



**Rosie Adediran**

**Create Music**

**One Voice Digital Festival of Singing**

**Demystifying Songwriting**

rosie.adediran@gmail.com

@Rosie\_Ade

www.londonrhymes.com

www.youtube.com/londonrhymes

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# Why create new music?

To **reinforce learning**: we know that young children learn more effectively through rhyme and melody, rather than just the spoken word.



A unique way of bringing together the **mind and the body**: Carl Orff (1895-1982) was a firm believer in the importance of teaching children music through the mind and the body. He developed ideas that connected singing, movement and acting.



Sparkling the **imagination**: something children have in abundance! Embrace their ideas - incorporating them into music is a wonderful way to celebrate their innate creativity.



Musicality is an **intrinsic part of being human**: vocal communication uses elements of music such as pitch, rhythm and timbre. By using musical tools in imaginative or storytelling activities (like vocalisation, sound play, motifs, dynamics etc. to heighten expression or suspense) we're enhancing what is already intrinsically happening.



# Warming up

## Movement / sound

Pass the [...] round the circle

'Freeze'!

Call and response - using body sounds

'Freeze'!

Listening and moving

Adding movement / actions



# Sound / voice experiments

To warm up the voice, as well as encourage freedom and creativity:

- Vocal doodle, scribbles.
- Call and response - then hand it to a pupil
- Building patterns of sounds and putting them together - make it a 'magic spell' or do the sequence as a round, in two groups.
- Create a 'soundscape' - a rainforest, a musical machine, a thunderstorm. Become a 'conductor' and then hand it over
- Passing the sound ball – passing wobbly jelly, passing firecrackers...
- A Mexican wave of sound / movements - relate it to your theme

**Try to connect the warm up to the theme of your songwriting activity**



# Rhythm games

- **Name game.** Making their names into rhythms! Choose your favourite name rhythms and put them into a sequence. Then clap the sequence, use body percussion or sing them.
- Any **phrase** can become a rhythm to explore. This could be the answer to a question ('how are you feeling today?') or a phrase from a book you are reading. Clap the rhythm, or find a melody that you like to sing it! You can remove the words so you're just left with the rhythm.
- Use a simple **drum loop** as an accompaniment to chant, clap or sing rhythms on top of.
- '**Circle reading rhythm**' game. For example, if you're wearing shoes with laces, the rhythm is... If you're wearing trainers, the rhythm to clap is ...Try varying the order of children and 'read' the rhythm.
- **Build a rocket!** Throw a series of sounds or words into a hat. Choose them at random and put them into an order that you like.

# Toolkit

We will consider:

- Themes for songwriting
- Exploring lyrical content
- Musical elements
- Where should I start?



Firstly, can we consider: what makes music, or a 'song'? Let's try and broaden and challenge our understanding. Consider this:

**“[sound is music] when whoever makes it and/or whoever listens decides that it is music” (Young, 2019)**

No idea is a bad idea.



# Themes

Inspiration for songwriting can come from anywhere. It could be an activity in and of itself. Or you may be wanting to connect a song to a topic you are already exploring in another area of the curriculum.

Here are some ideas:

- A painting, or picture (*what's happening in the picture? What is the character feeling? What might have happened to them? How does the painting make you feel?*)
- A book you are reading in class - *could a song express a point in the story, or a character, or a feeling?*
- A poem - *this could offer some words to put to a melody*
- A topic relating to another area of curriculum. This could be anything! Why not write a song or a piece of music about a volcano eruption?
- Your class, or group identity. What's the name of the class? What makes their class special?



# Content



**Instrumental music / vocal music** - is your piece a 'song' or is it an instrumental piece, or does it incorporate both? No rules!

**Mind mapping** - do a big brainstorm of all the ideas from the group relating to the theme you've chosen. This could be on sticky notes which you can move around, or on the whiteboard - and could be text, images or diagrams! Circle your YES words or phrases - ones that definitely need to be in the song!

**Storyboarding** - put a series of ideas into an order that you agree with the group. Do this more than once - each time you can refine the ideas even more. This will reflect the journey of the music or song.

**Consequences** - great to develop a fantastic and often silly story! Children work in groups, and respond to a question or statement given by you. It could be 'finish this sentence'.... or 'how did ... feel when...?' What colour was the dragon's skin? After each answer that the group gives, they fold the paper over and hand it over to the next group. You'll end up with some fantastic ideas to use in your piece.

**Creating lines of lyrics** - from any combination of the above exercises can come your lyrics! There could be two, or four short lines. They don't have to rhyme! Can you chant them?

## 3. Toolkit

# Musical elements

## Vibe

Understanding what the children think the 'vibe of the piece is is important! What could the music sound like? Use simple musical words that the children will know already (loud, quiet) but also other words such as bouncy, sad - anything! This will help you get a feel for what they want the music to sound like.

**loud!** **fun** **bumpy** **slow** **sad** **stompy**

## Rhythm

You might want to return to some of the rhythm warm up ideas to generate rhythmic patterns. If you already have lines of lyrics, then always start by chanting them in different rhythms in different ways - try it out!

They don't need to all 'become' melodies - they might stay as chants or raps.

Try other ways of using words - whispered, or in a mexican wave, or shouted! Take your cues from the ideas that the children had about what the music should sound like in each section.

# Musical elements

## Melody

- Depending on the age of the children, enjoy the musical freedom that can come so naturally to them! Some children might respond well to being asked directly 'how these words might sound when we sing them'.
- Play! Games. Become detectives, and use the below code combined with an instrument like a glockenspiel to come up with melodies using simple, short words. What does the word 'CAT' sound like when you use the code? Maybe that is the start of your melody for your song about Mog.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	a	b	c	d	e

## Reworking an existing melody

You can start a piece with an existing well known melody too. Here are some simple ideas to try, though the first 3 could also become a round too - upping the challenge of what might be a 'simple' melody for the group.

Some ideas: London's burning, Frere Jacques, I hear thunder, Here we go round the mulberry bush Row row your boat.. and many more!

# Musical elements

## Structure

Be guided by the children but ensure that there is plenty of repetition! There can be multiple verses, but the lyrics don't have to change. Here are some examples:

- V1 - Chorus - V2 - Chorus - breakdown, rap or quiet chorus - Chorus (pop style structure)
- V1 - V2 - V3 - V4 (folk structure)
- A section, B section, C section, A section
- or something totally different!

## Use a 'Graphic score'

Use colours, pictures, lines or words, and symbols. Get creative! This can give the group something tangible to follow. As your piece progresses and changes, you can edit and adapt it. This is particularly useful when creating music with instruments as well as with vocals.



# Routes

Where do you start? Where do you go next?! This will really depend on your group, and the theme that you select. Here are a couple of possible routes, with different starting points:

## Where the theme is totally new:



## Where you already have lyrical content (i.e. from poem or story).



# Using instruments



## How can using instruments aid songwriting?

- Physicality/play
- Immediate, instinctive sound
- Addition of pulse/rhythm/texture
- Scaffolding
- Access point
- Conducting - gives children the chance to direct



## Tools

- Creating 'atmosphere' - how can we make a scary sound?
- Use a drone - this is usually one long note repeated throughout part of a piece that helps to scaffold the song.
- An ostinato is a pattern of notes that repeats.
- You can use some of the rhythms you've created earlier, playing them on the instruments.
- A 'sound' like a gong or a whistle, can signal the next part of the music.
- You can follow your graphic score

# Don't forget!

No idea is a bad idea

**The aim is that every child will contribute, in different ways.**

Autonomy. Get them working in groups! The children are undoubtedly less intimidated by creating new music than us!

**Everyone's contributions are respected by the group**

Group decision making - this can be tricky! Feel free to try things in different ways and then vote on the ultimate choice!

**Listen, repeat, everyone joins in**



# **Warming up**





# **Toolkit**



# Instruments

