



## Music

### Sequencer games

Peter Schuhmacher, music teacher at Macintyre HS, outlines some of the ways he uses technology to enhance the teaching of notation and aural skills in his classroom. Use of computer technology helps to motivate students, turning the development of skills in rhythm and melodic notation into a game. At the same time, students learn to navigate the music software. Through this process, the students build up a resource folder of rhythm patterns and other musical ideas that they then use in other musical contexts.

#### Game 1: Whistles or clicks

Recognising a known melody from either a pitch pattern or a rhythm pattern.

Students choose to belong to either the *whistle* or *click* group. Students who choose to *whistle*, will be identifying melodies from pitch patterns. Students who choose to *click*, will be identifying melodies from rhythm patterns.

Each group has its own folder of resource material on the desktop. In the *whistle* folder, the pitches are rendered as semibreves, using a whistle or panpipe sound. In the *click* folder, the rhythm is rendered by a piano sound, on a single pitch.

The aim of the game is to identify as many familiar melodies as possible in the given time. Students are encouraged to use their voice to sing the patterns as a way of identifying the song.



When Aaron (Year 7) started these aural games, he preferred to use his guitar to find the pitch and rhythm of the *whistles and clicks* melodies. Eventually, he began to use his voice as well and started to develop some confidence in reading notation.

Now, he adds rhythm notation to pieces written in guitar tablature, so that he and his friends can learn new songs more quickly.

#### Game 2: Transcription game

Notating the pitch of a known song.

Students use notation software to transcribe the melody of a known song. The song used in this example is the bridge section, featuring piano and melodian, from 'Here comes the weekend' by Roxette.

##### Preparatory activity

Play the excerpt to the class for familiarisation. Encourage them to discuss the treatment of rhythm and pitch.

In 'Here comes the weekend' the students observe:

- an excerpt that is eight bars in length
- a repetitive, syncopated rhythm being featured
- a flowing melody
- bars one and two being repeated in bars five and six
- the melody moving mainly by step, with small leaps towards the end of the section.

In order to help the students memorise the excerpt, they sing it; then sing while clapping the rhythm; and then clap the melody while singing in their heads.



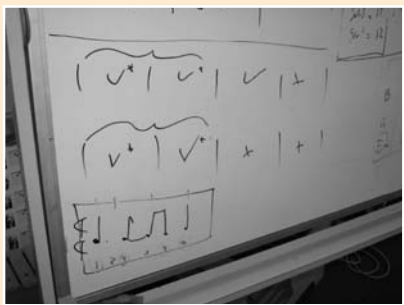
A group of Year 9 students learning the rhythm for the transcription game

##### Notating the melody

Now that the students have memorised the melody, they can move on to transcribing it.

This activity can be done using any notation software, including the free download *Finale notepad* available at <http://www.finalemusic.com/notepad/>

The rhythm of the song has already been notated and is in a folder on the desktop. The students use the mouse and arrow keys to move the note head onto the correct line or space. The successful students will have an accurately notated melody.



Students become more observant of musical ideas left on the whiteboard and often recognise or even adopt patterns left by an earlier class.

In this example, Year 7 added the ticks and crosses bar outline because one child realised that the rhythm in the box was what they had been clapping the lesson earlier.

### Game 3: Composition game

Working within a composition framework.

Students are given a composition framework that is based on a work they have studied in class. Part of the game is to identify the work that this framework is based upon.

Students are also encouraged to develop a resource folder of rhythms they have notated in aural activities. These rhythms can then be drawn on in composition activities, providing students with a vocabulary of known patterns.

#### Framework

Provide the class with a suggested framework for their composition. In this example, the rhythmic elements are drawn from the song 'Close to me' by The Cure.

The composition must have:

- at least three instruments which provide three different layers of sound
- an introduction in which each of the three layers enter
- at least two additional contrasting sections, each of at eight bars
- inclusion of some of the rhythms from their resource folder, which may be in the accompaniment or the melody.

#### Composing

Students can enter their own rhythms as they compose their pieces. Alternatively, the rhythms from the resource folder can be provided in a source folder and the students can join a selection of rhythms and then manipulate the note heads to create their melodies.

They should experiment with a range of tone colours to choose the most suitable instruments for each layer of their composition.

Perform the finished composition to the class and discuss each sample.



*Working from the source folder of rhythms*

#### Solving the riddle

Students need to do some detective work to discover the name of the song that uses the same composition framework. If the students haven't identified it, assist them by playing it amongst a selection of songs and have them check for the inclusion of items on the list above.

Once the piece is identified, compare the class pieces with the original, looking for similarities and differences.

### Game 4: Style game

Use melody lines from previously composed pieces as the basis of a collective composition. Students can extract their melody line from a MIDI file and paste them into a shared piece.

This activity works better in a sequencing program rather than *Finale notepad*, as tracks can be muted, making it easier to determine which melodies produce the most effective combination.



*Students collaborating on a composition*