

In this unit the children learn about lullabies and music associated with sleep. In doing so they begin to understand that music can effect the way we feel. By listening to Brahms's famous lullaby, *Wiegenlied* and traditional lullabies like the *Bressay Lullaby* from the Shetland Islands and *Souallé* from Chad/Republic of Congo they learn that lullabies are songs which are sung to a child to help them go to sleep. They often have a verse/chorus structure and are sung a slow pace in a legato (sustained) manner so that they are soothing to listen to.

The children also listen to two other pieces of music which are associated with sleep, the choral piece *Sleep* by contemporary composer Whitacre, and *Lullaby for Helene* by the jazz pianist Bill Evans. These two pieces in contrasting styles and from different genres both create a calm, sustained and gentle atmosphere.

Over the course of the unit the children learn to sing three lullabies in a legato (sustained) way, one accompanied by piano, one unaccompanied and sung in unison and one sung in two parts creating harmony.

Lesson Sequencing

In lesson 1 the children are introduced to lullabies by listening to Brahms's famous lullaby, *Wiegenlied*. Brahms was a 19th century German composer who was born in Hamburg. Whilst Brahms was particularly famous for the music he wrote for orchestras, this music is written for only one voice with piano accompaniment. It is two verses long and has a gentle, soothing feel. It is sung at a slow pace and in a legato (sustained) manner. The lullaby is very famous and children may have heard the tune before. The original version is in German. At the end of the lesson the children learn to sing an English translation of the song.

In lesson 2 the children compare Brahms's *Lullaby* with the *Bressay Lullaby* from the Shetland Islands. Both the lullabies are slow and legato. Brahms's *Lullaby* is accompanied by a piano, whereas the *Bressay Lullaby* is sung unaccompanied as a solo. The children learn that different cultures have different traditional lullabies. The words of the *Bressay Lullaby* are in the Shetland dialect which is a dialect of Scots. The song has a chorus and two verses. The words of the chorus do not directly translate into English but are based on the word in Scots for lullaby ("baloo") and are supposed create soothing sounds for a baby to listen to. The recording of the lullaby which the children listen to in this lesson was recorded in Shetland in 1949. At the end of the lesson the children learn to sing the *Bressay Lullaby* unaccompanied.



In lesson 3 the children continue to learn about lullabies from different cultures by listening to and learning to sing Souallé which is a lullaby from Central Africa. The song is probably from Chad/Republic of Congo. The song has one word in it, 'souallé' which means 'goodnight'. In the version which the children listen to in this lesson the song is sung by more than one person in different parts. By listening to the song the children revise the concept of 'texture' in music, and learn to sing the African lullaby in 2-part harmony.

In lesson 4 the children listen to a piece called Sleep written by the modern composer, Whitacre in 2000 with words by Charles Anthony Silvestri. Whitacre is known for composing choral music. The piece was written for a choir of eight singers who sing 'a cappella' (without instrumental accompaniment). The singers each sing a different part, creating texture and harmony and using notes which occasionally clash (dissonance). The music is calm and generally gentle, and at some points, extremely quiet, particularly at the end where the singers sing the single word 'sleep' repeatedly. The music reflects the nature of the words. For the most part the singers sing the same rhythm and in a legato, or smooth way, without breaks between the notes. At the end of the lesson the children practise singing the lullabies they have learnt in a legato way, concentrating on sustaining their voices between each breath.

In lesson 5 the children listen to Bill Evans playing Lullaby for Helene. Bill Evans was an American jazz pianist. Jazz is a type of music which originated in New Orleans in the U.S.A. He used improvisation, which means inventing music on the spot to fit with an accompaniment. Improvisation is a key feature of jazz music. Evans was known for his 'singing' melodic lines. This can be heard in the first 30 seconds of Lullaby for Helene, which was recorded in 1971 where the electric piano (a piano which makes sound electronically) plays a simple melody. In the next part of the music Evans improvises on the piano, embellishing the tune he has already played. The piece finishes by returning to the simple melody played on the electric piano. Evans is accompanied by a guitar and double bass, which play gently. The whole piece is slow and gentle, just a like lullaby. At the end of the lesson the children continue to practise singing the lullabies they have learnt.

In lesson 6, the children perform and record the lullabies they have learnt over the course of the unit. They then evaluate their performance. In doing so, they learn that we can evaluate a performance to make it better next time. By practising the songs so they are ready for performance they develop their skills in singing together as an ensemble.

Musical Focus

Texture, Structure and Form

- Song form, verses and chorus
- Unaccompanied/accompanied
- Singing in parts/harmony (choral music)

Style

- Purpose of lullabies
- Lullabies from different cultures
- Jazz and improvisation

Articulation

- Legato

Links to Prior/Following Units

Year 1

Autumn B—*Samba* (Texture—Layering different rhythmic patterns over a pulse)

Spring B—*Ostinato I* (Texture—layering of different rhythmic patterns)

Summer A—*What can you hear?* (Representation using sound)

Summer B—*Stories in Sound I* (Articulation—smooth and detached notes)

Year 2

Autumn B—*Beat Music* (Structure and Form/Texture—verse and chorus, melody and accompaniment)

Spring A—*Peter and the Wolf* (Representation—musical themes/instrumentation to show different character)

Spring B—*Gamelan* (Texture—gamelan music is played in different parts which fit around the melody)

Summer A—*Emotion in Sound* (Texture —layering sound, singing in rounds)

Year 3

Autumn A—*Off-Beat* (Texture/Structure and Form—songs with accompaniments, verse/verse and chorus)

Autumn B—*Pachelbel's Canon* (Structure/Form and Texture—Ostinato bassline, Canon (layering parts))

Summer B—*Indian Classical Music* (Structure and Form/Texture—rag (melodic), tal (rhythmic), improvisation, drone)

Outcomes

Learn to sing and perform three lullabies in a legato way, one accompanied by piano, one unaccompanied and sung in unison and one sung in two parts.

Key Learning Points

- A lullaby is a gentle song which is sung to a child to help them go to sleep.
- A lullaby is usually sung by an unaccompanied soloist and sung in a legato way.
- ‘Legato’ means to play or sing in a sustained, smooth way.
- ‘Unaccompanied’ means where there is no instrument supporting the main melody.
- Different cultures have different traditional lullabies.
- Music can be made up of different layers of sound which is called ‘texture’.
- When notes are played or sung together to create a pleasing effect this is called ‘harmony’.
- Different layers of music creating texture can be made by people singing different parts.
- Music sung by a choir is called ‘choral’ music.
- A choir can sing ‘a cappella’ which means without instrumental accompaniment.
- Brahms was a 19th century German composer who wrote a famous lullaby for voice with piano accompaniment.
- Bill Evans was a jazz pianist who used improvisation.
- Improvisation means inventing music on the spot to fit with an accompaniment and is a key part of jazz music.

Progression: Technical, Constructive, Expressive

Singing

Children learn and sing call and response and action songs, to warm up at the beginning of each lesson. They also learn to sing three lullabies, unaccompanied, accompanied and sung in parts, over the course of six lessons. This develops their technical singing skills which include posture, breath control, singing with a pulse, imitating rhythms, varying speed, holding a particular pitch, singing smoothly (legato) 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 singing in rounds which aids them when singing the lullaby Souallé in 2 part harmony.

Listening

Children practise 'active' listening, developing their skills in identifying instruments used in different music, how music makes them feel and comparing different pieces of music. By listening to the lullabies/songs they begin to have conscious understanding of how music is constructed, focussing on the dimensions of texture, structure/form, articulation and style. By studying these songs, they begin to develop an increasing understanding of the expressive qualities of music from a particular culture/genre.

Practising

Practising singing songs sung accompanied, unaccompanied and in parts develops an internal sense of pulse, rhythm, pitch and harmony. Singing these songs develops knowledge of handling pulse, rhythm, tempo, pitch, texture, structure/form, articulation and harmony as component dimensions of making music. Practising the skills required for learning the songs gradually over the course of the unit, ensures increasing confidence and sophistication in the expressive quality of musical outcomes.

Performing

Working towards performance of song with/without accompaniment and sung in parts over the course of six lessons ensures increased technical accuracy, confidence, fluency, expression and the ability to sing securely in an ensemble, following a leader.