

SCHEME OF WORK 5: How can Composers and Performers be best used as a resource in the classroom?

LESSON 2

TOPIC AND PURPOSE

Getting to know the performer and their instrument.

OBJECTIVE

Led primarily by the composer, this will introduce the performer to the class, demonstrating the instrument and covering various aspects of its capabilities. Issues that are initially discussed might include: pitch range, dynamic range (is this equal throughout?), timbre, special effects (extended techniques), aspects (including genres) of music that are idiomatic for the instrument, examples of musical ideas which would be idiomatic for the instrument, those that would not. Different forms of notation for the instrument would not be discussed specifically, unless answering a question from a pupil (e.g. for a particular special effect).

ENGAGEMENT

Learners are offered the opportunity to ask the performer questions and engage with them in order to develop their piece.

STICK-ABILITY

It is intended that the pupils absorb and are inspired by the sound of the instrument and its capabilities.

Encouraging pupils to take notes on the instrument's range (both pitch and dynamic) in addition to any 'special effects' will be useful material for subsequent lessons.

DIFFERENTIATION

Embedding:

Learners will ask the performer questions that will help them develop their composition.

Enhancing: Some will go further than this and critically evaluate their piece asking questions of the performer that will expand and extend their piece.

Extending: A few may go well beyond this and ask the performer questions, which enables them to refine their work. They will use musical terminology and extend their notated piece in response to the performer's suggestions.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Introduction to the instrument by composer and performer.

Questions by pupils to the performer.

Performer working with learners on short ideas they have written (from session 1).

STARTER

Reflection on the work created last lesson.

ASSESSMENT

Via questioning, the learners will develop self-assessment processes which will enable them to extend their knowledge.

The questions will be written and can be used to observe learner understanding.

ACTIVITY ONE

Learner and performer conversation and reflection.

Learners will develop a range of questions to ask the performer in order to extend and develop their piece.

Commentary on Activity One:

Topics for the pupils to consider when formulating questions for the performer:

What would you like to hear this instrument play, or demonstrate?

How softly can it play, how loudly can it play?

Does the instrument have a 'dynamic curve'?

Many instruments have parts of their range where they can play louder than others. Some of this might be obvious. For example, where in its range can the flute play at its loudest? What about the oboe? (The flute typically plays the louder the higher in its range, the oboe the opposite.)

ACTIVITY ONE CONTINUED

Commentary on Activity One continued:

How *easily* can the instrument play in different registers?

For example, can the instrument play quickly more easily in its lower, middle, or upper register? Does it make a difference? (As a contrary example, the piano is an instrument that can play quite quickly in any register- try it, even if you don't think you can play the piano!)

What is the instrument's lowest and highest note? On the piano this is easy to answer, you cannot play lower and higher than the keys available.

What about the violin? Its lowest note is set by the low G string. It can't play lower normally, although you could tune the string down! (Look up *scordatura* technique.)

For many instruments (winds, strings) their upper notes depend a great deal on the skill of the performer. For brass instruments, this applies to both the very low notes as well as the upper notes. For instruments like the harp, piano, xylophone, glockenspiel, the notes are 'set' and the ranges can't easily be modified.

ACTIVITY ONE CONTINUED

Commentary on Activity One Continued:

Is there anything this instrument can do which is unique?

Can it imitate other instruments? If so, how can it do this? How might you notate it? (For example, a trumpet playing quietly with a straight mute can sound a little like a quiet oboe.)

What emotions can this instrument suggest?

What kind of music might you want to write for this instrument?

HOMEWORK

To continue to develop notated piece utilising the information gained from the discussion with the performer.

RESOURCES

Classroom instruments

Learners' own instruments.