

This unit focusses on the 'Hallelujah Chorus' from 'Messiah' written by George Frederick Handel (1685-1759) in 1741. Handel was a German-British composer. He trained in Germany but spent most of his career working in England. The 'Hallelujah Chorus' is part of a larger composition called 'Messiah' which is a particular type of composition called an oratorio. An oratorio is a large composition, made up of lots of different pieces of music, on a Christian subject performed by a choir, orchestra and soloists. Handel's composition 'Messiah' tells the story of Jesus and it is often performed around Christmas time. It is one of the best-known and most frequently performed works in Western music. The 'Hallelujah Chorus' is the most popular piece in the oratorio. 'Messiah', which is around 250 pages of music is said to have been composed in just 24 days. Handel wrote it without getting much sleep or even eating much food. When his assistants brought him his meals, they were often left uneaten. His servants would often find him in tears as he composed. When he completed the 'Hallelujah Chorus' he reportedly told his servant, "I did think I did see all heaven before me, and the great God Himself seated on His throne, with His company of angels." The chorus is a celebration of the belief amongst Christians of the ultimate sovereignty of Jesus as a King above all kings.

In this unit the 'Hallelujah Chorus' is used to explore how a piece of music can be built around different motifs. A motif is a short musical idea. Motifs can be used to create layers of texture in music. The children learn the rhythm and pitch of four different motifs from the chorus which they clap and play on tuned percussion. They also practise reading stick and dot notation which represent the motifs. In doing so they develop their understanding of combining stick notation for pitch and dot notation for rhythm first encountered year 5, Spring B whilst studying *Beethoven's Eroica*.

In lesson 4 the children listen to the 'Hallelujah Chorus' and a contrasting chorus from 'Messiah' ('Surely, He has borne our griefs') to illustrate how a composer can use instrumentation with varying timbres (the quality or character of a sound) and tonality (the character or mood of a piece of music created by the scale which it is based on) to create different moods in music. This develops knowledge of tonality encountered in year 4, Spring A when studying *Beethoven's 5th* and instrumentation/timbre in year 5, Autumn A when studying *The Lark Ascending*. In lesson 5 the children listen to a different version of the 'Hallelujah Chorus' created in 1992. This version has been described as using "multiple genres of African-American music, including spirituals, blues, jazz, ragtime, big band, fusion, R and B and hip-hop" and shows the wide influence of Handel's music since it was written.

Lesson Sequencing

In lesson 1 the children are introduced to the 'Hallelujah Chorus'. They learn that Handel wrote 'Messiah' which includes the 'Hallelujah Chorus' which is an oratorio (a large composition, made up of lots of different pieces on a Christian subject performed by a choir, orchestra and soloists). The 'Hallelujah Chorus' is made up of different motifs (a short musical idea) sung by the choir which are combined in different ways. There are different motifs which set the words 'hallelujah', 'Kings of kings', 'and He shall reign forever and ever' and 'the kingdom of this world' amongst others. During the course of the unit the children use some of the rhythms and notes of these motifs and combine them into their own composition. They start in this lesson by learning to clap the rhythm of the motif for 'hallelujah'.

In lesson 2 the children are introduced to the motifs Handel uses in the 'Hallelujah Chorus', based on the words 'And He shall reign forever and ever' and 'King of kings and Lord of Lords' and how the music combines these motifs which are sung by different parts to create a layered texture. The motifs are in a metre (where the pulse in music is split into regular groups) of 4/4 (indicating four crotchets in a bar, separated by bar lines). The children practise reading stick notation for rhythm using a time signature of 4/4 and bar lines for simplified versions of these motifs to become familiar with the rhythms.

In lesson 3 the children use another motif from the 'Hallelujah Chorus' (which uses the words 'The kingdom of this world') to practise reading notation. They begin by revising what they have learnt about stick notation to show rhythm and go on to revise what they know about dot notation to practise playing the pitches of the motif on glockenspiels/xylophones. They then learn how written music combines these symbols so that we can read rhythm, metre and pitch at the same time and practise reading such notation.

In lesson 4 the children listen to the 'Hallelujah Chorus' and a contrasting chorus from 'Messiah' ('Surely, He has borne our griefs') to illustrate how a composer can use instrumentation and tonality to create different moods in music. Instrumentation means what instruments are used in a piece of music. Different instrumentation creates different timbres which effect the character or mood of a piece. In the 'Hallelujah Chorus', as well as stringed instruments, Handel uses trumpets which have a bright, joyful timbre. He also uses large, tuned drums, called 'timpani' which create an energetic, lively and dramatic sound. Tonality means the character or mood of a piece of music created by the scale which it is based on. A piece of music can be played in a 'major' or a 'minor' scale, or key. Often a 'major' key creates a happy mood. Often a 'minor' key creates a sad mood. The 'Hallelujah Chorus' is in major key. 'Surely, He has borne our griefs' is in a minor key. The minor key reflects the mood of the words which is about suffering. At the end

of the lesson the children work in four different groups to combine the four different motifs they have learnt in the first three lessons of the unit, played on tuned and untuned percussion.

In lesson 5 the children listen to a different version of the ‘Hallelujah Chorus’ created in 1992. This version has been described as using “multiple genres of African-American music, including spirituals, blues, jazz, ragtime, big band, fusion, R and B and hip-hop”. It has lots of the same motifs which are in Handel’s original but uses different instrumentation (e.g. piano and drum kit) and varies their rhythms, often making them off-beat (where, for example in a group of 4 beats, the strong beat falls on 2 and 4 rather than 1 and 3). At the end of the lesson the children rehearse working to combine the four different motifs as they did in lesson 4 and then use printed tables to record how they put the motifs together. The children will keep these plans for use in practising and performing their pieces in lesson 6.

In lesson 6 the children perform and record their composition based on the motifs they have learnt from the ‘Hallelujah Chorus’ and evaluate their performance. In doing so they learn 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.

Musical Focus

Texture/Structure and Form

- Building a piece around different motifs
- Layering motifs to create texture

Tonality

- Different moods of major and minor tonalities

Instrumentation and Timbre

- Using instrumentation and timbre to create mood

Notation

- Stick notation to show crotchets, paired quavers, minims, and rests
- Notation showing time signatures and bar lines

- Dot notation showing do-do' range using stave and treble clef

Links to Prior/Following Units

Year 5

Autumn A—*The Lark Ascending* (Texture—Solo and accompaniment; Timbre—How instruments can create different sounds)

Autumn B—*This Little Babe* (Notation—Stick notation showing crotchets, paired quavers, minims, rests; dot notation on stave in treble clef showing do-la range)

Spring B—*Beethoven's Eroica* (Rhythm and Metre—Minim and crotchet pattern in 3/4; Structure and Form—Development of motifs; Notation—Stick notation showing crotchets, paired quavers, minims, rests, time signatures and bar lines; dot notation on stave in treble clef showing do-do' range; combining notation for rhythm and pitch)

Summer A—*African-American Spirituals* (Texture—singing in parts)

Summer B—*English Folk Songs* (Texture—A cappella singing in unison and in parts; Rhythm and Metre—simple and compound metre)

Year 6

Autumn A—*Voice and Body Percussion* (Instrumentation and Timbre—Creating sound with body percussion and movement; Texture/Structure and Form—Canon, combining rhythmic motifs in layers; Stick notation showing crotchets, paired quavers, minims, semiquavers and rests, time signatures and bar lines)

Spring A—*Blues and the Groove* (Harmony, Rhythm and Structure/Form—chord progression for the 12 bar blues over 12 bars of 4/4 time)

Spring B—*Minimalism* (Texture—Layering of repeated rhythmic patterns; Rhythm and Tempo—Using rhythmic motifs in a repetitive way)

Summer A—*Rock, Pop and the Influence of the Blues* (Harmony and Form—Chord progressions for the 12 bar blues (chord I, IV, and V over 12 bars of 4/4 time)

Summer B—*Protest Songs* (Rhythm and Metre—time signature 4/4, off beat, downbeat)

Outcomes

Compose a piece using different rhythmic and pitched motifs (read from notation) which are layered to create texture. Perform composition in small groups.

Key Learning Points

- Handel wrote 'Messiah' which includes the 'Hallelujah Chorus'. 'Messiah' is an oratorio.
- A motif is a short musical idea. The 'Hallelujah Chorus' uses different motifs.
- We can use symbols to represent rhythm and pitch at the same time.
- The time signature and the bar lines show us what metre the music is in and the sticks show us the rhythm
- The clef and the dots on the staff show us the pitch of the notes
- 'Instrumentation' means what instruments are used in a piece of music. Different instrumentation creates different timbres which effect the character or mood of a piece.
- Tonality means the character or mood of a piece of music created by the scale which it is based on. Often a 'major' key creates a happy mood. Often a 'minor' key creates a sad mood

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 reading stick notation for rhythm and dot notation for pitch which they then use to compose their own piece using a combination of motifs as a class.

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