

Sounds from Home - 1. Making Music Transcript

0:12

If you're stuck at home like all of us here at the Unlocking Our Sound Heritage project,

0:17

you might well be in need of some new and creative ways to keep

0:20

yourselves entertained, and we thought we might just be able to help with a little assistance from the archive.

0:26

Today we invite you to take a journey both into the far reaches of outer space

0:30

and back in time, all without leaving the house.

0:34

It will be an apartment friendly workout for your ears, and you won't need any special equipment

0:38

just a few household items and a sense of adventure.

0:47

London Metropolitan Archives is one of 10 regional hubs across the UK

0:50

to join the British libraries Unlocking Our Sound Heritage project in 2018.

0:55

A project which together plans to preserve almost half a million

0:59

rare and at-risk sound recordings one of the things that has got us most excited

1:03

here at LMA was the discovery of creating music in class a teaching

1:07

program produced by the inner London Education Authority in 1976.

1:12

Opening the box we were intrigued to discover an instruction book, a number of tape spools,

1:16

and a collection of graphics scores. Essentially a toolkit for making

1:19

experimental music. Anyone could use it no matter their level of musical ability...

1:23

...and now you can too!

1:26

Firstly what is a graphic score?

1:28

Well, just like a regular score that contains notes on a stave, it's a set of instructions for playing

1:33

music - but using images and symbols rather than crotchets and semi quavers.

1:37

As you'll see graphic scores are much more open to interpretation,

1:41

meaning that you get to use your imagination to decide how to play them,
1:44

and what instruments you use.

1:50

Today we're going to create a piece of music for this work by Hamish Preston

1:54

entitled 'The Space Journey'. It's an interesting score because instead of

1:58

presenting us with written parts for different instruments, it simply offers

2:01

us a list of different sonic experiences we might come across while traveling through space.

2:06

Unlike a traditional score with a beginning and an end, this is more

2:10

like a sort of map - meaning that we can choose our own path and start and finish

2:13

wherever and whenever we like.

2:15

Helpfully each of the items on the score comes

2:18

with a short description, allowing us to imagine the sort of sounds it might make

2:22

and how we could represent them.

2:24

Because our time here today is limited we're

2:26

going to make a two minute piece using a few of the heavenly bodies that feature

2:30

on the score - stars, planets, and moons.

2:34

For argument's sake we'll be travelling

2:37

across the universe today, in a roughly clockwise direction.

2:46

Having examined our score, it's time to find things around the house to make sounds with.

2:51

My own home doesn't contain any traditional musical instruments, as such,

2:55

but we do have a lot of everyday household items that could be put to good use...

2:59

...and so will yours.

3:01

A door that makes an interesting creak when you open it,

3:03

a squeazy shampoo bottle, a singing kettle. All are rich in untapped sonic potential.

3:13

But for this project today, I'm feeling like a challenge,

3:17

so we're going to set ourselves the task of trying to make all the sounds we'll need from a

3:20

single item: a wineglass that I found in the kitchen. Obviously you have to be

3:25

very careful with glass and if you're watching this with a grown-up make sure

3:28

you ask them for help. If you're a grown-up just be sensible!

3:32

I've chosen a glass, because by filling it with water and touching the sides with wet fingers,

3:36

you can create all kinds of wonderful noises.

3:39

[Wine glass noises]

3:41

Plus if the experiment goes well,

3:42

we'll have something on hand with which to toast our success.

3:47

Having chosen our instrument and filled it with water,

3:48

it's time to try and get some sounds out of it.

3:50

We'll be recording our efforts using this digital recording device, but a

3:55

voice recording app on a smartphone would do the job just as well.

3:59

Once we've extracted some interesting sounds from our glass, we can then set about

4:02

transforming them using a digital audio editor.

4:06

I'm going to use some software on

4:07

my laptop, but there are lots of different programs and apps for smart

4:10

phone and tablet that you can use for your own experiments, many of them

4:13

available free online.

4:16

For this piece we're going to keep it simple, cutting

4:18

out some of the more interesting moments from our recording session,

4:21

slowing them down

4:24

...and then adding a little digital reverb or electronic echo.

4:29

But while we're doing this we're also thinking about each of the different heavenly

4:33

bodies on the score, and how those sounds might be used to describe them.

4:37

For example, a few high-pitched sounds might be useful for a twinkling star,

4:42

while hopefully adding some echo to those lower pitch sounds, will make them

4:45

feel bigger, stranger, and more planet-sized. it's surprising how quickly

4:50

everyday objects start to sound otherworldly.

4:55

But will they sound huge and luminous enough?

4:57

We shall see!

4:59

Time to launch this piece and find out if sound

5:01

really does travel through space.

5:10

[Music]...

7:25

...and there you have - it a trip across the universe, blasting off from a kitchen in

7:30

South London, and powered by nothing but our imaginations, a wineglass,

7:35

and an experimental music kit from a 1970s classroom.

7:38

I hope you enjoyed it,

7:40

and if you did, perhaps you'll start planning further journeys for yourselves.

7:43

Why not create some more sounds of space using whatever you can find around the house.

7:47

You could use the graphic score we've chosen on this video by playing it

7:51

through again with the sound turned off or you can create your own, using pencils,

7:54

paints, scissors and glue - and if you don't want to use a computer just play

7:58

along in real time. Then perhaps you could travel to other places: the bottom

8:02

of the sea or to the North Pole.

8:04

Every home is loaded with sonic potential but

8:07

obviously check with a responsible adult before using anything delicate, or breakable.

8:12

We're really hoping to hear lots of amazing new sounds coming from

8:15

houses all over the UK and beyond, so get recording and composing and then

8:19

be sure to show us what you came up with.

8:23

From all of us here are unlocking our sound heritage good luck and happy travels!