

Melodic Compositions...a few ideas

Much melodic composition involves children using their voices to create melodies.

Children can also explore melodic instruments and tuned percussion instruments, such as chime bars and handbells for this purpose.

Using notes of the pentatonic scale is a good place to start and will give a nice sound. These include notes D, R, M, S, L. In the scale of C major, these notes would be C, D, E, G, A or in D Major, the notes would be D, E, F#, A, B. Any selection of notes can of course be used.

A bank of task cards concentrating on pitch can be very useful for all classes. Here are some examples:

Compose a tune..

- Beginning with high notes
- Ending with low notes
- Will it be fast or slow?
- Will it be loud or soft?
- How will you remember it?

Compose a tune..

- Beginning with low notes
- Ending with high notes
- Will it be fast or slow?
- Will it be loud or soft?
- How will you remember it?

Compose a tune..

- Beginning with jumpy high notes
- Ending with low notes climbing down
- Will it be fast or slow?
- Will it be loud or soft?
- How will you remember it?

Compose a tune....

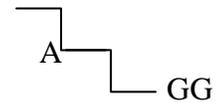
- Start with long notes
- Ending with notes climbing up
- Put 'leaps' in the tune ie. use notes that are far apart from each other
- Make sure there are some loud parts in the tune

Compose a tune...

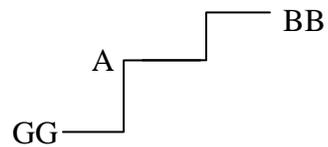
- Select three chime bars (B, A, G)
- Play them in a sequence (eg B, B, A, G, AA, G)
- Play the sequence backwards.....G, AA, G, A, B, B)
- Join the two parts together
- Create your own sequence

Compose a tune...

- Select three chime bars (or more at a later stage)
- Arrange them in a sequence from highest to lowest
- Play them in a sequence, repeating some of the notes BB



- Invert the sequence, ie, turn it upside down



- Join the two parts together

Question and Answer Compositions/ Conversations

- Invent simple word phrases as questions and answers
eg How are you?I am very well
Are you going to play outside.....No. It is raining
- Distribute some chime bars to pairs of children (2/3 each at first)
- Appoint one child to do the question and the other to do the answer
Child A plays the rhythm of the words on his/her chime bars (without saying the words aloud), using whatever sequence of notes he/she chooses
- Child B plays the answer in a similar way.
- Some structure may be put on this eg. Give out chime bars B, A, G and the question should end with B and the answer should end with G.

Improvisations/Conversations

- Distribute a set of black chime bars to pairs of children
- Invite them to have 'free conversations' on the chimes; one child plays the 'call' and the other plays the 'response'
- Consider, if the call is played quickly, should the response be fast/slow?
- Encourage the children to 'react' to the 'call'repeat some of the notes in the 'call' etc

Chime bars 1,2,3,4,5.....

- Distribute five chime bars (C, D, E, G, A) to five children
- Number each child 1-5
- Invite the children to arrange themselves in an order (eg 1, 3, 2, 5, 4) and to play their chime bars
- They arrange themselves (or another child directs them in this) in four different ways, thus giving four short melodies
 - 5, 4, 3, 2, 1
 - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,
 - 2, 5, 3, 4, 1
 - 4, 3, 5, 2, 1
- They play the four melodies in succession
- Invite the children to comment on each line and to make changes to 'improve' the melody
- Consider if it should be played slowly or quickly
- Could the whole section be repeated, playing it softly

Nursery rhymes

Compose a new melody for a well known nursery rhyme eg twinkle twinkle.
(use chime bars eg C, D, E, G, A). Clap the rhythm first and put a note with each syllable

Twink-le twink-le litt-le star }
How I won-der what you are }
Up a-bove the world so high
Like a di-amond in the sky
Twink-le twink-le litt-le star }
How I won-der what you are }

Keeping the same structurenote the way the start is repeated at the end-you could try this in your melody. Try another nursery rhyme!

Dice composition

Six children per group.

Each child is assigned a number from 1 to 6.

Each child composes a simple tune on chime bars (use cdefg or cdega or cdefgabc or the entire set) over a four beat pulse. While each child takes his/her turn composing their tune, the others in the group can keep the four beat pulse by tapping the table with one finger.

Finally the dice are used to order the tunes into a group composition-

Each child throws the dice once so the group ends up with a pattern eg

3 6 4 3 2 4...child no. 3 plays his/her tune followed by child no. 6 etc.

The children who didn't get a chance to play can keep a steady beat .

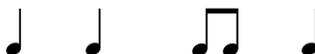
The children practise until they can play their composition without a break between each line.

Using Handbells

- One child takes a collection of colour cards (colours in line with the colours of the handbells)
- He/she puts the cards in an order of your choice
- Each child in the group has a bell and they play the bells in this order
- Decide whether you will play long or short notes; will you repeat some notes.
- How will you remember it?

Composing with Boomwhackers

- Each child in the group takes a boomwhacker (full scale; pentatonic scale; or a number of notes)
- Each child composes a pattern on his/her boomwhacker

Eg. 

- Play the rhythms in any order
- Invite one child to be the conductor and to signal when each child is to play, making their own composition.

See also notes on [Accompanying Songs \(melodic ostinatos\)](#) and [Singing Conversation....](#)