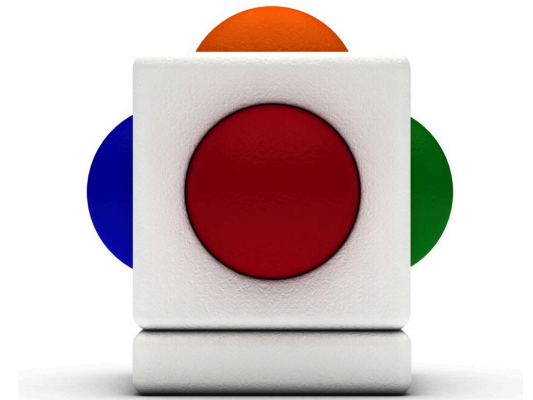# Lesson Chinese New Year

Lesson time - across two 35 minute sessions

In this lesson

- Learning about the Chinese New Year and the traditional customs around it

- Selecting and arranging sounds to express thoughts and ideas

- Improvising on the Skoog with the pentatonic scale

- Playing with a background track

- Recording a performance to be used as relaxation music

Learning Outcomes

References with Music Curriculum for Excellence:

- EARLY (EXA 0-17a) I have the freedom to use my voice, musical instruments and music technology to discover and enjoy playing with sound and rhythm.

- FIRST (EXA 1-17a) I can use my voice, musical instruments and music technology to discover and enjoy playing with sound, rhythm, pitch and dynamics.

- SECOND (EXA 2-17a) I can use my voice, musical instruments and music technology to experiment with sound, pitch, melody, rhythm, timbre and dynamics.

- THIRD (EXA 3-17a) I can use my voice, musical instruments or music technology to improvise or compose with melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre and structure.

References with Technological Development in Society Curriculum for Excellence:

- EARLY (TCH 0-01a) I enjoy playing with and exploring technologies to discover what they can do and how they can help us.

- SECOND (TCH 2-01a) When exploring technologies in the world around me, I can use what I learn to help to design or improve my ideas or products.

References with Mental and Emotional Wellbeing Curriculum for Excellence:

- EARLY (HWB 0-06a), FIRST (HWB 1-06a), SECOND (HWB 2-06a) I understand the importance of mental wellbeing and that this can be fostered and strengthened through personal coping skills.

Support Materials

Before we start, we recommend you to have these ready:

- The song Dragon of a Thousand Lanterns from Ming-Ming and the Lantern Dragon - Time and Tune BBC Radio for Schools (Spring 1980)

- The song Jasmine Flower from the CD Mountain Song by Blue Butterfly (1997, Australia)

- Music from the CD Asian Serenity by Guan Guo Sheng,

- Chinese Artefacts, for example:

  - Lion Head Mask

  - Chinese Drum

  - Paper Lanterns

  - 'Fu' New Year Sign

  - New Year Red Packets

- Simple Tai Chi moves.

Lessons with progression and/or differentiation.

Moira H Thorburn
Music Specialist - City of Edinburgh

Tai Chi

In this lesson we are going to compose a melody on the Skoog, and use it for relaxation purposes with some cool Tai Chi moves at the end!

1. Select Oriental Strings

We are going to use the Oriental String dynamic instrument on the Skoog to create a Chinese melody. So connect your Skoog to the computer and start up the Skoogmusic software.

1. Make sure the Audio Speaker button in the Skoogmusic Window is on (green)

2. Make sure we are not on mute - underneath the Audio Balance options to the left of the tabs in the Skoog Window.

3. Go to the Instruments Tab.

4. Click on the icon for Oriental Strings.

2. Discussion

Let's decide on how you want your music sound! Discuss on things such as tempo (the speed) and what kind of sound you might want to add to the melody - for example, background music and nature sound effects.

3. Selecting a scale

We are going to use a pentatonic scale here to create that folky musical effect; also to make sure that it won't clash with any background music that we might add later on!

1. Go to the Notes Tab

2. In the Scale menu underneath the keyboard, select either Major or Minor Pentatonic.

3. If you are playing along to something, find out what key your background music / track is in, then find out what compatible key your Skoog should be set in using the Key Chart (www.skoogmusic.com/sites/default/files/downloads/KEYS.pdf).

4. In the Tonic box on the Notes Tab, select the name for the key that you want.

4. Add a backing track

Your Chinese melody can be accompanied by a backing loop or some background music, such as the tracks from the CD Mountain Song (make sure it is in .wav, .aif, or .mp3 format).

1. The Backing Loop Player is located in the Skoogmusic Window across the top of the screen.

2. Locate your backing track of choice in your file browser.

3. Click and drag your backing track sound file across to the Skoogmusic Window, and drop it in the bubble that says Drop Loop Here.

4. When the border of the bubble stops blinking and the player reads Ready, the sound file has finished being imported. Click Play to start playing the backing track.

5. There you have it! If you want to control the volume of you backing track, just drag and adjust the slider in the loop playing. You can also pan you backing track to the left and right too.

6. The player will loop the track when it ends. Click Stop to stop playing.

5. Record your melody

Have a play with the Skoog and your backing track and come up with a melody. When you are ready, record it!

1. The Audio Recorder is located in the Skoogmusic Window across the top of your screen.
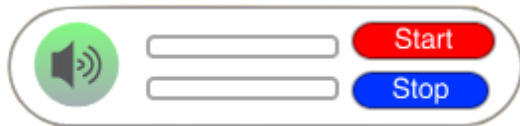

2. Check you levels with all the parts playing - a mini rehearsal if you like! Make sure the level indicator does not go into red. If it does, reduce the volume of each Skoog and that of the backing track.

3. When you are ready, click on Record. The button will change to Start and a file browser window will open to prompt you for a save location for you recording.

4. Once you have chosen your save location for your sound file, the Start button will start flickering. Click on it to begin recording - the button will then change to Recording.
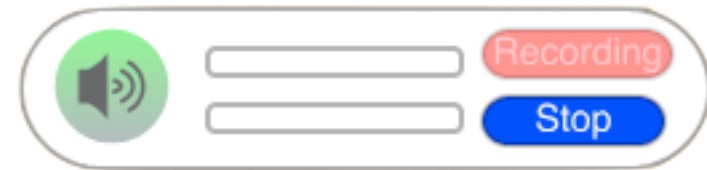
5. Click Stop to stop recording.

6. Add to your melody

Once you have recorded your melody playing nicely on top of the backing track, you can drag the newly recorded sound file back into the Backing Loop Player and record again to add more sounds to it! Simply follow Step 4 and Step 5 again.

This time you can select a different instrument by repeating Step 1, and add a bass line or rhythm line using percussive instruments when you record (using Step 5).

7. Add sound effects

This step is for if you want to add sound effects, or samples, to your recording.

There are three different way to play your samples in the Skoogmusic software:

SCRUB You literally scroll through the sound file as you press into the Skoog; the way you squeeze has a direct effect of how the sound plays out. You can create a lot of crazy effects with this option!

TRIGGER Turns the Skoog into a switch. Press into the Skoog once and it will play the entire sound file.

PRESS&HOLD A mixture of scrub and trigger - you trigger the sample as you come into contact with the Skoog, and it will play the sample in its entirety for as long as you hold on to the Skoog. Let go of the Skoog and you let go of the sound!

And here is how you would assign different sounds onto the different sides of your Skoog:

1. Make sure the Audio Speaker is on in the Skoogmusic Window.

2. Make sure the Skoog audio is not on mute.

3. Go to the Samples Tab.

4. Locate the file that you wish to use in your file browser - the Samples Tab can take either the .wav or .aif format.

5. Click on the file and drag it across to the Skoog Window; drop it on the waveform box for whichever side you wish to assign the sample to.

6. At the top of the Samples Tab, pick one of the playback functions (Scrub, Trigger, Press&Hold).

7. You might want to save the choice of your samples as a single folder (Samples Set), so you can easily load it back in later! It will remember which sample has been assigned to which side. Do so by click on the Save button at the bottom of the Samples Tab.

Again, repeat Step 4 and Step 5 to add the samples to your recording.

8. Tai Chi moves!

Now that you have a composition that you are proud of, we can use it to do our Tai Chi exercise! Below are instructions for a very simple Tai Chi hand exercise - there are of course plenty of others that you can choose from.

NOTE   Depending on the physical ability of the pupils, it might be necessary to invent moves in the spirit of Tai Chi rather than using actual Tai Chi exercises.

1. Stand with your feet a little wider than shoulder distance apart.

2. Lift your arms straight out in front of you, parallel to the floor at shoulder height.

3. Stretch your hands as wide as you can, then rotate your wrists in a clockwise and then anti-clockwise direction.

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES   In your follow up lesson, you can repeat the exact same steps to create another melody, but this time for a Chinese Dragon Dance. Get your pupils to parade round the corridors as a Chinese Dragon with this new melody!

For more information

For more ideas on creating music with the Skoog, see Chapter 6 of the Skoogmusic User's Guide.