'I've... forgotten my instrument / music / broken my arm / had braces fitted...

(INSERT AS APPROPRIATE!)

However much we (and for the most part, parents) remind them, children will sometimes come to your lessons without the practical equipment they need. These situations provide the perfect opportunity to cover **general musicianship and aural skills and reinforce understanding and application of the 7 musical 'dimensions'** (musical building blocks) of: Dynamics, Tempo (incorporating Pulse), Rhythm (incorporating meter), Pitch, Timbre (tone-colour), Texture and Structure.

A small **'kit bag' containing a few small percussion instruments** means they can copy back, invent, sightread and notate rhythms and use them to keep the pulse, tap out the rhythm and accompany you (or peers, if it's a shared lesson).

It would be helpful to know the **aural test requirements** of any exam board you use and have these ready to work through.

https://shop.abrsm.org/shop/dept/Aural/100009

https://www.trinitycollege.com/qualifications/music/resources/general-resources/aural

https://lcmebooks.org/v2/pg/aural-tests.php?pg=specimens

Activities

- **'What if...?'**: Play them a short piece on your instrument, accurately but with no added extras like dynamic or tonal contrasts. Ask them to help you play it more musically by experimenting with changes. What do they think works better?

- **Musical 'Spot the difference'**. Play them a short piece (or extract) – start with 2 phrases. Play it twice accurately, then make a change – can they spot the difference? This works aurally and also using notation. If the pupil is young, give them a handy hint before you play " I'm going to make a rhythmic change near the end" or "I'm going to make a change to the melody in the middle".

- **Use the percussion instruments or body percussion to compose a simple rhythm piece.** For less experienced pupils, using a 4 x 4 grid (where each space

represents 1 pulse beat) is a great help to understanding that 1 pulse beat can contain more than 1 sound i.e. a 4- beat phrase can have more than 4 sounds, if you subdivide beats into halves or quarters or join beats together to make longer sounds. Kodaly inspired 'stick' notation and use of spoken syllables (Ta, Tay-Tay, Ti-ri-ti-ri, Ta-Ah etc) can be very helpful.

Musical Multitasking.

Have a selection of short songs that can be used in different ways to get the brain firing off cross-cortex. Use the sung phrase "Off we go / Off you go / Off I go" to set the starting pitch (i.e. not the tonic note of the scale) and tempo (using the speed of the pulse). Sing them through, then try doing different things with each phrase e.g.

> Phrase 1: Use **thinking voice**, and mark the **pulse on knees**
> Phrase 2: Use **thinking voice** and mark the **rhythm using 2 fingers on palm of hand**
> Phrase 3: Show the **phrasing** (arch movement with L hand holding R elbow)
> Phrase 4: **Sing out loud** – have they **held the starting pitch?**

Danger, men at work! *(tune of 'Knees up Mother Brown')*

1. Sing as written, keeping the pulse with a simple 4 beat repeated body percussion pattern e.g. *shoulder, shoulder, knee, knee...*
2. Change the pattern to add a 5th beat - *shoulder, shoulder, knee , knee, clap...*
3. Continue to make the percussion pattern longer, whilst keeping the song going throughout e.g. *S, S, K, K, clap, head*
4. Sing the song, but without the repeated phrase, so the strong beat / strong word emphasis is changed – harder than you think! Once you've mastered that, try adding the above body percussion back in!

John Kanaka-naka

Use this (or another short folk song / playground game) to add clapping patterns (solo or in pairs/ small group). Once the pattern is added, try putting some phrases into thinking voice whilst keeping the pattern going – does pulse stay steady? Is pitch -matching accurate when singing is resumed out loud?

Example of paired rhythms (with 2 people standing opposite one another)

Knees, clap, R hand, clap, L hand, clap, both hands, clap

Jump, pat knees to rhythm of 'Ka-na-ka-na-ka, clap clap, both hands

Soo Bishop, Sept 2024