

10 player Standard 7 key Gamelan Set

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Reviewed by Emily Cotter

This resource offers the experience and expertise of a professional musician, Andy Gleadhill, and is able to support even those teachers who profess to minimal musical abilities. The package includes three gongs; Ageng (large), Kempul (medium) and Kenong (small). There are nine metallophones - three demung (large), three saron (medium) and three peking (small) - and one drum; the medium sized ciblon. On arrival, some of the instruments needed putting together, but no additional tools were required and lettered pieces of wood made assembling the frames an easy exercise. These instruments are of a good quality; however, the real strength of the resource is in the teacher's guide and CD that looks at the history behind Indonesian music and teaches you how to create your own Chamber Gamelan to be able to play a number of tunes.

The teacher's guide gives a brief introduction to the history of Indonesian Gamelan and its music. As a more creative approach to teaching across the curriculum is being developed, some time should be taken to share the background information on the instruments and traditions and etiquettes surrounding the music. I spent a little time creating a notebook that introduced the cultural context to my class in an exciting way. With the foundations laid, we explored the instruments and their layout and embarked on some warm up exercises.

The chapter on warm up exercises gives



simple exercises that are clearly laid out and easy to read. They allowed the children to familiarise striking the instruments and playing steady, even notes. As pupils became more confident and their ability improved, they could gradually increase the speed. All the exercises link up so all instruments can practise together, and they also feature in the actual lessons so children can revise and use these rhythms again.

The teacher's guide is incredibly informative, and for someone who has no experience of Gamelan music and the skills required to create a competent performance, within minutes I was able to develop the correct drumming technique and produce basic notes on the instruments.

Although we were using the 10 Player Pack, with instruments for 10 children, it's possible to use this resource with the whole class by adding extra finger cymbals, bells or other percussion. Or there is a bigger 30 player pack available with enough instruments for the whole class.



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Verdict: Cultural resonance

This Indonesian Gamelan set is bright, fun and probably very different to the instruments you might already use in school. It was great to learn about the cultural context of the music and be given a glimpse into the traditions and etiquettes surrounding the Gamelan. The book detailed the traditional formation for the instruments, discussed playing techniques and set out 10 tunes written out in full score; as someone with no experience of Gamelan, it was invaluable. The tracks on the CD sound quite similar and are quite repetitive, but the children enjoyed playing along.