

PROJECT ONE DOT

# Teacher Notes

Friday Afternoons



**SHANE**  
**MALTINGS**

# Musical Explorations

These notes further develop the content and ideas in each of the previous sections, offering some additional guidance, hints and tips for teachers when leading the various activities

## **The Little Girl of Rain**

What we are doing by ‘taking a note for a walk’ is showing how the notes move higher and lower as we sing.

So, on the first phrase “*The night is cold and dark*” the hand moves from left to right as follows:

- Hand starts at waist height on the word *The*
- Moves rapidly up to eye level on the word *night*
- Gradually moves down to waist height over the remaining words of the phrase “*is cold and dark*”.

We are illustrating the movement of the melodic shape of the tune. The melodic shape of the tune is very repetitive, making it easy for the students to learn and retain. Notice how a downward swooping phrase is followed by three descending phrases and finishes with an upward swooping shape.

# Musical Explorations

## **Snow**

In the early stages of putting together the two-part **harmony**, separate the two groups so they are not 'distracted' by the alternative part being sung by the other group. Reinforce each part by playing simultaneously on instruments.

# Musical Explorations

## TOP TIP

Although the idea of repeating a short musical pattern seems simple enough, it is important that they are sung or played rhythmically to a steady beat.

Practise this by keeping a steady pulse with a drum whilst the students chant 'cuckoo' in time. Once the rhythm is solid, add pitch.

## Cuckoo

In performance, the **ostinato** singers could be divided into three groups with each group singing one of the three pairs of notes. This will create a three-part ostinato accompaniment. If this seems too ambitious, add just one of the parts to the main ostinato.

Another way of adding an effective ostinato part to a song is to use un-tuned percussion playing a rhythmic part. In addition to singing the two syllables of "cuckoo", we could also add the two-beat rest between the ostinato pattern on a percussion instrument. Ask the children to try out various options from your classroom percussion collection. Before deciding which ones to settle for, discuss with the class:

- Which ones sounded best? Why?
- Did any sound too loud or too quiet?
- Which sounds seem to fit best with the 'Spring' mood of the song? How would you describe the mood or atmosphere of the song?

# Listening to and Appraising the Songs

There are no hard and fast *right* and *wrong* answers here and you will want to be open to giving serious consideration to all ideas and suggestions the children put forward. However, for guidance, we've added some possible interpretations in italics which may prove helpful in facilitating the discussion.

## **The Little Girl of Rain**

- Listen to the piano accompaniment. How does this part suggest the idea of rainfall? Is this a gentle shower or a heavy downpour? Is the rain steady or intermittent?

*Gently descending repeated pattern of notes suggest a gentle, continuous shower...*

- What about the tempo of the song? Is it slow or fast? How does this affect the mood of the song?

*Slow - possibly evoking sadness and a wistful, yearning feeling*

# Listening to and Appraising the Songs

- Is this a quiet song or something louder? Look again at the words of the song. Are there any clues here as to whether the song should be performed in a loud energetic style or something more subdued?

*The words suggest something quiet and gentle. This is a little girl on her own... tapping...whispering...*

- What about the **melody**? Does this suggest a bright, optimistic, joyful song or something more haunting? Try just humming the melody on its own...

*A haunting melody, and a feeling of something mysterious. Again, the mood is of the music is supported by the words... cold, dark, secrets...*

# Listening to and Appraising the Songs

## Snow

Think about snow falling and the mood it creates. It is gentle and falls more slowly and softly compared to rainfall. It also falls silently and creates a new 'smoother' landscape where all sharp edges and corners have been rounded. It is also something of an alien landscape reduced to one colour – a white monochrome.

- How does the song capture the feeling of snow falling?

*Gentle relaxed, calm, serene. The score instructs us to sing slowly and softly. The piano accompaniment is sensitive and restrained.*

- What mood does this create?

*The words suggest a magical and perhaps religious mood... answered prayer...miracle...heaven blessing.*

- Notice how the first three phrases each start on a higher note. What might this suggest?

*Prayers being sent upwards towards heaven?*

# Listening to and Appraising the Songs

- Listen to the short piano phrase of high notes played on the piano following the words “*The moonlit miracle all night*”. What does this suggest?

*Gently falling snowflakes, sparkling in the moonlight?*

- Notice how the final line of the song is slowed down by singing notes of a longer duration. [“*With the answered prayer of snow*” is the same tune as the earlier line “*Drops the blessing of the snow*”, but the note values are longer]. What might this suggest?

*Everything gradually slowing down and coming to rest – a peaceful ending. The whole song has a hymn like quality.*



# Listening to and Appraising the Songs

## Cuckoo

- How does the change in **dynamics** throughout the song support the telling of the 'story'?

*It begins quietly, the volume rises gradually, then falls away again. Perhaps this indicates how spring awakens and 'grows' into the more energetic vibrant summer months before birds fly away at the onset of Autumn.*

- In the middle of the song, the cuckoo sings "In June, I change my tune". How does the melody change at this point?

*Changes from a rising /falling phrase to one which climbs higher.*

- How does the "cuckoo" **ostinato** support the mood of the song?

*Gives a sense of energy, movement and momentum by driving the song forward.*

- What effect does repeating the song have?

*Shows the cyclic nature of the seasons – patterns repeating year on year.*

# Listening to and Appraising the Songs

## Fast Car

- How would you describe the overall mood of the song?

*Energetic, hopeful, excitement, looking forward, a feeling of travel and momentum, perhaps running away?*

- How does the piano accompaniment support the idea of a thrilling journey in a fast machine?

*The rapidly alternating notes capture something of the steady throbbing of a fast revving engine. The pounding chords give a feeling of power. Perhaps the driver is playing some loud rock music in the car stereo.*

- How does the mood of the song change slightly in the middle section [bars 35-46] beginning “*maybe to the sea...*”?

*It gains a dream-like quality where the driver is thinking forward to what it will be like when he or she gets to their holiday destination, or place of sanctuary? The vocal phrases are longer and using notes of longer duration helps evoke this slight change of mood.*

# Writing and Performing a Season Song

Think about the prevailing mood of the song being composed. Using a **major scale** will be good for an optimistic, energetic song, a **minor scale** will create something more reflective or haunting.

Or a bluesy scale for something a bit more laidback or funky.

Try these exercises to help establish an appropriate **tonality**:

On any instrument, play these scales going up and down, while the children sing along:

## Minor – play the notes

A B C D E D C B A

or

D E F G A G F E D

## For a major scale – play the notes

C D E F G F E D C

# Writing and Performing a Season Song

## TOP TIP

Good tunes can arrive at any point: record ideas on a device to make sure you remember them all.

### For a blues scale – play the notes

G A B C D C B A G F G

It is going down to the F at the end which gives this scale a bluesy sound.

Choose one that might work best for the song. The group should get their scale in their heads by singing up and down the scale several times.

Once the tune has been established, it is important to ‘capture’ it as tunes are easily forgotten. Either record the sung version or write the letter names of each note above the syllables of the song. [Typing the lyrics in double spacing is a good idea so you have room to add any note names as they’re generated.]

# Performance

Once you have learned all the songs you might want to put on a performance to celebrate, including some of the original compositions the students have devised as a result of your creative work. A sharing assembly based around the changing seasons would be a great way to showcase this work.

Having thought about the songs in more detail through the musical explorations and creative activities, how might this affect how you could sing the songs in a performance?

Concentrate on bringing that attention to detail to each song, reflecting the right mood and sentiment for each piece.

Think about a performance order for the songs.

- Which season would you start with?
- Would you sing them sequentially in the order the seasons naturally follow one another?
- Which would be a good song to end with? Do you want something rousing and energetic or perhaps something slowing things down?

## **Contact**

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