

## **Abdelazer – Rondeau**

### PRIMARY CLASSROOM LESSON PLAN

For:

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

*Written by Rachel Leach*

#### *Background*

**The composer: Henry PURCELL (1659 - 1695)**

- English composer
- Wrote for theatre, church and royalty
- Died young and was mourned as ‘very great master of music’

**The music: Abdelazer - Rondeau**

- Written in 1695
- ‘Abdelazer’ or ‘The Moor’s Revenge’ was a play that Purcell wrote the music for
- This ‘Rondeau’ (a piece with a recurring section) was used by Benjamin Britten in 1945 for his ‘Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra’

*Pronunciation:*

Abdelazar – Rondeau

**AB-duhl AY-zuhr - RON-doh**

- a as in hat
- ay as in day
- o as in pond

## *Learning outcomes*

### Learners will

- Listen and reflect on a piece of orchestral music
- Create graphic scores
- Learn to play a tune
- Create a 'rondo' and variations inspired by Purcell / Britten
- Perform as an ensemble
- Begin to learn simple staff notation
- Learn musical language appropriate to the task

### *Curriculum checklist*

- play and perform in ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

## *Glossary of music terms used*

<b>Graphic score</b>	a visual (often diagrammatic) representation of music. There are no rules for graphic scores, the composer (i.e. you!) invents them
<b>Pitched percussion</b>	percussion instruments that can play different pitches – xylophones, glockenspiels, chime bars etc.
<b>Rondo</b>	(or Rondeau) A music shape with a recurring theme. The theme is alternated with contrasting 'episodes'
<b>Tutti</b>	literally means all together but is used in music to mean 'everyone'
<b>Unpitched percussion</b>	percussion instruments that make sounds that don't have a specific pitch (or 'note') – drums, shakers, woodblocks, tambourine etc.
<b>Variation</b>	another word for 'version'

## *Resources required*

- A4 paper and pens
- Classroom percussion instruments and any other instruments your children might be learning

*This scheme of work is plotted out over six lessons. Feel free to adapt it to suit your children and the resources you have available.*

## **The six lessons at a glance**

### **Lesson 1**

- Activities: Watch the film and discuss  
Listen and describe a piece of music  
Make a graphic score
- Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory  
Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians  
Develop an understanding of the history of music

### **Lesson 2**

- Activities: Interpret a graphic score
- Curriculum link: Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression  
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

### **Lesson 3**

- Activities: Learn to play a melody  
Orchestrate a melody  
Read notation
- Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory  
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

## **Lesson 4**

Activities: Invent a new section of music  
Structure ideas into a rondo

Curriculum link: Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music  
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

## **Lesson 5**

Activities: Invent new musical ideas to create a variation upon a theme  
Structure ideas together into a bigger piece

Curriculum link: Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music  
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

## **Lesson 6**

Activities: Structure all ideas into a piece  
Perform the piece to an audience  
Use technical terminology where appropriate

Curriculum link: Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression  
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

# LESSON 1

## Watching and listening

1. **Prepare your class.** Explain to your class that you are going to begin a 6-week music project focusing on an important piece of music by a composer called Purcell

Explain further that Purcell was a very famous English composer from way back in the 1600s. He wrote a lot of music for the theatre at a time when it was the only form of entertainment, so everyone knew his music.

2. **Watch the film**

Watch the [Purcell Ten Pieces film](#) and afterwards have a class discussion about what you have just seen. You might like to ask the following questions –

- Did you like the film?
- What was your favourite part?
- What stories did you hear in the music?

3. **Listening task.** Listen to the beginning of Purcell's piece again, just the first 15 seconds or so. Explain that this tune returns several times during the whole piece. It begins with four big 'steps' and a flourish. Ask your children to invent a gesture for the beginning of it, perhaps something big and grand.
4. **When this is decided on** play the whole of Purcell's piece again and challenge the children to do the gesture every time they hear the theme. (It occurs five times). Talk about how this theme returns and other contrasting music alternates with it. Maybe listen again and encourage your children to create contrasting gestures during the sections when they don't hear the main theme
5. **Give out large paper and pens and split the class into about four groups.** Ask each group to draw the main theme (just the first 15 seconds of the piece). They will be quite used to it by now. Challenge them to draw a shape or a series of shapes to match the sounds that they hear.
6. **FINALLY** – compile their ideas into one big diagram on the board. Explain that this is a '**graphic score**' – a diagram that represents the music. Remember to save the children's 'scores' for next time

## LESSON 2

### Graphic scores

1. **Warm-up.** Clear the classroom and ask your children to stand in a circle. Look at the big class 'score' you made during last lesson. Ask the children to suggest some body percussion sounds to match the shapes on the board. For example, they might decide that a block means 'stamp foot', a wiggly line means 'tap your knees' etc.
2. **As a full class** work out a body percussion piece to match the score and perform it. This doesn't have to sound anything like the Purcell - you are interpreting the shapes on the board, not recreating his piece.
3. **Have a chat** about how you might interpret this score using whatever instruments you have available and perhaps try out some ideas. You can use classroom percussion, any orchestral instruments that the children might be learning, hand-made instruments or even voice for this
4. **Now split the class back into the four groups from last time.** Give out the graphic scores they made but make sure that no one has their own score, (i.e. they all have someone else's score). Challenge them to make a new piece by transforming the shapes on the page into sounds, either on body percussion or instruments. Give them at least 10 minutes to do this and challenge yourself to leave them alone to get on with it!
5. **Bring the groups back together** and hear their pieces. Encourage the composers of each piece (i.e. those who made the score) to give feedback to the performers of each piece (i.e. those you interpreted it)
6. **FINALLY** - decide on an order for these pieces and have a go at moving from piece to piece without too much of a gap. Or, put all the pieces together to make one big piece using suggestions\* from the children. Encourage the children to write down what they have done and who played what

*\*When asking the children for composing suggestions, always try out each idea in turn before it gets too complicated. Once you have tried and heard an idea, it is easier to talk about whether it worked or not*

## LESSON 3

### Purcell's tune

1. **Warm-up.** Begin your session in a circle again with a quick warm up such as copy me (below) to get your children ready for some body percussion.

*Here's how to play 'Copy me'*

- Explain that the game starts when you say: 'copy me' and finishes when you say: 'stop'
- Say 'copy me' and clap a pattern or make a gesture. The children must copy what you do (fast, energetic gestures will wake the children up, slow, gentle ones will calm them down)
- When you have done enough, simply say 'stop'

2. **Teach them the following body percussion piece.** You can do this by breaking it into chunks and playing 'copy me' again.

Say: STAMP KNEES CLAP 'ooooo' Clap (or say): "This is a rhy- thm to clap" x4 rumble clap clap rumble clap clap rumble STAMP (on knees)

3. **When this is good and strong** add some instruments to it. Work slowly and give out instruments to those who are working well and making good suggestions.

**Here is an 'easy' version for classroom percussion -**

pitched perc: D F A D unpitched perc: "This is a rhy thm to clap" x4 rumble hit hit rumble hit hit rumble hit

**Here's a version for absolute beginners –**



Musical notation for absolute beginners, consisting of two staves of music in 6/4 time. The first staff contains notes for D, F, A, D, followed by a series of eighth notes for A, then a series of eighth notes for G, and finally a series of eighth notes for F. The second staff contains notes for E, E, E, E, E, E, F, E, E, E, E, E, A, D.

**Here is the full version, with bassline.** Some or all of it might be playable by children learning instruments



Musical notation for the full version with bassline, consisting of two systems of piano accompaniment in 6/4 time. Each system has a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first system shows a melody in the treble and a bassline in the bass. The second system continues the melody and bassline.

4. **FINALLY** – make a class version of the tune using a combination of body percussion and instruments. You could even add voices! Keep a track of what you have done by writing it down or recording the final run-through



## LESSON 4

### Composing a Rondeau

1. **Warm up.** Begin this session by recapping the class version of the theme from last week
2. **Explain** that Purcell's full piece has a special shape called **Rondeau** (or, more commonly used, **Rondo**). Play this quick clapping game to illustrate what a rondo is:
  - Clap a short rhythm and ask the class to clap it back.
  - Decide how many times you are going to clap this pattern and practice looping it as a full group. Call this **A**
  - Ask a volunteer to clap something new and immediately afterwards lead the class in clapping **A**
  - Do this several times so that you have this shape:

**A** : Volunteer 1: **A**: Volunteer 2: **A**: Volunteer 3 etc.
  - Ask the group to describe this shape. Perhaps they will say that "A" keeps returning. This is a **Rondo**: one idea repeated with contrasting ideas in between.
3. **Explain** that the class version of Purcell's theme from last lesson is going to be the 'A' section of a new rondo. The task today is to create the other sections to go in between (these are usually called '**episodes**'). To do this, split the class back into their four working groups and set them the following task:
  - Make a short piece, using the same instruments, that features:
    - a. One idea from Purcell's theme
    - b. Something new
    - c. A completely contrasting mood, speed, volume etc.
4. **Bring the class back together** and hear each piece individually. Give some feedback on each one and as a full class decide on the order for the pieces so that you create a **rondo**. (i.e. A: Grp 1: A: Grp 2 etc.). Should you end with 'A' or with one of the groups? Maybe there is a really good alternative ending.
5. **FINALLY – end the session** by playing through your Rondo. Don't worry if this is a bit messy at this stage, it's quite a lot to remember!

## LESSON 5

### Creating a 'variation'

1. **Warm-up.** Once again begin the session with an empty classroom and with the children sitting in a circle on the floor. After a short warm-up and chat about last lesson, **explain** that Purcell's theme was so good that another English composer called **Benjamin Britten** used it in his piece 350 years later.

*You might like to research this on the internet (Britten: Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra) and watch the theme played by full orchestra (again, just the first 15 seconds or so). Ask your children to compare it with the Purcell and maybe make a list of the additional instruments they can hear; Purcell uses just strings and harpsichord, Britten uses a large symphony orchestra with brass, woodwind and percussion alongside the strings*

Britten did an extremely clever thing, he made 13 new versions (**Variations**) of the theme. Each one is for a different instrument or group of instruments from the orchestra and features Purcell's theme cleverly disguised or fragmented.

2. **Challenge the class** to make their own set of variations using this simple method –
  - Get into groups, each group must contain just one type of instrument i.e. all flutes, all tambourines, all voice
  - Think carefully about your instrument: What is it good at? What is it famous for? What do you like to play on it?
  - Choose your favourite section from Purcell's theme – this could be just the first three notes (D, F, A) or just a rhythm etc.
  - Make a completely new piece using this idea and new ideas.
  - Think carefully about the mood and character of your piece and try to get it to match with the character of your instrument
3. **FINALLY - Bring the class back together and decide on an order for the pieces.** Perhaps you'll move from high instruments to low (as Britten does) or soft to loud. Write the order on the board and end the session with a performance. Begin with the full theme played by everyone and then try to cycle through the 'variations' (group pieces) without leaving too many gaps. Make sure to keep a record of the music created so far

## LESSON 6

### Putting it all together

1. **Warm-up.** As usual, begin with a quick focusing warm-up. It might be fun to revisit the body percussion version of Purcell's theme
  
2. **Recap** - ask the children to remind you of all the music they have created during the previous sessions and make a longlist. It should have some (or all) of the following on it -
  - i. The full class theme
  - ii. Graphic score pieces
  - iii. The big rondo
  - iv. The variations
  
3. **Decide as a class which 'movements' (sections) you want in your final piece** and put them into an order. You can discard anything that you didn't like or that will be difficult to put back together. Write this order up on the board for everyone to see and maybe also notate which group plays in which bit. There's an opportunity to teach a great musical word here – '**Tutti**' meaning '**everyone**'
  
4. **Get out the instruments** and allow for a minute or two of chaos as everyone remembers their ideas, individually and in groups, and then rehearse any full class sections. Run through the whole piece without stopping and try to go smoothly from section to section
  
5. **FINALLY** – record your finished piece or perform it to another class

## TAKING IT FURTHER

### Cross-curricular activities

- **LITERACY:** The play that this tune is from - **Abdelazer** or **The Moor's Revenge** - seems to be long lost. Write your own version and decide who or what Purcell's music is describing
- **LISTEN** to Britten's full piece. There is one variation for each orchestral instrument and one for each orchestral section (woodwind, brass, percussion, strings) so it's a great opportunity to explore what makes up an orchestra.
- **SINGING:** Neither Purcell nor Britten used voices in their versions of this tune. Can you turn the melody into a song?

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