TEN PIECES
GET CREATIVE WITH CLASSICAL MUSIC
BBC

Introduction – Gaming Music

Watch the introductory film. Did you recognise this music? The gaming industry is now larger than the movie, television, and music industries combined! By the end of 2024, it was estimated that over 3 billion people participate in gaming.

What can we learn from Laura about the features of effective music for games?
Tick all of the statements below that you think are true:

- Short, memorable melodies

- Music that can be listened to on repeat

- Music that doesn't distract you from the game

- Music that suits the mood and characters in the game

- Different styles to reflect different stages / levels of the game

You are right – all of these are important features of effective gaming music!

Laura describes the game as 'creepy, cute, and funny'. Listen to what she says in the interview from 02:20, and match up the technique she uses with the mood she wants to capture:

|	
Creepy	Mixing in beats from different genres (styles)
Cute	Instruments and techniques associated with 'darker' things
Funny	Simple but catchy melodies

The clever use of musical features can really change the mood and impact of the music. Here are some more details on how you could create different musical moods:

Creating a Villain	**woodwind** instruments **piano** (quiet) dynamics **staccato** (detached) articulation **low-pitched** sounds melodies using notes that are close together – e.g. **chromatic** scales
Creating a Hero	**Brass and percussion** instruments **forte** (loud) dynamics **major** chords melodies using notes that are far apart – e.g. **leaping** up 4 or 5 notes
Creating tension / spooky / peril	**String** instruments **piano** (quiet) dynamics **legato** (smooth) articulation **high-pitched** sounds **trills** and **ostinatos** (repeating patterns)

You will need this information to plan the music for your own game! Listen to the performance of 'Grasswalk' and see if you can notice how Laura uses different instruments, dynamics, and articulation to suit the different moods found in the game.

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Gaming Music – creating characters

1. Create your hero. They should be a small character who lives in a forest world. Draw the character and fill in their profile information – including their musical information.
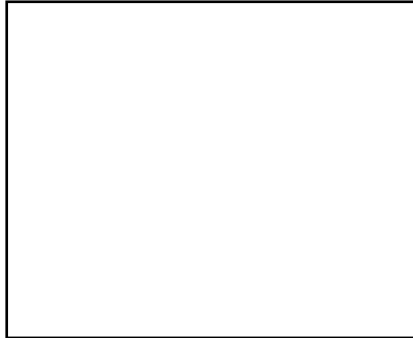
Name _____

Species _____

Weapon (one thrown object only, e.g. apple)

_____

Circle the musical features that would suit your character:

Tempo (speed):   very slow   slow   moderate   fast   very fast

Dynamics (volume):   very quiet   quiet   moderate   loud   very loud

Articulation: **staccato** (spiky / detached sounds)   **legato** (smooth / connected sounds)

Melody: high-pitched   middle range   low-pitched

Key: major (bright, happy-sounding)   minor (dark, sad-sounding)

Which **instrument** would suit your character? _____

2. Create your villain. They should be a large character who is alien to the forest world. Draw the character and fill in their profile information – including their musical information.

Name _____

Species _____

Weapon/s

_____

Circle the musical features that would suit your character:

Tempo (speed):   very slow   slow   moderate   fast   very fast

Dynamics (volume):   very quiet   quiet   moderate   loud   very loud

Articulation: **staccato** (spiky / detached sounds)   **legato** (smooth / connected sounds)

**Melody**:   high-pitched   middle range   low-pitched

Key: major (bright, happy-sounding)   minor (dark, sad-sounding)

Which **instrument** would suit your character? _____

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Gaming Music – creating a soundtrack

You now need the background music for your levels. Background music is called an **underscore.** This will often be a repeating pattern that matches the mood and the action, but doesn't distract from the game. The word for a repeating musical pattern is **ostinato**.

Turn these musical patterns into **ostinatos** by copying the patterns of notes three times (into the empty bars).
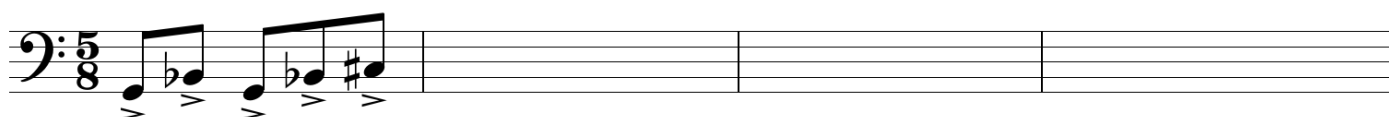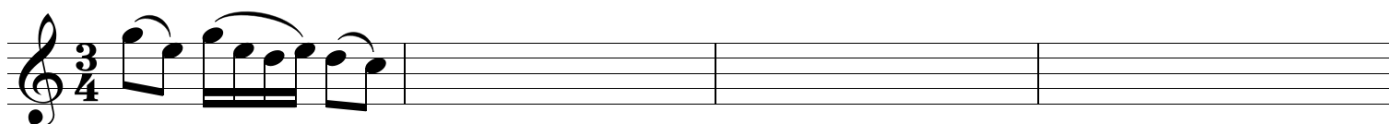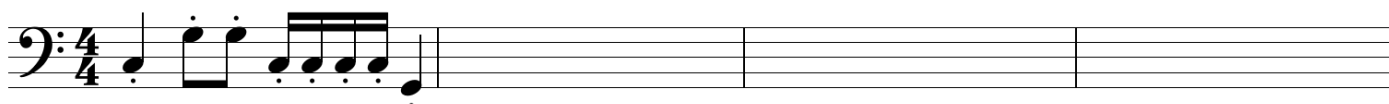
Now imagine a scene to suit each ostinato, based on the information about the music. Jot down your ideas about what these scenes could look like, who might be there, and what might happen.

Ostinato 1: Low-pitched, which could indicate a large size. **Staccato** (detached), which could sound playful. A **steady pulse** that sounds like steps. Big **leaps** between notes, that could indicate something clumsy or funny.

Ostinato 2: **High-pitched**, which could indicate something small or delicate. **Legato** (smooth), which could sound graceful and elegant. **Three** beats in a bar, which could feel calm and relaxed. A **major** key, that would sound bright and happy.

Ostinato 3: **Low-pitched**. **Accented** (played heavily), which could sound aggressive. **Five** beats in a bar, which could feel tense. **Flats** (*b*) and **sharps** (#) adjust the pitch up or down for unpredictability.

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Grasswalk – Quiz Time

The first letter of the answer to each question can be rearranged to reveal a person with an important musical role. Can you work out the hidden word?

1. A member of the woodwind family (*4 letters*): __ __ __ __

2. A musical sound or symbol (*4*): __ __ __ __

3. A large ensemble (group) of musicians (*9*) : __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __

4. Background music that accompanies a scene (*9*): __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __

5. The scale that can be used for a villainous melody (*9*): __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __

6. The highest-pitched brass instrument (*7*): __ __ __ __ __ __ __

7. Percussion players use this to play funky beats (*4 / 3*): __ __ __ __ / __ __ __

8. A low-pitched string instrument (*5*): __ __ __ __ __

9. What is an ostinato? (*9*): A __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ musical pattern

The hidden person is: _____

HINT – they use a baton!

Grasswalk – Creative Responses

COMPOSING – Put some of your ideas for characters and underscores to the test, by recording them into music software such as Garage Band, BandLab, or Chrome Song Maker.

PROGRAMMING / DIGITAL ART – Create your own game or characters for a game using software at school such as Scratch, or create on your own scenes / levels in games you play at home. On paper or in the space below, create a poster to advertise the game you have created:

RESEARCH / PRESENTATION – Find out more about Laura Shigihara, and other successful composers of gaming music, including Jessica Curry, Lena Raine, and Michiru Yamane. Present your findings as a poster, as a spoken presentation, or written down in the form of an interview.