, step-by-step, jumping*. Sometimes the melodic shape of two or more lines is similar, but at different levels of pitch. Draw the shape of each melodic phrase. Compare the rhythm of each phrase.

- sing a round in two parts and identify the melodic phrases and how they fit together

- Not all rounds are based on the four-part model – some have three parts. The number of parts usually corresponds to the number of lines or phrases. However, four-line rounds do not have to be sung in four parts; if you just want two parts, bring the second part in halfway through the song. In some rounds the last line and the first line are the same. Rounds sound effective if they are sung through twice. They can either end by each part dropping out as it completes its performance, or the various parts repeat the last line until everyone has caught up.
- It is much better to sing two parts with confidence than to struggle with three or four parts.

- to sing a simple round in two parts and accompany it with a three-note chord (triad)
- Divide the class into two groups and allocate one line of the round to each group. Ask the two groups to sing together. Listen to and discuss the effect.
- Ask the groups to keep singing their phrase quietly over and over again (melodic ostinati). Start with group 1, then bring in group 2. Tape the singing and play it back to the children. Invite observations. *How could the performance be improved?*
- Use chimes or tone bars to make a three-note chord, eg, C E G (root, third and fifth). The chord must be the chord on which the round is based. Allocate a child to each note, and ask them to play together on a slow pulse while the rest of the children sing through the round. Accompany the round sung in two parts. Tell the class that this repeated chord is called a drone.
- Ask a child to improvise a repeated pattern (ostinato) using two notes (the root and the fifth, eg C and G).

- sing a round in two parts with confidence and accompany their singing with a repeated chord

- Extension activity:** Only add a third part when the class is singing two parts securely and with confidence. The aim should be to hear all the parts together, so discourage children from putting their hands over their ears!
- The three children playing the chord may need to practise before they can play the notes at the same time. Challenge them to get the notes exactly together.
- If, for any reason, it is difficult to work out the notes and the chord for a round there will be pupils in the school and other staff, or parents, who will be able to help.

- how to find given notes on a pitched instrument
- how to perform using voices and instruments
- Take a well-known round, eg London's burning. Prepare four pitched percussion instruments with the notes C D E F G A B; C' – one instrument for each line/phrase of the round. Invite a child to sit in front of one of the instruments and to 'pick out' the melody of the first line ('London's burning, London's burning'). If necessary, tell the child the starting note – the low C. Talk about the tune. Sing and play. Repeat this procedure with the rest of the round. At the end you should have four children each able to play one of the lines of the round. *Can you play through the whole round without a break?* Allow time to practise.
- Ask the children to play their melodic phrases at the same time using the four instruments. Ask them to repeat their tune several times (melodic ostinato). Experiment with different combinations.

- internalise short melodies and play these on pitched percussion (play by ear)
- perform a round confidently using voices and instruments

- To take part in the activities the children will need to know a simple round very well, and the teacher will need to be able to identify the key in which it is sung and the notes used to make up the tune of the round.
- Extension activity:** *Can anyone pick out the whole tune on one pitched percussion instrument or a keyboard?* If more than one child is able to do this, ask them to play it as a round.
- London's burning has the following sequence of notes:
- CC FF CC FF / GG AA GG AA / C- C- C- / C B; A A C B; A A (the chord for this round is F A C).

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

- how to create a class performance through practise and rehearsal
- Teach the children a round. When they can sing it confidently in unison, sing the round in two parts. Practise until the class can sing it together, asking different groups to start the round (part 1). Ask the children to suggest an accompaniment. Encourage them to consider and use musical vocabulary: a single-note drone, a two- or three-note drone; an ostinato rhythm based on one line of the round; a melodic ostinato based on one line of the round; a melodic ostinato using the root and the fifth (the first and the fifth note).
- Help the class learn how to practise and rehearse together. Encourage the best quality of sound and ensemble (playing and singing together accurately and showing an awareness of how the different parts fit together).
- Rehearse and record performances. Ask the class to sit quietly and listen to the recording and then, without discussion, see if they can make it better in the next performance.

- practise their own parts and rehearse with others, showing that they know how to contribute appropriately to the overall effect
- improve their performance through listening, internalising and analysing (in their own minds) what changes need to be made
- achieve a quality performance

- Introducing a new round can be very effective at this point. This will provide a new stimulus and opportunities for the children to demonstrate what they have learned through the unit.
- The emphasis on a quality performance is the most important aspect of this, and all other units. Encourage the children to strive for the best. This will take time. Provided all the class is involved through singing or adding accompaniments, they will appreciate, and enjoy, the challenge of 'getting it right'. The more demanding parts could be practised by children individually between the class music lessons.

EXTENSION AND FUTURE LEARNING

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

- compose their own rounds based on a chord, with or without words
- each child in a group of three or four could be provided with an instrument, prepared with the notes of a chord, and invited to improvise melodic ideas. (Children should aim to listen to each other and try to make their music blend, include silences in their individual playing and make interesting rhythmic patterns)
- sing and accompany more complex rounds
- experiment with combinations of three notes, exploring sharps and flats

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

ENRICHMENT

- A choir could be invited to sing for the children. This would give the children the opportunity to find out about the different voices – bass, tenor, alto, soprano. Listen to the harmonies produced by the combination of voices. Listen to the voices sing their parts on their own. *Which part has the most interesting melody? Do they sing all the time? Do they all sing the same rhythms? What is the role of the conductor?*

