

Global Music Lesson Plans

Lesson 1: Free and Metrically Organised Music – The UK, Balkans, Ireland and Germany (Age range 11-14)

Time required:

One or two 60 minute lessons.

Activity:

Identifying which of four pieces of music (from London - Southall, the Balkans, Ireland and Germany respectively) is the odd one out. Composing a dance or song that contrasts free improvisation with metrically organised 'composed' music.

Aims:

- To compare the music of four diverse musical traditions.
- To create a piece that contrasts free improvisation with metrically organised 'composed' music.

Pupils will learn:

- To discriminate between free and metrically organised sections of music.
- How a particular musical convention can be a feature of the music of four diverse cultures.
- About ternary form as a musical structure.
- About the 'virtuoso' concerto and the role of the cadenza.

Weblinks/ resources you will need:

- First 1 – 2 minutes of [Neend Koyl](#) (track 1) performed by Najma Akhtar. This can be downloaded from the album: Qareeb (Triple Earth records – TERRACD103), at a price of approx. 52p. Scroll down to the Qareeb album. It also appears on the *Music Matters* year 8 tape of excerpts.
- First 1 – 2 minutes of [Sanjam Cocek](#) (track 10) performed by the Boban Markovic orkestar. A 1 minute sample of this track can be streamed online from the Album: 'Rromano Suno - Gypsy Music from the Balkans' - Various Artists – (B92CD205).
- [No. 6 The Coombe](#) performed by The Chieftains. This can be downloaded from the album: The Best of the Chieftains (Columbia records – 4716662) at a price of approx. 52p.
- [Violin Concerto in E minor](#) by Mendelssohn (scroll down to download a free excerpt that includes a virtuoso cadenza preceded and followed by orchestral

accompaniment). Note: to access an mp3 file of this you are required to become a 'free member' – see homepage.

- [Toccata and Fugue in D minor](#) by JS Bach. This piece can be freely downloaded as a midi or mp3 file, see note above.
- Song lyric – e.g. '[Afghan Woman](#)' by Marc Bolan. Click on 'A' from alphabetical index. Scroll down and click on song title.

Useful information

Many musical conventions are shared by diverse cultures and traditions from around the world. Many genres of music from diverse cultures 'yolk' free improvisation or improvisatory sections with metrically organised music. In many Indian, Middle Eastern and East European cultures it is a convention to begin certain types of music with a section of free improvisation e.g. raga or ghazal. In Western Classical music the same convention is adhered to in e.g. the Baroque Toccata and Fugue. The idea of contrasting free improvisation and metrically 'composed' music is also an important convention of the concerto.

The purpose of improvised or improvisatory passages varies. In addition to demonstrating the skill of the performer the freely improvised introductory sections that introduce many Indian pieces slowly reveal the notes of a raga along with any associated melodic fragments and motifs. In the gypsy music of the Balkans, improvised introductions create a great sense of expectation and suspense. In the classical concerto, cadenzas are virtuoso show-pieces that display both the technical capabilities of the performer and instrument. In Irish traditional music, slow haunting and often ornate improvisatory introductions based on traditional melodies often lead into vibrant toe tapping dances.

Note: Neend Koyl is a ghazal composed by Najma Akhtar who was born and brought up in Southall, London. The piece fuses traditional Indian elements with Western rock influences (known as the Southall beat). It is a good example of the way in which music cross fertilises to create new and vibrant fusion sounds. This information should be shared with pupils as it reinforces the inter-cultural nature of music.

Lesson plan	Free and Metrically Organised Music – The UK, Balkans, Ireland and Germany (Age range 11-14)
Starter	<p>Listen to four contrasting excerpts of music and in groups discuss which one is the odd one out: <i>Use Neend Koyl, Sanjam Cocek, Violin Concerto in E minor and No. 6 The Coombe</i>. Ask a spokesperson from each group to feed back their answer and the musical reasons for their choice. <i>Note: although a good case could be made for any of the pieces, the intended answer is the Concerto as it is the only one in which improvisation takes place anywhere other than at the beginning of the piece. The improvisation is also more 'showy' than the others.</i></p> <p>Whilst all of the pieces sound very different, they share a common feature i.e. that free improvisation is contrasted with metrically organised 'composed' music.</p>

Main	<p>Listen to each piece again, eliciting and listing a) the specific improvisational features of each (e.g. instruments, structure, devices, mood & effect of each improvisation) and b) ways in which these contrast with the 'composed' section.</p> <p>Discuss the purpose of the freely improvised sections of each piece (see 'useful information' above).</p> <p>In pairs, pupils compose either a dance or song (use 'Afghan Woman' lyrics by Marc Bolan) which contrasts free improvisation with metrically organised 'composed' music and uses some of the devices identified and listed previously.</p> <p>Model ways of approaching free improvisation using both voice and a pitched instrument and metrically organised 'composed' melodies, using the following Arabic scale:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">D E F G# A Bb C# D</p> <p>It may be useful to set out more explicitly some suggested ways of creating contrast between the sections of their pieces e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free improvisation Composed music Free rhythm Metrically organised Florid, exploring the full range of the scale Motifs and melodies that use a small range of notes Pauses and unpredictable movement Fluent melodic lines Call and response Repetition and contrast Drum roll Drum ostinato rhythm Drone (sustained or tremolo) Melodic ostinato <p>Check progress regularly, asking pupils to peer assess each piece of work and suggest ways forward.</p> <p>Note: This task may take an additional lesson to complete.</p>
Plenary	<p>To apply their understanding of free improvisation and metrically organised 'composed' music in another context, listen to Toccata and Fugue in D minor. Ask pupils to put their thumbs up if they think the music has a free rhythm or down if they think the music is metrically organised. Ask pupils to discuss what they think is the purpose of the piece of music (e.g. an exuberant, dramatic and virtuoso show piece which is used at the conclusion of a church service - e.g. to inspire awe and wonder?)</p>