

ADVENTURES IN SOUND

Music Composition Project with St Peter's Primary School,

St Nicholas' School and composer, Robert Jarvis.

INTRODUCTION

This document details the various approaches to music making as used by Robert Jarvis during the "Adventures in Sound" music composition project, hosted by St Nicholas' and St Peter's schools during spring term, 1998.

Although at first it might appear that time devoted to creative music making is at odds with a teaching strategy that concentrates on the three R's, I believe that the project demonstrated that music relies on and therefore makes use of a combination of various core skills. Throughout the nine weeks of music making the students gained experience in language, literacy, counting, sequencing, experimenting, inventing, testing, teamwork and expression as well as personal and social education. I would therefore encourage you to try out some of the ideas below. They are not meant as an exhaustive guide to music composition in the classroom, but rather as a document of how I worked with the students during the project. Included are my own notes that I took whilst working in the schools as well as a summary of some of the methods I used to help the music making along.

MY TEACHING METHODS

As a rule I would decide what I would be doing before the lesson began, and then allow the music and the students to dictate the consequences. Quite often this resulted in me having to alter my initial plan many times during the life of the piece. This turned out to be a good thing as it prevented the lesson from becoming dull as well as keeping the development of the composition unpredictable.

Before embarking on a new piece, I would find it helpful to preselect a number of instruments, which the pupils could initially choose from. By setting out different instrument combinations for different pieces I was able to ensure that no composition sounded similar. This was important when it came to remembering them for performance.

In my experience, group composition is often a slow process. It is easy to be dismayed at the apparent lack of product at the end of an hour's session. For me though, the real value of a composition class is the learning process that has to be gone through to achieve the end result. It is no wonder the students

find it so difficult at first. They have to call upon so much knowledge, which they have learnt through their other subjects for the composition to be a success. As much as possible I help them through this journey of discovery. The main thing though, is that it is them who get the chance to discover, and it is not me telling them the answers. It seems that the more I hold back and give the students free rein, the more they gain from this process.

The main challenge for me is to order the session in such a way that everyone feels that they are involved. One way to do this is by discussing and questioning the pupils' ideas with the rest of the class. That way everyone can feel they are contributing to the composition even though only a few might be playing the instruments at a given time.

At the end of a session we record our piece so far, and any other good ideas, onto a cassette tape. This always proves invaluable when beginning the next session, as we are able to refresh our memories before running through the piece and carrying on. I usually encourage the students to be critical of the recording as a whole and not just their own parts. We listen to it a few times and try to work out how it might be improved. After many weeks of music making the recordings provide a reassuring document of the pupils' progress.

STUDENTS INVOLVED

St Peter's Primary School

GROUP A: *Rose, Beth, Nadia, Miles, Stephan, Josh, Michael, Ben, Daniel, Dicky, David, Chris, Charlotte, Delilah, Christian.*

GROUP B: *Dineth, Kristie, Kitty, Shannon, Mark, Helen, Adam, Nazarin, Nathaniel, Jack, Isabel, Aaron, Richard, Jessica, Cornelius, Joe.*

St Nicholas' School

GROUP C: *Daniel, Tash, Hayley, Lisa, Raymond, Ben, Roy, Lee.*

GROUP D: *Darrell, Sam, John, Louis, Emma, Katie, Jonathan, Shadhad.*

PROJECT REPORT

THURSDAY 11th JANUARY: St Nicholas

GROUP C 9.30 - 10.45

Passed instruments around one at a time to see how pupils responded to them. Instruments were to be passed in silence. With the exception of Raymond, most found this possible. Moved onto greetings: one instrument playing "hello" and another responding. Other instruments joined in, in order. Daniel went first, then ... Hayley, and finally Raymond. Recorded children saying greetings as well. Thought I could use them with soundbeam and incorporate them into a piece. Tash was quite shy and didn't really join in. Visiting music therapist recommended giving her a metallophone. Ben & Roy were good on drum. Daniel and Hayley are very able.

Senior Group 11.00 - 12.00

This group is not really a part of the project as the teacher thinks the students are too old to mix with the year five St Peter's children. This is a shame as they are quite able. Did a short piece with them - quite structured - and recorded it.

GROUP D 1.30 - 2.45

Did piece to fit in with class theme of transport. They're doing cars at the moment and so our piece plotted the journey of a car starting, travelling, stopping, traffic with klaxon horns, rain and wind for the windscreen wipers etc. Recorded piece. Sam is deaf. Jonathan's first language is Flemish - has limited English - appears to be a bit moody. Has a good voice and can easily keep a rhythm once it's going, I'm told. Shadhad appears to be quite troublesome. Katie experimented with guitar plucking and strumming and noticing the difference between the sounds.

FRIDAY 16th JANUARY St Peter's PS

GROUP A&D 10.00 - 10.40; 11.00 - 12.00

The group five class are doing CHANGE as their theme for this term. (Their specific topics are: Local Area, English Civil War, Shakespeare, Maps, Number Measures, Steam Engines, Earthquakes, and Shapes.) Started by asking group what we would do. Daniel on bass drum said he could do a drumbeat and played me an example. I said it was good, but could he do something a little more interesting. He did, and Rose and Beth came up with a little figure to play in the gap - as did others. With that little idea completed we

moved onto another, this time starting with an idea by Miles and Stephan. Again, when then that little piece was complete, we worked on a contrasting idea on the cymbals with horns playing long notes. After break, **Group d** from St Nicholas joined us. I played them the recording of yesterday's composition, explained the piece to the St Peter's group, and then the St Nicholas group ran through the piece once or twice. After the St Peter's group played their new piece to the St Nicholas students we then came up with ideas to join in with each other's pieces and eventually to join both pieces together. For example, as Miles was demonstrating his small group's piece, Sam (from St Nicholas) knocked the Mark Tree making a sound. Miles thought that although this was obviously a mistake, it was in fact a good sound combination, and so we incorporated this into the piece. With the pieces enlarged in this way and joined together as one we then recorded our updated composition. I spoke to the pupils about coming up with new ideas during the weeks between my visits. They seemed quite keen. A rap was mentioned (on the subject of travel - the St Nicholas theme was cars). Stephan said he was working on a little tune at the moment on his guitar. He played it; I recorded it.

GROUP B 1.30 - 2.45

Chose a selection of tuned instruments (chime bars, xylophone bars, piano) for the group to start off using in their piece of music so that it would sound distinct and explore different ground from the other group's piece. The session started with us all tapping a steady beat on our knees and trying various clapping patterns. We discussed the idea of space (or silence) in music and saw how a complicated pattern was actually improved when played and a gap or silence inserted afterwards, but the trick was to restart the pattern in the same place the next time. When someone thought of a pattern, they had a go and tried to make it fit with the rhythm. This they were quite good at, and so we moved onto the chime bars, starting with the three bass xylophone bars, which were chosen by Helen. She made up a repetitive pattern for the other musicians to fit on top. People in the group then chose their instruments and made up their own patterns. Once everyone had something to do, I gave the job of conductor (or controller) to Joe as he was the only one left without an instrument, and he experimented with starting and stopping people in the group, so we could determine what patterns went well together and in what order. By this time we were running out of time and so we recorded our piece so far, which started with Mark on chatterbox, then baritones, and eventually the whole group joining in, the last person being Joe who played a simple tune on the piano. When this tune was finished Joe resumed his role as controller and stopped everyone one at a time, finishing off with Mark on Chatterbox. Talked very briefly about the possibility of them sorting some lyrics out so that we could fit a tune on top. Mark and Nathan are special needs.

THURSDAY 22nd JANUARY St Nicholas

GROUP C 9.30 - 10.45

This is the most difficult group, behavioural and musically. Tried to build on last week's greetings, but group finds it difficult to play one at a time and in succession. After greetings ("hello") played one at a time on instruments, starting with Raymond on the giant chime. (He needs a custom made beater so that he can't hit the wood of the stick on the chime). Others came in: Ben first on drum, then Daniel with cabasa. When drum sounded, different shaking instruments sounded, finishing with Tash playing the metallophone. Hayley finished piece by playing tambourine. This group is certainly slower than the others, but progress is to be seen. Tash did play, quite boldly in fact, but not in the 'right' place allocated for her. Instead she chose to play when everyone was making quite a lot of sound. I was also impressed by the fact that Raymond and Ben were able to keep a beat together. More accurately, Ben keeps the steady beat; Raymond joins in.

Senior Group 11.00 - 12.00

It's a cold (almost frosty) day today. We started session by thinking about which instruments had particularly wintry sounds. The marktree was chosen as an example. I asked the group what happened in wintertime and they were keen on the idea of thunderstorms. I asked the groups what happened in a thunderstorm and what instruments suited each aspect, and this way everyone was allocated an instrument. The group decided to order the sounds the same way as a thunderstorm, with the wind beginning first, then the rain, heavier rain, lighting and thunder. Each group had their cue to come in. When the drum sounded at the end (for the thunder) everyone stopped. Piece was recorded.

GROUP D 1.30 - 2.45

Experimented with different people playing, or trying to play, a steady beat. The problem was, whilst a steady beat could be played, it couldn't be controlled in the sense that the player would move off to something else after a short time. It was therefore well nigh impossible for two (or more) people to support each other by playing a steady beat together. I gave Katie three notes on the Metallophone and she played a short ostinato figure with the help of her teacher. Jonathan was very quick to lock into this, and a structure for the piece was born. Unfortunately, the nature of the performers is that after an unspecified amount of time they go into random play mode, perhaps because they see another instrument they want to play, so the assistance of the classroom helpers is invaluable to keep the music from apparent anarchy. We quickly worked out an order for everyone else to play, and as we played we sung the name and instrument of the current performer to the tune of Katie's ostinato: -

"Katie plays the glock; Jonathan plays the drum; Emma plays the cymbal; Louis plays the handchime; Johnny plays the handchime; Darrel plays the handchime; Sammy plays the glock." Darrell then hit the vibraslap to end the piece (as before), quickly followed by Louis on the marktree. Piece recorded. According to teacher, Samantha (absent today) might be able to repeat a pattern.

FRIDAY 23rd JANUARY St Peter's PS

GROUP B&D 10.00 - 10.40; 11.00 - 12.00

(Aaron absent. New person: Isabel on flute.) Ran through piece so Isabel could see/hear what was going on, and found an area in the music where she could play. Did a little work with her on improvisation. (She was very shy, and inexperienced.) Added a bit more to the end of the piece so that it died away quietly with high piano chords. When St Nicholas group c came we played them our piece so far, and saw that their instruments complemented the St Peter's group. We tried out ideas with each pupil from St Nicholas' in turn and found a way of incorporating them into the music. This worked very well, with all responding well to the stop/start commands from our two controllers (Joe & Dineth). Even Tasha played a bit. Her helper appears to be learning what is the right level of encouragement to offer Tash. Some nice ideas came out of this session, including ending the piece with tinkling bells as well as the piano. Richard's baritone was not really working, so he moved to wooden agogo. This was much better. Composition recorded.

GROUP A 1.30 - 2.45

Ran through last week's piece. We had a newcomer, Christian, so Stephan rehearsed his guitar part with him, before we all played the piece together. We then started another piece that sounds as though it might follow our other one. Not only that, but it's tonality is similar to yesterday's St Nicholas' composition (group d), so it might act as a link to the start of that piece. As a starting point for this composition we used the tune that Stephan had played for me the week earlier. He played the tune several times so that the timing became more solid, and people could see how they might fit in with it. The students all had different ideas as to how they could build on the piece. We tried these and discussed their success. This formed the basis of a sort of introduction, starting with the bass drum played by Daniel. He finds it difficult to repeat his pattern, as so do some of the others, and so we had to work on this for a while. The afternoon session finished before we did, and so we just recorded our piece so far.

THURSDAY 29th JANUARY: St Nicholas

GROUP C 9.30 - 10.45

Listened to last weeks recording at St Peters. Worked on piece initiated, I think, one week before. This time we started with Ben on drum, as he's good at a steady beat. Daniel joined in on triangle, then Raymond on handchime D5. Hayley stopped those already playing by starting to play the drum. This was also the sign for the next stage of the music to begin, starting with Roy on shaker, then Lisa on tambourine and then Lee on bells. Daniel stops those playing by signaling with his hands. The next stage begins with Lee quietly shaking his bells, and Natasha rubbing the notes on the metallophone with

her stick. Lisa switches to ocean drum and makes gentle sounds. At this point Roy played the guitar (and sung too - but this was not recorded). This was good and pointed the way forward to the next session. Piece was recorded. This is the first time that the group has been able to work together and accomplish a structured composition. Unfortunately, half the group had to leave fifteen minutes before the end, and the session lost its calmness. Still, Daniel organised his own piece of music, with him playing some notes on the metallophone. It is quite clear that he understands about order in music. This piece was recorded too.

Senior Group 11.00 - 12.00

Played group the recordings of the two compositions they have done so far. Then I played them one of my African dawn chorus recordings. We listened to the birdsong, how often they sung, and the patterns they sung. We then made up our own piece based on the dawn chorus. The piece started quietly with the metallophone, firstly with the 'wrong' end of the stick and then as the piece grows with intensity with the normal end. Instruments that were paired came in, listening to each other, talking to each other like birdsong. Gradually more instruments joined in. The cymbal and small gong (both played with soft sticks) came in towards the end depicting the rising of the sun and the increase of light. The bass drum also increased in volume, with the result that the ending sounded a little like last week's thunderstorm! Maybe both pieces could be joined together.

GROUP D 1.30 - 2.45

Somewhat rowdy session with cymbals and sticks being thrown! Probably inspired by two new faces to the session: Gillian (from PRS) and Johanna (visiting musician). Something to think about for future occasions, e.g. media. Worked on and enlarged last week's piece ("Katie plays the glock" tune). Again, asked for suggestions from group regarding direction music should go. Louis was very helpful though found it difficult to keep quiet when not playing (and when playing too, sometimes!). Samantha listened well and was very controlled in her playing.

FRIDAY 30th JANUARY St Peter's PS

GROUP A&D 10.00 - 10.40; 11.00 - 12.00

Worked on last weeks piece and tightened up rhythm, and put a few new ideas together. Just before break we listened to the "Katie plays the glock" piece of the St Nicholas group. When St Nic's came each group played their piece, and we fitted them together, which we recorded. Piece needs a little work but main foundation is there.

GROUP B 1.30 - 2.45

This afternoon we began work on a new piece. The class has been learning about steam trains in their normal class, and so this was chosen as the theme for the next piece of music. I played a recording of a steam train and got them to carefully listen to it. In fact I played it to them 3 or 4 times in all, getting them to pick out different sounds. We then discussed what we could hear before listening to the beginning of Steve Reich's "Different Trains". I asked the group how Reich was able to simulate the character of a train using the string quartet, and they replied that they were playing train type rhythms and also repeating these rhythmic patterns. So the next step was to compose our own patterns, and we went round the group trying different patterns, first on the instruments, and then with everyone beating on their knee and various volunteers clapping their train rhythms. They decided on the piece beginning with some spoken phrases, like on the Steve Reich piece, and so the composition began with Jack repeating "May I have your tickets please" interspersed with another's "Tickets please". Then Helen started on the cornet, directed by Joe, playing the starting whistle, soon joined by Nathaniel on Giant chime bar E with a hard stick playing the train bell. Next was Aaron playing baritone for foghorn (I guess!), and the train started with the drums (African & bongos) and then others (Jack on shakers...). Time beat us. We recorded the piece so far. More work to go. Should go well with St Nic's group d.

THURSDAY 5th FEBRUARY: St Nicholas

GROUP C 9.30 - 10.45

Piece started last week more or less finished, with whole class coming together better than before. Gradually over the weeks the class has been able to operate better as a group and concentrate on the music for longer. Daniel, Lee and Ben especially seem to know exactly what's going on, while others (to a greater or lesser degree) need some prompting to fix their minds on the moment, and then they're okay. Natasha playing as well as others in group now.

Senior Group 11.00 - 12.00

Handed out chime bars, slowly and one at a time, so people could hear the effect of the gradual build up of sound. Sean acted as controller and stopped and started players to make up a gamelan style composition.

GROUP D 9.30 - 10.45

Rehearsed car piece and "Katie plays the glock" piece. Group are working well together. Jonathan behaved and cooperated well. Katie for most of the time was playing her _CED-_ tune on her own and without much assistance from her helper. Managed to get through pieces quite quickly. Louis was absent.

FRIDAY 6th FEBRUARY St Peter's PS

GROUP B&D 10.00 - 10.40; 11.00 - 12.00

Worked on last week's piece about trains. Started work on another train piece to use as a contrasting idea. When St Nicholas's came in, they played their piece a few times before we worked out how the two schools' compositions could fit together. Ben (from St Nicholas') was very good in the class, offering suggestions as well as starting the group each time with a "ready?" before beginning the composition with his regular drum beat. With his help we made good progress. Recorded the piece.

GROUP A 1.30 - 2.45

Class Five has been studying the following Shakespeare sonnet: -

*"Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no! it is an ever-fixèd mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved."*

We decided to use it as a base for composing a new piece of music. After reading through the poem many times and deciding what each line meant. We decided that the poem was quite soppy, and needed something to make it more interesting. It would not be enough to just make up some lovely wistful music to accompany the words. So we searched the poem for less obvious ways of going about composing our piece of music. It was noted that there were two 'characters' in the sonnet: Love and Time, and whatever happened (tempests, doom, etc) Love and time remained. It was decided that the first step would be to make up some music for these two characters, so we split up into two groups; one to make the Love music, one to make the Time music. Before starting with the instruments we discussed how each music would sound. The Time music would have short notes like clock ticks, would be very regular, and somehow the different rates of hours, minutes and seconds would be included in the composition. By contrast the Love piece would consist of long gentle notes and would involve a changing texture to mirror the changing nature of Love in different situations. The groups worked quite well separately. We recorded both pieces.

FRIDAY 13th FEBRUARY St Peter's PS

GROUP A&D 10.00 - 10.40; 11.00 - 12.00

Rehearsed traffic piece in preparation of St Nicholas' coming in. Delilah invented new bit using chime bars. Charlotte found same notes on her flute and improvised a tune on top. The same for Nadia on her 'cello, but playing half time. I asked Charlotte and Nadia to work out a tune on their instruments for next week. I also gave the notes to Michael on cornet and asked the same of him. When the St Nic's pupils came in we put the whole piece together. I sat with Jonathan as he played the bass drum. He behaved very well and cooperated very musically. Louis took the role of controller in the new bit of the music, and gradually stopped everyone by going round and touching them. It was hard at first for him to do it without verbalizing, "stop", but gradually he got the hang of it.

GROUP B 1.30 - 2.45

Worked on the train piece. Played recording. Worked on last week's first idea and added contrasting section. Used controller to gradually stop everyone so that the piece finished gradually and gently.

FRIDAY 27th FEBRUARY St Peter's PS

GROUPS B&C 10.00 - 10.40; 11.00 - 12.00

Worked on Groovy piece and then played through Train piece before break. When St Nic's arrived we went through the groovy piece. We isolated three different sections in the music that had different atmospheres. The first was the groovy beginning, and in this section people were to play in a lively way. The second section involved the cymbals being played in wave like fashion, Natasha playing metallophone, Nathaniel playing his chimes, Nazarin playing ocean drum, etc. This was the romantic section. The third and final section was the snow section, with the bells and high piano. With the three sections defined the class were able to work towards each different feel, and have specific instruments to play at appropriate stages of the composition, thus giving the piece a better form. I more or less left the St Nic's kids to their own devices in this session. In fact now it is the St Peter's lot who have the behavioural difficulties. The children from St Nic's were brilliant!

GROUPS A 1.30 - 2.45

Worked on the Shakespeare piece. Ran through the Love & Time compositions, before working on the next bit. This was the music for the tempest part of the poem. So now the piece starts with the time motif, then the tempest, then the love piece. Recorded it.

FRIDAY 6th MARCH St Peter's PS

GROUPS A&D 10.00 - 10.40; 11.00 - 12.00

Rehearsed both the Chinese Traffic Jam and the Stephan/Glock piece before the arrival of St Nicholas students. The students have now got to get used to playing both pieces, one after the other and all that entails. Ran through both pieces again with the St Nic's students & staff. The staff appear not to have the same understanding as the students regarding what happens and where in each piece of music, and so they are getting a little confused. I will write the pieces out for them so they have a better idea of what is happening. The Stephan/Glock piece that was based around Katie's metallophone contribution ("Katie plays the glock") has featured a minor setback in the sense that Katie is no longer at St Nicholas'. This is a shame because each week she improved immensely, and last week she was even playing the part on her own with very little help. After the St Nicholas lot had gone again, the remaining St Peter's students ran once through their Shakespeare piece. They are getting used to thinking faster now, and so are becoming more disciplined.

GROUP B 1.30 - 2.45

The group was keen to do a new piece, so we tried out different ideas. It was clear that they had learnt about the importance of coming up with good product; however in the limited time available we were not able to come up with anything substantial. The students realised that their progress was quite slow. From their point of view, they now knew what constituted a 'good' composition and did not want to settle for anything less. They felt they could put together something but it wouldn't be as polished as the others, and now being so close to the final performance it was decided to try to use some of their new ideas in their existing pieces instead of continuing with this new composition.

FRIDAY 13th MARCH St Peter's PS

GROUP B&C 10.00 - 10.40; 11.00 - 12.00

Ran through the train piece and experimented with changing the volume of sound within the music, sometimes abruptly to create contrast, and sometimes gradually. The students agreed that dynamic changes made the piece much more exciting, and so we spent a while running through the piece and inserting volume changes. Also, we sorted out what they were going to call their compositions and how they might be introduced at the performances. Ran through both pieces when St Nic's kids present. Again we talked of making the most of each section, as well as ensuring that each section was distinct. (Had written down each composition's order of events for the staff present with St Nic's kids, so they would definitely know what was happening within the pieces.)

GROUP A 1.30 - 2.45

Ran through their pieces and practised finishing one piece and starting the next until they could do this smoothly and knew exactly which instruments were required (and by whom) for each piece.

FRIDAY 20th MARCH St Peter's PS

Morning Performance at St Peter's School.

I was impressed with the St Peter's students, for when I had arrived at the school they had already collected their instruments. It was good to see that they felt in control, although help was needed to organise them quickly into a new seating arrangement suitable for the hall. This must have been slightly confusing for them, as their music requires visual communication between players. Still, they performed their pieces well, only missing out one section when the going got tough!

Afternoon Performance at St Nicholas' School.

This time the students totally organised themselves and seated themselves, and in a different seating arrangement. This was a very different experience - performing in the special school. At times the audience made more sound than the musicians performing. It was a difficult performance to do. Nevertheless the musicians performed well and coped admirably. Alan Wiltshire (the headteacher of St Nicholas' Special School) commented afterwards that the success of the performance could be seen in the audience in so much as he'd rarely seen them so 'quiet' and for so long. They were obviously fascinated with what was going on, as well as enjoying the music. What was easy to think of as an uninterested and noisy audience was in fact the complete opposite!!

Mon 6th April: I was invited to attend the St Peter's talent show, which was to take place the following fortnight. I went along and was interested to note the following observations. Miles and Stephan had made up their own piece of music for the occasion. It was very short, but worthy of being extended. They said they had been working on it since the end of the PRS project. The links were clear, as also when I spoke to another parent who said that her daughter was now making up pieces of music with friends at home, and performing to friends and family.

EXERCISES

I Selective Listening

Explain to the class that you want them to listen to what sounds are around them. For them to listen carefully they must be as quiet as possible. You will clap twice - one to start the listening period and one to mark its end.

After the 'silent' period, students say what sounds they heard.

Ask them to listen out for different types of sounds or sounds from different areas, for example, sounds in the classroom, sounds outside the classroom but in the school, and sounds outside the school buildings.

II Listening and Repeating

One person claps a short rhythm - just a few claps, but something they can repeat.

Another person claps a different rhythm, again something they can repeat.

Exercise repeated with different people. Each must have a different rhythm.

Class must listen out for any contributions which are repeated by anyone else.

III Simple Copying

One person claps a short rhythm - everyone claps it back

IV Extending Rhythms

One person claps a short rhythm - just a few claps, but something they can repeat.

Everyone claps it back.

Next person repeats the rhythm and adds another rhythm onto the end of it.

Everyone claps it back.

Sequence extended until final rhythm is too long.

Repeat using a couple of percussion instruments - one for the first pattern and the other for the copied response.

V Different Sounds

Pass an instrument round a class.

Each pupil is to demonstrate a different sound capable of being produced by the instrument.

When instrument is exhausted, try another.

VI Keeping time

Introduce the idea of a steady pulse.

Pass an instrument round the class. Everyone to tap four slow beats on the instrument before passing it on.

Start by counting "1,2,3,4", followed by tapping out the first four beats. Count the next four beats out loud whilst passing the instrument on. The person receiving the instrument taps out the next four beats so that there is no extra gap between the beats counted and the beats played. Instrument passed round the group in this manner with the aim that the pulse should be unbroken.

Stop the progress of the instrument around the class if anyone speeds up, slows down or fails to come in on beat number one. Ask those participating what the reason is for stopping.

VII Fitting Patterns Over a Steady Beat

Everyone lightly taps a steady beat (on their knees, for example).

This time someone claps a short rhythm and repeats it so that it fits with the steady beat.

When the repeated pattern is steady, everyone joins in.

Try suggesting inserting a gap into each repeated pattern by only clapping every other time. This will give the person clapping a bit more time to think about what s/he is doing.

VIII Using Recorded Music

Play class a short excerpt of music.

Ask questions about what they heard, for example, was it a man or woman singing, when do the drums come in, what instruments can be heard, and so on. Do not give answers immediately.

Play the music again, and let the class discover the answers for themselves.

Ask someone to tap the beat or pulse of the tune.

Move onto them accompanying the piece with percussion instruments if possible.

IX Percussive Patterns

Start with Exercise VIII.

When there are about eight different patterns, introduce instruments.

Ask someone dependable to play the steady beat to keep everyone in time.

Run through patterns again, this time ask the person clapping to choose a percussion instrument to transfer the pattern to. Encourage them to use the instruments inventively.

When a pattern is steady ask two or three others to join in with the same (or complementary) instrument to join in.

When everyone has an instrument and something to play, let the students decide what order the patterns should be played, including how the piece should begin and end.

X Themed Composition

Choose a theme, story, poem, etc.

Discuss the chosen theme in as much detail as possible. Do not move onto working with the instruments until the students have a firm plan for the order of events in their piece.

Ask for suggestions for which parts of the theme would be most suitable for being included in the piece of music.

Discuss each suggestion asking how it might sound. Try to cover as many facets of the sound as is possible, for example, will it be a loud sound, how will the volume change, will it last a long time, what instrument might be appropriate, and so on.

When someone makes a suggestion let them demonstrate their idea on the instrument of their choice. Encourage students to think ideas, not just instruments.

Wherever possible encourage students to extend their ideas, perhaps by repeating them turning them into patterns.

Ask the students to place their musical ideas in the piece. For example, will idea number two follow idea number one, go before it or happen at the same time?

If the class seems to be getting impatient have each suggested idea played by more than one person on similar sounding instruments.

The group of people playing the one idea can be encouraged to divide the sound up between them. Perhaps one person can start and others can join in on each repeated occurrence.

Encourage students to not always just accept their first idea or sound but to use their imaginations and come up with several ideas from which they can make an informed choice.

Try as many offered suggestions as possible. Experimenting is an invaluable part of the music making possible.

PRS OFFICIAL REPORT

Gillian Perkins

2.6 Robert Jarvis creates Adventures in Sound in Canterbury

Project Organiser: Cherry Barnes, teacher St Peter's Methodist Primary and St. Nicholas' Special Schools, Canterbury

2.6.1 Proposal

This was a composition project shared between two schools, with the aim of writing music for performances at the end of term in both schools, thereby to improve teaching skills and pupils' compositional skills and to develop further the integration between the two schools. Robert Jarvis was to work during the Spring term, visiting each school for one day each week.

2.6.2 History

The project came about through the schools' sharing of their music specialist teacher. Cherry Barnes works mostly at St. Nicholas', but she spends some time each week at St. Peter's, where her husband is Head. Integration between the two schools has been on-going, but not attempted before on such a consistent and regular basis.

The pupils ranged in age from 9 to 15, with the St. Peter's children being two classes of Year 5. In St. Peter's and to a lesser extent in St. Nicholas, different members of staff were involved in the sessions, to ensure as wide as possible access to the teacher training potential.

The project had a slow uncertain start. Its original plan was for the autumn term and involved students from Christ Church College, Canterbury. Due to funding uncertainties - it proved very difficult to secure support for a project based on only two schools - the project was delayed until the Spring, and in the event the college students were not involved. Robert invited various visiting musicians into his work, more to give them experience and insight into his methods than to enhance the sessions themselves.

There was extensive media coverage of the project, which Robert masterminded sympathetically and sensibly. The project featured in the Spring 1998 issue of *Sounding Board* (published by Sound Sense). The final performances were attended by parents from both schools, and children from schools were totally integrated into the performance of each others' compositions. Some of these were songs, others were depictions of rain or linked to the idea of Transport, not merely in a literal sound-picture sense, but in a developed musical framework.

2.6.3 Finance

Income £ Expenditure £

Paul Hamlyn Foundation	1000	Robert Jarvis (@ £150 per day)	3000
Schools' contributions in kind	1400	Provision of staff cover	1400
PRS	<u>2000</u>		
	Total 4400		Total 4400

This is by far the most generously funded of all the projects this year in terms of the PRS' proportion of support.

2.6.4 Comment

In effect this project was organised by Robert Jarvis. He masterminded the application, the fund-raising and has co-ordinated the evaluation. [The results have been very well documented with detailed notes of each of Robert's sessions](#), showing exactly how he managed the integration of mainstream and special needs' education. There are also significant statements from the teachers involved, some of which have been published elsewhere. They underline their commitment to this type of work, not just for its musical benefits, but also for the benefits they have observed in children's general abilities.

"Robert Jarvis' method of teaching is worthy of detailed mention. His 'laid back' style belies the months of careful preparation he has already put into this project. He sits on the classroom floor with a circle of children and his initial stimulus can be as simple as "Err...we've got to make up some music....anyone got an idea?" By immediately handing responsibility for both the process and the product to the children he ensures maximum 'ownership' of each composition. As children offer their suggestions each is discussed and perhaps refined by the whole group.....The composition produced at the end is very honestly the children's piece; they have not been guided to compose what the adult composer wanted....Children feel so fully involved that control and discipline have been perfect: behaviour has simply not been an issue.

"Not only is each composition genuinely the work of the group but each individual contribution is truly the offering of that person. This aspect of Robert's work is particularly evident in the shared sessions with the St. Nicholas children. Here an educationally very disparate group where some of the members can scarcely move or see, produces music which utilises the best abilities of each child and no special value is placed on the more complex contributions....This experience has already moved and humbled every teacher who has observed sessions, all have remarked upon the fact that even the children's very early compositions are rational, well-organised and tuneful. Co-operation between individuals and schools has grown significantly, and examples of practical un-demeaning care between pupils of barely nine years old have proliferated. When observing this kind of activity there is an unmistakable feeling that this is very much what education should be about." [Jonathan Barnes, Headteacher St. Peter's School]

This 'laid-back' approach rested on some very careful planning. I learnt on my visits that Robert was never his most communicative before a session; he used the time to work out meticulously how he was going to structure the next hour, by setting out particular instruments, thinking about what technical games to use and so on. (I am not saying other composers don't do that kind of work; his was simply more visible and transparent.) His notes give examples of how he set the parameters differently each time, to make sure the individual pieces were distinct and therefore more memorable alongside the other music created. Every lesson included recording, both to underline the sense of achievement, but also as an aide-memoire, which was shared between Robert and the teachers, and was used to ensure an efficient start to the session when the work might be further extended or refined. All of this background material and preparation took a lot of time, a good deal of it way beyond the time allocated to the project on the strict numbers of days approach. (It is extremely rare to find examples of that kind of time-keeping in any PRS project!)

Jonathan Barnes also writes about the contribution of this type of music class to the general curriculum. See 3.1.2. I cannot resist quoting his last paragraph here:

"I am confident that this ten weeks will be remembered by these children for ever and make a lasting impression on their lives and attitudes. I am not sure I could say that of any of the lessons I will give in Literacy Hour!" (The project coincided with announcements of the new literacy and numeracy campaigns.)

Anyone watching the final performance will have slightly different memories: the standard of music making was very high; very few of the children played an instrument, but the amount of music they were able to play from memory was extraordinary. The different pieces were quite distinct. One had grown from its early beginnings when Robert had played Steve Reich's *Different Trains* whilst another was a development of name game from St. Nicholas at the very beginning of the project. Above all I remember how much everyone enjoyed doing it. One of the pieces was directed by a St. Nicholas' pupil, and his face was sheer delight at being in charge. It was a potent example to all the parents there, and for the St. Peter's children, to see what so-called 'disabled' children are capable of achieving, and at their shared capacity for involvement and enjoyment.

From the individual teachers has come plenty of positive feed-back on what they have learnt. All of them comment on the value of the Inset session they had together at the start, if only to say that it was an eye-opener, and not long enough. They have asked for more input to help them move on from the project.

"It has been interesting as a teacher to see a different approach to composition. Robert's approach is almost completely child centred. They choose individually and jointly which instruments to play, with who and when to play them. They are encouraged to evaluate their performances and to amend them. I will now try as a result of this to loosen up my own teaching methods and direct the children less. This takes less courage than I thought. Robert did not look stressed." [Cherry Barnes]

Cherry also makes the point that Robert learnt from the project; his early sessions at St. Nicholas were pitched too high for the pupils, but that he was very ready to take

advice and help from the staff and assistants there. "We are all able to learn from each other".

Robert has written about the role of a composer in the classroom, in particular against the background of falling musical skills amongst pupils in general. His comments are not directed at these schools at all, and since they have far wider relevance to Composers in Education as a whole, they are more relevant to the general section of this report. See 3.2.3.

2.6.5 Summary

This was a small-scale, very well thought-out project. It has made an important contribution to the social understanding and liaison between these two schools. They were fortunate to have someone like Robert to encourage them into the project. He was very good at the job. It was only made possible by exceptional support from the PRS.

Gillian Perkins - Extract from "A Report for the Performing Right Society"