



In this unit the children learn that music can have structure/form and texture by studying Pachelbel's Canon. This famous piece, written for three violins and a 'cello is a canon built on an ostinato bassline. A canon is where a melody is played and then imitated shortly afterwards by another part. A round is a simple form of canon. A canon gives the music a structure/form and a particular texture (where parts are layered on top of each other). An ostinato, which in this piece is played by the lowest instrument in the ensemble creating a bassline, is a short phrase which is repeated throughout a piece of music. This gives the piece a particular structure/form. Learning about ostinato builds on the idea of rhythmic ostinato which the children first learnt about in year 1 (Spring B - *Ostinato I*) and then again in year 2 (Autumn A - *Ostinato II* and Summer A - *Emotions in Sound*).

At first, the children learn to play Pachelbel's ostinato bassline on tuned percussion instruments. They then build a canon, played on tuned percussion instruments on top of this bassline to create their own version of the Pachelbel's Canon. They also learn to sing a simple sung round in four parts. This builds on learning about how rounds can be used to build texture in music encountered in year 2 (Summer A - *Emotions in Sound*).

Studying Pachelbel's Canon also allows the children to consider how different stringed instruments play at different pitches: a violin has a higher pitch and a 'cello has a lower pitch. In lesson 4 the children further develop their understanding of pitch, using their increasing ability to play different pitch-patterns on tuned percussion to match dots on the stave with sol-fa hand signals/words and follow dot notation to play a simple, familiar song on tuned percussion. This builds on their understanding of how we can use dot notation to show pitch patterns, first encountered in Spring A of year 2 (Peter and the Wolf), and further developed in later units of year 3 (Spring A – *Vivaldi's Winter* and Summer A – *Stories in Sound II*).

## Lesson Sequencing

**In lesson 1** the children are introduced to Pachelbel's Canon. This very famous piece was written by the German, baroque (the period/style of Western classical music composed between roughly 1600 and 1750) composer Pachelbel sometime between 1680 and 1706. It is a canon written for four parts for three violins and one 'cello. It has an ostinato bassline which is played by the 'cello

(written with an apostrophe because this is a shortened version of the whole word 'violincello'). An ostinato is a short phrase which is repeated throughout a piece of music. In this lesson the children learn to play the bassline on glockenspiels/xylophones. Whilst Pachelbel's music is written in the musical key of D (it is known as 'Canon in D') the children will play the bassline in the key of C as this key does not include any sharps and flats making it easier to play.

**In lesson 2** the children listen to Pachelbel's Canon again and learn about what a canon is. A canon is where a melody is played and then imitated shortly afterwards by another part. A round is a simple form of canon. When lots of parts are layered on top of each other in music, as in a canon, we call this 'texture'. Pachelbel's Canon is perhaps the most famous example of a canon. The children learn to sing a round (*I am but a melancholy flower*) to get first-hand experience of a canon and go on to start to build the first part of their own version of Pachelbel's Canon which is layered over the ostinato bass which they learnt in lesson 1.

**In lesson 3** the children revise what they have learnt about Pachelbel's Canon, in particular recalling their understanding about the instruments the piece was written for (three violins and a 'cello) and how the pitch (how high or low a sound is) of these instruments is different. A violin has a higher pitch and a 'cello has a lower pitch. The violin and 'cello are stringed instruments, each with four strings which are played with a bow. The bow, which is traditionally made of wood and horse-hair scrapes along the strings to make a noise. The children continue to build up their own version of the canon using glockenspiels/xylophones learning the second part of the canon which is layered over the ostinato bass.

**In lesson 4** the children watch four musicians reading music to play Pachelbel's Canon and use this as a vehicle to consider how symbols can be used to represent pitch. They learn that the staff is like a frame which we can put dots on to show pitch and sing a simple and familiar song ('Sorida') to match the dots on the staff with sol-fa words and hand signals for do, mi and sol. They conclude the lesson by practising the canon which they have learnt in lessons 1-3.

**In lesson 5** the children revise what they have learnt so far about symbols that are used to show rhythm and pitch in music and then learn that musical pitch can be ordered into a scale (when pitch is ordered to go up and down in steps), which can be given the letter names A-G. They go on to learn the letter names for the dot notation that they have used so far for the song, 'Sorida'. Using this notation, they play part of this song on their glockenspiels/xylophones. They finish by practising their version of Pachelbel's Canon which they will record next lesson.

**In lesson 6** the children practise, perform and evaluate playing their version of Pachelbel's Canon, 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

### *Structure/Form and Texture*

- Ostinato bassline
- Canon—layering parts

### *Pitch*

- Contrasting pitch of violin/'cello
- Using hand signals and symbols to show pitch
- Using letters A-G for a musical scale

### *Notation*

- Dot notation for F, A, and C on the staff

## Links to Prior/Following Units

### Year 2

Autumn A—*Ostinato II* (Rhythm—Rhythmic ostinato)

Spring A—*Peter and the Wolf* (Pitch—using major triad to create pitch patterns; Dot notation to show pitch patterns)

Summer A—*Emotions in Sound* (Rhythm—Rhythmic ostinato; Texture—Layering sound, singing in rounds)

Summer B—*Lullabies* (Texture—singing in parts)

### Year 3

Spring A—*Vivaldi's Winter* (Texture/Structure and form—solo and layered texture; Dot notation for a triad on the staff)

Summer A—*Stories in Sound II* (Dot notation for do-mi range on the staff)

## Year 4

Autumn A—*Working Songs* (Texture—Solo/Chorus; melody with rhythmic accompaniment)

Autumn B—*Take the 'A' Train* (Texture—Melody and accompaniment; Dot notation on stave in treble clef showing do-so range)

Spring A—*Beethoven's 5th* (Texture—Unison v layered; Dot notation on stave in treble clef showing do-so range)

Spring B—*Solo* (Pitch and Melody—Phrases moving by jump and by step)

Summer A—*Stories in Sound III*—(Texture—building layers of texture, ostinato bassline, rhythmic ostinato; Dot notation on stave showing do-so range)

## Outcomes

Play and perform a version of Pachelbel's Canon using ostinato and canon parts on glockenspiels/xylophones. Sing a simple song in a four-part round. Read dot notation on a stave for do, mi and sol (F, A, and C).

## Key Learning Points

- An ostinato is a short phrase which is repeated throughout a piece of music
- A canon is where a melody is played and then imitated shortly afterwards by another part. A round is a simple canon.
- Music can have lots of parts layered on top of each other. A bassline is the lowest part of the music.
- Pachelbel's Canon was written for four stringed instruments, one 'cello and three violins. It has an ostinato bassline.
- A violin has a higher pitch. A 'cello has a lower pitch.
- We can use hand signals with words and symbols to represent pitch.
- The stave is like a frame which we can put dots on to show pitch.
- A scale is when pitch is ordered to go up and down, step by step. We can give pitches in a scale letter names.

## Progression: Technical, Constructive, Expressive

*Singing*

Children learn and sing call and response songs and rounds 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 understanding of and skill in singing in parts, using sol-fa hand signals to indicate different pitch patterns, learning to read dot notation for pitch and learning to read stick notation for rhythm.

### *Listening*

Children practise 'active' listening, developing their skills of recognising how music is constructed by answering focussed questions relating to the different dimensions of music. By listening to Pachelbel's Canon they begin to have conscious understanding of how music is constructed, focussing on the dimensions of structure/form, texture and pitch. By studying the piece, they begin to develop an increasing understanding of the expressive qualities of music from a particular culture/genre.

### *Practising*

Practising playing a piece of music which makes use of tuned percussion instruments to create a layered texture of different parts develops technical motor skills and children's skill of playing and individual part in an ensemble. Creating a piece which layers different parts over a bassline develops knowledge of handling structure/form, texture and pitch as component dimensions of making music. Practising the skills required for building the piece 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 piece 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.