



In this unit the children learn about music based on a rhythmic ostinato by studying Ravel's *Boléro*. A rhythmic ostinato, which the children first encountered in the year 1 in the unit Ostinato I, is a short rhythm which is repeated throughout a piece of music. Ravel's piece is written for an orchestra to play and is built upon an unchanging, short, repeated rhythm played by the snare drum. The children start the unit by recreating the rhythmic ostinato from the piece using words and body percussion over a steady pulse.

By studying *Boléro* the children also begin to understand how composers use dynamics (the volume of a piece of music): Ravel's piece starts very quietly and gets louder and louder (a 'crescendo') and finishes very loud. They go on to study another piece which is built on a crescendo: *In the Hall of the Mountain King* by Grieg. By marching to the beat of the music and comparing the piece with Ravel's *Boléro* they explore how the beat/pulse (the heartbeat) of a piece of music can stay at the same speed (tempo), get faster (accelerando) or slower (rallentando). They also learn that the beat/pulse of a piece of music can be split into regular groups of 2s, 3s, and 4s. This is called 'metre'. They practise imitating rhythms in a metre of 4 which both stays at a steady pace and speeds up to contextualise their understanding of tempo and metre.

By studying *In the Hall of the Mountain King* the children learn that music can be used to tell a story or set a scene and that a composer can use different speeds (tempi), rhythmic patterns and dynamics (volume) to represent different parts of a story. Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, which was written for ballerinas to dance to, tells the story of a boy escaping from an evil troll. Over the course of lessons 4-6 the children use what they have learnt about ostinato, tempo and dynamics to create a piece as a class which also tells a story/sets a scene. They work in groups to create different parts which play a pulse in a metre of 4, an ostinato rhythm, punctuated with train sounds which they create using body percussion and untuned percussion instruments to portray the journey of a train. They make use of crescendo, accelerando and rallentando to reflect the movement of the train.

### Lesson Sequencing

In lesson 1 the children are introduced to *Boléro*, a piece based on a Spanish dance of the same name written in 1928 by the French composer Ravel built upon an unchanging ostinato rhythm. It starts quietly, with only the snare drum, flute, violas and 'cellos playing and becomes gradually louder as more instruments join the ensemble. It ends loudly, once all the instruments of the orchestra have joined in, with discordant harmonies played by the brass section. Ravel wrote the piece for a ballet dancer called Ida

Rubenstein. Its first performance was a sensational success and it has become Ravel's best known work. Ravel himself referred to the simplicity of the compositional form of the piece, stating that it consisted wholly of "one very long, gradual crescendo". The children recreate the bassline rhythm and then the rhythmic ostinato from the piece using words and body percussion over a steady pulse.

**In lesson 2** the children continue to explore Ravel's *Boléro*. They listen to different parts of the piece to understand how it gets louder and louder as the music continues. This is called a 'crescendo' and is created, in this case, by more and more instruments joining in the playing as the piece progresses. The children identify how the flute and then the clarinet take up the winding tune at the beginning of the piece and create a drawing to reflect the different melodic and rhythmic lines they can hear.

**In lesson 3** the children are introduced to *In the Hall of the Mountain King* by Grieg. Like Ravel's *Boléro* this piece gets louder and louder. Unlike *Boléro*, which keeps a steady pace the tempo (speed) of *In the Hall of the Mountain King* gets faster and faster (an *accelerando*). The beat/pulse of the piece of music can be split into four, in contrast to the metre of '*Boléro*' which is in three. Where the beat/pulse is split into regular groups this is called metre. Grieg's piece is from the 'Peer Gynt Suite' and, like *Boléro*, is also made for ballet dancers to dance to. The music and the ballet dancers tell the story of a young boy – Peer Gynt, who falls in love with a girl but is not allowed to marry her. He runs away into the mountains but is captured by trolls who take him to their King in his hall. Peer Gynt tries to escape but is chased by the trolls and the troll king but eventually gets away. Grieg was Norwegian and wrote this piece in 1867. At the end of the lesson the children practise imitating rhythms in a metre of 4 which both stay at a steady pace and speed up to contextualise their understanding of tempo and metre.

**In lesson 4** the children learn that music can tell a story or set a scene. They further investigate to *In the Hall of the Mountain King* and consider how it tells the story of Peer Gynt escaping from the Mountain King. The children then start to compose a piece of music to illustrate their own scene: they imagine waiting at a station for an approaching train and compose music to illustrate the movement of the train. In this lesson they devise four separate parts which create the sound of the train.

**In lesson 5** the children start by exploring how music can stay at a steady pace, get faster and slower. They listen to a piece written in 1551, during the Renaissance period by Susato. It stays at a steady tempo (speed) and reflects the different sounds that the Tudor queens and kings of England (studied in History in Year 2, Spring B) would have been familiar with. The children then continue to compose their piece reflecting the sound of a train, which they started last lesson, incorporating an *accelerando* and *rallentando* (where the music gets slower).

**In lesson 6** the children practise, perform and evaluate the piece which they developed in lesson 4 and 5, learning that we can evaluate a performance to make it better next time. By practising the piece so it is ready for performance they develop their skills in playing together in a group, following the directions of the teacher who acts as the conductor.

## Musical Focus

### *Rhythm*

- Rhythmic ostinato

### *Pulse/Beat/Tempo/Metre*

- Constant and changing tempo
- Metre—grouping beats in 2s or 3s

## Links to Prior/Following Units

### Year 1

Autumn A—*Marching Music* (Beat/Pulse—what is the beat/pulse)

Autumn B—*Samba* (Beat/Pulse—finding the pulse; Rhythm—pattern, imitation, call and response, using percussion instruments to create rhythms)

Spring B—*Ostinato I* (Beat/Pulse—finding a beat/pulse; Rhythm—rhythmic ostinato)

Summer B—*Stories in Sound I* (Tempo—Fast/Slow)

### Year 2

Autumn B—*Beat Music* (Pulse/Beat/Metre/Tempo—beat music, grouping beats in 4s, steady and fast tempo)

Spring A—*Peter and the Wolf* (Tempo—Accelerando)

Summer A—*Emotions in Sound* (Rhythm—rhythmic ostinato)

## Year 3

Autumn A—*Off-beat* (Beat/Pulse—Off-beat; Metre—Grouping beats in 4s and the downbeat)

Autumn B—*Pachelbel's Canon* (Ostinato bass-line; canon)

Summer B—*Indian Classical Music* (Metre and Rhythm—tala and tukdā)

## Links to other PKC subjects

This unit links to the History curriculum, where in Spring B of year 2 the children learn about the Tudors. The music of Susato, which the children listen to in lesson 4 reflects the different sounds that the Tudor queens and kings of England would have been familiar with.

## Outcomes

In the first three lessons of the unit the children undertake exercises to develop their sense of layering different rhythms over a pulse, learning the ostinato beat of *Boléro*, creating a picture to reflect the different parts they can hear in the piece and creating rhythms which accelerate in speed. Over the course of lessons 4-6 the children compose and perform a piece to illustrate a train ride with an accelerating and decelerating ostinato beat.

## Key Learning Points

- A rhythmic ostinato is a short rhythm which is repeated throughout a piece.
- Recognise and keep a steady, accelerating and decelerating beat/rhythm (accelerando/rallentando).
- The beat/pulse of a piece of music can be split into regular groups of 2s, 3s or 4s. This is called metre.
- Ravel wrote '*Boléro*' and Grieg wrote '*In the Hall of the Mountain King*' for orchestra.

## Progression: Technical, Constructive, Expressive

### *Singing*

Children learn and sing call and response and action songs, to warm up at the beginning of each lesson. This develops their technical singing skills which include posture hold, breath control, singing with a pulse, imitating rhythms, varying speed, holding a particular pitch and singing together in an ensemble. Practising songs over the course of six lessons ensures familiarity and

increasing sophistication of musical expression. The children use the songs which they sing at the beginning of the lesson to develop their skills in identifying and imitating pulse and rhythm which they then use to compose their own piece as a class.

### *Listening*

Children practise 'active' listening, developing their technical skills of feeling, clapping, tapping, using actions and moving to the beat and in imitating different rhythmic patterns. By listening to compositions by Ravel, Grieg and Susato they begin to have conscious understanding of how music is constructed, focussing on the dimensions of pulse, rhythm, metre and tempo. By studying these pieces, they begin to develop an increasing an understanding of the expressive qualities of music from a particular culture/genre.

### *Composing/Practising*

Composing and practising a piece which makes use of body percussion and untuned percussion instruments to create rhythms over a pulse develops technical motor skills and an internal sense of pulse and rhythm. Creating a piece which layers different rhythms over a pulse develops knowledge of handling pulse, rhythm, metre, tempo and texture as component dimensions of composition. Practising the skills required for building the composition gradually over the course of the unit, ensures increasing confidence and sophistication in the expressive quality of musical outcomes.

### *Performing*

Working towards performance of a composition over the course of six lessons ensures increased technical accuracy, confidence, fluency, expression and the ability to play securely in an ensemble, following a conductor.