

Mindful Music Making
By Nicola McAteer (Lead Music Leader)

Hello Everyone!

This Month's Musical Connections Video is available here (<https://tinyurl.com/MCMindful>) or if you are receiving this in the post, on your DVD.

I am aware we are now into the 3rd month of lockdown and despite having lots of time to enjoy our creativity, these strange circumstances can be challenging in many ways. This month's video and worksheet explores the concept of 'Mindful Music'.

Mindful Music = Making music through experiencing the present moment

Exercise 1: Mindful Breathing

- Breath In for 4 counts and out for 4 counts.
- Breath In for 4 counts and out for 7 counts.

Exercise 2; Mindful Meditation

This exercise can be done anywhere but if you are new to meditation exercises, I suggest you find somewhere you feel calm, with minimal distractions if you're able to.

- a) Find a place to sit comfortably and close your eyes.
- b) Breath normally and focus your attention on your breathing. You may want to bring your attention to the rise of and fall of your chest whilst doing this.
- c) After a few moments of sitting with all of your attention on your breathing, you can then draw your attention to your senses. When we experience our senses we immediately are able to 'be present', be completely in that moment, free from thoughts or worries of the past or the future. Enjoy being in that moment.
- d) Work through your senses one at a time, bringing your attention to that sense and sitting, breathing and enjoying that moment before moving on to the next.

TOUCH – SMELL - TASTE – SIGHT – HEARING

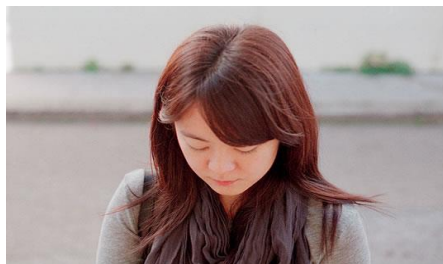
Top Tips:

- Take your time.
- If your thoughts and attention start to wander, just bring it back to your chosen sense or your breathing.
- Enjoy both strong senses and distant/mild ones e.g. what can you hear far away? If you open your eyes to embrace your sense of sight, how do things look straight away? Where does the light fall? Are there shadows and shapes?
- Never criticise yourself for getting distracted. It's ok for your thoughts to wonder what you might eat for lunch! Just accept any passing thoughts and go and return to the exercise with your senses and breathing.
- Regular practice makes this easier and makes the experience more enriching.
- If you find this difficult, leave it and try it again another time.

Task 1: *Creative writing in the moment*

You may want a note pad, pen and a phone with an audio recorder (voice notes/ voice memos/ audio files) if you have one.

Following the Mindful Meditation, we are now going to draw from our experiences of being in the present moment to start making music or begin song-writing.



Step 1: Write down any words or sounds that immediately spring to mind where you are being mindful and just note them all down.

Step 2: Can you hear anything in this moment that you can turn into a little rhythm or beat or riff (cars driving, footsteps, washing machine rattling, birds singing)?

Step 3: Try to get a feeling for the style, mood or groove of your music from what you have come up with in Steps 1 and 2. Is it upbeat, slow, jazzy, rocky, serious, sad, jokey?

Step 4: Try out some of your words (or sounds) from Step 1 now you have a style and feeling of the music. Experiment with some lyrics if your using words. You can add new words and sounds to your existing ones too! You may want to tap out your rhythm then try some words/lyrics or vice versa or try them both together if you fancy a challenge!

Task 2 – *A mindful ‘observational’ walk for musical material!*

You can try this exercise on a daily walk or even in the garden, on your doorstep or even looking out the window if you aren’t able to leave the house.

As you take your walk, practice mindfulness - being in the moment - bringing your attention to what you can hear, see and smell! Try and remember them or make a note of the things that **instantly** catch your attention. Don’t worry if the words or sounds don’t link up at this stage.

Examples of walk observations (remember, anything goes!):

- *A rose garden.*
- *An interesting name of a street sign.*
- *A bird’s feather*
- *The texture of a lamppost.*
- *Any animals on the canals or pathways.*
- *Types of trees.*
- *A shop sign.*
- *The colour or shape of bricks, houses, roads, shops, bus stops*

Then follow **Steps 2-4 from Task 1** to use this observational material for creative original music making.

Remember, these are just ideas to get you started with things. Feel free to bend, break and recreate your own guidelines!

It would be brilliant to hear any music being made at the moment so please send some examples back if you are able to by email to info@quench-arts.co.uk!

Happy Mindful Music Making!

From Nicola 😊