



SONGWRITING WORKSHOPS

TOOLKIT

Prepared by



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Who is this Toolkit intended for?

This Toolkit is addressed to musicians, music teachers, general education teachers and non-formal music educators working with children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds and children with a migrant background. Our belief is that this project can have a large multiplier effect and that students facing similar hardships can benefit from participating in these workshops.

The Project

This toolkit has been developed under the project “M.U.S.E.: Music Unites through Social Equity”, funded by the Preparatory Action ‘Music Moves Europe’ by the European Union. The project offers students with less opportunities the experience to engage with learning music, participate in a choir and perform together with a symphony orchestra. Moreover, toolkits on five different approaches of using non-formal methodologies for music education were produced, offering a valuable resource for professional development to teachers working with students with less opportunities, and especially students of migrant and refugee background. The toolkits were produced by music educators specialized in non-formal music education and who are experienced in working with students who have less opportunities. The educators who created the toolkits delivered workshops that reached hundreds of students at schools with migrant, refugee and disadvantaged student populations.

Introducing the Project's Toolkits

The result of our project is five individual Toolkits available as single units or as part of a complete volume that includes them all. The toolkits are available to download from our website: www.sistemacyprus.com/resources/.

- M.U.S.E.: Community Music Workshops Toolkit
- M.U.S.E.: Upcycling Music Band Workshops Toolkit
- M.U.S.E.: Songwriting Workshops Toolkit
- M.U.S.E.: Creative Music Technology Workshops Toolkit
- M.U.S.E.: World Music Choir Workshops Toolkit

M.U.S.E.: Community Music Workshops Toolkit

Community music is a powerful tool for promoting the inclusion and integration of migrants and refugees. The activities presented in this toolkit are focused on Songs in circle activities, songs with movement, body percussion activities, and music with movement activities fostering creativity. The aim of this toolkit is to present activities on creating a safe environment, encouragement of creativity which is important for a solid self-development of every child.

M.U.S.E.: Upcycling Music Band Workshops Toolkit

Upcycling is the reuse of objects (such as: buckets, barrels, shakers, plastic pipes (tuned), fire extinguishers, plastic bottles, and tins) in order to create musical instruments and empower the idea that music can be everywhere without the worries about the technical and theoretical level you may reach prior to joining a band. The aim of this toolkit is to present various upcycled musical instruments and activities that form an upcycling music band.

M.U.S.E.: Songwriting Workshops Toolkit

Songwriting is a fun and creative activity that can develop the personal development of a child. The first aim of the songwriting approach, presented in this toolkit, is to create a fun, inclusive, equal, safe, and non-judgmental environment. Furthermore, the process of songwriting entails the element of creativity. The topic of the song can be funny for younger ages and more serious for older ages. This toolkit follows a 'step by step' method in songwriting.

M.U.S.E.: Creative Music Technology Workshops Toolkit

The Creative Music Technology Workshops Toolkit is designed for children of ages 6-14. This toolkit presents an introduction into Music Technology tools (free & online applications) and uses notions of beatboxing, looping and sampling. The aim of this toolkit is to utilise free and online tools in order to experiment with rhythmic composition techniques. The methodology is based on a series of exercises (i.e. imitation, call-and-response, developments of rhythmic motives) always working in tandem with technology and ICT tools.

M.U.S.E.: World Music Choir Workshops Toolkit

The choir lesson in many schools usually offers small-scale goals, whereas the inspiration and the sense of creativity of working with others towards a grand concert, is minimal. The choir approach presented in this toolkit is based on the foundation of El Sistema's principles. This toolkit focuses on the children's experience of singing songs from a variety of cultures while giving the space to interact, relate and learn from each other.

Songwriting: Description of Approach

'We are the music-makers and we are the dreamers of dreams'

Arthur O'Shaunessy

Music is for everyone - not only for talented or experienced musicians. It is used by people worldwide to express their emotions; and just like language, music can bring people together. Songwriting in particular, has been a powerful form of self-expression. At the same time, it can be a therapeutic experience as well¹.

Studies and researchers have shown that songwriting activities contribute to the development of positive self-concept, self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-esteem. Experts say that the process of writing a song can improve mental health, increase confidence and optimism, develop problem-solving skills and help-seeking behavior, develop communicative abilities and social competences, and finally help with post-war trauma (depression, stress, disorders and aggression). In addition, Songwriting can increase empathy, as writing from someone else's perspective allows someone to see through the eyes of another person².

Therefore, Songwriting can help children handle difficult situations in life, find joy and a sense of inclusion to the community. It can help disadvantaged students especially from migrant and refugee backgrounds who are living in low-income families and are affected by war, violence, dispossession and loss. It has been reported that Songwriting has contributed to the increase of the sense of personal safety, and helped victims fight against self-blame and attain a sense of security³.

¹ WolfBrown, W.D. Why Making Music Matters', https://www.carnegiehall.org/uploadedFiles/Resources_and_Components/PDF/WMI/WhyMusicMatters.pdf
Baily, J. & Collyer, M. (2006). Introduction: Music and Migration, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32(2), 167-182.

Scroope, S., & Signorelli, R. (2009). Music therapy helps refugees. *Refugee transitions*, summer, 36-39.

² Agopian, V. (2018). Using music in the classroom to help Syrian refugees deal with post-war trauma. *International Journal of Educational and Pedagogical Sciences*, 12(3), 369-374.

Scroope & Signorelli, "Music Therapy helps Refugees".

Music City, Inspire the Future Songwriters of the World, musiccitysongstar.com/inspire-the-future-songwriters-of-the-world

³Music City, "Inspire the Future Songwriters of the World".

Scroope & Signorelli, "Music Therapy helps Refugees".

Songwriting is not only a technique, but also a method and a tool; it is a fun and creative activity that allows children express themselves freely and process their ideas, thoughts and feelings in a positive and constructive way. Making music with children can stimulate what children imagine, notice and feel; and can build community as children learn to create melodies and lyrics together as a group⁴.

After having written their first song, children will feel a sense of achievement, thrill and excitement knowing that they created something that did not exist in the world before. This feeling is contagious and gives them the confidence that they can do it and can keep writing songs⁵.

The Aim

The aim is to create a song as a group in a fun, safe, inclusive, and nonjudgmental environment in which feelings and thoughts are expressed and communicated freely and easily; an environment that also helps children discover and shape their ideas as they contribute to lyrics and music, but also an environment that helps them imagine a more just world.

The Approach

This is a playful and interactive approach invested in encouraging and engaging children in writing songs together by choosing each aspect and every element of music. It is a guide aspiring to give teachers a series of suggestions, and equipped them with practical tools to use with their students in helping them express themselves through Songwriting.

Although there are many ways to start a song, we will be following a title/lyrics-first approach. Starting with the title first can give you a key line to focus on, suggest ideas to move forward and define the overall feel of the song. A title/lyrics first approach will help the song have a catchy hook as well and will lead to the development of the rest of the song. Furthermore, it

Agopian, "Using music in the classroom to help Syrian refugees deal with post-war trauma".

⁴ Music City, "Inspire the Future Songwriters of the World".

Charette, R. Songwriting Workshop with Rick Charette,
<https://rickcharette.com/Portals/0/Songwriting%20Workshop.pdf>

⁵ Music City, "Inspire the Future Songwriters of the World".

will help children generate lyrics more easily; lyrics will give the core idea of the song and other parts will then naturally fall into place⁶.

Order of Activities

1. Writing a title (Topic Ideas)
2. Brainstorming (Lyrics Ideas)
3. Writing a draft (Creating Lyrics)
4. Editing draft (Developing Lyrics)
5. Writing the melody (Bringing in Music)
6. Performing and Recording (Reviewing and Refining)

⁶ Gary, E, (2011), Starting the Songwriting Process with The Title, www.secretsofsongwriting.com/2011/09/14/starting-the-songwriting-process-with-the-title/ Songwriting Project, <https://www.rutherfordhouseschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Songwriting-Project.pdf>

Writing a Title

Short

Funny

Serious

Mixed (reality and imagination)

Brainstorming

Single words/ Short phrases

Information/ Feelings

Answering questions

Zipper-song process

Writing a draft

Rhyming

Freestyle

Editing draft

Arranging Verses and Chorus

Writing the melody

'Sing-song' / Rap

Word painting

Improvisation

Generating beginning & continuing

Performing and Recording

Finishing touches

Gestures/ Movements

How to start

Initially, the leader/trainee should explain to the children what will happen during the session, namely that they will create an original song by inventing the text and the melody. The leader/trainee should emphasize that the song will consist of their own lyrics and their own music and should explain that they do not need to have any prior music training as songwriting is all about feeling and sharing.

Warming up before the activity is essential for concentration, collaboration, for waking up and bringing everyone together, and for building trustworthiness. It is also important for the leader/trainee to establish leadership and authority, so that the students trust and follow them when making decisions.

Leader/Trainee should discuss with students the ingredients of a song (title, lyrics, melody and form) and mention that they will be creating a short-form song consisting of one recurring chorus and 2-3 verses. Then, they should explain to the children that verses have the same melody but different text while chorus have same melody and lyrics, and repeats after each verse; it is usually the catchy and memorable part of the song.

It is recommended for the leader/trainer to put themselves through the activities before the session in order to feel confident about the task (self-reflection). Although sometimes songs are not completed within the session, the leader/trainee may encourage children to write additional verses if they wish, since the form has been determined⁷.




⁷ Charette, "Songwriting workshop"

During the process/ Tips⁸




- Use a whiteboard to track ideas and a computer to write draft and final song
- Write everything down to keep everyone feeling included and accepted but make decisions (e.g. choose a title) to establish authority
- Maintain a good flow by keeping the discussion brief, yet fruitful; encourage children to share their various ideas but without losing time
- Ask students to raise hands so that you know who has participated so far
- Ask which pair/group would like to share their ideas
- Be patient and allow time
- Allow repetition
- 'No idea is a bad idea' (safety)
- Keep it simple
- Praise effort; comment on something positive about the song; do not try to make it perfect
- Even if you don't play a music instrument, you can use a drum, rhythm sticks or body percussion

⁸ Music City, "Inspire the Future Songwriters of the World".
Lullaby Project, National Partner Handbook, 2020-2021, Carnegie Hall, Weill Music Institute

Songwriting Step-by-Step Activities

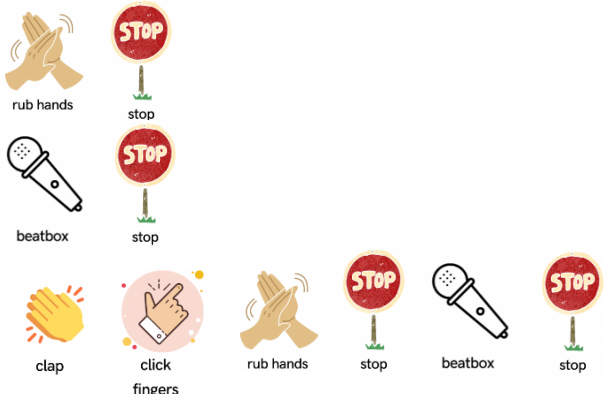
	20		90'		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Computer, Projector, Whiteboard ▪ Music Instrument(s) (optional): Piano/ Keyboards/ Guitar/ Ukulele/ Orff Instruments ▪ Audio Recorder/ Other music- capturing device
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Icon meaning


	Number of participants
	Duration of the Activity
	Materials

Warm Up

	20		5'		Hand-held signs/ digital flashcards
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GOAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage students in recognizing and following signs and patterns Engage students in moving and making sounds (voice/ body percussion) Wake up, concentrate, collaborate, bring everyone together, build trustworthiness, establish leadership and authority for the leader/trainee
DESCRIPTION	Using flashcards and signs, direct students about when to start and stop moving/making a sound. Create patterns and conduct (see notes for teacher below)
NOTES FOR TEACHERS	 <p>The diagram illustrates a sequence of actions and stop signs for a warm-up routine. It starts with 'rub hands', followed by a 'stop' sign. Then 'beatbox', followed by another 'stop' sign. Next is 'clap', followed by 'click fingers', then 'rub hands', followed by a 'stop' sign. Finally, 'beatbox' is shown, followed by a last 'stop' sign.</p>

Step 1: Writing a Title

	20		5'		Computer, Projector, Whiteboard
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GOAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose a title for the song
DESCRIPTION	Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to write a title. The title should consist of 1-3 words at maximum. It can be an object or a subject and 1-2 descriptive word(s) (e.g. The walking tree). Then choose one as the leader/trainee.
NOTES FOR TEACHERS	<p>It is possible for the leader/trainee to choose a general topic/theme (e.g. environment) before the workshop and present it to the students to help them find inspiration.</p> <p>The title of the song can be funny for younger students and more serious for older ages, even a combination of something realistic and something from their imagination.</p>

Step 2: Brainstorming

	20		20'		Computer, Projector, Whiteboard
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GOAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a bank of material for possible lyrics Stimulate lyrics creation
DESCRIPTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ask students to work in pairs/groups to think of single words or short phrases that describe or are related to the subject/object of the title (e.g. big, old, green) Ask students to write something they know or want to say about the title (e.g. It has falling leaves) or to say how they feel about the subject/object (e.g. I love the walking tree) Invent questions about who, when, what, where or how and ask students to work in pairs/groups to answer (e.g. What color is the walking tree? What else does the walking tree do apart from walking? What does the walking tree like?) Apply the zipper-song process asking for ideas from students to fill in the missing blanks in a sentence that you write (e.g. The walking tree is _____ and _____, The walking tree likes _____, The walking tree has _____)
NOTES FOR TEACHERS	<p>It is possible for the leader/trainee to choose only some of the activities mentioned above and implement the activities in any order based on what works better with group.</p>

Step 3: Writing a draft

	20		10'		Computer, Projector, Whiteboard
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GOAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a rough draft using brainstorming • Create lyrics
DESCRIPTION	Ask students to read aloud in rhythm the phrases they have already written. Then work together to edit the phrases by adding/ taking words away and thinking of words/ phrases that rhyme or sound similar (e.g. tree-green, sun-dark), in order to create two lines which work well together as lyrics for a song. Then write a new lyric using the same rhyme scheme and rhythm scheme/ similar pattern of syllables.
NOTES FOR TEACHERS	Rhymes give a chance to play and create. However, rhyming is not strictly necessary and there is no pressure. Near-rhymes can work better sometimes than exact rhymes and freestyling is also a way to get your creativity flowing.

Step 4: Editing draft

	20		15'		Computer, Projector, Whiteboard
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GOAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange verses and chorus
DESCRIPTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Start with writing the chorus first. Use similar headlines, patterns of syllables, lines and rhymes. Write the first verse. Once you have the first verse you can create more verses using similar patterns of syllables, lines and rhymes again, but different text.
NOTES FOR TEACHERS	<p>Chorus can have a different number of lines and rhyming scheme to the verses.</p>

Step 5: Writing the music

	20		20'		Computer, Projector, Whiteboard
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GOAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create the melody
DESCRIPTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ask students to vote for the mood (peaceful, sweet, playful, bouncing etc.) and the speed (fast/medium/slow) of the song Ask students to think how their lyrics might fit to music encouraging them to rap phrases in a rhythm and/or sing their phrases in different ways Ask students which words/phrases should go up and which down according to their literal meaning (e.g. 'sky'-high, 'falling leaves'-descending) or according to their personal taste and mark them (word painting). Give a starting note or generate the beginning of the song asking students to continue. Listen, pick an idea, ask students to repeat and move on applying the same procedure for the rest of the lyrics.
NOTES FOR TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel free to make changes to the lyrics to match the melody Encourage students to sing the lyrics over existing melodies they already know Consider using a simple instrument to accompany

Step 6: Performing and Recording

	20		15'		Audio recorder or any other audio-capturing device
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GOAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of achievement
DESCRIPTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ask students to review, refine and add finishing touches. Ask students to suggest hand gestures or movements to go with the lyrics (e.g. falling leaves – wiggling fingers from high to low) Perform and record

Sample

The walking tree

Verse 1

The walking tree is old and big
It has many, many falling leaves
The walking tree is tall and green
It has yummy-yummy fruit to eat

Chorus

*The walking tree is not like the other trees
The walking tree dances with the wind
The walking tree is not like the other trees
The walking tree is a mystery*

Verse 2

The walking tree can speak and sing
It can run really fast and jump and skip
It likes to play hide and seek
In the streets with little kids.

Chorus

*The walking tree is not like the other trees
The walking tree dances with the wind
The walking tree is not like the other trees
The walking tree is a mystery*

Verse 3


The walking tree likes the sun
It goes to sleep only when it's dark
It likes the sky but it can't fly
It feels so lonely in the night

Chorus

*The walking tree is not like the other trees
The walking tree dances with the wind
The walking tree is not like the other trees
The walking tree is a mystery*

Verse 1


D **A**



The walk ing tree is old and big It has ma ny ma ny fal ling leaves The

D **Chorus**


5



walk ing tree is tall and green It has yum my yum my fruit to eat The

A **D** **A**


9



walk ing tree is not like the o ther trees the walk ing tree danc es with the wind The

D **A** **D** **Verse 2**


13



walk ing tree is not like the o ther trees the walk ing tree isa my ste ry The

D **A**


17



walk ing tree can speak and sing It can run real ly fast and jump and skip It

D

21



likes to play hide and seek in the streets with lit tle kids The

A D A

25
walk ing tree is not like the o ther trees the walk ing tree danc es with the wind The

D A D **Verse 3**

29
walk ing tree is not like the o ther trees the walk ing tree isa my ste ry The

D A

33
walk ing tree likes the sun It goes to sleep o nly when it's dark It

D **Chorus**

37
likes the sky but it can't fly It feels so lone ly in the night The

A D A

41
walk ing tree is not like the o ther trees the walk ing tree danc es with the wind The

D A D

45
walk ing tree is not like the o ther trees the walk ing tree isa my ste ry

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