

Into the Woods (A graph-appical adventure in songwriting)

Summary Info

What if we took a single key - E major - and treated it as a landscape to adventure in?

The seven chords of the key become paths out from a cabin; a song is a journey along them; a chord from outside the key is a step off the path into the wildwood.

Every song we study is drawn as a graph of that journey, so the shape of a piece of music becomes something students can see, compare and borrow from.

Participants gather a toolkit of songwriting ideas from what they see and experience.

They use these to create compositions (whole or part), share them, and add them to their portfolios.

A complete schedule is included as a separate document in this pack.

Who it is for

Amateur to professional musicians, public to post-16 and undergraduate music students, from first-years to advanced. The theory dial turns up or down to meet the room, and the same material scales from a festival tent to a lecture theatre. Establishing ‘where people are at’ allows me to tailor the workshop, which can be achieved prior to delivery with a conversation.

The theory applies to any instrument, but the day is taught through the guitar and built on it. Guitars are needed and used throughout.

Curriculum fit

The workshop maps directly onto the UAL Level 3 Diploma and Extended Diploma in Music Performance & Production, which is the qualification framework this material was written against:

- **Unit 2, Critical listening and music composition** · the graphed analysis addresses all three learning outcomes. The unit exists to “expand and develop listening and compositional skills... and communicate clearly using music and terminology”, which is precisely what the graphs provide.
- **Unit 4, Critical and contextual awareness** · the optional deeper module addresses historical and cultural contextual perspectives.
- **Units 1 and 9** · the afternoon writing session addresses collaborative practice, technique selection, and critical self-evaluation.
- **Assessment** · the day generates portfolio evidence in the forms the specification names — annotated analysis, reflective journal entries, recordings, and a composed section with a written statement of technique and intent.

A full unit-by-unit mapping with verbatim specification wording is included as a separate document in this pack.

What students take away

- A method for seeing the structure of any song they hear, and a notation for recording it.
- A personal toolkit of harmonic techniques to shake up their songwriting practice, gathered rather than taught.
- A written and performed section of their own, produced on the day.
- A standalone copy of the accompanying app to keep — every graph, game, tool and the graph builder, running offline on their own device, with their own work saved locally.

Practical requirements

- A room with movable chairs, a screen or projector, and a PA with one microphone for larger groups. Break-out spaces for composition are welcome.
- Participants bring guitars if they have them; a handful of spares in the room is useful.
- Group size 1–50.

This pack contains

- This summary.
- The full one-day lesson plan, with timings, activities and the song library.
- A unit-by-unit mapping to the UAL Level 3 specification, with verbatim wording.
- My bio
- Links to the accompanying app.

Contact

David Green — scribblingdavey@gmail.com - 07784820123

Book a call: <https://calendly.com/scribblingdavey/30min>

The app: <https://into-the-woods-music.netlify.app>

The invitation: <https://into-the-woods-music.netlify.app/the-invitation>

The site is behind a password during development — I can open it or share the password on request.

The Song Library

Every song below is in the app as a graphed journey with notes on what it is doing.

Well-behaved wanderers - staying on the seven paths

Song	Notes
Call Me Al - Paul Simon	Never- ending sawtooth - nothing here!
Sit Down - James	Never- ending sawtooth - nothing here!
You Are My Sunshine - Johnny Cash	One verse, chorus, all in one tidy package
Three Little Birds - Bob Marley	
Will The Circle Be Unbroken	
Good Riddance (Time of Our Lives) - Green Day	Verse? Chorus? Or all 1 well-behaved movement
Down To The River To Pray - Alison Krauss	Where are the chords landing?
A New England - Billy Bragg	The power of a pause
Karma Chameleon - Culture Club	Everytime we leave we go somewhere else
Dancing in the Dark - Bruce Springsteen	Complimentary chords dancing with one another
Don't Stop Believing - Journey	The power of a well-placed G#m
I Think We're Alone Now - Tiffany	The power of a melody to shift the ground beneath you
Girls Just Want To Have Fun - Cyndi Lauper	Passing chords to make a beat
The Fields Of Athenry - The Dubliners	The power of changing the length of a linger
Everything I Own - Ken Boothe	A deeper dive into lingering
The Weight - The Band	Descending basslines and a pregnant pause
Higher and Higher - Jackie Wilson	Holding a bass note and doing hardly anything to groove
Lean On Me - Bill Withers	
Fix You - Coldplay	
Redemption Song - Bob Marley	
Superman - Flaming Lips	Addicted to F#m and is there any structure?
When Tomorrow Comes - Eurythmics	Starting lost and coming to ground

Off the beaten track - stepping off the path

Song	What it shows
Help - The Beatles	Borrowing the D.
Take On Me - A-Ha	A G# major surprise. Using a chord like a melodic ladder
Can't Help Falling In Love - Elvis Presley	Woah! Where did you go? How will you get back?
Your Song - Elton John	Major sevenths, moving bass, sparkles everywhere.
Take Me Home Country Roads - John Denver	The power of a borrowed D
Nothing Compares 2 U - Prince	Leaping away for the chorus

Dirty Old Town - The Pogues	Key shifts without melodies
Tender - Blur	Borrowed D and G
Be My Baby - The Ronettes	G# and C#
Starman - David Bowie	Starting lost, smashing the rules, keeping it simple.
Night Fever - Bee Gees	Major/minor shifts and m7 sparkle.

My own songs, as case studies

Song	What it does
Shadow Dancing	Every chord in the scale, including the diminished, used deliberately and with surprises along the way
Air Balloonery, Parts 1–3	Portals from E to C and returns home
On My Mind	Begins in E, modulates to F#, ends in F
The Hat Song	Starts in A, uses Cmaj7 as the portal to D, via F
Still On My Mind	Crazy wandering in the woods until settling in key
Down To The River	The slightest whiff of a C

The Graph-App - a gift to go home with

The workshop runs alongside a web application which is projected throughout: every graph we look at, the feeling wheel, the fretboard, the ear games, and a writing room where a progression can be built and heard.

Everyone leaves with a standalone copy of it to keep. It is theirs - it runs on their own device with no internet connection needed, and it holds everything we did on the day: all the graphs, the games, the tools, and the graph builder, so they can keep drawing their own songs long after the room has emptied. Anything they write in it is saved on their own device.

The workshop companion: <https://into-the-woods-music.netlify.app>

The going home gift: https://scribblerdavey.gumroad.com/l/into_the_woods

The live site is behind a password. I can open it or share the password on request.

About the Facilitator, David Green



David Green started playing guitar at seventeen, and a curiosity that was already there in his listening took hold and never left him. Why does music move us so? Where does it come from? How do you make a song, and where do songs come from? Into the Woods came out of those questions.

The workshop explores the melodic landscapes that songs arise from, using a folk-tale motif and graphs. The root chord is home, the cosy cottage you set out from and hope to return to once the quest is done and the ring is in Mount Doom. The other chords are the well-worn paths through the woods, and the interesting question is what happens when a song steps off the path and into the trees. The graphs are a fun way to get under the hood of why some songs go BOOM and others do not, with a cheeky dose of trickster energy in the mix.

The same curiosity took David into a novel. He stumbled on a passage in Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* describing the death of the Music Master as a transcendence achieved by a musical journey rather than through meditation, and he wanted to know how that could possibly happen. The question took him around the world and into a good many cultures, through the myths, metaphysics and philosophies of music. He considered a PhD in comparative ethnomusicology, but where was the excitement in that? So he wrote *The Musician* instead, and the workshops grew out of all that research.

As a performer he has played a range of festivals and supported Ray Davies of The Kinks at Colston Hall, now Bristol Beacon. He released *Unsteady on Our Feet*, produced by Gaz Williams with Beth Porter on cello (Lost Songs, The Bookshop Band). As a producer he has worked with X-tian from the Democratic Republic of Congo on the *Asante/911* release, and with SJM, an NHS nurse and poet, on the *Make Space* fundraiser for nurses during Covid.

He ran the companion workshop, *A Meander Through the Metaphysics of Music*, at Shambala and Priddy Folk Festival, and brought *Into the Woods* to *Between the Trees*. He also created and performs *The Kindling Songs*, a participatory song cycle for hard times.

Alongside the music, David spent five years developing and delivering a *Sociology of Community* curriculum at sea with *Class Afloat*, and has taught physics, including the physics of sound, to teenagers who deserved better than the textbook version. The workshop comes out of all of it: a lifetime of writing songs, a working knowledge of why they do what they do, and years of making imaginative learning spaces where curiosity is the point.