

CONNECTING TUNES



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Béla Bartók was a Hungarian composer who lived around 100 years ago. He was very interested in the traditional music of his region and spent many years travelling across Eastern Europe - and further afield - collecting and recording traditional songs.

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You can warm up your voices by saying Bartók's name in different ways. Can you try saying his name in a high, floaty voice, and then in a low, quiet voice? What happens if you say his name really slowly? What other ways can you say his name? It'll be hard to forget it now!

Q. IN WHAT EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES MIGHT HE HAVE MADE RECORDINGS?

A. Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and Transylvania (a historical region in today's Romania).

Q. CAN YOU FIND THESE COUNTRIES ON A MAP?

Here is one of the recordings he made whilst on his travels collecting songs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhCoDliWtzw>

HOW DO YOU THINK HE MIGHT HAVE RECORDED THIS MUSIC?

A. He didn't have a mobile phone or a microphone to do it. He used a piece of equipment called a 'wax cylinder' to record it. The wax cylinder, or 'record', looked like this:



A machine captures the vibrations made by the sound and scratches it on to these wax cylinders. Then a different machine plays the sound back: a small needle 'reads' the grooves in the wax and translates that into sound.

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Bartók was so inspired by the music he heard in all the different towns and villages he visited that he started to incorporate some of these melodies into his own compositions. Here is a piece of music called Six Romanian Folk Dances:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYV7DvQt9Jk>

Q. CAN YOU HEAR THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE RECORDING HE MADE OF THE TRADITIONAL SONG, WHICH WE HEARD EARLIER, AND HIS OWN MUSIC? WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?

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WHAT IS A TRADITIONAL SONG?

A traditional song is a piece of vocal music that we learn by ear. That means we learn it by hearing it sung by other people. This may be a playground song we hear our friends sing, or a song that our parents or grandparents have sung to us from their history. Recordings do not normally exist and these songs would not be in the music charts! Throughout history, when many more people worked in fields or factories (and before TV and computers!), these songs were sung to keep people entertained whilst they did their work.

Q. THERE IS ONE VERY FAMOUS SONG THAT ALMOST EVERYONE HAS LEARNT BY EAR THAT WE SING ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS. CAN YOU GUESS WHAT IT IS?

A. HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Do you know any traditional songs? What other songs have you learnt by ear?

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Here are two playground, or game, songs that you can try out:

TONY CHESTNUT

Tony Chestnut is an action song in which we point to different body parts as we sing. Watch the video below to listen and see how the song works:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLLMm8fbhqq>

Here is the score for the song:

Slowly at first (but faster each time) ♩ = 66

To - ny Chest-nut knows I love you, To - ny knows, To - ny knows,
Toe Knee Chest Nut Nose Eye Love You, Toe Knee Nose, Toe Knee Nose,
(Head) (Heart)

5

To - ny Chest-nut knows I love you, That's what To - ny knows.
Toe Knee Chest Nut Nose Eye Love You, That's What Toe Knee Nose.
(Head) (Heart)

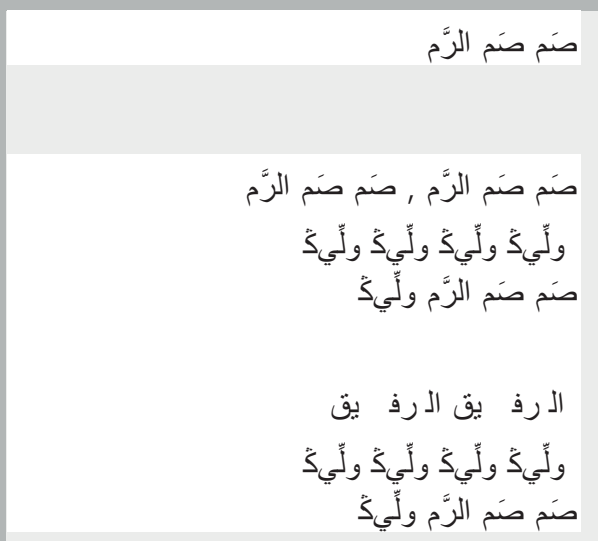
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Once your singers have mastered the music, words and actions you can challenge them further by 'muting' some of the words we sing. See the video for an example.

You could also make it faster and faster each time, and continue to remove different words!

A RAM SAM SAM

A ram sam sam is an action song originating from Morocco. The original words in Moroccan Arabic look like this:



And here they are in Latin / Roman alphabet English:

A ram sam sam
A ram sam sam
Guli guli guli guli guli
Ram sam sam

A rafiq
A rafiq
Guli guli guli guli guli
Ram sam sam

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The words 'a ram sam sam' have no meaning. 'Guli' is pronounced 'gooley' and approximately translates as 'you say to me'. 'Rafiq' is pronounced 'ra-fee' and means 'a companion' or 'a friend'.

You can listen to it here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=71&v=UnJ-LsiBznE

And here is the score:

1
A ram sam sam, A ram sam sam, gu-li gu-li gu-li gu-li ram sam sam. A

6
ram sam sam, A ram sam sam, gu-li gu-li gu-li gu-li ram sam sam. A

10
ra - fiq, A ra - fiq, gu-li gu-li gu-li gu-li ram sam sam, A

14
ra - fiq, A ra - fiq, gu-li gu-li gu-li gu-li ram sam sam, A

18
ram sam sam, A ram sam sam, gu-li gu-li gu-li gu-li ram sam sam. A

22
ram sam sam, A ram sam sam, gu-li gu-li gu-li gu-li ram sam sam.

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There are also actions to go with the song:

- On 'a ram sam sam' pat your thighs with your hands
- On 'guli' circle your fists around one another (like 'wind the bobbin up')
- On 'a rafi' stretch out your arms as if they are about to give someone a hug

Once you have perfected the actions and the singing you can try doing the song as a round, or giving different groups different sections of the song to sing. The 'a rafi' section fits on top of the 'a ram sam sam' section. Listen to the YouTube clip to hear how it works!

Q.CAN YOU MAKE UP NEW ACTIONS TO THE SONG BASED ON THE WORDS?

Q.THE TUNE FOR THIS SONG SOUNDS VERY SIMILAR TO A PLAYGROUND SONG THAT IS SUNG IN ENGLISH. DO YOU RECOGNIZE IT?

A.IT'S THE PLAYGROUND SONG 'A PIZZA HUT, A PIZZA HUT...'. IT IS LIKELY THAT 'A RAM SAM SAM' CAME FIRST AND THEN SOMEONE CHANGED THE WORDS. THAT'S THE WONDERFUL WAY THAT TRADITIONAL SONGS GET PASSED FROM PERSON TO PERSON, AND WE CAN ADAPT AND CHANGE THEM TO SUIT US!

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TOP TIPS FOR SINGING AND TEACHING SONGS

Sing the song through first to your singers so they know the 'shape' of the music.

After you have sung through the song teach the singers the words line by line. Speak the words in rhythm so your singers learn the words and the rhythm at the same time!

Always learn as a 'call and response', so the leader sings/speaks first and then the singers copy. Try to do this without a gap between the call and the response – it makes learning quicker and easier.

Once your singers have gone through the words you can start adding pitch, or melody). You can show them the shape of the melody with your hand as you demonstrate each line to them. We call this 'pitch patterning'.

Teach each line individually, then try two lines at a time, and then keep extending how much you do until everyone has learnt the song.

Actions are really useful to help our learning and also really fun. You can get ideas from your singers for actions you might want to use.

If your singers are finding a melody, or words, hard to remember you can practise speaking the words and/or singing the tune in different voices (quiet, scary, etc) to aid learning.

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If you are sitting down to sing your singers should always have a long back and sit as tall as they possibly can. But make sure your singers' chins are not sticking out. Imagine the top of the head has a balloon attached to it and is helping your head be floaty and relaxed.

Standing up is even better for singing! Our feet should be slightly apart and pointing directly towards the front. Our hands should be by our sides ready to do the actions and our shoulders should be low. Keep that floaty head with the balloon on top. We want singers, not soldiers!

A great big smile is really important. This helps our singing sound even better, and if we are performing, it shows our audience that we are having a really great time!

YOUR TRADITIONAL SONGS?

When Bartók recorded his traditional songs he had to use very large and bulky equipment. Sometimes it broke, and sometimes he ran out of the wax cylinders he needed for the recording equipment to work. When this happened he wrote down the music on manuscript paper.

Now we're in the 21st century we have many ways of recording (and filming!) our songs.

Do you, or your family, know any traditional songs? Are there songs that you, or your family, may know that you learnt by ear? Maybe one of your parents learnt a song on the playground when they were your age? Maybe a grandparent used to sing songs with their co-workers?

Ask your singers to go home and see if they can be traditional song collectors by asking family members about songs. It doesn't matter if their family members or friends can only remember some of the melody/words – it makes a great starting point for our own composing.

Can you get your family member to teach you the song by ear? If it is in a language other than English can you get them to write down the words in the original language and give you a English translation? Does the song have any actions to go with it?

If you want to you can also record the song and play it back to your singers.

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BEING BARTÓK!

Now we've collected lots of different traditional songs we can start using them to create our own music!

First work out what instruments you have available or would like to use. Are they melodic instruments (glockenspiel, xylophone, etc) or are they percussive (egg shaker, guiro, drum, etc). Or will you use both? Are you going to have singing as well in your Bartók-inspired instrumental music?

Divide the class into groups of around 5 per group and give each group a different 'family' of musical instruments. So one group may have instruments that shake or rattle, one may have low sounding drums/percussion, one may be on glockenspiels, another may be on xylophones, etc.

Work with each group to create a different pattern that will accompany your song. The melodic instruments may play along with the melody of your song, or they might pick out a few of the notes of the melody.

Once each group has their musical pattern you can the mix and layer different patterns on top of one another to form your new piece of music. Once you have decided on the structure of your piece (who plays when and for how long) then maybe you can add some singing on top of it!

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STARTING A NEW TRADITION!

Can you now make up your own playground/game song?

Most playground and game songs start with actions and this is a great way to come up with the words for your song. Think about the different actions you could do in your song. Can you come up with some exciting actions that may be only found in your song? Sometimes the last line in playground/game songs describes what happens next, for example 'let's sing again, but faster'. You may want to bring this into your song.

You could also choose a theme for your song (your favourite fruits or different colours, for example) and make a list of these to become your song. Many playground songs are actually 'nonsense' songs in which the words don't really make sense together – these are often the most fun ones!

Once you have your words and actions you need to decide on the notes you are going to sing. This is sometimes the hardest part! But there is a clever way you can make your melody... You can match the pitch of the melody with how high or low your action is. So if you started your song like this:

**'Touch your toes,
Touch your head'**

You would go from a low note to a high note.

You can also write new words for melodies and songs your singers may be familiar with already.

FURTHER RESOURCES

MAMA LISA

<http://www.mamalisa.com/>

An online resource which features a large collection of children's songs and rhymes from around the world. It includes recordings, videos and scores of songs as well as notes to accompany each song. You can even upload your own recordings to the website!

FOLK SONGS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

<https://www.efdss.org/efdss-education/resource-bank/beginners-guide/fun-with-folk#welcome-to-fun-with-folk>

The English Folk Dance and Song Society have lots of great examples of English folk songs on their website. In this link you can find some interesting examples of English folk suitable for primary school voices.

ZIGGY DA DUMBA

https://www.singforpleasure.org.uk/shop/product_info.php?products_id=222

A book of Polish playground/game songs to be used for young voices from the organisation Sing for Pleasure. There is a demonstration CD included.

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