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Key Stage 3 Music Projects

Monody and Drone

An Introduction to Indian Music

Teacher's Notes

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Key Stage 3 Music Projects

Monody and Drone

Introduction

Writing a melody is a difficult and, for children, time-consuming process, especially given the constraints with which we have to work. Often, a melody in four time will have no sense of structure or cadence and getting children to understand what makes a good melody is difficult, if not fruitless. The following project uses Indian music styles as the basis for melodic writing by looking primarily at rhapsodic invention, in which they can work with a sense of freedom, without being inhibited by those restraints we naturally impose.

This project is designed to last about one half term, although there are numerous possible extension activities that are likely to be of use. Although most suitable for the lower end of KS 3 (i.e. Year 7), there is no reason why it cannot be adapted to suit the requirements of KS 2 children. Indeed, the absence of workbooks makes it easily suitable for any music teacher's needs. It was tried by a number of teachers prior to publication and refined accordingly.

Equipment needed is relatively straightforward: xylophones and metallophones are the easiest for children to work with, although there is no reason why keyboards or orchestral instruments cannot be used. For the main performance at the end of the course, it is useful to have other hand-held classroom percussion, e.g., maracas, agogos, cymbals, etc.

As far as recordings are concerned, it is worth playing your class performances of Indian music. Most World Music sections in good record shops will have a range of suitable material. However, there are also many sites on the Internet which provide free downloads of ethnic

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music, which can be converted into wav format and burned onto a compact disc. If you have any problems with this, consult your IT department.

Cross-curricular Links

Cross-curricular links are also very possible: the most obvious is with Religious Education, through the story of Rama and Sita, which appears as the basis for the last activity in this project. However, there is also scope for Geography (a project on India), Art (making masks, costumes, batik, etc.), as well as English-based activities such as poetry, story-telling and drama.

Stage 1

One might consider the following to be ‘straight in at the deep end’, but it does allow the children to come to grips with the differences between Western tonality and that which is accepted as normal in India. The children should be allowed to use any instruments which might be suitable for the task. Those who do not play orchestral instruments should be provided with barred ones such as xylophones or, for certain compositions, metallophones or chime bars.

Divide the class into groups and give each one of the following scales. These are commonly referred to as *ragas*, a term your children should become used to as soon as possible. Raga has several meanings: some translate it to mean a ‘tune’, others take it to refer to a calling from God. Perhaps the closest we can come to the term in the West is ‘melodic composition’. Each of the following is meant to evoke a mood or mental picture, since the ancient Hindus believed that each raga was meant to evoke a specific image or colour. It is also through that each raga was used to invoke a specific god. Different ragas are played at different times of the day; others reflect a prayer’s mood, such as happiness, courageousness, etc.

Raga Malakosh

Time of day: night

Mood: peaceful and meditative

Notes: B D E G A B

Raga Behag

Mood: lovely and tender

Notes: C E F G B C

Raga Bilaval

Time of day: afternoon

Mood: pleasant and joyful

Notes: C D E F G A B C

Raga Vibhas

Time of day: Morning

Mood: loveliness, early dawn

Notes: C D b E F $\#$ A C

Tell each group the mood the raga is meant to evoke and ask them to experiment with the scale, with each child trying to reflect the mood in his/her playing. One often finds that children immediately start to

12. Journeying Music 2

As 1

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4. Background Music
As 1
 5. Evil Music
Instruments: Chinese cymbals, cabassas, wooden percussion.
 6. Journeying Music I
As 3
 7. The King's Chair Music
Instruments: xylophones, cymbals, metallophones, wooden percussion, etc.
 8. Ravana Music
Instruments: Chinese cymbals, cabassas, tone bars, maracas, voices, etc.
 9. Rama Music II
As 2
 10. Hanuman Music
Instruments: Glissandos, whistles, voices
 11. Battle Music
Instruments: Metal bars being struck together, drums, cymbals, voices

produce melodies with Western qualities. Playing some Indian music might help, but children find this extremely difficult to copy. It is therefore worthwhile spending some time explaining the concept of *rhapsody* and trying to get this quality into their monodies. A good analogy might be to liken the music they are playing to an elastic band, and that the melodies should reflect this quality by stretching the tempo: stopping and starting, getting faster and slower etc., as well as through breathing, as would a person. Other useful methods might be to get them to liken the music to speech: by reading them a poem or an example of good prose they can see how the words speed up and slow down according to the 'excitement factor'.

In all instances, ensure that your pupils also include as much silence as they can — children have a remarkable propensity for ignoring the finer points of silence in music and it is up to you to make sure they don't!

Try to demonstrate yourself before they begin by playing on a barred instrument. Don't jump notes; instead, play your melody as a series of melodic cells, perhaps allowing each to try to reflect a specific feeling — anger, happiness, sadness, etc. It might not be kosher, but it does help to evoke the flavour of the music.

When the children have had time to experiment with their ragas, get each group to play and ask the remainder of the class if they can feel the qualities they are trying to attain.

As the teacher, you might want to introduce a drone here, played quietly on a sustained instrument such as a metallophone as a tremolo with two beaters. The suitable drone notes for each of the above ragas are as follows:

Malakosh:	B E
Behag:	C G
Bilaval:	C G
Vibhas:	C A

Once your children have seen what you do, they can add their own drones on these notes. Remind them to keep the music as free as is possible.

As an extension of this exercise, it is worthwhile asking the children to compose and perform their own ragas by choosing:

1. A time of day
2. A mood
3. A scale to suit their requirements
4. Two suitable notes to act as drones

Stage 2

This stage looks at changing a rhapsodic melody into one which is more structured.

1. Divide the class into groups of three. One should have a small hand drum, the others a melody and drone instrument. This can cause problems with resources, especially for large classes, but nearly anything will do from barred instruments to electronic keyboards. For drones, wind instruments like clarinets and stringed instruments such as cellos have quite a good timbre. The task is for the group to compose a short piece of music which has:

- a rhythmically interesting melodic line
- a cyclical drum rhythm

12. *Journeying Music II*

Rama and Sita's fourteen years in exile were over and they journeyed back to the city where Lakshman was waiting to give Rama his throne back. Everyone was overjoyed to see the return of the proper king and put little lights outside their houses to make sure that they could see their way. These lights were known as divas and from this we have the festival of Diwali.

Notes on Episodes

1. Introductory Music

Raga: *Behag*
 Mood: *lovely and tender*
 Scale: C E F G B C
 Drone: C G
 Instruments: xylophones, Indian bells, brushed cymbals

2. Rama Music

Raga: *Madhy amadi saranga*
 Mood: brilliant and confident
 Scale: C D F G B C
 Drone: C G
 Instruments: xylophones, cymbals, woodblocks, etc

3. Sita Music

Raga: *Malakosh*
 Mood: peaceful
 Scale: B D E G A B
 Drone: B E
 Instruments: Indian bells, metallophones, glocks, etc.

6. **Journeying Music I**

Rama and Sita went away into the forest to live. They lived very happily and made friends with all the animals.

7. **The King's Chair Music**

The queen went to Lakshman and said, "Rama has been banished. You will be the new king." But Lakshman did not want to be king. Instead, he said, "No! Rama is the rightful king and I will only rule in his place until he returns. I shall put his sandals on the king's chair so that everyone who comes to pay homage will know that he is the rightful king.

8. **Ravana Music**

In the forest, Rama went hunting for food. Sita was left behind. Ravana was an evil demon. He had ten arms and ten heads. He saw Sita and kidnapped her, taking her away to the far off island of Lanka where he imprisoned her in his castle.

9. **Rama Music II**

When Rama returned, he could not find Sita anywhere. He searched and searched, but he did not know what had happened to her.

10. **Hanuman Music**

This is Hanuman. He is king of the monkeys. He saw Rama and said, "Your wife has been kidnapped by the evil demon Ravana. He has taken her to the island of Lanka where she is his prisoner." Rama gathered together an army of animals and they journeyed to the evil demon's castle. There was a great battle.

11. **Battle Music**

Rama killed the evil demon and freed Sita, who was imprisoned in a high tower.

- an appropriate drone

With the first, try to get the children to try to think in phrases, perhaps with a pattern that returns several times. It is quite effective getting the melody to rest for several beats during the composition. Although it should *not* be rhapsodic in this instance, it worthwhile reiterating that it is best composed using step-wise movement.

Whether or not this is notated depends on your children's abilities. However, it is worth remembering that most Indian music is improvised

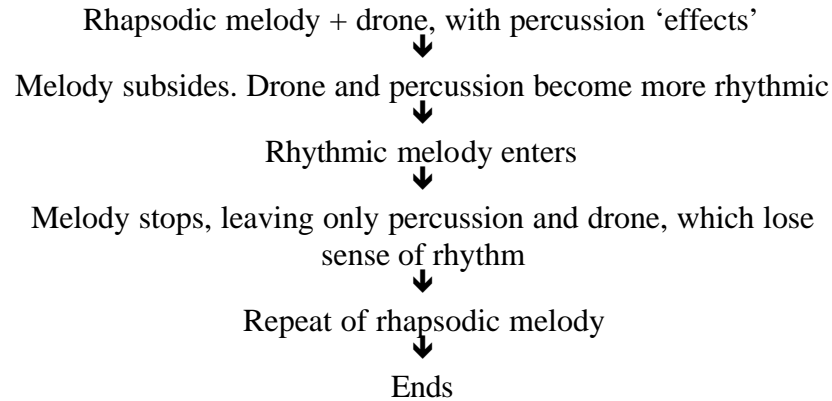
You will need to explain the concept of a cyclical rhythm. In India, these are often practised to a series of mnemonics known as *bhols*. Although there is neither the time, nor much reason for examining these in detail, thinking up a series of repetitive nonsense words might act as a great help, especially if you use more than one drum: one word might indicate a higher pitch than the other, and so on.

The children might wish to establish the rhythm before the melody starts and after it ends, e.g.

Drone + Rhythm ——— add melody ——— less melody

The drone is a matter of taste, since it could be free, as in Stage 1, or rhythmic and played in Alberti bass fashion.

2. This activity now needs to be given a more structured format by combining the rhapsodic work completed in Stage 1 with the melodic work above. They should start their compositions with the free improvisatory monody, to which the cyclical drum beat should be introduced carefully. This is quite a hard task and is perhaps best achieved in the following manner:



It might be worthwhile using Asian poetry or stories as stimulus for their compositions. Have a chat with your English Department about this, since many multi-cultural resources are now found in school textbooks.

Stage 3

This stage combines the concepts and skills used earlier with free composition and uses the story of the Indian festival of Diwali as its basis. It can also be used as the foundation of dance/drama work as well as having other curriculum links.

The story is structured in a series of twelve episodes, some of which use Indian compositional ideas whilst others allow for free expression. It is worthwhile having large groups, thus allowing them to do one ‘Indian’ and one free composition.

Although notation has not been planned as a part of this project, it might be a good idea to make sure that your pupils plan the structure of their work on paper as a reminder of what to do in performance.

It is worth considering the following ideas:

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1. If used as a stand-alone project, the music should last slightly longer than the narrative for each episode.
 2. If used as the basis for drama or dance, each episode should be quite lengthy.
 3. With careful co-ordination, the music could be continuous, with one group taking over from the other without breaks.
 4. Read the story to your class and discuss with them the sort of music that might be suitable for each episode before beginning the composition exercise.

The Story of Rama and Sita

1. ***Introductory Music***
This is the story of Rama and Sita. It is a story that happened a long time ago in the far off land of India.
2. ***Rama Music I***
This is Rama. He was going to be the king: he was tall, wise and very handsome.
3. ***Sita Music***
This is Sita, a woman of great beauty who is going to marry Rama. They love each other very much.
4. ***Background Music***
Rama’s father was very old. He said one day: “Rama, I am very old and the time I have left in this world is not long. You will be the next king and you will sit upon my throne and rule this land.
5. ***Evil Music***
The king’s wife was very jealous of Rama since she wanted her son Lakshman to be the new king. She made the king promise to send Rama and Sita away for fourteen years.