

THE SONG OF THE ELEMENTS

Robot Arwyn and Aled Lloyd Davies



ABOUT THIS SONG

This song was commissioned by CanSing and introduces the musical elements through its lyrics.

THEMES/SUBJECTS

Musical elements/composing/songs

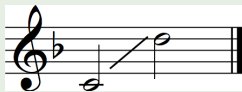
CURRICULUM KEY LINKS

Languages, Literacy & Communication
Expressive Arts

DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

Vocal range

A 9th



Vocal format

Unison/independent parts

Musical elements

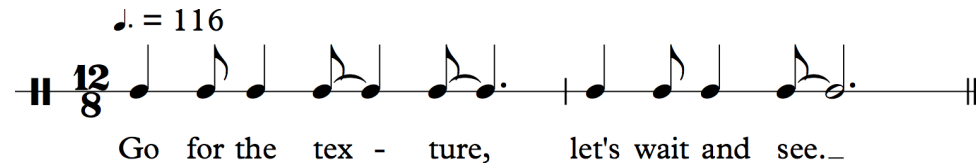
Texture and dynamics

Musical characteristics

Unison and three-part harmony, detailed dynamics on the score

Warm-up Exercises

- Ask learners to breathe deeply and hiss or blow out slowly; count how long they take to blow out. Repeat this exercise, encouraging learners to improve on the previous time.
- Then ask learners to balance on one leg and rotate the other leg in a circular motion, starting with the ankles, then the knees, and finally the hips. They should try this clockwise and then anti-clockwise, before repeating with the other leg.
- Ask learners to sing a scale of C Major (CDEFGABC1), ascending and descending, to the numbers 1 to 8. Replace one of the numbers with a silence and try to perform. Gradually replace more numbers with a silence.
- Demonstrate the characteristic rhythm of the song:



- Ask learners to clap or say this rhythm.

Suggested key links with other Areas, cross-cutting themes &/or local, national and international contexts

- There are many musical elements mentioned in this piece: texture, unison, harmony, melody, pitch, pace, structure, tone, dynamics, pattern, duration, timbre, cadence.
- Explore the definitions of these different elements.
- Can they identify any of them within this piece?
- How are they used to create different effects?
- Listen to a range of pieces and identify the different musical elements mentioned here.

GRADING: CHALLENGING

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Teaching and learning

- 1 Begin by teaching the verse and enjoy singing this expressively.
- 2 Take time to discuss the musical elements as they are introduced, clarifying new words and meanings.
- 3 Use different physical gestures to encourage learners to sing whole phrases in one breath and, in bars 12 and 16, to take note of rests that appear in the middle of phrases.
- 4 Ask learners to join in with the recording on verse 1. Ensure learners follow the melodic line accurately and concentrate on the syncopated rhythms.
- 5 Introduce the melody of the chorus, that is, the top part. If learners struggle with a specific phrase, ask them to listen to you or the track and then join in.
- 6 When learners are familiar and confident with the part and lyrics, encourage them to sing whole phrases in one breath and to sustain the long notes at the end of every phrase.
- 7 You may find that learning the melody is enough for one session and decide to tackle the harmony parts in the chorus in the following session.
- 8 Introduce the second part of the chorus to everyone. Ask learners what they notice about this part. The rhythm is exactly the same as the melody. Also, every phrase starts with both parts singing in unison and ends in harmony. Point out that when singing in harmony, the gap is either two or three notes apart (a 3rd or 4th).
- 9 Give plenty of support to help learners find the notes when singing in harmony.
- 10 When all learners are confident with the harmony part, divide the class into two equal groups. Give one group the melody (Part 1) and the other group the harmony (Part 2).
- 11 Try to perform in two parts with or without the recording. Change the parts round so that everyone has an opportunity to sing each part.

Integral Skills

- This song has two verses and a third harmony part in the chorus. Read through the lyrics of verse 2 and then practise with the recording. When you are happy with both verses and the two-part harmony in the chorus, divide the class into three and introduce the third harmony part to one group.
- Try to perform the chorus in three parts without any accompaniment to encourage learners to listen carefully to the sound of the harmony. Words need to be very clear, with strong consonants and focused vowels.
- Try to vary the dynamics in the performance. There are detailed dynamic markings on the score, for example, crescendos (gradually getting louder) in verse 1 – bars 12, 18 and 22. In verse 2, the lyrics refer to different dynamics – bars 58 to 66. Every chorus is marked as *mf* (moderately loud). Try singing the last phrase of the last chorus *forte*, which is marked as *f* (loud).

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Statements of what matters:

- *Exploring the expressive arts is essential to developing artistic skills and knowledge and it enables learners to become curious and creative individual*
 - *Creating combines skills and knowledge, drawing on the senses, inspiration and imagination*
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- Encourage learners to use the vocabulary from specific sections of this song to describe other songs. For example, learners could use the vocabulary from the chorus: Is the texture thick or thin? Is the song in unison or harmony? If harmony, is it in two or three parts?
- Learners could compose very short pieces with a strong emphasis on one specific musical element. After composing and refining their ideas, learners should perform the pieces to the rest of the class, and ask their peers to say which musical element it describes.

Assessment for Learning:

- *Responding and reflecting, both as artist and audience, is a fundamental part of learning in the expressive arts*
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Questioning

Tool: Think-pair-share

- List the musical elements mentioned in this song.
 - How does the music reflect the musical elements described? For example, does the pace change? If so, where?
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Feedback

Tool: Temporary comments

Give learners temporary comments on areas they need to develop. To improve their accuracy of rhythm, learners may need to revisit certain phrases and listen again to a recording. Give learners time to act upon these comments during the session and then comment again to see if they have been successful.

Self- and peer assessment

Tool: Two stars and a wish

Record a group performance of the song. Listen to this recording and then ask learners to suggest two positive comments (stars) on their performance and one specific improvement (wish).
