ANNA MEREDITH (b.1978)

Connect It

Focus of Lesson
- Introduction to the piece
- Raising awareness of contemporary music
- Introducing the body as a musical instrument
- Introducing the concept of a musical canon

Key Vocabulary
- Genre: a specific type of music, e.g. film music, pop music, classical music
- Canon: where two or more parts perform the same melody or sound, but at different times
- Pulse: a regular musical beat

Try to introduce the above terms and their meanings to pupils during the lesson.

LESSON

Introduction
Music isn’t just a thing of the past, it wasn’t all composed hundreds of years ago. Composers are still writing music today. They are often inspired by the past, but they’re also experimenting with new musical genres, new styles and techniques, and new sounds. Technology has enabled this to some extent, but a lot of this new music goes back to the fundamentals; using music and movement, as well as our own bodies and voices to create the piece. Connect It is one example of this, written especially for Ten Pieces.

Anna Meredith is a young, Scottish composer, and writes all sorts of music, in many different genres. When Anna was asked to write this piece, she chose to use the canon structure as the foundation. A canon is where two or more instruments, voices or sounds play the same music, but starting at different times. This compositional technique has been around for more than 500 years, but is still widely used in contemporary music.

This piece involves aural and visual elements, and invites children to explore the sounds that their bodies are capable of making. In this piece, human beings are the instruments – a human orchestra has been created.

Listen to and watch the whole piece. Discuss with the pupils which parts of the body are being used to create the sounds that they are hearing? Can they demonstrate these sounds?

Play a game with pupils, to increase their understanding of body percussion. Count a slow four – 1, 2, 3, 4 – to set the pulse. Then replace these four counts with four sounds or actions. For example, clap four times, click fingers four times or stamp feet four times. Encourage the pupils to immediately copy what you have done.
To increase difficulty, perform your four actions, and then move directly on to your next four actions. While you are performing your new four actions, the pupils should remember what your previous actions were and copy these. So, they will be doing something different to you. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 x clap</td>
<td>4 x clap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x finger click</td>
<td>4 x finger click</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x stamp</td>
<td>4 x stamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x tap head</td>
<td>4 x tap head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x slap thigh</td>
<td>4 x slap thigh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explain** the structure of a Canon, and how different sounds and different sections of the piece all connect to one another to form the complete work. This compositional technique enables new patterns and shapes to be formed, and generates the energy and movement in the music.

**Create** a short piece using solely body percussion. Ask pupils to work in groups of four and to select four different body percussion sounds. Pupils should each demonstrate these sounds and then work together to decide in which order they will each perform these sounds. It is a good idea to encourage them to start simply, perhaps with one person making one sound, and to add to this until all members of the group are performing together.

**Perform** this work to the rest of the group, and discuss ways in which the piece could be developed using other sounds. Which is the most creative piece of music, and why? How important is a steady pulse throughout?

**Extension work**
Pupils can add to their body percussion creations by adding vocal sounds. Humming, shouting, whispering and popping sounds would all work well in this context. Once again, show the film to the pupils to see how the voice is incorporated halfway through, and how it also follows the Canon structure.

**Learning Outcomes**
- Appreciation of the contemporary music genre
- Understanding how your body works in a musical context
- Understanding how imitation and repetition are fundamental to music
- Understanding the importance of pulse to pull together musical sounds