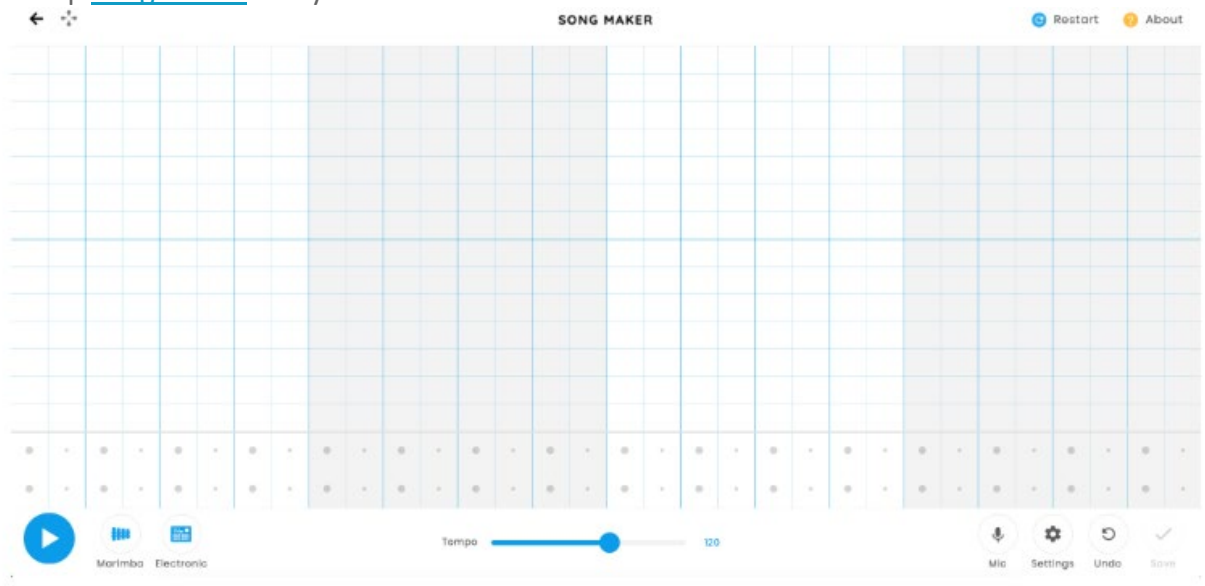
Explorations
Visual and Performing Arts
Music Grade 6/7

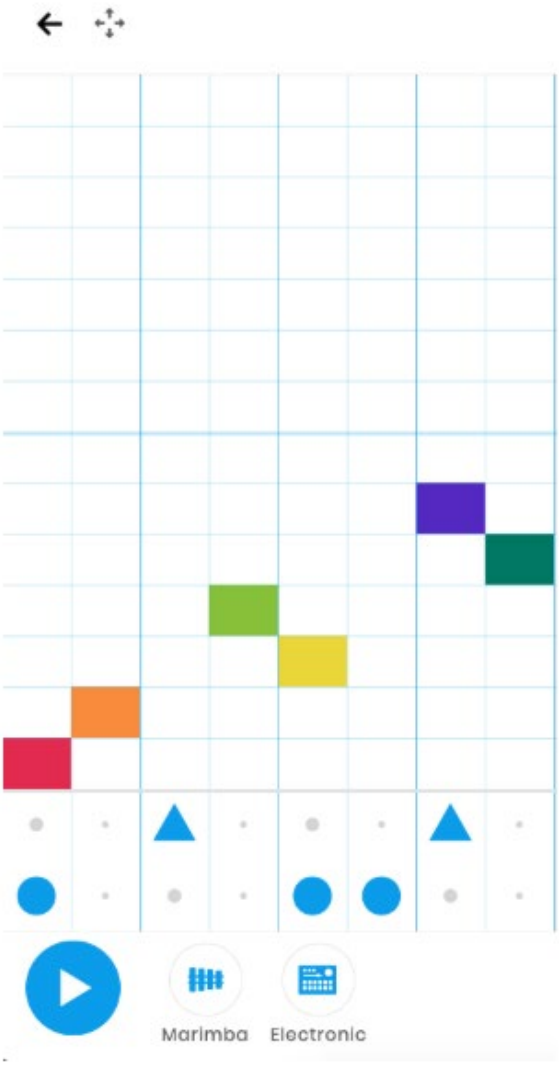
5 fun activities for Chrome Music Lab

1) Complete the pattern

This is a fairly easy activity to do, but you can make it so hard if you want to! Go ahead and open up Song Maker and you'll be met with a blank screen like this:



Once you've opened it up, you can create a simple pattern in the first bar and ask your class to then copy and repeat the pattern on their own devices. If you're stuck for ideas, try using this one (click here to open it directly on your device, too!):

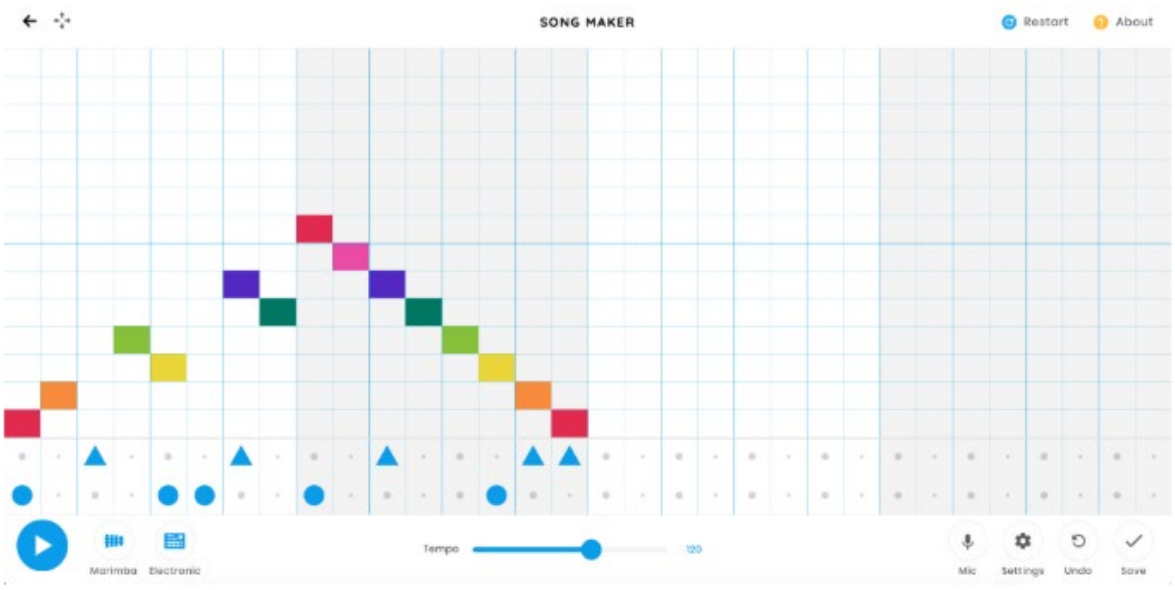


And that's it! OK, that's not quite all there is to it, but that's your starting point. To extend the task, your class could pair up, with one person creating the first bar and the second person trying to copy the pattern into the remaining three bars. Something else I've done in the past is to print out a screenshot of the blank starting screen, asked the class to create their patterns, or compositions, *by hand*, and then fill them in on Song Maker.

Apart from being a fun activity for music, this is also a great opportunity to talk about repeating patterns in terms of maths and art. You could also add limitations to how they create their patterns, e.g. "You can only use a quarter of the percussion notes" which will really get them thinking!

2) The beauty of symmetry

Similar to 'complete the pattern', start off with a blank screen in Song Maker, but this time create a pattern or image that fills the first two bars, like this (or click here):



Once they have the first two bars copied, treat the end of bar two as a mirror line and get the class to reflect the shape, creating a symmetrical image. They will have lots of fun creating their own images, again working independently or with a partner whilst developing digital artistic and mathematical skills. If you want to make this a little easier, go to settings and change the length to 2 bars.

This will allow pupils to work with one reflected bar, instead of 2. Again, you could print out blank workspaces and get the class to reflect the patterns by hand before copying them into their digital documents.

3) What can you spell?

This is an old music lesson favourite, and it is based on the principal of using musical notation to spell words. Before working on Music Lab, as a starter, ask your class to spell as many words as possible using only the letters A, B, C, D, E, F & G. They can use letters more than once if they wish. You could make this a competition, who can spell the most words? Who can find the longest word? (I won't spoil this for you, give it a go yourselves!) Once you have your word bank, you can head over to Melody Maker to get started.

Using the colour scheme here to match the letters used, get the class to input their spelling to see what they sound like!

Once the class are confident using this method of note input, you could transfer the skill over to Song Maker, and create longer compositions using different words. You could even get the class to input several different words in layers and begin creating some interesting harmonies and counter melodies!

If you wanted to bring this work into the physical world, the colours of the notes match colour systems for classroom musical instruments, so you could have some digital music playing in Melody Maker or Song Maker, whilst the class play other words using their own acoustic instruments. You may even like to write a short story using the words the class composed, and play the words in time with the story too!

4) An artists delight

This activity is great for younger classes, but it can be developed for older children too. To begin with, ask the children to draw any of the following shapes on either a sheet of paper, in their books or on a personal whiteboard:

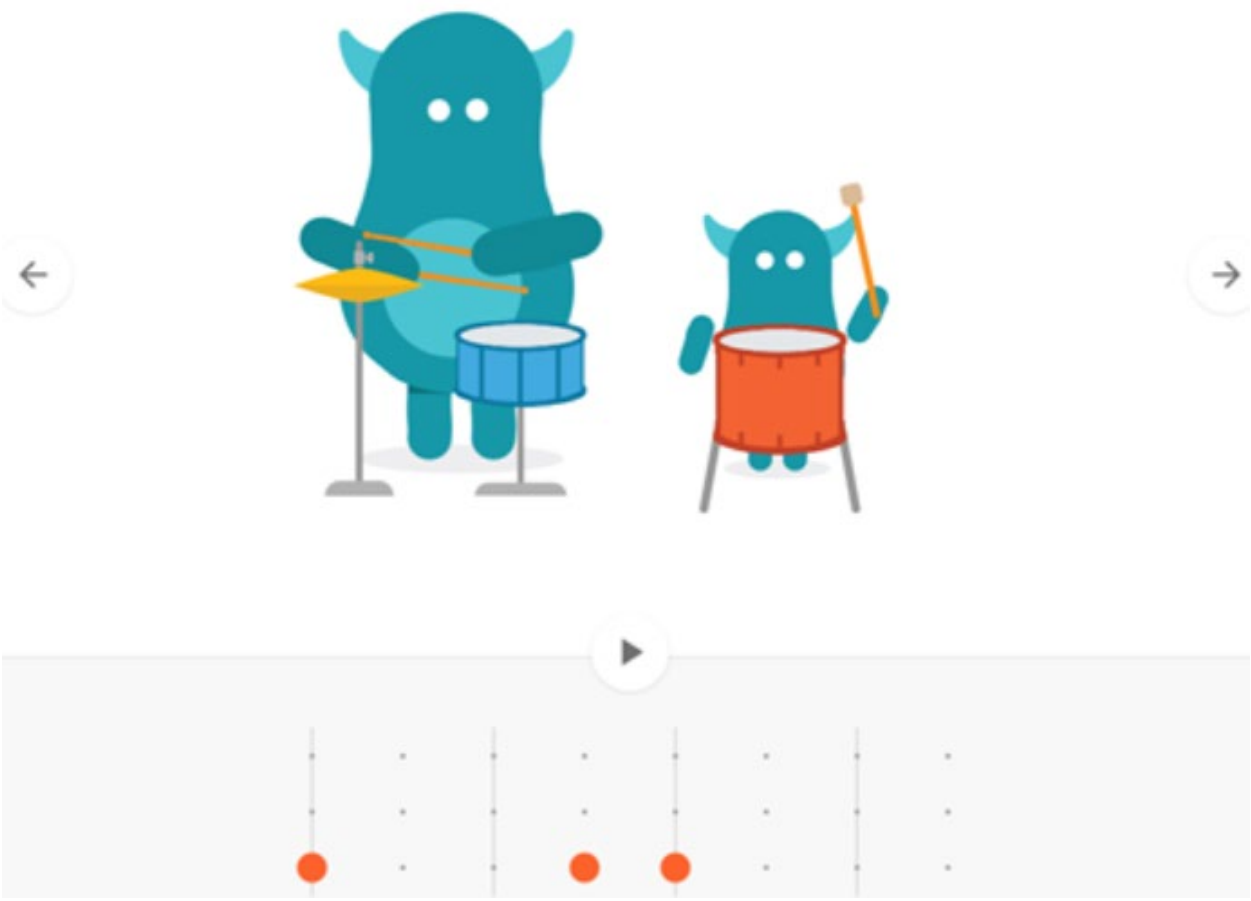
Lines, Circles, Squares/Rectangles (quadrilaterals) or Triangles.

The shapes can be as big, small or as numerous as they like. They might even only want to use one shape! Once they have created their images, introduce them to Kandisky. Kandinsky is a beautifully simple 'experiment', because all the children have to do is draw! Ask the class to copy their original pictures into Kandinsky, then hit play.

What do they notice about the different sounds produced? Do the shapes all make the same sound? What is the difference between larger shapes? What happens when you draw shapes higher or lower on the screen?
Ask the class to change the colour scheme and see what they think now! You could then look into the life and work of Kandinsky, and use your compositions as examples of work inspired by him.

5) Give me a beat

This is a really simple activity which brings the digital world into the acoustic one. Start by opening up Rhythm. Once it's open, press the right arrow until you have these two critters on your screen:



Once they're up, create your own rhythm for them to play. You could start with something simple, like this:

This creates your beat which your class are now going to play along with using their own instruments. Rhythm is a fantastic 'experiment' for simply creating a backing beat, or metronome, for your pupils to play along with. They could clap or march in time, or they could compose their own ostinato (repeating musical pattern) on their own instruments to play.