

Vocabulary

Compose – Creating an original piece of music.

Improvise – Making up a melody as you go along.

Motif – a very short musical ‘idea’ – often just a small group of notes or a rhythm that create a musical phrase.

Palindrome – Something that is the same forwards as it is backwards.

Retrograde – moving in a backwards direction, often applied when the same pattern of music is played backwards.

Tuned percussion – percussion instruments that can play different pitches – xylophones, glockenspiels, chime bars etc.

Untuned percussion – percussion instruments that can only make a limited number of sounds – drums, shakers, claves, tambourines.

A Bao A Qu – Mason Bates

How can music describe an imaginary creature?



About the composer:

Mason Bates was born in 1977, and is an American composer who often writes for a combination of orchestral players and electronics. He was recently named the most-performed composer of his generation! He was born in Virginia and studied at the University of California until 2008. He has written highly acclaimed pieces for several major orchestras and is currently the first ever composer-in-residence for the Kennedy Centre of Performing Arts in Washington DC.

Prior learning

Work in KS1 on untuned percussion and rhythm, listening to and appraising ‘The Nutcracker Suite’, improvising and composing rhythms.

Interesting ideas:

American DJ and composer Mason Bates composed a 30-minute orchestral symphony called ‘Anthology of Fantastic Zoology’ in 2015, which featured 11 strange imaginary creatures, one of which was the A Bao A Qu. The middle of A Bao A Qu, when the music starts winding itself back to the start is a musical palindrome, and just like a palindrome word is spelt the same forwards as it is backwards, the music sounds the same when played forwards or backwards!

Useful links:

Follow this link to watch a performance of ‘A Bao A Qu’.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTO_qrsYb8E