Activities for the summer term

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by Anna Gower

INTRODUCTION

As well as some warmer weather and hopefully some sunshine too, the summer term brings with it public exams, numerous trips and activities, unexpected disruption, events and concerts – all of which can affect learning at KS3.

Sometimes lessons have to be moved to avoid disrupting exams taking place nearby, or students may be missing from class as they are needed elsewhere. But it can also be a great opportunity to introduce some new units and ideas that:

- build on previous musical learning and look ahead to what comes next.
- continue to make progress towards an assessment point and end-of-year reports.
- make the most of an opportunity to try some new activities, instruments, singing, technology, or something else that hasn't yet happened during the year.
- keep students engaged and interested in coming to music as the end of term gets nearer.
- celebrate and demonstrate what they have learnt so far.
- prepare them for the following year, whether that's for GCSE or a vocational award at KS4 or for the next year of KS3.
- ensure that students have the opportunity to continue to make the most of their music lessons, when every lesson counts in a squeezed timetable, with a wealth of exciting and distracting things happening in the summer term!

By the summer term, Year 7 have usually settled into the routine of music lessons. They are used to working a bit more independently in groups, know how to set up and use instruments, equipment and space, and have an idea of the kinds of activities to expect from their music lessons.

In some schools, Year 8 have already chosen their options, so the summer term is the last chance many of them will have to take part in music at school. For those with a three-year KS3, the summer term in Year 8 can be a way to encourage more independent learning and build some musical skills ahead of going into Year 9, and hopefully encourage them to consider music as an options subject the following year.

And for Year 9, for many it will be a celebration of the end of their musical experiences in school and the chance to show what they have learnt through activities that lead to a final outcome – perhaps a performance, or contributing to a composition or project that has a clear start, middle and end that can run across the summer term.

With all this in mind, perhaps it's possible to be more flexible at the end of the year, and even to make the most of some of the frustrations that come with the inevitable room changes, cover teachers or constant disruption from a busy school calendar.

Below are some one-off lessons and ideas for those times where you find yourself in a room without instruments, with a bank of computers, or missing half the class, any of which can stop your current scheme of work in its tracks.

Then there are some ideas for larger-scale projects that can be stretched over longer periods of time when a six-week scheme of work perhaps isn't the best way to structure the lessons, or where smaller activities feed into a wider outcome. All come with the potential to plan in some flexibility when it's needed.

Please note that the suggested resources included in this article are not an exhaustive list. They have been chosen because they are free, openly available and related to the suggested activities below. However, there are plenty of organisations that offer resources by subscription or for purchase, and a multitude of online teacher communities where resources and ideas are freely shared. All suggestions have been made with the aim that teachers personalise them to fit with the needs and aims within their own planning as appropriate, with the ideas given as suggested starting points rather than schemes of work to be followed to the letter.

GETTING READY AHEAD OF TIME

Room changes

Coping with room changes can be incredibly stressful. Moving from the music classrooms where instruments and spaces are set up for hearing and playing music to a variety of different rooms, all with different layouts and desks, can be unsettling for students, especially if they are partway through a project. Preparing them in advance with a temporary timetable, lots of easy-to-spot signs for where their lessons will be, and an overview of the lesson activities for the term – with guidance for how these lessons will complement and not interrupt learning – can really help.

Other ideas

- If room changes are a regular occurence in the summer term, ask if you can be relocated to one room for all of them. That way you can at least organise the layout to suit your own seating plans and groupings, and make sure students can find you more easily
- See if you can find a space where you can play or sing without disturbing other classes. Sometimes this is down to sympathetic and patient colleagues who are prepared to support the music department and tolerate some noise. In other cases it could be about finding a general space such as a youth centre or more isolated classroom to become a temporary music space.
- Talk to SLT well ahead of time and work together on a plan for the summer term. The sooner issues are identified, the sooner they can better be resolved in collaboration
- Start to prepare some transportable instruments. A box of ukeleles, some percussion, a keyboard and folders of student work can be prepared in advance, and organising some members of each class to collect these items from an accessible central space and return them if you are on the move a lot can be invaluable.

Don't forget that visiting instrumental teachers are also affected by the summer term upheavals. Creating a department timetable and sharing it well ahead of time is an essential first step for everyone to be able to plan effectively.

Be prepared! Put together a checklist for planning your summer term activities:

1. Revisit what students have already done, and look at the balance of:

   - singing.
   - whole-class music making.
   - composing and improvising.
   - student-led projects versus teacher-driven content.
   - range of musical styles and genres.
   - opportunities to use music technology if available.

2. Decide on a focus for the summer term and plan accordingly.

3. Check your rooms and resources, and create a timetable well ahead of time.

4. Work out what is available in terms of computers, tablets, instruments, room changes and so on, and plan these into your activities from the outset.

5. Research what free trials of online and cloud-based music tools are available. Many organisations give a free one-month trial and if they don't, they might if you contact them. Activate your trial at a time that means you will get most from it with the majority of classes across that month. This is also a great excuse to research some of the subscriptions, platforms and resources available online that may be of use for you more widely across the next year, if you have some budget to spare.

6. Don't forget the headphones. For a lesson in a computer room, it's great to be able to work in pairs or even continue work started in small groups. If you invest in some headphone splitters and encourage students to bring in their own headphones, then you will have less to carry and set up between lessons.

A planning sheet such as the following may be helpful when looking ahead to what is needed.

Summer Term Planning Sheet

Project Title:			Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Year Group: Key Words:	Overall Objective: Specific Learning Objectives:		Circle as appropriate: -Room Change -Cover lesson -Trip/event -Computers -Music Classroom -Instruments -iPads	Circle as appropriate: -Room Change -Cover lesson -Trip/event -Computers -Music Classroom -Instruments -iPads	Circle as appropriate: -Room Change -Cover lesson -Trip/event -Computers -Music Classroom -Instruments -iPads	Circle as appropriate: -Room Change -Cover lesson -Trip/event -Computers -Music Classroom -Instruments -iPads	Circle as appropriate: -Room Change -Cover lesson -Trip/event -Computers -Music Classroom -Instruments -iPads	Circle as appropriate: -Room Change -Cover lesson -Trip/event -Computers -Music Classroom -Instruments -iPads
Ideas for extension tasks:	Ideas for homework:	Suggested Listening:	Bullet point Plan: Today we will:	Bullet point Plan: Today we will:	Bullet point Plan: Today we will:	Bullet point Plan: Today we will:	Bullet point Plan: Today we will:	Bullet point Plan: Today we will:

As you go along, gather some student feedback on the activities you do in the summer term. Ask students about the relevance to prior learning, engagement with the tasks, usefulness in terms of what they're learning, and how they feel the activities are helping them to make progress. Use the feedback to feed into planning for the next school year, and to refresh existing schemes of work and activities.

ACTIVITIES FOR A COMPUTER ROOM

Get a free trial of an online, cloud-based resource

You will need:
- access to computers and/or tablets or laptops.
- headphones, one per student, headphone splitters as appropriate.
- If you have MIDI keyboards available, they can be useful but are not essential.

Planning and preparation:
- Research the various platforms and resources that offer free trials.
- Explore resources and online forums for teachers that use the platforms and resources, in order to identify a few relevant activities for your students.

As mentioned above, many online and cloud-based platforms offer free trials of various subscription models to use the platform or to access resources for use with KS3 classes. You can try out an online music studio where students can drag and drop loops, record their own sounds, arrange and create music or even make a podcast.

Here are some suggestions for free trials to try out this summer:

Focus on Sound	Music education software in the cloud: develop listening skills, theory and musical knowledge with online resources for PCs, tablets and smartphones.	Two-week free trial
Soundtrap	Soundtrap EDU is an online tool that enables teachers to follow the latest curriculums through music, podcasts, language, literacy training and other sound recordings. It offers a creative environment in which students can collaborate and develop their own creative and communication skills.	30-day free trial
Charanga Music Sessions	Interactive resources and creative apps to develop unique lessons or units of work.	30-day free trial
Charanga VIP Studio Sessions	VIP Studio Sessions gives you everything you need to help young people create, produce and release their own music.	30-day free trial
MusicFirst Classroom	MusicFirst Classroom combines a learning management platform with engaging content and powerful integrated software to help you monitor your students' progress, make lesson plans, and create assignments.	Free demo
Ableton Live: Learning Music	Learning Music is a new, interactive website that helps you learn the basics of music making – beats, melodies, basslines, chords and song structure – right in your browser.	Free access
Ableton Live	Ableton Live lets you easily create, produce and perform music within one intuitive interface.	30-day free trial

Other websites offering free resources to download and use include

- Birmingham Contemporary Music Group
- MusicTheory.Net: free music theory exercises for tablet and phone.
- Teoría: free music theory exercises accessible on computer (headphones required).

Make a podcast

YOU WILL NEED
- recording devices.
- a means of editing recordings on a computer or tablet. There are plenty of free online editing platforms such as Audacity and you can use GarageBand on iPads. Soundtrap (see above) has a podcasting template that can be used with their online studio platform.
- plenty of note paper or books for groups to plan their content.
- access to websites to research the chosen content if required.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION
- Decide how prescriptive you want to be. Perhaps allow the class to choose a theme for their podcasts, then in groups they can plan out the content.
- Decide on some parameters to follow – you might want to specify these or agree them as a class. Consider the length of the podcast, and what must be included (for example some background music, a song, a jingle, etc).
- Decide whether the focus is to be giving information or advertising something.
- Ask each group to list three key points of information they will cover in their podcast.
- Listen to some existing podcasts, for example the free *Marvellous Music* podcast from Classic FM

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES
- Make some cross-curricular links if a suitable theme is chosen such as climate change (geography) festivals (RE), or a news or sports review (PE/English).
- Students could design a poster to advertise their podcast communicating the key points.
- Students could find some podcasts related to their chosen theme and create a playlist.

> There's a wealth of online quizzes on music that can be used as extra content for a lesson in a computer room. You could even get students to create their own using a free online platform such as Typeform or Quiz Maker, and then test each other.

Refresh your displays

It's always great to get some new work to put on display, and even better if it's related to something the students are learning in their lessons, keeping what's on the walls relevant to what they're doing in the classroom. Use time in the computer room to get students to think about what kind of display content would be relevant to them, and give your classroom a bit of personality.

> Linking some of the work to GCSE or vocational qualification content is a great way to give students an idea of what's ahead if they opt to take music. For example, depending what your school offers, a 'careers in the music industry' display might link to vocational qualifications students can take at KS4 and KS5 and beyond, as well as GCSE and A level music. If you have former students who have gone on to study music beyond year 13, or are working in the music industry, invite them to write a summary of the route that took them to where they are now – and the importance that music at school played in getting them there.

You could consider displays about:
- careers in the music industry.
- well-known people (or teachers in your school) who played musical instruments.
- musical role models – who inspires you and why?
- advocacy for music, a campaign for why music is important in schools and in our lives.
- different styles and genres of music.
- student voices – write-ups and quotes about their learning in music to date, what they've enjoyed, how they've made progress, and what music means to the.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES
Depending on when your school starts its GCSE course, you could widen the styles and genres of music to include knowledge organisers to get students ready for GCSE the following year. If younger classes choose to put together the musical styles or genre, the older ones could create the knowledge organisers, choosing the

correct options from a list you provide of key musical characteristics and key words. In order to select correctly, they will need to listen to music – a really important part of any music lesson, even in a computer room.

Finally, they could research their own interesting facts, composers and influential figures and create a timeline to add to their one-pager. It's even better if all this can link to one of the four Areas of Study in GCSE music, so that there is a relevance there for what's created, displayed and learnt throughout the process.

Be a talent show judge

Find two videos of a performance that feature younger performers. Choose one 'classical' performance and one 'contemporary'.

Here are two examples of videos:
- Keyboard performance
- Piano performance

1. Ask students to come up with their own criteria for marking the performances.
2. Agree the criteria as a class.
3. Watch and mark the performance.
4. Discuss the student judgements.
5. Look at the criteria for GCSE music performance from the exam board that you use.
6. Mark the performances again.

Ask students to write their top three tips for giving a successful performance, and to share them with each other. Use these to mark their next performances as a class.

LARGER-SCALE PROJECTS

Devising a larger-scale project for the summer term can fulfil two different outcomes. The first is to include tasks that are flexible enough to accommodate room changes, limited instrumental access, hit-and-miss attendance and disruption to timetables. The second is that all year groups can contribute to one larger-scale outcome, at an appropriate level, with content designed to support progression and prior learning as appropriate for each year level.

There is also an opportunity for making cross-curricular links, if that's something that the timetable and structures within your school allow, as well as many opportunities to look ahead to KS4 and what comes next as part of the planning process.

As always, there are also plenty of chances to integrate student-led learning and smaller projects, all of which feed into the wider outcome.

Project 1: Film music

TASK
Working in groups, plan, make and present a short film that you have created from scratch. It should include music composed, recorded and used to support the main aims of the film, as outlined in the plan. The flexibility within this task should allow for work to take place with whatever space and instruments are available.

As mentioned above, this could be a great transition task from KS3 to GCSE, since this project is a fantastic chance to pick and mix from within GCSE syllabus content, with film music being one of the prescribed Areas of Study across all the exam boards. Regardless of the exam board your school follows, there is some useful and relevant content and guidance in all the specifications that can be tailored to KS3, so consider choosing from the following when devising your aims, objectives and lesson activities.

YOU WILL NEED
- Tablets or other means for students to video and edit their own films.
- Access to instruments and/or music technology (see above) to create a soundtrack.

SUGGESTED AIMS AND OBJECTIVES LINKED TO GCSE

The most comprehensive outline of objectives for the study of film music is in the Eduqas specification, which is worded as follows:

In this area of study, learners will develop an understanding of film music, including the use of timbre, tone colour and dynamics for effect. Through listening to and/or performing examples of film music, learners will study how:
- **composers use musical elements appropriately to respond to a specific commission.**
- **composers use leitmotifs and thematic transformation to develop thematic material to respond to a given stimulus or commission such as words or pictures.**
- **musical features are adopted by composers to create a mood in descriptive music performers interpret a composition.**
- **the audience and/or venue affect the performance and/or composition.**
- **instrumental and/or vocal timbres are used to create colour/mood.**
- **dynamics and contrast are used for the creation of special effects.**
- **music technology may be used to further enhance sonority.**
- **minimalistic techniques are used in film music.**

Although the language is written to be in line with specific Eduqas assessment outcomes, this can be adapted to come up with some specific learning objectives for a KS3 group.

SUGGESTED LISTENING

AQA and Eduqas do not offer any specific suggestions for listening as preparation and inspiration for film music, but the OCR and Edexcel repertoire lists are a useful start to get students engaged with the genre. To give a balanced overview of film music in all the specifications, AQA and Eduqas content has also been included below.

OCR
Suggested repertoire
- John Barry: *Out of Africa*, *Somewhere in Time*
- Hans Zimmer: *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Gladiator*
- Emmanuel Fratianni: *Avatar*
- John Williams: *Jaws*, *Star Wars*
- Tommy Tallerico & Emmanuel Fratianni: *Advent Rising*
- *Halo*
- *Assassin's Creed*

Edexcel
Set works
- Stephen Schwartz: 'Defying Gravity' (from the album of the cast recording of *Wicked*)
- John Williams: Main title/'Rebel Blockade Runner' (from the soundtrack to *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*)

Suggested additional listening
- Tim Minchin: 'Naughty' from *Matilda*
- Marc Shaiman: 'Mama, I'm a Big Girl Now' from *Hairspray*
- Deborah Lurie: 'The Pier', 'Walk on the Beach' and 'Dear John Letter', from *Dear John*
- Howard Shore: 'The Prophecy', 'Concerning Hobbits', 'The Bridge of Khazad-dum' and 'The Breaking of the Fellowship' from *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*

AQA
Listening – unfamiliar music
Students must be able to listen attentively to unfamiliar music from the following styles/genres to identify and accurately describe musical elements, musical contexts and musical language:
- Film and computer gaming music 1990s to present.

Eduqas
Aims and intentions
Through this Area of Study, learners are encouraged to consider how music for film is created, developed and performed, and the impact this has on the audience. Learners will have the opportunity to compose and perform film music and are encouraged to use musical technology to create mood and atmosphere through engaging with the story of the film.

Eduqas also offers the following guidance for elements of film music that might be useful when planning an assessment framework for your film music project:

- relevance of music to the storyline.

- use of lyrics as consistent with the plot/ideas.

- characterisation reflected in the music.

- strong and distinctive thematic material.

- supportive accompanying ideas.

- appropriate musical contrasts to reflect mood/meaning/scene.

- musical reflection of visual images.

- use of musical devices and features to create anticipation, action, excitement.

- suitable dynamics to support and reflect the chosen ideas.

- chromatic movement and harmonies where appropriate.

- use of 'leitmotif'.

- layering.

- minimalistic techniques.

KEY VOCABULARY

Using the suggested pieces of music above, the following is a guide to some key terms and vocabulary that can form the basis of listening or research tasks for the weeks where access to instruments or resources are limited.

- Underscore
- Leitmotif
- Soundtrack
- Cue
- Theme
- Mickey Mousing
- Stimulus

Project 2: Organise a music event to be performed at the end of the summer term

This project is one that all year groups can feed into and be involved in, with preparation of performances taking place in lesson time throughout the term. One of the best ways to fill a summer concert or event is to include items that have been prepared in class. This project also offers the opportunity for students to plan and lead their own music event, with an incentive to keep on task in lessons right until the end of the year!

Suggested events might include:

- Battle of the bands

- Charity talent show

- Music festival

- Summer concert

- Rhythms of the word

- Songwriting competition

The following is an example topic map across the summer term, with the option for outcomes from each project to be included in an end-of-year performance. In this model, year 9 plan and organise the event, with other year groups preparing some of the content for the final outcome.

	Topic	Activities	Suggested free resources to get you started
Year 7	Battle of the bands	• songwriting unit: perform an original song. • band skills: prepare a cover song as a band.	Musical Futures International Free Guide to Songwriting
Year 8	Rhythms of the world	• Samba • African drumming • Junk percussion	Beat Goes On Samba Rhythm Grids, Junk Percussion Rhythm Grids
Year 9	Planning, preparation and event planning	From RSL unit 221: Work as a member of a small team of no more than five people on a project to organise and stage a defined event.	RSL Music Practitioner Unit MUSPRA 221
Year 10	Getting creative with classical music	Pick and mix from one-off lesson plans to inspire composition and ensemble performances. These might link to GCSE Areas of Study or to support performing and composing coursework.	BBC Ten Pieces

RSL MUSPRA221 suggests the following learning outcomes, which can be adapted for use in this project

■ Definition of the identity and purpose of the event.

■ An individual assessment of their potential to contribute to the project and an identification of personal aims.

■ Identification of clear team goals in relation to the project, including definition of team roles.

■ Assignment of jobs to roles as a team, based on an analysis of each individual's skill base.

■ Alignment of the event logistics with team and audience expectations.

■ Define the extent to which team and individual goals have been achieved as agreed and assess the success of the event in relation to these goals.

FINAL THOUGHTS

One of the key challenges with KS3 music in the summer term is keeping learning on track and maintaining engagement right through to the end of the year. Sometimes this can impact on behaviour management. When classes are constantly moving rooms, have members of groups or staff missing, or can't access instruments, keeping them on task can be a challenge.

Part of the solution comes from careful planning and good communication so that week to week, the students know where they will be and have an idea of the kinds of activities they will be doing. Allow groups to feed into overall project plans, and encourage them to prepare for lessons beforehand where possible. This can be a great use of homework time if you are required to set it.

Use class blogs or any online platforms your school uses to set tasks up front, and have booklets or note paper available for students to keep track of what they are working on, to make it easier to pick it up the following lesson. If you're able to video work each week, then if someone is missing, parts can be covered by others.

One of the least frustrating aspects of this time of year can be warmer weather. Sometimes taking an activity outside can add a bit of extra interest, and be an excuse to try something a bit different to how it's normally done in the classroom.

For example, in a samba activity, take the ensemble on a walk to get the idea of samba as part of a carnival or festival, add in some movement and vocal or body percussion to an a capella vocal performance, allow students to film outside as part of the film music task, or simply enjoy having a little extra space to expand into.