



# ABBA<sup>®</sup> Voyage

A concert like no other

Lesson Activity Guide

Only at the **ABBA<sup>®</sup> Arena**, London

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# Welcome to **ABBA<sup>®</sup> Voyage**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to this ABBA Voyage Lesson Activity Guide. Here you'll find two lesson plans to help you prepare for your visit to the concert and then explore the production further, once you're back in school.

The plans have been written with the National Curriculum strands of Music and Performing Arts (Key Stages 2,3 and 4) in mind but we invite you to adapt these lesson plans to suit the learners in your own setting.

This activity guide was written by Susie Ferguson and commissioned by ABBA Voyage.

# Lesson 01

## The Voyage Begins



### Curriculum Links: Music

- Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians (**Key Stage 2**)
- Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory (**Key Stage 2**)
- Listen with increasing discrimination to a wide range of music from great composers and musicians (**Key Stage 3**)
- Develop a deepening understanding of the music that they perform and to which they listen, and its history (**Key Stage 3**)
- Use appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music (**Key Stage 4**)
- Analyse, evaluate, and identify musical elements, contexts, and language (**Key Stage 4**)

### Starter activity: Quiz - Knowing ABBA

10 minutes



- 1 True or false? All four members of ABBA were born in Sweden.
- 2 Which one of these is NOT an ABBA song:
  - *Dancing Queen*
  - *Money Makes the World Go Round*,
  - *Mamma Mia*
  - *The Visitors*
  - *I Have a Dream*
  - *King Kong Song*
  - *Put On Your White Sombrero*
- 3 True or false? ABBA won the Eurovision Song Contest before they were famous.
- 4 True or false? The UK awarded ABBA's performance of *Waterloo* 'nil points' at the 1974 Eurovision Song Contest.
- 5 According to the BBC, how many albums have ABBA sold since 1974?
  - a) 38.4 million
  - b) 385 million
  - c) 3.85 million
- 6 Complete the following song lyric:  
"The winner takes..."
  - a) the trophy"
  - b) it all"
  - c) the money"
- 7 Which sport features in a musical written by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus from ABBA?
- 8 **Benny, Björn, Agnetha** and **Frida** form the band. Who is the lead singer of the group?

# Lesson 01

## The Voyage Begins



### Starter activity: ★ The Answers ★

- 1 False: Frida was born in Norway but moved to Sweden at a young age.
- 2 *Money Makes the World Go Round* is a song from the musical *Cabaret*. ABBA did have a hit called *Money, Money, Money* but it is not the same song.
- 3 True: Although all four members of the band had successful music careers before forming ABBA, it was the Eurovision Song Contest that made them famous outside of Sweden.
- 4 True.
- 5 B - ABBA have sold over 385 million albums worldwide since their Eurovision win (as of 2024)
- 6 B - it all
- 7 Chess. (The International Olympic Committee recognised chess as a sport in 1999)
- 8 None of the band are considered the sole lead singer. Whilst it is usually Agnetha or Frida who sings the lead vocals on each track, all four members of the band have delivered lead vocals on the band's songs. Benny also plays keyboards and Björn plays acoustic and electric guitar on ABBA tracks.

### Listening Activity: *Voulez Vous*

20 minutes



**This activity allows you to explore the style and content of ABBA's music, introducing students who might be unfamiliar with it whilst also developing knowledge for those who are. The task encourages students to apply technical terminology to identify and describe what they hear within one of ABBA's most famous songs. You can access a video of ABBA performing this song above.**

At the beginning of the task, **avoid telling students** what the piece of music is called. This is to ensure that they are using their listening skills, rather than making assumptions based on preconceptions or personal taste.



**Click here for the YouTube video**

#### **Play the first 23 seconds of *Voulez Vous***

- this is the introduction before the vocals begin.

Ask students to simply listen to what they hear. Play it a second time, this time asking them to contribute observations to a discussion on this piece of music. Offer prompts such as:

- What's the genre?
- What will happen from 24 seconds onwards?
- What instruments can they hear?

Aim to elicit observations about disco, synthesizers, tempo, time signature, use of drums and high hat, use of electric piano. The song is played at 127 beats per minute (127 bpm).

# Lesson 01

## The Voyage Begins

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- Now replay the song from the beginning through to the end. Ask students to put up their hands each time they think they are hearing the chorus of the song, (they should be able to articulate how they know it is the chorus, by the end of the track).

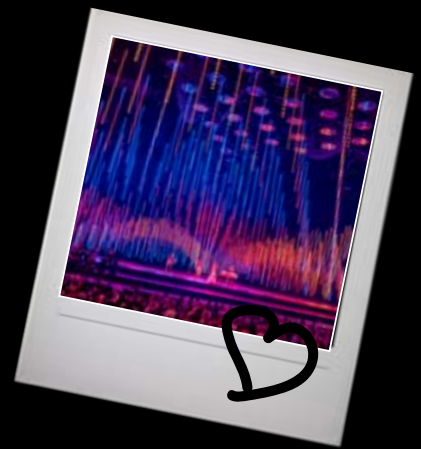
You may wish to use closed captions on the YouTube video to display the lyrics to the song. This can help students monitor the structure of the song. (Intro, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, chorus and outro)

- Ask students to discuss in pairs what they notice about the song. This might include: repetition (which makes the lyrics easy to remember and sing along to), unison, harmony, female-led vocals, syncopation, interaction with audience in the video, a strong disco influence, simple

structure, a celebration of music and dance (rather than a song about romance), upbeat lyrics and style.

- Once you have given students sufficient time to discuss what they have noticed with their partner, scaffold students to write one paragraph about *Voulez Vous*.

Encourage students to use as many technical terms as possible, which you might have jotted on the board (or asked a student to scribe) during the discussions above.



### Composition task: Disco riffs

20 minutes



- Play *Voulez Vous* again, this time drawing students' attention to the disco riff of the song. Riffs are often played on guitar, piano or bass and are short phrases that form the foundation of the song's rhythm and melody.
- Working on keyboards, or on their own choice of instrument, students should create their own disco riff lasting between two to four bars. Students might like to access other ABBA songs or disco anthems to consolidate their understanding of riffs before they begin working on their own creations.
- You may also like to explore the specific *Voulez Vous* riff and ask students to play it along with a recording of the song. Alternatively you could use this task as a singing activity - some students may wish to hum or sing the riff, rather than singing the lyrics. (You could, for example, divide the group into those singing lyrics and those providing the riffs)

# Lesson 01

## The Voyage Begins

### Homework/Research Activity



**These suggested tasks are designed to prepare your students to fully engage with *ABBA Voyage*. Some of the tasks might also be suitable as activities within your lessons, depending on your resources and your students' interests.**

- Ask students to read this article from Britannica and then create their own poster, presentation or speech about the band.

[Click here](#) for the Britannica article

They might also like to create a new quiz, to add to the starter activity in this lesson.

- For students interested in the visual culture of ABBA, they can explore the work of *ABBA Voyage* Costume Designer Bea Åkerland, and read this *Vogue* article on ABBA's fashion. Students can collate their findings in a collage, presentation, or their own sketches.

[Click here](#) for the Vogue article

- For students keen to develop their own instrumental skills, they may wish to choose one well-known ABBA song and learn some or all of the melody, riff, rhythm or vocals.
- Now that you have explored a song by ABBA, you might like to give students the opportunity to create a list of questions and/or predictions about what they are going to see and hear at *ABBA Voyage*.

# Lesson 02

## The Voyage Continues



Now that your students have seen *ABBA Voyage*, there are countless ways of extending their experience. The ideas below are designed to provide a starting point for students' own explorations. Feel free to select the activities that most suit your learners. We've made suggestions of how long the tasks might take but timings are entirely flexible.

### Curriculum Links: Music

- Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians (**Key Stage 2**)
- Develop a deepening understanding of the music that they perform and to which they listen, and its history. (**Key Stage 3**)
- Use appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music (**Key Stage 4**)
- Compose and develop musical ideas with technical control and coherence (**Key Stage 4**)

### Curriculum Links: Performing Arts

- Investigate how professional performance or production work is created (**Key Stage 4**)
- Demonstrate understanding of the skills, techniques and approaches used by professionals to create performance and/or production work. (**Key Stage 4**)

### Starter activity

10-15 minutes



In **pairs** or **groups of up to 4**, ask students to create a short review of *ABBA Voyage*. This can be in written form, but encourage live delivery which might include a news-style report, a 'video' designed for a social media post, or a TV/radio advert for *ABBA Voyage*.

You might like to guide students to focus on specific aspects of *ABBA Voyage*, for example, ABBA's Avatars, the live band, the use of technology, the costume design, the choice of songs, their favourite moments etc. You could share the following text with them to demonstrate the type of language and register they might use:

"Get ready to experience **Agnetha, Björn, Benny, and Frida** in a concert like no other. *ABBA Voyage* brings together a 10-piece live band and cutting-edge creativity in a 100-minute setlist that moves effortlessly between eras and emotions."

Or

"Now in its fourth year and firmly at home in London, *ABBA Voyage* continues to delight fans of all ages with a setlist of the band's biggest hits. From the first notes of *Dancing Queen* to the final chorus of *Waterloo*, this is a concert filled with music that lights up the room and brings people together."



**Ask students to share their reviews with others in the class, performing to each other in small groups or to the whole class.**

# Lesson 02

## The Voyage Continues

### Discussion

10-15 minutes



This task asks students to reflect on other experiences of live music. To increase the accessibility of this task, you might like to draw students' attention to various iconic moments in music history: Live Aid (1985, particularly Freddie Mercury's audience interaction), Tina Turner's world record audience of over 180,000 fans in Brazil (1988), Taylor Swift's *Eras* tour (2023-24) which was broadcast in cinemas and also on streaming services. You could also look at footage of musical festivals such as Glastonbury. Students who wish to explore even more iconic concerts might like to explore this [Rolling Stone article](#).

Ask students to think about other concerts they have been to, or seen on TV/film. Ask them to compare their experience at *ABBA Voyage* with their previous experience(s), or their expectations beforehand. You could prompt them to discuss:

- The size and shape of the arena
- The size of the audience
- Performers who interact with the audience
- The live performers
- ABBA's Avatars
- Use of lighting effects

[Click here](#) for the [Rolling Stone article](#)



Extend this discussion and pose the following question: *if you could revisit the concerts of any musician/band from the past using the same technology as ABBA Voyage who would it be, and why?*

### Creating an event: Brief & pitch

40 minutes



In this activity, students are asked to think about how they might create a similar production to *ABBA Voyage* for a different band or musician. This can be differentiated and adapted for students in different key stages, by removing some of the bullet points, or allocating specific students to different aspects of the project.

Using the above discussions, provide the following brief and provide students with sufficient time to respond and then present their ideas.

You have been tasked with creating a new concert for a band or music artist of your choice. Using your experience and knowledge of *ABBA Voyage*, create a five-minute pitch (presentation) in which you propose your new production. Consider:

- **Your choice of band:** why will they still be relevant to modern audiences if they are no longer performing live? (You can link this to other curriculum content regarding musical influences and music history, for example)

# Lesson 02

## The Voyage Continues

- **Your target audience:** ABBA's music appeals to a wide range of audiences. It is often associated with feel-good music, nostalgia and fun. Who are you hoping to attract to your concerts? How will you ensure that you are successful in reaching them?
- **Location:** the *ABBA Arena* is in London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, which continues the legacy of the 2012 London Olympics. How will you ensure your location is both accessible *and* inspirational?
- **Set list:** which of your chosen band or artist's back catalogue will you include in the performance? And in which order? Ensure that you choose a range of their work, encompassing different mood, atmosphere and time period where appropriate.
- **Costumes:** Your chosen band or artist will have a specific visual aesthetic. *ABBA Voyage* was inspired by a number of iconic costumes worn by ABBA, but did not seek to simply recreate specific

outfits. Create some designs (by hand or using a computer) for your band. Alternatively you could create a mood board of your chosen band's past looks to indicate the style you are hoping to capture.

- **Unexpected moments:** Consider how *ABBA Voyage* used animation at key moments to provide a narrative for the audience. What tricks will you use to keep your audience engaged and excited about their experience?
- **Design your merchandise:** Your audience might want a souvenir to remind them of their fabulous experience at your event. Design two pieces of merchandise that you would sell at your event.



### Song analysis: Part A Part B

10 minutes  
20-30 minutes



*ABBA Voyage* opens with a song which might be less familiar to some members of the audience. It has been chosen to create a sense of anticipation, and to enhance the feeling that this event will include some unexpected surprises. *ABBA Voyage* is a new and unique concert experience and by starting the concert with *The Visitors*, the audience is encouraged to expect the unexpected!

#### Part A:

In the first few moments of *ABBA Voyage*, the production carefully sets up how the audience understands what they're seeing on stage. Rather than showing everything at once, the illusion is introduced gradually, helping the audience get used to the ABBA's Avatars. As well as using *The Visitors* as the opening song, the concert also gradually introduces the audience to the visual language of the concert.

# Lesson 02

## The Voyage Continues

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Invite students to list the different visual aspects that they remember in the opening moments of the concert. For example:

- Lighting changes
- Movement
- The appearance of the live band
- The use of colour on screen and in the lighting choices

In what order did these changes take place? By the end of the song, the audience has been introduced to the style of the concert and understand the

creative elements that are being used to create the *ABBA Voyage* experience. Explore how the elements are added little by little, navigating the fine line between exciting and overwhelming the audience. You may wish to discuss how concert creators work with a 'palette' of different techniques, choosing some before others, applying some sparingly and others used throughout. For example, the live band is used throughout, but the lighting of the concert ebbs and flows through different states in order to create nuance and variation whilst avoiding predictability.

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### Part B:

Provide students with the lyrics to *The Visitors*, which are available online. Delay playing the song until students have responded to the following aspects of analysis:

- What is this song about? Who are the 'visitors'? What is the story that is being told here?
- This is a song by ABBA who are famous for upbeat songs which are often about love and romance. How does this song meet or defy your expectations of their work?
- You might like to draw students' attention to how they might analyse a poem in their English lessons: what do they notice about the structure, language and imagery, and who is the speaker?
- Björn Ulvaeus has explained that this is a song about an oppressive regime (although it doesn't make explicit reference to a specific place) and the experience of being under surveillance. How does the language create the tension and anticipation of the song?

- Ask students to try and recall hearing this song at the beginning of the concert. What can they remember about it? Consider the music, vocals, lighting and mood/atmosphere as appropriate.

Play the song two or three times. Using whatever form of notation or graphics are most appropriate for your students, ask your students to create a diagram of the following:

- The use of different instruments
- Repetitive rhythm and tempo
- Structure
- The creation of tension and suspense
- Use of layered vocals
- Use of synthesizers
- Musical arrangement

**Note for teachers:** *The Visitors* was released in 1981, and was the title track on their final studio album. This offers the opportunity to compare this much more political and sombre song, to other ABBA songs that students might be more familiar with. This might include *Waterloo* (1974), *Mamma Mia* (1975), *Fernando* (1976), *Take A Chance On Me* (1978) or *The Winner Takes It All* (1980)

# Lesson 02

## The Voyage Continues



### Creating an arresting concert opening Musical influences and timelines

20 minutes  
20-30 minutes



The influence of ABBA's iconic sound can be heard throughout subsequent pop music. Madonna, Lady Gaga and Kylie Minogue have all embraced aspects of ABBA's style, including instrumentation and specific samples (such as *Hung Up* by Madonna), the kitsch visual aesthetic, the use of synthesizers, harmony and the use of overdubbing. You can also make reference to Phil Spector's innovative 1960s production technique known as the 'Wall of Sound'.

Of course, ABBA was also influenced by the music that came before them. This could include the work of The Beatles, glam rock, and even classical music.

Using either computer or paper-based resources, ask students to create a timeline of key moments in 20th and 21st century music. They may wish to use online resources such as Britannica to assist them. Ensure that you ask students to include the present year in their work, making connections to current artists with whom students are already familiar. This could include the work of Swedish music producer **Max Martin**, who has worked with artists such as **Katy Perry**, **Ariana Grande**, **P!nk**, and **Taylor Swift**.

### Additional resources:



During your exploration of ABBA's work and popularity, you might like to access some of the archive material below. Please note that the availability of this third-party material is not guaranteed.

#### 'ABBA was somewhat of a dirty word': How the pop band's 1974 Eurovision win divided Sweden

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/culture/article/20240510-abba-was-somewhat-of-a-dirty-word-how-the-pop-bands-1974-eurovision-win-divided-sweden>

#### ABBA: Against the Odds - BBC iPlayer (Contains some strong language)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001z0th/abba-against-the-odds>

#### When ABBA Came to Britain - BBC iPlayer

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001y5m0/when-abba-came-to-britain>

#### ABBA at the BBC - BBC iPlayer

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b03lyzpr/abba-at-the-bbc>