Adding music themes in video games

Previous compulsory steps / Prior students' knowledge	Editing sound clips using an app or an online tool
Learning objectives	Finding, creating, editing music/song to be added to the video game
Subjects	Arts, Computer Science
Recommended Age	10 - 14
Material needed	Videos with music themes, special software for creating music (like GarageBand or Bandlab)
Sequence duration	160-180 minutes (it depends on the prior knowledge in using apps like GarageBand or Bandlab)
Individual or group activity	Individual and Group Activity
Expected production	Creation of music theme
Skills developed	Creativity, critical thinking
Extension / differentiation activities (after or before sequence)	creating or finding sound clips (effects and dialogues), creating the graphic design, creating the animation; creating the video game

Step by step: how to implement the sequence

In this sequence, students can either choose music clips from game (inner) libraries or from online free music repositories, edit them and/or even they can create their own music clips and import them in the game.

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- **Step 1 – Introduction to music themes in video games (45-60 minutes)**

Firstly, it is crucial to point out to the students the importance of music in video games. With your students, you can discuss about different genres, instruments, styles, etc.

Interesting sites about the process of creation of music for video games:

- Composing music for video games - KS3 Music - BBC Bitesize - BBC Bitesize
- The Guide To Composing Music For Video Games | Midnight Music
- Composing Music For Video Games - Audient

Discuss with your students about the findings from the above sites about the characteristics and the types of music themes. Then you can ask your students to close their eyes and listen to the music themes in videos like those that you can find below:

- 1-Hour Music Mix | The Best Video Game Soundtracks - YouTube
- Video Game Soundtracks, Themes, & Music of All Time (Relax & Listen) - YouTube
- Top 10 Video Game Musical Themes - YouTube

- **Step 2 – Brainstorming about the music theme (10 minutes)**

Depending on what they heard and what they know from their own gaming experience they could try to imagine the appropriate music for the game.

Questions to guide this step:

- What kind of music will be appropriate for the game that we will create?
- Could the kind of music affect the gameplay of the game?
- Would you like to have lyrics or not?

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You can pre- prepare a list of possible themes they will discuss, such as easy listening, mystical, epic, energetic, etc. You can first let them give you some answers and then support them in finding more ideas enhancing in that way their imagination and their creativity. You can then divide them in groups of 3-4 students and let them decide about the music theme appropriate for the game**.**

Students in collaboration can create a list (on the whiteboard) with the genre/style/ music and which lyrics (or not) they have concluded that they would like for the video game. The same group of students could be the one which will try to find or/and create the music theme.

- **Step 3 – Online search for music themes (30 minutes)**

If you use a game creator platform which has music themes to offer, you can choose from them. However, if you use game creating platform without embedded music themes you should find other ways to add your own music theme. The easy way to find the appropriate music for your game is to buy it online but at a certain cost. You can buy it in royalty-free way from various websites (like audiohub or epidemicsound).

Alternatively, you can also try to find free music with attribution notice on websites like Bensound. Of course, every creation has it copyrights and ownership notices and in most cases, the music themes from the website would probably have a special notice.

Finally, you can use websites like the following ones to find music themes totally free to use it under various “creative commons”- type licences.

- Sound Library - YouTube Studio
- dig.ccMixter Home
- Jamendo Music | Free music downloads

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- Listen to music and stream podcasts online for free | SoundCloud
- free, painless and legal music downloads without registering (cctrax.com)
- Free Production Music by Jason Shaw AudionautiX.com

Ask your students to find and download the ones that seem interesting and appropriate and ask them to save them using filenames with appropriate description according to the content.

During the research ask them to give special notice to the copyright (creative common) rights so if it is allowed, they can edit it at the standards of duration and format (mp3, wav) they have decided for the game. Furthermore, you can ask your students to add one or two forming effects to the music clip: like fade in / fade out if they find it appropriate. All these are small procedures which are easy to learn.

- **Step 4 – Create your own music theme (40 minutes)**

The music themes that you can find on the Internet are countless. But even in that way maybe the appropriate one cannot be found for many reasons (copyrights, different language, or culture, etc.). The solution is simple and fun as you can easily create and record your own music themes using an app like Garageband or Bandlab. In these apps you can easily add lyrics and singing voice transforming an instrumental theme into a song theme for your video game. The simplest idea is to use loops (that are free and easy to edit) in order to create a music theme with the right duration.

Some examples can be found here as these websites can give ideas for creating music themes from a loop:

- Making Music with LOOPS - YouTube

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- How To Turn Your Loop Into A Song #2- Arrangement and Production - YouTube
- How to Make a Song Loop Seamlessly - YouTube
- Tutorial - Using Loops to Create Original Music - Videomaker

Tutorials for GarageBand and Bandlab can be found here:

- GarageBand Video Tutorials - Free Course by Redlands College on iTunes U (apple.com) ,
- Garageband Tutorial: How to Make a Basic Track - YouTube
- Tutorials | BandLab Blog ,
- BandLab Basic Skills. Create Music Using BandLab

- **Step 5 – Decide about the music themes appropriate for your game (40 minutes)**

Your students had found or created several music themes. Now it's time to choose the appropriate one (or more if they want to add more in different parts of the game). They can listen to all the music themes that every group found or create and then they can vote in a democratic way to choose the music theme(s) that can be added to the game.

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Resources

Bandlab software download: https://www.bandlab.com/#download

GarageBand application download:

- For iOS: https://apps.apple.com/us/app/garageband/id408709785
- For Mac: https://apps.apple.com/us/app/garageband/id682658836?ls=1&mt=12
- For android: https://garageband-studio.en.softonic.com/android

Websites to download music themes freely:

- YouTube Studio Sound Library: https://studio.youtube.com/channel/UC15dqzLV3fPur4uY1RHzgqQ/music
- Dig.ccMixter: http://dig.ccmixter.org/
- Jamendo Music: https://www.jamendo.com/
- SoundCloud: https://soundcloud.com/
- CCtrax: https://cctrax.com/
- AudionautiX: https://audionautix.com/

Video tutorials for GarageBand and Bandlab:

- GarageBand Video Tutorials - Free Course by Redlands College on iTunes U (apple.com)
- Garageband Tutorial: How to Make a Basic Track - YouTube
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