

Edexcel AoS4: Kate Bush's *Hounds of Love*

KS5

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Introduction

English singer-songwriter Kate Bush released *Hounds of Love*, her fifth studio album, in September 1985. It received immediate acclaim from critics and record-buyers alike, and was soon being hailed as that rare thing – a commercially successful album that was also artistically ambitious.

Three songs from *Hounds of Love* are among the set works in Edexcel's compulsory A level AoS4 Popular music and jazz: 'Cloudbusting', 'And Dream of Sheep' and 'Under Ice'. This resource does not go into extensive analytical detail of musical elements across the three songs, details that are already covered in Pearson's own study guide (https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/Music/2016/teaching-and-learning-materials/A_Level_Kate_Bush_Hounds_set_work_support_guide.pdf).

Instead, we'll provide an overview of each song, as well as considering the songs within the context of Bush's other work and that of other musicians, exploring the vexed idea of the concept album and the technological possibilities offered by the Fairlight CMI sampler/synthesiser, and examining the literary influences behind some of Bush's songs. We'll also provide suggested classroom and homework activities to encourage students to get to know Bush's music better.

Context: background and biography



Kate Bush in 1986

Kate Bush was born in Kent in 1958. Her father was a doctor, and her Irish mother was a nurse – the daughter of a farmer from County Waterford, and an amateur Irish traditional dancer. Traditional Irish music has played a strong role throughout Bush's music, as we'll see, and it's something she puts down to her mother's influence, and also to frequent visits to Ireland as a child.

As well as trying violin and organ, Bush taught herself piano, and it became her principal means of music expression alongside her voice. She began writing songs around the age of 11, and already had a substantial output by the time she was a teenager. For example, she wrote 'The Man with the Child in His Eyes', released in 1978 as her second single, at the age of just 13 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAj8suae3WY).

She gained fame and recognition initially through the intervention of Dave Gilmour, guitarist with Pink Floyd.

The Bush family had put together a demo tape of more than 50 of Kate's compositions, which they had sent out to record labels with no success. Through a mutual friend, Gilmour received a copy and helped Kate, aged just 16, to put together a more professional version. He also encouraged EMI to sign her, which the record company did in 1976.

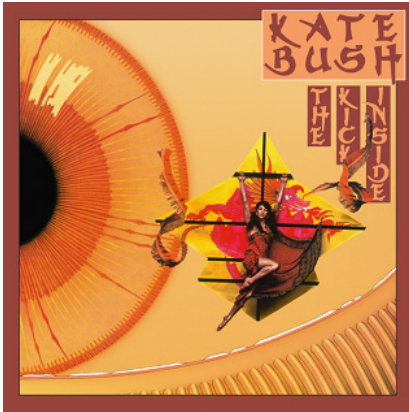
Bush also trained as a dancer and mime artist, using some of the advance that EMI gave her to enrol in dance classes with Lindsay Kemp (who had previously taught David Bowie). Dance and mime are skills that Bush has used extensively in both her live shows and her music videos.

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Kate Bush



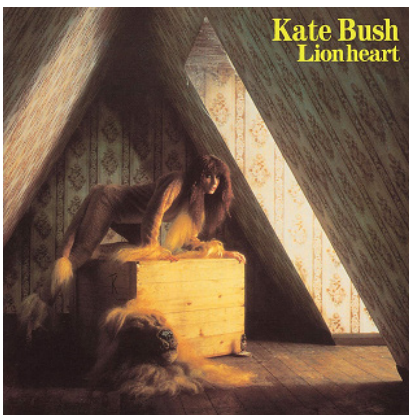
Hounds Of Love



Her first album, *The Kick Inside*, was released to huge acclaim in 1978, when Bush was 19, and was a major commercial success – encouraged by the widespread notoriety caused by her first single, ‘Wuthering Heights’, whose wailing vocals and unconventional subject matter caused amusement as well as fascination. We’ll look at ‘Wuthering Heights’ in more detail later in the resource. (Ironically, EMI originally wanted to release the more conventional rock number ‘James and the Cold Gun’ as her first single, but Bush insisted on ‘Wuthering Heights’, and it remains her most famous song to this day.)

She had such an extensive catalogue of songs already written that EMI was able to release a second album,

Lionheart, later the same year to capitalise on her initial success, followed by *Never for Ever* in 1980, and *The Dreaming* in 1982. This last album was the first that Bush herself produced, and it’s considered a far more experimental, less immediately accessible work than its predecessors (she later described it as ‘my “she’s gone mad” album’).



Bush’s success had begun to wane slightly by the mid-1980s. Her 1985 album *Hounds of Love*, however, marked a new beginning in Bush’s music, and it was her most successful album at that time, managing to be both artistically ambitious and genuinely popular.

After the enormous success of *Hounds of Love* in 1985, followed quickly by her best-of compilation *The Whole Story* the following year, Bush released *The Sensual World* in 1989 (which she has called her most honest, personal album), then the less successful *The Red Shoes* in 1993, inspired by the 1948 film of the same name, and for which Bush produced her own original film. There was a long hiatus following *The Red Shoes*, a period that

Bush devoted to raising her son Bertie, and a time in which it seemed she had simply stopped recording music altogether. But she made a surprise return in 2005 with the double album *Aerial*. Her most recent album is *50 Words for Snow* from 2011, which marked quite a musical departure for Bush in its quietness and its chamber-like intimacy.

Why study Kate Bush?

It’s a reasonable question. Since Bush hasn’t released new material for several years, and since her best-known songs come from several decades ago, many students may not even be aware of her output.

Why devote time and effort to studying such an idiosyncratic figure? Here are a few reasons:

- ▶ Many of her songs are unconventional, ambitious, sometimes even challenging, and they may challenge students’ preconceptions of what pop music is or can be.
- ▶ She brings together multiple influences in her songs – from rock music to classical, jazz and traditional musics from across the world – but retains a distinctive and immediately identifiable personal style.
- ▶ She has been at the forefront of music technology (as we’ll see later in relation to the Fairlight CMI) and has integrated new sounds and techniques into her personal sound world.
- ▶ Her songs often deal with unconventional themes or ideas, or take their inspirations from literary sources (as we’ll see later with ‘Cloudbusting’ and other songs), again providing a sense of ambition and questioning what pop music should be.
- ▶ Though many artists have covered her songs, her own voice remains a key ingredient in the originals: she sometimes embodies different characters, or uses unusual singing techniques to convey emotion or character, to the extent that some are almost like miniature opera scenes.
- ▶ She offers a distinctively female perspective across her work: she takes on female roles from across literature, as we’ll see, but she also examines relationships and other issues from a woman’s point of view.

Hounds of Love

The three Kate Bush songs in Edexcel's AoS4 – 'Cloudbusting', 'And Dream of Sheep' and 'Under Ice' – are all taken from her 1985 album *Hounds of Love*. In any music that's taken from a larger work, it's worthwhile students getting to know the bigger piece so that they understand the context of the particular music they're studying. In the case of these three Kate Bush songs, however, getting to know the album *Hounds of Love* is crucial in terms of understanding what they are and what function they play.

Bush took a break from recording following her less commercially successful album *The Dreaming* in 1982, and following what she described as the physical and mental toll it had taken on her. She took the opportunity, however, to bring her music production far closer to home, quite literally. Rather than running up the huge expenses of hiring state-of-the-art recording studios in central London, Bush instead built her own 48-track studio in a converted barn next to the family home, which also allowed her to bring in some of the latest technology of the time, including the Fairlight CMI, which we'll discuss later in the resource.

The album she produced as a result was released on vinyl, cassette and CD on 16 September 1985. The first two of those formats are crucial to *Hounds of Love*'s conception. It's an album that falls into two distinct halves, separated on vinyl and cassette by the physical act of turning the record or cassette over to continue listening.

Hounds of Love's Side A (which Bush titled, slightly confusingly, 'Hounds of Love', meaning that that title applies to a song, an album side and the album as a whole!) is a collection of five more overtly 'pop' songs, each of which, Bush has said, deal with a different aspect of love. They include the four singles that Bush released from the album: 'Running Up That Hill (A Deal with God)', 'Cloudbusting', 'Hounds of Love' and 'The Big Sky'.

Let's look in a bit more detail at Side A:

Side A: 'Hounds of Love'

- ▶ **'Running Up that Hill (A Deal with God)'**: Bush reportedly originally called her opening track simply 'A Deal with God' but was persuaded to change the title following record company concerns that it would prove controversial in countries with more strongly religious record buyers. Built around a pounding drum track, it imagines a man and a woman in a loving relationship swapping places so that they might be able to understand their partner's feelings in a more immediate way.
- ▶ **'Hounds of Love'**: beginning with a sample from the 1957 horror movie *Night of the Demon*, the album's title track is about being afraid of love, and a fear of the pain and confusion it can bring. Bush imagines someone running away from love's responsibilities and commitments, which are embodied by dogs literally pursuing the unfortunate figure, represented in the song's distinctive 'barking' vocal sounds that she sampled and processed using the Fairlight CMI.
- ▶ **'The Big Sky'**: this lavish, rock-influenced song was, according to Bush, inspired by remembering the simple pleasures of sitting watching clouds form and reform as a child, though Bush expands that simple starting point into an extravagant, exuberant song – even if it's somewhat difficult to see how it fits into her overall theme of love.
- ▶ **'Mother Stands for Comfort'**: this is the only song from Side A that wasn't released as a single, and the darkest, quietest and slowest of the five. It tells of maternal love, in a story of a mother protecting the son she knows to be a murderer. 'Mother Stands for Comfort' makes extensive use of Fairlight CMI sounds (listen out for the sampled drums and breaking glass effect that Bush already used on 'Babooshka' in this song's short introduction), which she considered appropriate because of the coldness they share with the song's theme.
- ▶ **'Cloudbusting'**: Bush moves on to paternal (or filial) love in the final song of Side A. 'Cloudbusting' is inspired by the memoir *A Book of Dreams* by Peter Reich, who remembers his relationship with his psychiatrist and philosopher father Wilhelm Reich, and the machines he built that were apparently able to make it rain. We'll look at 'Cloudbusting' in more detail later in the resource.

The album's second half, by complete contrast, is a concept piece called 'The Ninth Wave', which brings together seven interconnected songs as a single, continuous piece of music. It's an elusive, slightly confusing collage of sensations and musical ideas, all of which come together to tell a story. Its central character is alone in the water at night, and goes through a series of dream-like visions before waking to the safety and warmth of the new day.

Bush took its title from the poetry cycle *Idylls of the King* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, a set of 12 narrative poems recounting the legends of King Arthur and his Knights. Bush derived the title from four lines in the first of the poems, 'The Coming of Arthur', which she reproduces in the album's liner or booklet:

'Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame'

Let's look in more detail at the seven songs in 'The Ninth Wave':

Side B: 'The Ninth Wave'

- ▶ **'And Dream of Sheep'**: the opening track on 'The Ninth Wave' is a gentle lullaby in which the cycle's central character, floating alone in the water at night (perhaps, as Bush has suggested, after being swept overboard from a boat) both fights sleep because of the dangers of drowning, yet also wants to give in to the comfort that sleep will bring. We'll look at 'And Dream of Sheep' in more detail later in the resource.
- ▶ **'Under Ice'**: the person either dreams or imagines themselves skating alone on a frozen lake when they notice something moving under the ice. Peering closely, they realise they are looking at themselves. As previously, we'll look at 'Under Ice' in more detail later in the resource.
- ▶ **'Waking the Witch'**: following the voices of 'visitors' (perhaps spirits or memories) urging the person to wake up, their dreams or visions continue. Now they imagine themselves as a woman undergoing trial by water for witchcraft. She is immersed in water: drowning indicates that she is innocent, but survival demonstrates that she has used her witchcraft to live. Bush's voice is processed almost to the point of unintelligibility, perhaps suggesting her gasping for air because of her dunkings, and she also includes the growling voice of her accuser and implorings to God in Latin by the jury. It's a violent, intentionally disorientating song that, Bush says, deals with 'fear of women's power': 'I feel that female intuition and instincts are very strong, and are still put down, really.'
- ▶ **'Watching You Without Me'**: the central character now imagines themselves as a spirit or ghost, visiting their loved one, and watching as their partner grows increasingly concerned about their whereabouts and safety. It's a frightening vision, though one that's conveyed in sweetly smooth music. Bush again disguises her voice to the extent that some lines are virtually incomprehensible, to reflect the fact that the spirit can't be seen or understood.
- ▶ **'Jig of Life'**: the character's future self, or perhaps another spirit entirely, comes to the person's aid, and implores them not to give up. 'Jig of Life' is heavily influenced by traditional Irish music, and falls into two parts, each based around its own Irish tune. Bush wrote the song in Ireland, and collaborated with several Irish musicians on it, each of whom play traditional Irish instruments: John Sheahan (fiddles and whistles), Donal Lunny (bouzouki and bodhrán) and Liam O'Flynn (uilleann pipes). The narrator in the song's second half – perhaps embodying the imploring spirit – is her brother, John Carder Bush.
- ▶ **'Hello Earth'**: perhaps encouraged by the visitation, the character imagines seeing themselves and the Earth from a great distance, as if they are looking down from space. Bush has called this song 'a lullaby for the Earth', and in many ways it forms the emotional climax of 'The Ninth Wave'. The song also includes a choral setting of the Georgian folk song 'Zinzkaró' (which Bush reportedly heard on the soundtrack of the 1979 movie *Nosferatu the Vampyre*) arranged by composer Michael Berkeley.
- ▶ **'The Morning Fog'**: the atmosphere changes completely with the coming of the light of a new day, and the character feels 'reborn' as they remember their family and loved ones. Following the cold, processed sounds and sweeping soundscapes of earlier songs, 'The Morning Fog' focuses on the warmth of acoustic instruments, bringing 'The Ninth Wave' to a positive, optimistic close.

Listening activity: 'The Ninth Wave'

Not only do the songs of 'The Ninth Wave' form an overall narrative, but they are also linked by a web of interconnections that become increasingly apparent the more familiar the music grows. There are references back and forth between the songs in terms of their texts, their Fairlight CMI effects, their melodies and harmonies, and plenty more.

Here are a couple of examples:

- ▶ The vocal line of the first song, 'And Dream of Sheep', opens with an ascending perfect 5th (E-B), perhaps indicating a sense of beginning and expectation. This is mirrored in the final song, 'The Morning Fog', which ends with a falling perfect 5th (F sharp-B) in the solo guitar line, perhaps indicating closure. Both perfect 5ths also end on the note B.
- ▶ The words 'Get out of the waves, get out of the water' are first heard as if from a megaphone in a helicopter in 'Waking the Witch' (3:52), and reoccur as part of the backing vocals to 'Hello Earth' (2:29).

Ask your students how many more interconnections between songs they can find, then consider these questions:

- ▶ Do you think they're intentional, or maybe coincidental? Considering that Bush wrote and produced the album, how likely do you think it is that these connections and references came about by chance?
- ▶ What purpose do they serve, do you think? How do they help unify the songs as a single work?
- ▶ How might they reflect the narrative of 'The Ninth Wave'? How might they add to its story of a person hallucinating or experiencing visions while alone in the sea?

Concept albums

As we've seen, Side B of the *Hounds of Love* album is a seven-song concept piece called 'The Ninth Wave', whose first two tracks – 'And Dream of Sleep' and 'Under Ice' – form two of Edexcel's three set works from the album. This could be a useful jumping-off point to explore the idea of the concept album with your students, and to reflect on what makes a concept album different from a more conventional album, and what pop musicians have aimed to achieve by taking that approach.

What is a concept album?

That's a hard question to answer. It's a term that's been used to cover a vast range of different styles of music, and many different approaches to bringing music together. In general terms, however, it's an album whose tracks aren't considered simply as individual, unconnected songs. It's used to refer to an album whose creators have decided on a single, overarching narrative for the whole work, or whose songs have been created around a unifying idea or theme. You could even draw parallels with a song cycle in the world of classical music. A concept album's songs can be listened to individually, of course, but they've been created collectively as a single work, and should be seen as parts of a larger creation.

A brief history of concept albums

The first concept album is generally agreed to be Woody Guthrie's 1940 *Dust Bowl Ballads* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOpsGkC5-tE&list=PLNRoIFqwI9GwsHkK5oJCXhgMIAjIOd3v5), all of whose songs deal with the effects of the Great Depression in the USA in the 1930s, and its effects on manual labourers and their lives.

In a very different musical style, the term was later applied, too, to several of Frank Sinatra's early albums, for example *In the Wee Small Hours* from 1955 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9MvNjILbJc&list=PLsoD4eYuzH2U4NOhyNrLc8LoB4iiPLdrE). Sinatra's overarching theme on this album is lost love, reflecting his own personal circumstances at the time of recording, and it's one of the earliest albums to differentiate tracks between those intended to be issued as singles, and others to be heard as part of the overall album experience. Being less concerned about the possibility of releasing all of an album's songs as singles allowed for more personal artistic expression in the album – something that Sinatra was aiming for, and something that has characterised concept albums ever since.



The Beatles's *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (the subject of its own *Music Teacher* resource, February 2017) (www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtXl8xAPAtA&list=PL3PhWT1oBW3VDM5lcVodrdUpVIhU8f7Z-) is regularly cited as one of the most influential concept albums. Ironically, the album's songs are relatively unrelated, and there's no underlying narrative or theme. What unites the album, however, is its performers' new identities: the Beatles assume the personas of the band in the album's title, introducing themselves in the opening track (and reappearing in its penultimate track), and appearing on the album's artwork in their new identities. John Lennon argued that, apart from those two songs, 'every other song could have been on any other album'.

As ambitions and technical possibilities increased, the concept album itself began to develop into the rock opera, in which named characters sing an album's songs, which themselves tell an overarching story. The Kinks' 1969 album *Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOD5e-32wS8&list=PLJiBoXYJoJzm3xozj-VcrHWJv_K6DI5Ey), originally conceived as the soundtrack to a television play, tells of a family emigrating from the UK to Australia, while the Who's *Tommy* (released in 1969, and made into a film by Ken Russell in 1975) (www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKdusyjiuvY&list=PLycVTiaj8OlgCiWbd-stIro-8cKwA1tZw) is about the 'deaf, dumb and blind kid' Tommy Walker and his rise to fame and fortune against the odds.

With their shared interest in experimentation, ambition and often bizarre storytelling, the concept album became indelibly associated with progressive rock (or prog rock), the high-concept, virtuosic style of rock that reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s. Several avowedly prog rock bands and artists released concept albums based around particular themes or storylines. Notable examples include:

- ▶ Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (1979) (www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLFwTqdsuxw&list=PLYDzU3p8FP24syYfTXpGqTDHsQhIxlwIIS), virtually a rock opera that tells the story of depressed rock star Pink and the events that have led to his withdrawal from society.
- ▶ Genesis's *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (1974) (www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBNCIKqpb_Q&list=PLDD6nAEVVZxHoN6NTPNNjpsRRxrgYtQh), for many the epitome of prog rock concept albums, telling the dream-like story of half-Puerto Rican Rael and his bizarre journey of self-discovery in New York, apparently derived from Genesis frontman Peter Gabriel's dreams.
- ▶ Rick Wakeman's *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1973) (www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDuBhDzjYyI&list=PL8a8cutYP7frtLtjExzGz8EQhI-jehrgV), an entirely instrumental album written and produced by the Yes keyboard player, with just six tracks, each a musical portrait of one of the Tudor king's spouses.

Pop musicians have continued producing concept albums right through to the present day, across musical genres and tackling contrasting themes and narratives, from rock (try *Songs for the Deaf* by Queens of the Stone Age, www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_45GLa_F7o&list=PLR4Mc5WNWFxTKuS-3vUwCdn5_lvTM7yo6) to hip hop (for example Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgfN-8NjrvI&list=PLDCjwiC9oTGNwI VOUU_mKmThxmYPcKZr).

Concept albums have often been mocked for the supposed pretension of pop musicians attempting to produce work with artistic integrity and ambition, rather than simply writing good songs. But they have also offered opportunities for pop musicians to explore musical genres, storytelling and often challenging subject matter, across musical styles, genres and periods.

Listening activities: concept albums



Ask students to listen to some of the concept albums mentioned above, or to these examples:

- ▶ Marvin Gaye: *What's Going On* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-kA3UtBj4M&list=PLKLjDq58gFD_cY1K3dqNhZRe8mibgziQZ)
- ▶ Green Day: *American Idiot* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oCRF5ylvso)
- ▶ Sufjan Stevens: *Illinois* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6wT_6uEiRk)
- ▶ Plan B: *The Defamation of Strickland Banks* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwYJop919UM&list=PLpISLTplDmTBdJRx7GNVDT8BFXwFaaVvz)

Now ask your students to think about these questions:

- ▶ Take a couple of sentences to explain briefly each of the albums' overarching themes or narratives. What makes them into concept albums? How does this vary from album to album?
- ▶ Setting aside the albums' contrasting musical styles, how interesting or effective do you think their overall themes or storylines are? Are they strong enough to carry an album's worth of music?
- ▶ Turning to the music itself, how do the artists reflect or even contradict their themes or stories in their music? Does the music use particular elements connected with their theme, or does it set out to subvert it?

As a follow-up task, ask students to listen to these classical song cycles:

- ▶ Schubert: *Die schöne Müllerin* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YeITW9A8Rk)
- ▶ Britten: *Nocturne* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhXqR2D2-Cs&list=PLC834xzZqEoGejkFBAYrUYRiFVjEtvwnr)

And then ask them to think about these questions:

- ▶ Briefly explain both of these song cycles' overall themes or narratives. Are they simply a collection of unrelated songs, or are there ideas that bring them together into a unified whole? What was the composer's intention in bringing them together?
- ▶ Ignoring the obvious differences in musical style, what are the similarities or differences between them and the concept albums you've previously listened to? Think about questions of instrumentation, the texts that are used and where they come from, and the overall ideas behind the works.

Kate Bush and the concept album



Following 'The Ninth Wave' in 1985, Kate Bush returned to the idea of the concept album in her 2005 album *Aerial*, which follows a similar format to that of *Hounds of Love*. Its first half is a collection of unconnected pop songs, while its second half is a concept piece, bringing together nine compositions, called 'A Sky of Honey' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=SleyuKiMosY).

The storyline of 'A Sky of Honey' is in some ways simpler than that of 'The Ninth Wave', though no less elusive. It recounts the experiences of a single summer's day, beginning with an early morning awakening, complete with prominent birdsong, then proceeding with a visit to a pavement artist, before watching the sun set and

contemplating dusk, two lovers taking a late-night swim in the sea, and a euphoric welcoming of the new day in its final track.

Listening activity: 'The Ninth Wave' and 'A Sky of Honey'

Ask students to listen to both 'The Ninth Wave' and 'A Sky of Honey', and think about the similarities or differences between them. They could consider these questions:

- ▶ What's the sound from the natural world that Bush uses extensively in 'A Sky of Honey'? How does she integrate it into the music? What's its relationship with the concept suite's title?
- ▶ 'The Ninth Wave' draws on Irish traditional music, most prominently in the song 'Jig of Life'. What different traditional music does Bush draw on in 'A Sky of Honey'? (Hint: listen to the second half of the song 'Sunset'.)
- ▶ Bush used the then new Fairlight CMI extensively in recording 'The Ninth Wave'. When she came to record 'A Sky of Honey' two decades later, music technology had moved on considerably. How does her use of music technology in 'A Sky of Honey' compare with that in 'The Ninth Wave'? How does she use samples and effects in 'A Sky of Honey', and how extensive is their use?
- ▶ How do the storylines of the two different concept works compare? How ambitious are they, and what opportunities do they allow Bush to explore in her music? How diverse is the music in the two pieces as a result?

'Cloudbusting'

Let's turn to look in more detail at the three songs Edexcel has selected from *Hounds of Love* for its AoS4 set works.

'Cloudbusting' is the final song on Side A of *Hounds of Love*, and the first of Edexcel's three chosen songs. It uses quite an unconventional line-up of instruments – Bush's vocals alongside backing vocals, a string sextet (the Medici Sextet), synthesisers and drums – but no guitars at all. Even its drums are very restricted in the role they play, repeating a pounding, somewhat military-style rhythm almost throughout.

The song is based on *A Book of Dreams*, a memoir written in 1970 by Peter Reich about his relationship with his father, the Austrian-born psychoanalyst and inventor Wilhelm Reich. Bush's song sticks very closely to the content of Reich's book.

Wilhelm Reich was a controversial figure, respected for his pioneering early work in psychoanalysis (he was a student and later a colleague of Sigmund Freud in Vienna), but held in far lower esteem for his later opinions and activities, which his son's book recounts. Wilhelm Reich believed he had discovered a kind of cosmic life energy, which he called orgone, and which he believed was somehow related to the energy released during sex. He built boxes that he called 'orgone accumulators', in which he would ask patients to sit, believing the energy would improve their physical and mental well-being. In a more direct connection with Bush's song, he also built devices he called cloudbusters, which would direct (he believed) concentrated orgone energy into the atmosphere, thereby making it rain. He also believed that Earth was receiving frequent visits from UFOs, which spread a kind of negative energy (which he called deadly orgone radiation), and that bursts of orgone energy from his cloudbusters would help dispel them.



One of Wilhelm Reich's orgone accumulators

believed that Wilhelm Reich had lost his sanity. In the 1940s and 1950s, he was actively investigated by the US Food and Drug Administration for offering an unauthorised form of medical treatment in the form of his orgone accumulators. In 1954, he was ordered to destroy all of his equipment and the books describing it, but it was later discovered that some pieces (unknown to Reich) had been moved from Maine to New York. As a result, he was put on trial for contempt of court, convicted, and sentenced to two years in prison, where he died of a heart attack in 1957.

The Reich family lived on an estate in the state of Maine that Wilhelm Reich called Orgonon, mentioned in the first line of Bush's song. A few lines later (in the song's first bridge section), there's a reference to a yoyo. In one episode in Peter Reich's book, as a young boy he is playing with a yoyo that gives off coloured fluorescent light, but his father tells him that it generates the same deadly orgone radiation as the UFOs, and that the only way to avoid that negative energy seeping into the atmosphere is to bury the yoyo under the earth.

Despite the respect he had gained as a psychoanalyst, many



Wilhelm Reich with one of his cloudbuster devices

arrest by the 'men in power', who also ransack his laboratory. His son continues his work in defiance, however, using the cloudbuster to bring on heavy rain, which pounds the car that drives his father away.

Kate Bush's literary inspirations

'Cloudbusting' is just one of several songs in which Bush takes inspiration from literary sources. Here are a few others:

'Wuthering Heights'



'Wuthering Heights' was Bush's first single, released in 1978, and it spent four weeks at No. 1 in the UK charts. It was her breakthrough song, and is still the song that many people immediately associate with her. It is featured on her first album, *The Kick Inside*.

She was inspired to write the song after watching a BBC TV adaptation of the 1847 gothic novel of the same name by Emily Brontë in 1967. Discovering that she shared the same birthday as the writer, she reportedly wrote the song in a single sitting late at night.

Brontë's novel recounts the complicated relationships between two families, the Earnshaws and the Lintons. It focuses on the relationship between Heathcliff, an orphan

who the Earnshaws take in, and his 'sister' Catherine, who holds a forbidden love for him. Bush's song is sung from the perspective of Catherine's ghost, who returns night after night, pleading to be let in to Heathcliff's remote moorland farmhouse that gives the novel its name.

Watch the original 1978 video to 'Wuthering Heights' here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1pMM1e4hb4

Despite the strange, sometimes quite disturbing events it recounts, *A Book of Dreams* is nonetheless a touching account of a son's admiration for his father, and of the older man's undying defiance against the authorities. It's these themes of filial love, admiration and loss that Bush focuses on in her song. She reportedly contacted Peter Reich to explain her ideas behind writing the song, and to ask for his approval, which he gave.

Both the song and the music video that accompanies it (www.youtube.com/watch?v=plIRW9wETzw) recount the book's events. In the video – which features a specially extended version of the song – Bush takes on an androgynous look to play the role of the young Peter Reich, while respected Hollywood actor Donald Sutherland plays Wilhelm Reich. After a somewhat idyllic opening, in which father and son haul a cloudbuster to the top of a hill, the video ends with Wilhelm Reich's

‘The Sensual World’



The title track from Bush's sixth studio album, from 1989, 'The Sensual World' is based on Molly Bloom's closing soliloquy from James Joyce's 1922 novel *Ulysses*. In it, the woman recalls her earliest sexual experience with her husband Leopold Bloom, the book's central character, in a stream-of-consciousness succession of memories and impressions, written entirely without punctuation, but punctuated by frequent uses of the word 'yes', which also take on overtly sexual overtones.

Bush retains the punctuating 'yes' in her song, which imagines Molly Bloom stepping out of the black-and-white text of Joyce's book and into the vibrant colours and sensations of the real world. She originally

intended to use text taken directly from Joyce's novel, assuming it to be out of copyright, but was denied permission by Joyce's estate, so wrote her own original words that emulate Joyce's original. She was eventually granted permission, and recorded the song again with Joyce's words as 'Flower of the Mountain' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIGGEUUK1-o), released on her 2011 remix album *Director's Cut*.

Watch the video to the original version of 'The Sensual World' here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1DDndYoFLI

‘The Infant Kiss’



This song, from the album *Never for Ever*, has an indirect literary inspiration: Bush was inspired to write it by the 1961 gothic horror movie *The Innocents*, itself inspired by Henry James's 1898 novella *The Turn of the Screw* (which also inspired an opera from Benjamin Britten in 1954).

The song relates to a particular moment in the film, when one of the governess Miss Giddens's young charges, Miles, kisses her passionately as if he were an adult. The implication is that Miles is somehow possessed by the ghost of the former manservant Peter Quint, but in Bush's version, Miss Giddens considers the disturbing attraction that she nonetheless felt. It's a difficult, controversial subject, and one that's certainly more sensitive now

than it was at the album's release in 1980, as Bush has herself accepted. But the apparent calm contemplation of her song nonetheless serves to lay bare the horror of its subject matter.

Listen to 'The Infant Kiss' here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORAQIT1Gxw

Other songs in Bush's catalogue are concerned with overt storytelling, even if they don't take their inspiration directly from literary sources. Let's look at two of them.

‘There Goes a Tenner’



'There Goes a Tenner' is a track from Bush's fourth album, *The Dreaming*, and was released as a single in 1982, though it was very poorly received, only making it to No. 93 in the UK charts. Inspired by classic heist movies, it tells the story of a bungled robbery through a strange mix of knockabout comedy and dream-like unreality.

Watch the original video to 'There Goes a Tenner' here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxVcrFTzZMs

'Babooshka'

This song from Bush's 1980 album *Never for Ever* did far better, spending ten weeks in the UK charts, where it peaked at No. 5. It tells the story of a wife who sets out to test her husband's fidelity by dressing up as a younger woman and attempting to seduce him. When he eventually gives in to temptation, it's because this 'younger woman' reminds him of his wife in earlier times, and thereby, his wife's paranoia destroys what was a strong and trusting relationship.

Bush took certain inspiration for 'Babooshka' from the English folk song 'Sovay', which tells of a woman who disguises herself as a highwayman to test her lover's loyalty. She transposed her story to a fairytale Russia, but it was only after writing and releasing the song that she discovered that its title means 'grandmother' rather than referring to a younger woman.

Watch the original video for 'Babooshka' here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xckBwPdo1c

Listening activity: storytelling songs

Ask your students to listen again to 'Cloudbusting', and to some or all of the songs listed above.

Then think about these questions:

- ▶ Can you summarise the 'story' or at least scenario of each of the songs in a couple of sentences?
- ▶ How does Bush go about conveying the story? What perspective does she take? Is it as an objective, detached storyteller, or as a character from within the story? How is 'Babooshka' different from the other songs in that respect? What effect does this have on the experience of listening, do you think?
- ▶ How does Bush's vocal writing reflect the themes of the story, and the character she's playing or describing? Think about its tessitura, its range, and the melodic shapes she uses. How does her vocal delivery do the same? Does she do anything in particular to her voice, or sing in a particular way, to achieve this?
- ▶ How do the harmony and instrumentation in the songs themselves reflect their themes or storylines?

'And Dream of Sheep'

'And Dream of Sheep' is the first track on Side B of *Hounds of Love*, and the opening track in Bush's seven-song concept piece 'The Ninth Wave'.

Like many songs from earlier in Bush's career, it's based predominantly around voice and piano. It also incorporates two traditional Irish instruments performed by two respected Irish traditional musicians: Donal Lunny playing bouzouki (a kind of long-necked mandolin), and John Sheahan playing the Irish whistle. As we've seen, Irish traditional music plays an important role in Bush's songs, an influence that can be traced back to Bush's mother. The Irish influences in 'And Dream of Sheep' prefigure far more extensive use of Irish tunes in 'Jig of Life' a few tracks later on the same album, and also come after 'Night of the Swallow' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=61UZj0lxKxg) a similarly Irish-flavoured track on her previous album, *The Dreaming*.

Despite the generally acoustic sound of 'And Dream of Sheep', Bush's Fairlight CMI still plays a significant role, for example in the sampled voice intoning the shipping forecast heard quietly in the background from 0:45, and in the vocal sample 'Come here with me now' at 0:53. This second sample was recorded specially by Bush's mother, and Bush explained a personal significance of the words: if she woke from a nightmare as a child, she would go into her parents' bedroom and wait for her mother to wake up, inviting her into their bed with those words.

'Under Ice'

As we've seen, 'Under Ice' is the second song in the concept piece 'The Ninth Wave', which forms Side B of the album *Hounds of Love*. It marks the first dream or vision of the central character, in which they imagine themselves skating alone on a frozen lake, noticing something under the ice, which they later discover to be themselves.

'Under Ice' is an unusual song in several ways, and arguably the kind of song that would only find a natural home on a concept album. First of all, it's entirely through-composed: although it relies on the repetition of clear rhythmic, melodic and harmonic ideas, it doesn't follow the verse and chorus structure of a conventional pop song at all. Secondly, its line-up is simply Bush's voice and her Fairlight CMI. Bush explained that she sat down to write it at the Fairlight CMI, and decided it worked well exactly as she'd written it, and that the 'coldness' of the Fairlight CMI sounds illustrated the song's subject matter. (She said in an interview: 'I just sat down and wrote this little tune on the Fairlight with the cello sound. And it sounded very operatic, and I thought, "Well, great."')

As well as the sampled and processed cello sound that Bush uses throughout, the Fairlight CMI supplies several more sound effects during the course of the song, for example distant vocal calls (0:48), ice cracking (1:13), a submarine sonar (1:24) and synthesised sounds reminiscent of overtone singing near the end (2:01). Bush sings at a far lower tessitura here than in 'Cloudbusting' or 'And Dream of Sheep', and in a very restricted range of just a 5th – perhaps reflecting being 'trapped' under the ice. Note too the sonic quality of some of Bush's lyrics: the emphasis on s and i sounds in the lines 'splitting sound, silver heels, spitting, spitting snow', for example, serves to mirror the sound of the skater whooshing on the ice, and also its chilly hardness.

The Fairlight CMI



Kate Bush working at her Fairlight CMI in the 1980s

Kate Bush first used the Fairlight CMI on her third album, *Never for Ever*, but it played a central role in composing and recording *Hounds of Love*, and the three tracks from it that Edexcel has chosen for its AoS4. Let's look in more detail at this influential instrument.

History

The Fairlight CMI (short for Computer Musical Instrument) was at the cutting edge of music technology in the 1980s, though most of its capabilities can be carried out by a desktop DAW today. It worked as a synthesiser, with a bank of preset sounds, but it could also sample acoustic sounds, as well as acting as a sequencer.

It was first produced in 1979 by the Australian digital audio company Fairlight, established by the instrument's makers Kim Ryrie and Peter Vogel (it was named after the hydrofoil ferry that passed in front of the home of Ryrie's grandmother in Sydney). Ryrie and Vogel are also credited with coining the term 'sampling' for what their new instrument could do.

They originally intended to create a digital instrument that could replicate the sounds of acoustic instruments, collaborating with Motorola consultant Tony Furse, who was investigating ways that electronic instruments could emulate acoustic sounds by analysing their harmonic partials. But when it came to recording acoustic instruments in order to analyse their sound, Ryrie and Vogel realised it would be far simpler and more realistic to use the recorded sound and alter its pitch, rather than attempting to replicate it.



The Fairlight CMI Series II, first produced in 1982

Their earliest machines were sold with floppy discs containing samples from 22 orchestral instruments, and the very limited memory on these initial Fairlights (as low as 16KB) meant they were only able to use low-quality samples, giving the instrument its own particular sound character. They comprised one or more musical keyboards, a computer QWERTY keyboard and a green-screen monitor for programming.



Vogel met with British musician Peter Gabriel in 1979, who was in the process of recording his third album (officially called *Peter Gabriel*, like all of his first four albums, but commonly referred to as *Melt*) during the summer and autumn of that year. Gabriel was immediately fascinated by the new instrument, and became the first owner of a Fairlight CMI in the UK, adding sampled sounds to several songs on that album, including the anti-war 'Games Without Frontiers' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4K4obX3wcs). Kate Bush sang backing vocals on 'Games Without Frontiers' and another track on the album, and it was Gabriel who introduced her to the Fairlight CMI and its possibilities.

Kate Bush and the Fairlight CMI

Bush recorded her own third album, *Never for Ever*, from September 1979 to May 1980, and used a Fairlight CMI on several tracks, though she restricted herself to many of its embedded samples on that album. She had also previously used a synthesiser on earlier albums, for example in 'Wow' on her second album, *Lionheart*.

Listening activities: Kate Bush and the Fairlight CMI

- ▶ Listen to 'Wow' from Bush's second album, *Lionheart* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=oar7vovnH5I). Bush used a synthesiser to create the sweeping string-style harmonies in the background to the song. Why use a synthesiser rather than an acoustic string ensemble? What quality does the sound add to the song, and how does it reflect its themes?
- ▶ Listen to 'Army Dreamers' from Bush's third album, *Never for Ever* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOZDKlpybZE). Bush uses a Fairlight CMI for the song's cello sound, and more prominently for the gun trigger-clicks that mark out its waltz rhythm at the start. How do you feel this represents an evolution in her use of electronic sounds? What was the Fairlight CMI able to offer her that earlier synthesisers couldn't?
- ▶ Listen to 'Babooshka', also from *Never for Ever* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xckBwPdo1c). One of the most famous early Fairlight CMI sounds was of shattering glass, which Bush uses towards the end of the track. How effective is it, do you think? How does Bush make the simple sampled sound more complex? What connection is there with the theme of the song?
- ▶ Listen to 'The Dreaming', the title track from Bush's fourth album (www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2WaoLdCsvM). Bush uses a looped didgeridoo sample that was already one of the Fairlight's preset sounds throughout the track, as well as many other samples including whistling, sheep baa-ing (contributed by animal impersonator Percy Edwards), and an orchestral 'stab' heard several times towards the end of the song (for example at 2:59). The orchestral stab became an almost ubiquitous sound in pop music of the time, and has continued ever since: can you think of any other examples, from the 1980s or more recently?

Listening activity: 'Cloudbusting'

By the time she came to write the material that ended up as *Hounds of Love*, Bush had moved from composing at the piano to composing at the Fairlight CMI, immediately offering herself greater sonic possibilities, while also broadening her imagination.

Bush wrote 'Cloudbusting' at the Fairlight CMI rather than at the piano (a fact perhaps indicated by the fact that there's no piano on the track), and the sonic palette she uses is remarkably wide. She originally planned that the song's prominent string figures would be played on the Fairlight CMI, but then decided to use acoustic strings instead.

Ask your students to think about these questions:

- ▶ What do you think made her change her mind, choosing acoustic strings rather than the Fairlight CMI's sampled strings?
- ▶ How would the song have been different, do you think, had it been recorded using the Fairlight CMI rather than acoustic strings?
- ▶ What does it show about the limitations of the Fairlight CMI, or the particular sound world it creates?

Listening activity: 'Under Ice'

Bush also wrote 'Under Ice' at the Fairlight CMI rather than at the piano. Here, however, she retained the Fairlight CMI in the song's final version: in fact, the song uses no other instruments apart from the Fairlight CMI and Bush's voice.

Ask students to think about these questions:

- ▶ Apart from the synthesised strings and Bush's voice, what other sonic elements can you hear that have been created using the Fairlight CMI's sampling capabilities?
- ▶ Why do you think Bush reverted to acoustic strings for 'Cloudbusting', but retained the Fairlight CMI's synthesised strings for 'Under Ice'? How do those choices reflect the songs' different themes and moods?

Conclusion

Kate Bush is a somewhat idiosyncratic, highly individual figure in popular music, as many of her songs and influences show. But the three songs from *Hounds of Love* that Edexcel has chosen for its AoS4 set work can serve as a springboard for exploring broader musical issues that are relevant across styles, genres and musical periods, whether bringing songs together into a concept piece, deriving inspiration from diverse literary sources, or harnessing cutting-edge technology. In her own terms, however, Bush has produced some of the most innovative and distinctive pop music in recent decades, and her output is as rewarding and valuable to explore in itself.