

# A VOYAGE OF MUSICAL DISCOVERY

## AUSTRALIAN ROMANTIC & CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA

RICHARD GILL AO | FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

### Education Kit #1 2021 MOTIVIC DEVELOPMENT

#### About

The *Voyage of Musical Discovery* Education Kit is aligned with the **Music 2 and Music Extension – Stage 6** NSW HSC Music Syllabus. The material below is a stand-alone learning resource, but full educational benefit is achieved by working through the activities in conjunction with attending the live *Voyage* presentation on **Wednesday 17 February 2021, 6.30pm** at City Recital Hall, Sydney.

*Voyage of Musical Discovery* is presented in two parts – orchestral and chamber music from the Classical or Romantic era performed in historically-informed style followed by Australian works written in the past 25 years performed by guest contemporary ensembles, improvisers, singer songwriters or a capella voices.

*Voyage* establishes and demonstrates the many connections and links between the musics of different times, places and styles, and augmented by the Education Kit, listeners are given the information and tools to compose and create sounds and pieces of their own.

*Voyage* #1 traces the **Motivic Development** in a seldom-heard late-Romantic work from Germany through to real-time composition for saxophones and loop station.

#### Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra

MAX BRUCH – Serenade on Swedish Melodies for Strings in C minor (1916)

Max Bruch (1838–1920) builds a short five-movement work for strings by expertly developing motifs from Swedish folk music. With the musicians of the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra, Co-Artistic Directors Rachael Beesley and Nicole van Bruggen guide listeners through Bruch's methods, and present a case for giving this Romantic classicist greater attention.

[arco.org.au](http://arco.org.au)

#### Nick Russoniello

NICK RUSSONIELLO – Suite for Saxophones and Loop Station (2018)

*Suite for Saxophones and Loop Station* is a tour de force of real-time composition. Award-winning saxophonist Nick Russoniello creates a groove-based work by layering and developing musical elements as diverse as beatbox, reggae and minimalism. Russoniello is a polyphonic one-man-band, imaginatively extending the sonic capabilities of the saxophone in live performance.

[nickrussoniello.com.au](http://nickrussoniello.com.au)

Nick Russoniello is a D'Addario Artist

[Voyage of Musical Discovery  
booking information](#)



## What is a Motif?

A motif in music is a melodic, rhythmic or harmonic unit that recurs and is developed throughout a section or work. It is generally shorter than a theme or phrase, and can be recognised as a self-contained compositional idea. While melodic motifs are often readily identifiable, a specific rhythm or set of chords also qualify as motifs – as well as combinations of these.

### —● Discuss & Do

Make a quick list of your top three musical motifs – here are a few famous ones to get you started:

- first four notes of Beethoven's 5th
- *Smoke on the Water*
- *Imperial March*

Have a look around the room and locate some non-musical motifs – e.g., a pattern on the carpet, an architectural design feature, or a leading shoe brand logo.

Was there a motif in a recent book you read or series you watched? Go beyond the broad subject matter, and identify a specific recurring and unifying image or object e.g., the references to blood or water in *Macbeth*, or the pink teddy bear in the swimming pool in *Breaking Bad*.

#### Leitmotif

Most commonly associated with the operas of **Richard Wagner** (1813–83) – in particular *Der Ring des Nibelungen* – a *Leitmotif* (German – meaning leading or guiding motif) is a longer musical theme associated with a person, object, place or idea. These often undergo change to indicate an extra layer of information about a character or situation, in addition to what is visible or related in the text. **John Williams** (1932–) employs a similar method in the *Star Wars* scores, and leitmotifs were also mainstays of the live accompaniments to silent films.

- Read more about leitmotifs and the connection between Wagner and Williams in [this article by Alex Ross](#).

#### Motif or Motive?

Although sometimes used interchangeably, when writing about music stick to *motif* and save *motive* for discussing the reason behind an action or cause of something.

## Motivic Development in the Classical & Romantic Eras

Longer themes and entire pieces are constructed by repeating, modifying and connecting motifs. Gradual alterations over the horizontal span of a work are recognised by the listener as variations on or products of the original motifs, and this provides a work with homogeneity. In other words, we sense that the many individual musical components are related – or naturally belong together – and this brings with it a sense of satisfaction.

Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757) was one of the pioneers of motivic development, and many examples can be found in any one of his 555 keyboard sonatas. Motivic development is also a central building block of sonata form as practised by the Classical-era symphonists Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, and this continued into the Romantic period led by composers such as Brahms and Bruch. Even as the orchestral palettes and structures expanded and the harmonic and rhythmic languages evolved, the processes of motivic development remain. By understanding the ways that motifs are altered, fragmented, extended, transposed, disguised and otherwise developed throughout a work gives us insight into the inventiveness and skill of a composer. In many cases, it is possible to imagine that an entire composition has expanded outwards from a single initiating motif – like an organism growing from a single cell.

### Bruch & Swedish Songs

Created late in his career, and amid the multitude of changes to politics, science, art, literature and music that occurred in the early decades of the 20th century, Max Bruch (1838–1920) may well have been more astute than many give him credit for. By basing a work on motifs drawn from existing folk melodies ensures that the musical raw materials are unpretentious and easily accepted by the listener – even one who may not be familiar with the original songs.

The Serenade was a substantial reworking of an earlier work, the Suite No. 2 on Swedish Folk Melodies for Orchestra Op. 80 from ten years before – often referred to as the Nordland Suite. Prior to that Bruch had composed and published several different editions of songs and dances for violin and piano, also based on Swedish and Russian melodies.

This familiarity with source material gathered over a lifetime of collecting and composing, in combination with that material's very simplicity allows us to easily focus on *what* he does with the music – i.e., how motivic development happens.

#### March

The first and final movements of Bruch's Serenade are loosely based on a march written for the coronation of Karl XII of Sweden (1682–1718). He became king at the age of 15 and was an aggressive military leader.

It is an excellent example of how a short piece can be constructed by means of motivic development.

—● [Listen to the first movement](#)

# Serenade

in fünf Sätzen nach Schwedischen Melodien für Streichorchester

## I. Marsch

Max Bruch  
opus posthumus

**Allegro molto**

Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Violoncello  
Double Bass

**A**

VI. I  
VI. II  
Vla.  
Vc.  
D.B.

**B**

VI. I  
VI. II  
Vla.  
Vc.  
D.B.

**C**

VI. I  
VI. II  
Vla.  
Vc.  
D.B.



## —● Create New Motifs

Create two different versions of your own motifs in the following categories. They do not need to be masterpieces – keep them simple and save your compositional inventiveness for later when they are varied and developed.

### Melodic

Mimic the melodic style of Bruch – keep the tones mainly diatonic, make sure your motifs are easily singable or playable, and they need not be longer than a bar or single breath. If you are stuck for notes, consider making a cryptogram motif – as has been famously done with BACH – and translate your initials or part of your name into musical notes. Adopting the German names for notes can be helpful (Es=E♭, As=A♭, B=B♭, H=B, Cis=C♯, Fis=F♯ and so on). Version 2 may have the same notes as version 1, but arrange them in a different order.

a. 

b. 

### Rhythmic

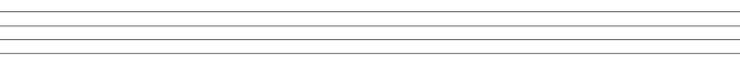
Create two contrasting 2-bar rhythms in 4. Remember that not every beat needs to be filled with activity, consider some syncopation, and make sure they can be quickly memorised and clapped or drummed on the table in cycles. Ignore the melodies you just wrote – the rhythms do not need to complement them.

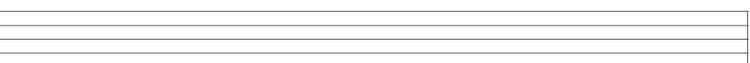
a. 

b. 

### Harmonic

Choose a key and create two different diatonic three- or four-chord progressions. Voice them to be easily playable on the piano with one hand, and indicate what they are either with Roman numerals or chord symbols. The progressions do not necessarily need to resolve, and do not need to relate to your melodies written above.

a. 

b. 

## Motivic Development in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, music has undergone huge and exciting changes in structure, tonality, instrumentation, media and audience. However, melodic, rhythmic and harmonic motifs – and the ways these were modified, developed and combined in the Classical and Romantic periods – remain at the core of composition and a work's reception, across the wide expanse of musical styles that emerged.

### Second Viennese School

Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) – one of the first composers to develop the twelve-tone technique – wrote extensively in his music theory text books about how to approach motivic development and cites hundreds of musical examples spanning Bach to Brahms. The mastery he gained through this historical grounding comes across in all his compositions.

### Bebop

The virtuosic improvisers of mainstream jazz in the 1940s and 1950s – e.g., Charlie Parker (1920–55) and Dizzy Gillespie (1917–93) – were firmly rooted in concepts of motivic development. Popular songs of the day became the vehicles for exploration and development, and these consisted of readily-identifiable units in the form of standard chord progressions – harmonic motifs – that were elaborated on with a series of connected licks – melodic motifs. Listeners accepted the fast tempi – reinforced by rhythmic motifs – and successive choruses and solos, as these were variations – motivic developments – on songs they knew well.

### Minimalism

The musical style attributed to Steve Reich (1936–), Phillip Glass (1937–), Terry Riley (1935–) and La Monte Young (1935–) may have been a reaction to the perceived complexity of concurrent contemporary art music. Minimalism's hypnotic repeating rhythmic cells, drones, and straightforward harmonies often included almost imperceptible timing and placement shifts (so-called phasing or phase-shifts) which can nonetheless be classed as examples of gradual motivic development.

### Hip-Hop

The sampling and development of motifs from the work of others is often attributed to hip-hop, but could also be argued as belonging to a wider practice of borrowing in contemporary music that can be traced back to the multi-layered works of American composer Charles Ives (1874–1954) from the early 20th century. Referencing and pastiche became increasingly widespread from the 1960s onwards, and can be regarded as forerunners to the YouTube mash-up of today – examples of post-genre motivic development.

## Thinking Vertically

Looking again at Bruch, you will have noticed that it is often too arbitrary to classify motifs in terms of being only melodic, rhythmic or harmonic. These musical parameters overlap, particularly when different motifs are arranged in vertical layers, and each of these is developed. Thanks to advances in technology, it is now possible for a single performer-composer to create, record and layer multiple motifs on multiple instruments either in the studio or live on stage.

Nick Russoniello's *Suite for Saxophones and Loop Station* consists of four movements, and each is built up from a series of motifs. These are developed by some sections being recorded and played back, others played live, and others improvised. A typical track involves multiple instruments, and calls for playing techniques of mouthpieces removed, vocal squeals, slap tongue, key noises, growls, multiphonics, and glissandi to replicate beats, samples, voices and electronic effects.

### —● Investigate

1.

Without looking at the score, [listen to and watch Pocket Loops](#).

Make a note of each motif as it enters.

As new parts begin, does your perception of the looped material change? If yes, does that qualify as motivic development?

What effect does repeating different length phrases at the same time have on the horizontal developmental of the piece?

What are the challenges of notating music for live looping?

Which sections do you think are improvised and which are notated?

2.

Now have a look at the score on the following pages.

Is it what you expected?

Does the score help you to identify any additional motivic elements?

Would every performance of this work be generally the same?

# IV. Pocket Loops

For Bb soprano saxophone and Eb baritone saxophone

N. Russoniello  
Sydney, 2018

♩=100

**Record  
(Track 1)**

*Slap*

*record/playback*

Eb Baritone Sax

**Record  
(Track 2)**

*Down neck (remove mouthpiece)*

*"beatbox" (down neck)*

*Slap (unpitched but high in register)*

**Stop Track 2 playback  
To soprano sax**

IV. Pocket Loops

2

Bb soprano sax

*f*

Stop recording  
To baritone sax

Eb Baritone Sax

Do not record

Gliss. through harmonics

Squeal!

*ff*

**Start Track 2**

Ad. Lib squeals in harmonics (like hip-hop DJ scratching)

Stop Track 2

5

Stop Track 1 suddenly

## —● Human Live Looping

1. Arrange yourselves into groups of four. Choose a pair of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic motifs from page 6 written by three different people. The composer of each will play or sing the first of their two motifs, and one person directs.
2. The musical director cues each motif to begin and loop – they need not all begin at the same time.
3. By adding, changing, modifying, or subtracting notes, rhythms or harmonies – each performer gradually morphs their first motif into their second. This can be done in each player's own time, and practice the transitions from (a) to (b) individually if need be. Don't worry if things are in different or conflicting keys, or if they are of different lengths – if each motif is repeated confidently, it is surprising how effective the vertical results can be.
4. Consider adding additional parts or an improvised solo if necessary. Can multiple – or all – groups be combined, and each of these switched on and off by someone directing from middle of the room?
5. The musical director could indicate individual or group dynamic changes or alteration of tempi.
6. In discussion, work out an ending – things could build to a peak then suddenly stop, each motif could gradually return to its original form then stop, there could be a synchronised fade out, or come up with your own plan combining these and other ideas.

### Extension

Try a similar exercise with software – e.g., [GarageBand](#), [Soundtrap](#) or [Soundation](#). By all means, begin with the supplied loops but aim to avoid relying entirely on the pre-packaged musical material. Find a motif you like, make your own version of it, then develop it by changing parts of it incrementally – add, remove or transpose notes, alter and shift the placement of beats and rhythms, explore the upper extensions of chords, and alter the length of individual sections. Make it cohesive and keep the listener's attention by drawing on the tools and techniques of motivic development.

Schoenberg provides the following advice on varying motifs: "Variation means change. But changing every feature produces something foreign, incoherent, illogical. It destroys the basic shape of the motif. Accordingly, variation requires changing some of the less-important features and preserving some of the more important ones." (*Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, 8.)

## **Final Thoughts**

A recurring motif in historically-informed performance programming around the world is introducing audiences to neglected composers, and long-forgotten works. In the *Voyage of Musical Discovery* and accompanying Education Kits, the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra pairs such lesser-known works with music written in Australia in the past 25 years. The message behind this for young and emerging performers and composers: make a distinction between fame and skill. Fame and recognition rely on many factors – including luck – that are beyond your control, whereas skill and experience are things you can influence and steer.

The official historical versions of the great musicians of the past ignore many of the informal backstage conversations, collaborations, and trial and error that are an everyday and necessary part of composing and performing. The concept of the performer-composer is not new – be both. Write for your friends, trust them to bring your music to life, and return the favour.

Regard scores as starting points rather than blueprints, and don't be afraid to mix up styles and idioms. Remember too that many artists gain inspiration from all sorts of areas of life – your music can be inspired by words, images, conversations, machines, dreams or anything else.

## Anticipated Learning Outcomes

Definition of motif in music, and comparing it to occurrences in other art forms including visual design, architecture, branding, literature and film.

Introduction to the leitmotif of Wagner and *Star Wars*

Disambiguation of motif/motive

Role of motivic development in music, as defined by Classical-era composers and continued in the Romantic period

Situation of lesser-known Max Bruch alongside Brahms, and draw attention to his expertise in the manipulation of straightforward compositional material

Techniques of motivic variation – including examples and follow-up exercises in identifying motifs and their methods of development by cross-referencing score reading with listening, and discussion.

Division of motif types into melodic, rhythmic, harmonic including instructions for creating own examples

Introduction of cryptogram motif technique.

Establishment of connection between motivic development in Classical- and Romantic-era composition and styles of the 20th and 21st century – including twelve-tone composition, jazz, minimalism, hip-hop and mash-up.

Introduction to score and techniques of composition for instruments and loop station, including implications for motivic development of recorded material vertically as well as horizontally.

Exercises in creating real time collaborative compositions that combine techniques of looping, repetition, and motivic development.

Tactics for applying motivic knowledge to software tools, including avoidance of ready-made materials.

Rationale for highlighting work of lesser-known, local or emerging composers as motivation for development of individual skills.

Encouragement to collaborate and experiment with multiple styles of music, and sources of inspiration.

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Related material is contained in further 2021 *Voyage of Musical Discovery* presentations and accompanying Education Kits:

#2 VOICES & INSTRUMENTS

**Tuesday 4 May, 6.30pm**

CITY RECITAL HALL, Sydney

**Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra**

FRANZ BERWALD Grand Septet in B-flat major (1828)

**Sydney Chamber Choir**

BRENDA GIFFORD *Mother Earth / Minga Bagan* (2020)

ELLA MACENS *Stāvi Stīvi, Ozoliņ* (2019)

CLARE MACLEAN *A West Irish Ballad* (1988)

PAUL STANHOPE *Agnus Dei: (Do not stand at my grave and weep)* (2016)

#3 TEXTURE & TIMBRE

**Thursday 5 August, 6.30pm**

CITY RECITAL HALL, Sydney

**Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra**

HAYDN Symphony No.103 in E-flat major *Drum Roll* (1795)

**Taikoz**

KERRY JOYCE & RYUJI HAMADA *Flowing Water* (2019)

IAN CLEWORTH ... *like a ripple...* (2012)

[Voyage of Musical Discovery information](#)

## Web References

### Page 1

Voyage Booking

<https://www.cityrecitalhall.com/whats-on/events/voyage-of-musical-discovery-1-motivic-development/>

### Page 2

Alex Ross, New Yorker

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/a-field-guide-to-the-musical-leitmotifs-of-star-wars>

### Page 3

Bruch 1st movt. audio | <https://youtu.be/xVUngS4Wvhw>

### Page 5

Bruch score

[http://imslp.hk/files/imglnks/euimg/f/f4/IMSLP571562-PMLP662423-Bruch-Serenade\\_-\\_Score.pdf](http://imslp.hk/files/imglnks/euimg/f/f4/IMSLP571562-PMLP662423-Bruch-Serenade_-_Score.pdf)

Bruch 5th movt. audio | <https://youtu.be/bN4YZQ26lTI>

### Page 8

Russoniello *Pocket Loops* audio/video | <https://youtu.be/pgHLZNZ0xXY>

### Page 11

Garageband | <https://www.apple.com/au/mac/garageband/>

Soundtrap | <https://www.soundtrap.com>

Soundnation | <https://soundnation.com>

### Page 13

Voyage information | <https://www.arco.org.au/2021-voyage-of-musical-discovery>

## Recommended Further Reading

Bernstein, Leonard. *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976.

DeNora, Tia. *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792–1803*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995.

Dobbins, Bill. *Jazz Arranging and Composing: A Linear Approach*. Rottenburg, Germany: Advance Music, 1986.

Haerle, Dan. *The Jazz Language: A Theory Text for Jazz Composition and Improvisation*. Miami: Studio 224, 1980.

Ross, Alex. *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007.

Schoenberg, Arnold. *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*. London: Faber and Faber, 1967.