

# John Williams

## Year 4

### Autumn 2

## Unit Overview

### Lesson One - An Introduction to John Williams

- Play the 'Introduction' video from the start to 6.10m. This will stop the video before the answers are revealed.
- Allow the children time to think of what the famous films are from the music they are hearing. They may need a few listens.
- When the children are ready reveal the answers.
- Explain that John Williams is an American composer who is a good friend of Steven Spielberg who directs many of the films we have seen here.
- John Williams uses something called motif. Motif is very important in Music and Film. A motif is a short melody that acts as a theme for a character. Generally speaking, as soon as children hear the first 8 notes of Hedwigs theme they know immediately that this is Harry Potter. The simple melody has been made to capture an audience and make them think that magical things are about to happen.
- Play the next part of the video from 11.10m. This introduces the next part of our scheme. Performing. The children are going to learn to play a few of the famous John Williams motifs for themselves.
- In the next lesson we will get more adventurous with digital music, however, for today hand out some tuned percussion for some of the children to try. Chime Bars, Glockenspiels or Xylophones can be given out for the children to use. Print off the Sheet Music for the children to use as reference. This is on the Webpage itself.

### Lesson Two - John Williams in Action

- Recap the previous lesson. Who is John Williams? How do we know his music?
- Watch the 'John Williams in Action' video. This video helps us to see how John Williams and Steven Spielberg work together when creating music for a film. Encourage the children to discuss the video as a class. Whilst JW was playing what were the two men watching? Why were they doing this? What does the music do as it plays ET's Flying melody? It gets higher in pitch. Why do the children think the music might make people emotional?
- Now watch the 'ET's Flying Motif' video. This explains more about how a motif can develop over the period of a story. And how important music is in ET. The first 8 minutes of the film are exclusively music. There is no dialogue.

### Lesson Three - Digital Piano App

- Recap the work the children did on John Williams in the last lesson.
- Watch the first video from 11.30m - 17.16m. This will show the children how to play each of the famous melodies.
- Make sure they each have a print off of 'Jurassic Park' to start with. This is one of the easier themes. If you have digital tablets, they can use the free piano app, GarageBand or simply find an online piano player on the internet browser. Failing this, the children can use tuned percussion.
- Allow the children time to follow the notes on the sheet music. Playing one note at a time.
- Play the 'Tutorial' video to help the children.
- Play the 'Play Along' video so the children can have a go with playing along when they have practiced.

## **Lesson Four - Musical Motif**

- In this lesson the children will learn how to create a 'John Williams' style motif.
- A motif is a short melodic theme that often repeats during a performance. It can attach the audience to a character or the essence of a story.
- Play the 'Famous Musical Motifs' video. The children can have a go at guessing the famous tunes. They have already heard a few in the first lesson. The important musical lesson here is that famous melodies are often very simple. Superman just uses 3 notes in it's famous first phrase. Low C - G - High C. The children have already played Jurassic Park and possibly some other famous John Williams melodies on digital devices.
- Using their knowledge of the John Williams melodies, let the children develop an idea for a musical motif of their own. The stimulus could be:
  - A Famous character from a book, film or television program (The Trunchbull - Iron Man - Sponge Bob)
  - A short story idea (A Day at the Park goes horribly wrong - My Visit to the Moon - Uncle Robot!)
  - A history topic they have particularly enjoyed (The Romans - Great Fire of London - World War 2)
- Hand out tuned percussion or digital piano devices. Allow the children time to create a short motif for their chosen subject. Important considerations:
  - Keep the melody short. Maybe only 8-10 notes.
  - Keep the melody simple. Go up and down in steps on the instruments. Don't take big jumps. So, E F G E F E. Is better than E A C D B E etc.
  - Make the tune catchy so it sticks in the Childs head. This is the whole point of a motif.
  - Repeat the pattern again and again so it is easy to remember and other friends can easily play the motif themselves.

## **Lesson Five - Continuing on Motif**

- In this lesson the children will continue working on their short musical motifs.
- Using Tuned Percussion or digital devices, the children finish their short pieces focussing on a repeating melody of only 8-10 notes.
- Ask children to play their pieces for the class. The other children in the class can try and guess what character or subject the player is trying to portray.
- Perform and Evaluate to finish the lesson making sure every child has had the chance to play and discuss their piece.
- For extension work children can think about how else they can make the motifs stand out. Dynamics (loud - Soft) Tempo (Speed) Duration (Long - Short) Etc. How can changing the musical elements help the motif become clearer to an audience.

## **Lesson Six - Evaluation**

- Recap all of the work on John Williams carried out during the scheme.
- Hand out the 'John Williams Quiz' sheets. Let the children have a go at answering the questions to see how much they can remember.
- Hand out the Musical Motifs played in Lesson 3 to let the children test their piano skills once more.
- Let children finish their own Musical Character Motif if they haven't had chance.