

PROJECT ONE DOT

# Spring Cuckoo

Friday Afternoons



**SNAPE**  
MALTINGS

# Overview

## RESOURCE

Musical resources plus more information on this song and the composer can be found [HERE](#)

### Teacher Skill Development

- How to use the voice as an instrument and compositional tool
- What an **ostinato** is and does in music
- How to take a theme/idea from a piece of music and use it as an ostinato

### Assessment

- Students can sing the Cuckoo ostinato in tune and in time
- Students can devise and perform an original ostinato for this song to varying levels of complexity

### National Curriculum Mapping

- Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy and control
- Compose music using the **interrelated dimensions of music** [emphasis on pitch, tempo, timbre, texture)
- Listen with attention to musical detail
- Follow staff and other musical notations

# Singing the Song

## Cuckoo

- This two part song has a repeated **ostinato** in the second part, and needs to be sung with a light, unforced sound. The **range** is quite high throughout, so begin with some vocal play, using sounds such as ‘weeeee’ or ‘bzzzzzzz’ or ‘ng’ to travel up and down the **vocal register**, to access the top part of the singing voice.

See video demonstration here: 

- The **melody** uses a lot of **ascending phrases**. Using the method described in *The Little Girl of Rain* activity, use the hand to draw a rising shape and follow with the voice. Try doing this with the words “*what do you do*” from the first phrase of the song.
- There is a **melisma** phrase towards the end of the song in the line ‘*August away*’. This means that one vowel travels across several notes. When you have this sort of phrase, make sure the students are singing on the open sound – in this case the ‘eh’ of away, rather than closing on the ‘y’ sound.

# Musical Explorations

## Composing Using a Repeated Ostinato

Listen carefully to the recorded track. Ask the students to identify the word which repeats throughout the song [cuckoo]. Play the song again, and this time ask them to join in with the “cuckoo” part whenever it appears.

Explain that a phrase which repeats like this is called an **ostinato**. Use of ostinato is a very simple but effective way of adding an accompaniment to a song. In this case, it is a two-note ostinato on the notes C, A $\flat$ .

For variety, we can sing the “cuckoo” part slightly higher on the notes E $\flat$ , C. Or we can sing slightly lower on the notes A $\flat$ , E $\flat$ . They will all sound in harmony with the song!

Here are the three possibilities:



# Musical Explorations

## ACTIVITY

Display the notations below on the whiteboard. Try singing each of the options in turn. To help the students sing the ostinato in tune, play the notes on a piano, or tuned percussion such as xylophone, glockenspiel or chime bars.

The musical notation is written on a single staff in 6/8 time, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The notation consists of three measures, each separated by a double bar line. Above the staff, the chords for each measure are indicated: C, A-flat, E-flat, C, A-flat, and E-flat. The notes in each measure are: Measure 1: quarter rest, eighth rest, quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter rest. Measure 2: quarter rest, eighth rest, quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter rest. Measure 3: quarter rest, eighth rest, quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter rest.

# Musical Explorations

Devising simple ostinatos in a great way to start building harmony in a piece of music. A good way to do this is to find a small simple extract from the song which will bear repetition. For example, in *Cuckoo* we could use the phrase use ‘what do you do’ which occurs at the very beginning of the song. We could add it as a vocal part, or as an instrumental part played on percussion:

A♭ C D E♭ A♭ C D E♭

[Tap] What do you do? [Tap] [Tap] What do you do? [Tap]

## DELVE DEEPER

Why not try devising simple ostinato parts for other songs in this module or in the [Song Bank](#), using a similar approach.

Un-tuned percussion could be added to provide accompaniment, with a group of students playing the above rhythm along to the song.

## **Contact**

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