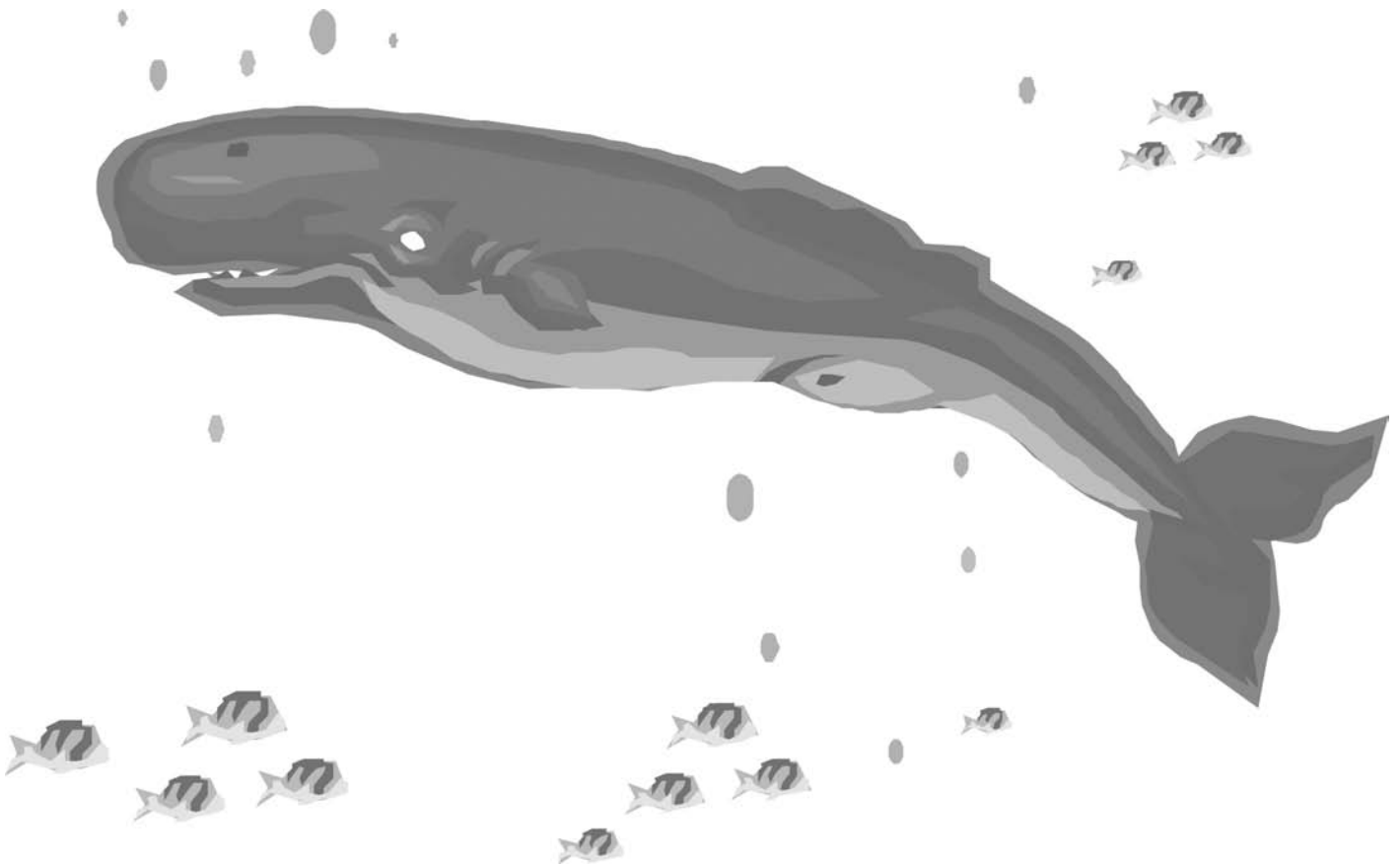


THE BLUE PLANET LIVE!

EDUCATION PACK 6

Seeing Sea Music



Seeing Sea Music

Michael Betteridge and Emma Shires, The University of Manchester 2008

This music workshop workshop focuses on the use of graphic notation, where signs and symbols are employed to represent sounds. Using visual material selected from the Blue Planet Live! show as a stimulus for Key Stage 3 pupils, the workshop looks at how the sea, sea life and images associated with the sea can be conveyed through the use of sound and then how these sounds can be written down using graphic notation.

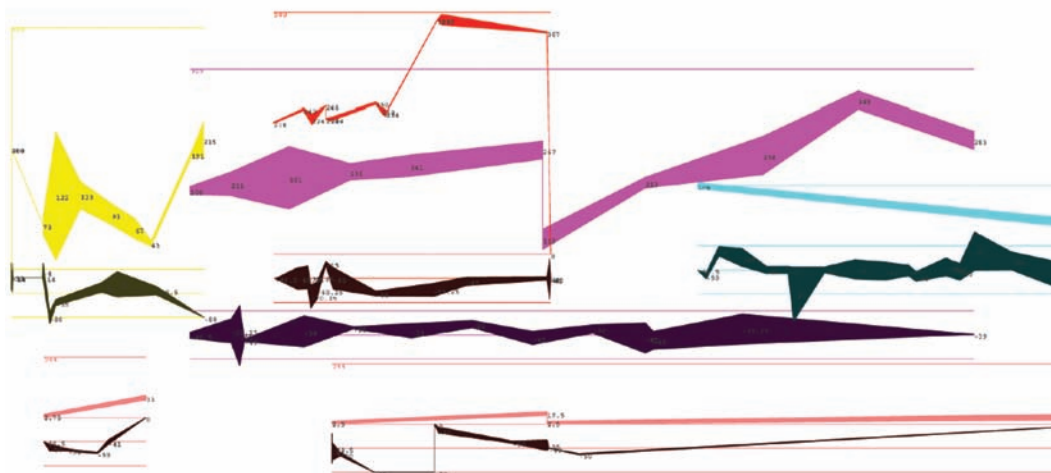
Graphic Notation

How does one translate music from the sound to the score? Conventionally we see scores that look like this:



Example from Schubert's Death and the Maiden Quartet

In the twentieth century avant-garde composers started to develop new ways of notating music. The main reason for this new notation was the freedom it gave composers to express musical ideas without the constraints of conventional notation. It also gave performers a new way of interpreting music that was dependent upon personal interpretation of shapes and symbols, rather than being governed by the strict rules imposed by the traditional system of notation. An important strength of graphic notation is that composers and performers do not need any prior knowledge of how to write or read traditional notation. This makes it suitable for people of all ages and all abilities. Here is an example of a graphic score.



Example from Steiner's Solitude

Seeing the sea, seeing the music

The Blue Planet Live website has several clips from The Blue Planet Live! Show which can be downloaded – see the guidance page for details. Take a look at these and listen to the podcast interview with George Fenton, the composer who wrote the music for The Blue Planet Live!, in which he talks about how he puts music to moving images.

How does the music in The Blue Planet Live! help to create and enhance the images on the screen?

When looking at an image or clip what can we use to help us create music for it?

Look at how certain sounds can be notated, using the examples provided here, and think about how to perform these. After you've spent some time considering these as a class, have a look at clip 6 from The Blue Planet Live! website. This piece of film has had its accompanying music specially removed so that you can create your own work to go with the scene. In groups, you will create a composition for voice (or other sounds from the body), percussion, piano or keyboard, and any extra instruments you have at hand.

What sounds can we make with our voices/bodies that evoke sea images?

If using an instrument, what noises can the instrument make?

Can you find any 'new' ways of playing traditional instruments?

How can we use the same sound in different ways? For example how can beating a drum represent a shark attack or a calm coral reef?

You will also create a graphic score so that you can perform your composition to other groups in the class, and so that other groups can perform it themselves. Think about the shapes and colours you might want to use to represent particular sounds or performers.

Why does a certain shape or symbol feel associated with a certain sound?

Why do colours make us feel different moods?

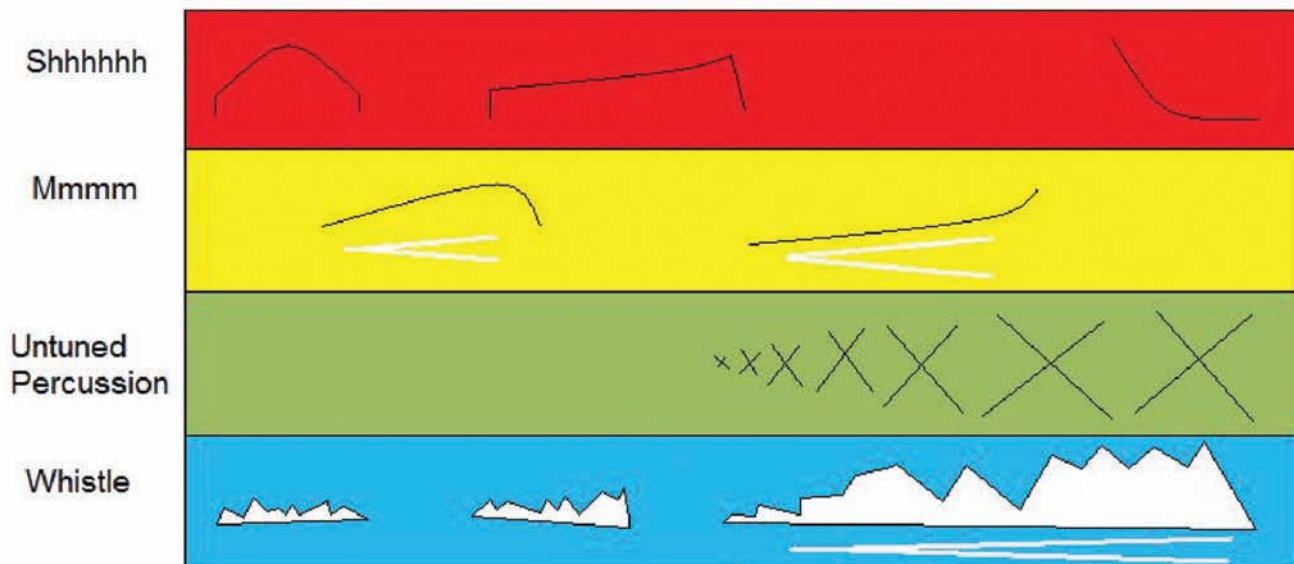
How do you (and in what ways can you) notate a sound which is getting louder?

Music happens over time. How will your graphic score reflect this?

How can more than one performer use the same graphic score?

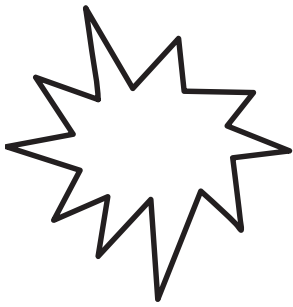
Does each performer have their own symbol?

Example of a possible score from the workshop



This is a simple example of a graphic score with sounds/instruments indicated. This particular example is intended to evoke images of a wave crashing to shore. Pupils can either interpret the shapes as they see fit, or specific instructions can be given to certain shapes/symbols. For example the crescendo markings (which are seen in conventional scores, despite being graphic themselves!) can either be seen as actual crescendo markings, or perhaps interpreted in terms of pitch. The untuned percussion 'Xs', which increase in size, can be seen as either instruments getting louder, or perhaps more players on more instruments. The spikes on the whistle can be seen as a change of pitch or volume. These are just ideas - your imagination can lead to any number of interpretations. Here are some ideas for what you might want to represent with notation and with music, and how you might try to link the two through your choice of images for your score.

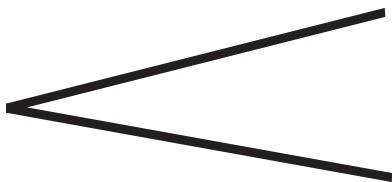
Possible images for your Blue Planet Live! graphic score



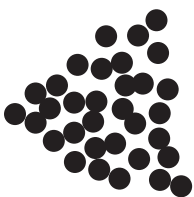
This shape could represent a crash, for example a wave hitting the shore. In performance this could be interpreted as a loud hand clap or a loud smack of a drum.



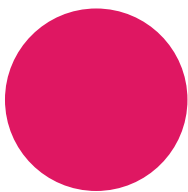
This line could represent a graceful swimming fish. In performance this could be interpreted as a simple melody that moves up and down in pitch.



This image could represent an eel starting to swim faster and faster away from a predator. This could be interpreted as a sound getting louder or faster.



This image could represent a gradually increasing flock of birds feasting on fish. This could be interpreted as an increase in sounds from progressively more performers.



Colour can also be used to represent moods, or different performers.

Guidance for teachers and parents

This resource is aimed at key stage 3 pupils, but can be adapted for younger and older children. Graphic notation can be used in some GCSE music examinations, and can be helpful for encouraging younger students who do not read music.

This resource is designed to work best as a workshop lasting 80-90 minutes in a music studio. Structure of workshop:

- look at clips from The Blue Planet Live!,
- discuss how certain sounds could be notated and laid out on a score,
- watch soundless clip from which to take inspiration for a composition,
- create a composition and graphic score which to perform.

The specific aims of this workshop are:

- to encourage pupils of differing abilities to engage with the notion of creative composition using images as stimulus,
- to demonstrate that musical notation is not solely confined to the western classical musical notation system, and that other cultures and modern western composers use graphic scores to notate their work,
- to encourage the performance of pupils' own work,
- to support pupils in learning to work as a team,
- to prompt discussion on the topic of graphic notation and the different ways in which it can be interpreted.

National Curriculum Links

Music key stage 3, section 2 – composition; section 3a – analysing, evaluating and comparing pieces of music; section 3b – communicating ideas and feelings about music expressively; section 3c – adapting ideas and refining pieces of work; section 4c – identifying the resources and conventions used in specific musical genres, styles and traditions. Work on graphic notation can also enable pupils of differing abilities to engage successfully in group work.

Ideas for further work

<http://www.mtrs.co.uk/graphic.htm> gives other suggestions for how graphic scores can be used to educate pupils and has several examples. For younger pupils, try http://www.musicatschool.co.uk/year_7/graphic_scores.htm.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/music/musicappreciation/analysingmusicrev4.shtml> is designed to demonstrate an alternative to classical notation for GCSE music students.

Take a look at <http://www.theblueplanetlive.com/> for other packs, games, and information about the show. The clips of film and music from the show that you will find helpful in this workshop can be downloaded from this site once you have obtained the password, by emailing blueplanet@manchester.ac.uk with the subject line "password request".

Go to <http://www.manchester.ac.uk> to find out more about the University of Manchester.