



Earth by Hans Zimmer BBC Ten Pieces Commission

Classroom resource for students who are deaf or hard of hearing

For:

- Key Stage 2 in England and Wales
- Second Level, P5-P7 in Scotland
- Key Stage 1/Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland

Adapted for students who are deaf or hard of hearing by Ruth Montgomery

Background

The composer: Hans ZIMMER (b. 1957)

- German film composer
- Has composed more than 150 films scores and been nominated for ten Oscars
- Is self-taught
- Loves using technology, synthesizers, samplers and computers as well as the orchestra

The music: Earth

- Written especially for BBC Ten Pieces
- Draws upon the soundworld he used for Blue Planet II and Planet Earth II – two of his most popular scores
- This isn't a film score (it wasn't written for a movie) but it does sound very 'filmic'

Trailblazer: Film composer Hans Zimmer uses all sorts of different techniques to create music. He has helped shape the sound of today's film, TV and games music

LESSON 1

Understanding sound and emotion

1. Prepare your class

Explain to your class that you are going to begin a six-week music project focusing on a fantastic piece of work by film music composer Hans Zimmer. They may already be aware of films such as 'Madagascar', 'The Lion King', 'Kung Fu Panda' written by Zimmer along with many, many soundscapes for other movies, computer games and TV shows. Play some of these clips and discuss the role of music in film.

2. Warm up

Before they get their hands on the instruments get your students up, shaking their bodies and stretching. Start by asking your students to tap their heads 10 times, then shoulders, knee and toes. Next do it in quick succession of 8,6,4,2,1. How fast can your students do it?

3. Look at your instrument collection

Explore and play with the varied range of pitched and unpitched instruments. Look at instruments that are capable of making a continuous sound as well as short blasts. Explore textures and discover high and low sounds.

4. Music and emotions

Now let's explore the emotional aspects of the music. To do this we start by thinking about the dynamic range – from very quiet to loud. Next is tempo – playing something slowly and fast. Explore how that affects dynamics.

Can you play something happy and sad? NB: It needs to have contrast, refer to the box below for some ideas.

<i>Examples are:</i> <i>Happy</i> <i>Calm/blissful</i> <i>Lively/joyful</i>	<i>Sad</i> <i>Angry/annoyed/frustrated</i> <i>Sleepy/dreamy</i>
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5. Creating our own musical idea to film.

Choose any film without dialogue relating to earth/people/animal ideas and turn off the sound. Choose one or two short clips to play with lasting 60 seconds – for example:

- A rocket lifting off to space (counting down from 10-0 and lift off)
- Lots of people crossing the road in New York or Tokyo (beeping horns, walking feet)
- Waterfalls and rivers, fish swimming by in the vast ocean.

- The weather – rain, thunderstorms, rainbows and sunshine.

What soundscapes will you make to match the energy and ideas that you can see in the short clip? This can be illustrated with body percussion, the sound of voices and the instruments you all picked up earlier.

7) FINALLY, recap the student's activity today and discuss how music is often being used to create emotional dimension and impact to support a visual story.

LESSON 2

Introduction to Earth

1. Prepare your class

Recap the last session. What can they remember about the role of music in films? What role did the instruments play in the emotions felt and the soundscape? Get their imagination and ideas flowing as well as conversations going as you put words or any drawings from their feedback onto the wall.

2. Watch the BBC Ten Pieces Trailblazers film. Choose the one with Layla presenting the music in sign language with text narrative and have a discussion about what you have just seen. Explain that the music has been written for an orchestra and choir using lots of different instruments to create an exciting sound landscape of our Earth.

3. Music, ideas and drawing

Watch the film again and ask the class as they watch and listen to draw on a large sheet of paper what they think the music is describing. Have lots of colouring pens, pencils, crayons handy. Encourage your class to let their imaginations run wild. They might like to focus on the opening of Zimmer's piece and draw the atmosphere around Earth – space, stars and other planets floating outside of their circle. Or they may choose to focus on the middle section of the piece and draw the movement and action of our planet – i.e. the flock of birds, large whale or the last part where language is evolving and ever changing. Split your students into groups of three. It is important for them to note that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' ways of drawing music – but to enjoy the lines, shapes, flow and pattern. It does not have to be literal, but they may want to be literal.

4. Watch and listen several times and encourage your class to focus on a different section of Zimmer's music and each time ask them to add something different to their artwork. Ask them to think about colours relating to feelings, mood and changes.

It may help to show them images of Earth from Google Maps (can't mention Google). Make sure the view is switched to satellite mode and then type in the school's address into the search bar. Zoom out over and over until you reach the view of Earth from space.

FINALLY How does this orchestral 'Earth' piece compare with the animated film? What did their picture look like? Keep these pictures and take photos of them as a backdrop for their concert at lesson 6.

LESSON 3

Call and response

1. Warm-up: 2 different activities

- Call and Response
- Shimmering Paper

Call and Response:

Sit around in a semi-circle and have the class follow you until everyone is clapping steadily in regular time. Ask the class a question in a musical manner and get them responding with their own answers.

For example:

In spoken English: *'Hello, what's your name?'* A: Andrew *clap* *clap*

Signing in BSL *'Hello, name what?'* A: Andrew *clap* *clap*

Explain that everyone answers the same question differently. This is a call and response.

Shimmering Paper:

Get a piece of paper or an old newspaper and shake/flap it about – showing different levels of shaking – soft, small and quiet shaking to large, wide and loud ones. Bring the class back to creating a little, gentle, shaky sound.

2. **Explain that you have just made a 'shimmer'** – similar to the sound at the beginning of Zimmer's piece. Show them the BBC Ten Pieces Trailblazers film 'Earth' again and see how a shimmering sound is being made by the strings. Listen to the shaking, shimmering sounds!

Explain more about the purpose of shimmering sounds – What does it do?

Suggested words: creating atmospheric sounds, sun-rising and sparkling over the water, ambience, stirring, waking, mysterious, unknown, starting and growing.

Other ideas: small, anticipating, waiting, wondering, suspension

3. **Look at your instrument collection.** Ask the class to suggest some unpitched instruments to join in with the shimmer – these should be instruments capable of making a soft, continuous sound or capable of being played in such a manner (i.e. a drum can be tapped lightly with the fingers instead of hit with a beater). Add some of these suggestions to your class shimmer.
4. **Now try adding some pitched instruments.** Use these notes:

(Treble clef – G B D)

The best pitched instruments are the ones that show higher or lower pitch in size – for example hand/bar chimes or xylophones as the length of the bar demonstrates pitch differences – short is high, long is low sounds. The piano could work too.

- 5. Talk about the horn solo** – Highlight the role of the horn. What did it do? It played 4 notes/sounds - a call out to the world.

Play slowly – G A B D (low)

How do you acknowledge this call? What sound would you like to use as a response? Remember the warm up game? Ask your class for ideas.

- 6. FINALLY**, put all of the ideas together. The shimmer should be played all the way through while you alternate between the two melodies on top. You might want to appoint a conductor to help with this. Your class could look at some of the other Ten Pieces orchestral films to see what the role of the conductor is! Encourage your performers to keep lots of space and stillness between the melodies and not move too quickly, just like in Zimmer's piece. Write the structure of the introduction down on a large sheet of paper at the end of the lesson, you will return to it later in the project. Call this your 'shimmering introduction with call and response'.

LESSON 4

'People on Earth' (three note pattern)

1. Warm-up

Work in a room with a large space and spread out. Ask your students to walk around the room.

- Hold movement to four beats for semibreve, known as 'stance-standing'
- Hold movement to two beats for minims, known as 'strolling'
- Hold movement to one beats for crotchets, known as 'walking'
- Quick steps for quavers known as 'running'

Ask a 'leader' to walk around the room slowly and everyone moves and copies. When there is a change of walking speed, everyone either speeds up or slow down! The class can learn about tempo and rhythmic changes through this activity.

- ### 2. Remind your class that Zimmer's piece gets a bit 'busier' during the middle.
- Ask your class to think of what part of the piece Earth could be – maybe they will say 'people moving around' or 'cars'. Zimmer uses just three pitches during this section so ask your class to choose three notes from the following scale:

(Treble clef) G A B C D

For example, your class may choose G, A, C (3 note pattern). Make sure that everyone with a pitched instrument can play the chosen pitches.

- ### 3. Practise
- playing through your chosen notes encouraging everyone who has pitched instrument to play each note as follows:

Semibreves (4 beats each)

Minims (2 beats each)

Crotchets (1 beat each)

Quavers (1/2 beat each)

<p><i>Remind them the 'standing' 'strolling' 'walking' and 'running' warm up activity they did for warming up earlier and relating them to semibreves, crotchets etc.</i></p>

4. Explain

Zimmer has all of these different note lengths (durations) layered up in his piece. Ask the class to suggest which instruments should play different durations. For example, they should consider which instrument makes the best long notes (semibreves) – perhaps they will decide on violins for this – and which instrument

makes the 'neatest' short notes (quarters).

5. **Split into four groups based on these decisions** – You will have a semibreve group, a minimum group, a crotchet group and a semiquaver group. The unpitched players will make up the fifth group. Each team must practice their pattern. The unpitched group must create a short, neat rumble with a crescendo (i.e. moving from soft to loud).
6. **Bring the class back together** and hear each group one by one giving some gentle feedback as you go through. Ask the class to come up with an order for the groups so that they create one big piece. The pitched groups must try to fit their rhythms together and to the same pulse (the crotchet group is the most important team as it provides the pulse). The unpitched group is different – they don't have to fit in at all. Their job is to provide a bit of excitement on top of the texture so they can play the rumble whenever they like but perhaps not too often, nor in a rhythmical manner - it needs to come as a surprise.
7. **FINALLY**, fix this structure and practise it. Again, write down carefully what you have done and give it a name such as 'people on Earth'.

LESSON 5

Life on Earth and Structure

1. Warm up: Life on Earth

Begin this lesson by leading a quick brainstorming activity. Ask your class to think of things associated with Earth and make a big list on the board. These can be descriptions of a landscape, or life on the planet, or even scientific facts. Keep them on the wall and refer them as 'Life on Earth' for later.

2. Begin in a large circle with a quick focusing activity to recap all the elements you have made so far. Here's a list:

- Shimmering introduction – quiet shimmer with call and response (lesson 3)
- Three note pattern with four different durations and random rumbles (lesson 4)

3. Get the instruments out and have a play through the piece you worked on in the previous lessons.

Use a large sheet of paper to provide a framework of the music structure/plan.

4. Develop a musical motif from the things on the list you created in the warm up. A motif is the term for a short musical idea. It can be a rhythm, a collection of notes or even a sound effect. This is how Hans Zimmer expanded the middle section known as 'life on Earth'. Refer to the list of things and work within the groups from lesson 3. Encourage your pupils to keep their motifs short and simple and to use the same instruments they have been using so far on the project. They may want to pick up whistles or blow on kazoos for random animal calls, or coconut shells for hooves, low bass sounds for the whale swimming deep in the ocean.

5. Challenge your class to join the sections together to make one big piece. Keep referring back to the large sheet of paper, thinking about this musically but also logistically – can they make the music work without having to move around too much? As usual you may have to try out several different versions until you land upon the best solution. Again, add to the large sheet of paper you have been working on throughout the lessons to keep creating your class composition.

Hans Zimmer uses this shape:

- shimmering introduction
- Call and responses

- Life of Earth (3 note pattern)
- Shimmering returns
- Three note patterns, huge crescendo

...but you don't have to!

6. FINALLY – practise your full piece until it is polished and ready for performance.

LESSON 6

Performance time!

1. **Get the instruments out** and have a run through of the piece you created by the end of the last lesson.
2. **Give some extra thought to the ending.** Zimmer ends his piece with a huge crescendo, should your piece end like that or can you think of another way?

3. Explain

You are going to perform your new work to another class (You can create a performance with teachers, parents or students. Whatever works best). Spend some time arranging your musicians so that everyone can be seen and there is a clear area for the audience. The best shape to perform in is often a large semicircle (like the orchestra layout) but you must make sure that everyone can see everyone else and any conductors or signallers are at the front.

You might like to hang some of your artwork from lesson 2 on the wall as a backdrop to your 'orchestra'.

4. **Before your audience arrives,** have a discussion about dynamics, i.e. loud and soft. Remind them of the warm up game in lesson 2, so that they can get ready to perform. Raise your hands up and down for volume control and show facial expression for emotional sensitivity. Rehearse the moments when the piece has a crescendo (soft to loud) or decrescendo (loud to soft) or any other dynamic changes. This will make the piece sound a lot more polished. If you have a list of events on the board, write the dynamic changed alongside them. Here's a list of the symbols musicians use for this:

pp pianissimo (very soft)

p piano (soft)

f forte (loud)

ff fortissimo (very loud)

Crescendo – gradually getting louder

Diminuendo – gradually getting softer

5. **FINALLY,** - put on a concert for your audience. Select volunteers to introduce the music and talk a little about Hans Zimmer (you could even watch his piece) then perform your new piece.

Enjoy!