VOYAGE of MUSICAL DISCOVERY

RACHAEL BEESLEY & NICOLE VAN BRUGGEN CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

NUMBER	02	TOPIC	CULTURAL NARRATIVES
DATE		JUNE 2023	VIC



RICHARD GILL AO I FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

LIVE

JDA

<image>

IMAGE CREDIT Robert Catto

Thursday 8 June, 6.30pm

VIC

Alexander Theatre The Ian Potter Centre for Performing Arts Monash University Members of Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra

Georgia Browne | Flute Tatjana Zimre | Oboe Nicole van Bruggen | Clarinet Anneke Scott | Horn Lisa Goldberg | Bassoon Jenna Sherry | Violin Stephen King | Viola Daniel Yeadon | Cello Rob Nairn | Double Bass

Louise FARRENC Nonet in E flat major, Op.38 (1849)

Visit <u>www.arco.org.au/vov</u> for booking information



Anna McMichael | Violin Louise Devenish | Percussion

CLIMATE NOTES

Cathy MILLIKEN | Red Garden Daniel BLINKHORN | Unequal Forms 1–3 Kate MOORE | Bloodwood Variations Damian BARBELER | Pressed Bree VAN REYK | How We Fell

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INTRODUCTION

The Voyage of Musical Discovery presents musical works of different times, places and styles along with spoken explanations. The first half features orchestral and chamber music from the Classical and Romantic eras performed in a historically-informed style. The second takes recently-written Australian works performed by a guest ensemble, often including the composers themselves.

This Education Kit works as a stand-alone learning resource, but full educational benefit is achieved by working through the activities in conjunction with attending a live Voyage presentation. GUIDE FOR

TEACHERS

How to integrate this material into the classroom

CULTURAL NARRATIVES

To identify and better understand *Cultural Narratives* in music, this Education Kit consists of:

TASKS Locating, listening to and discussing specific features and compositional approaches in the following music:

CLIMATE NOTES (various composers)

Nonet in E-flat major, Op.38 – Movt. I Louise FARRENC

ACTIVITIES Testing some of the ideas through creative arrangement, composition and performance exercises

There is adequate material here for **two** or **three timetabled classes** – and more if you decide to do all of the larger projects at the end.

A specific composer, work and/or section is introduced and described, then the tasks and activities appear on the subsequent **left-hand / even-numbered pages**. It may be helpful to print or save these individually to share with the students.

The opposite **right-hand / odd-numbered pages** are guides for you – including suggested responses and tips for assisting with the practical activities.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Orange boxes like these contain extra related information and/or links

- clarification of terms
- tips for extending material across multiple sessions
- suggestions for overlap with wider areas of learning

VIC

The activities in this Education Kit and in the live Voyage presentation address concepts of music through learning experiences in performance, composition, musicology and aural training within the context of a range of styles, periods and genres. To do this, core elements of composition, performance and musicology are introduced and discussed, and connections between current Australian music and Classical and Romantic repertoire are identified.

The kit materials are suitable for all secondary year levels, and specifically address the following areas of the Victorian secondary school music curriculum.

VCE

Unit 1 Organisation in Music Unit 2 Effect in Music Unit 3 Music Composition / Music Contemporary Performance

Levels 9–10

Explore and Express Ideas

Improvise and arrange music, using aural awareness and technical skills to manipulate the elements of music to explore options for interpretation and developing music ideas (**VCAMUE040**)

Manipulate combinations of the elements of music in a range of styles, using technology and notation to communicate music ideas and intentions (VCAMUE041)

Music Practices

Create, practise and rehearse music to interpret a variety of performance repertoire with increasing technical and expressive skill and awareness of stylistic conventions (VCAMUM042)

Plan, develop, and notate compositions with an understanding of style and convention (VCAMUM043)

Levels 7 and 8

Explore and Express Ideas

Experiment with elements of music, in isolation and in combination, using listening skills, voice, instruments and technologies to find ways to create and manipulate effects (VCAMUE033)

Develop music ideas through improvisation, composition and performance, combining and manipulating the elements of music (**VCAMUE034**)

Music Practices

Create, practise and rehearse music to develop listening, compositional and technical and expressive performance skills (VCAMUM035)

Structure compositions by combining and manipulating the elements of music and using notation (VCAMUM036)

CULTURAL NARRATIVES

DISCUSSION

Why is music important for you?

Why study music? And how?

What is a cultural narrative?

What do music and culture have in common?

What are actions?

How does music make you feel?

TEACHERS

As educators and musicians, our intention with the information presented here is not to tell you what music you should teach or listen to. Instead we offer some signposts and activities for discovering new ways for historical and contemporary music to be thought-provoking in the classroom.

Depending upon the experience of your group and as an introduction to the overall topic, either have your students read or listen to the following text, or get a discussion started with the questions on the left (page 6) and augment that with the information below as required.

One of music's great strengths is its **ability to express things** that are difficult to describe with words or symbols. In this way, music can act as a mirror or metaphor for wider **cultural issues** and themes. However, to see the **connections between music and culture** can require some recalibration. That means being open to new angles and approaches that may challenge and build upon established expectations on the **role of music education**.

A shortcoming of music education is that it tends to place a lot of emphasis on printed notation and the instruments that produce the sounds. These are important, but if we want to get closer to understanding **what music means** – and how it gives us insights into wider culture – we must look more closely at **actions**. In other words, we turn our attention to **what people do** (this idea comes from Christopher Small's 1998 book *Musicking – The Meanings of Performing and Listening*).

Well, what do people do?

They interpret, interact, negotiate and discuss.

And as in our day-to-day lives, a lot of this doing is creative, spontaneous, social, non-verbal, and at times ambiguous (these terms come from the *Handbook of Musical Identities* edited by Raymond MacDonald, 2017).

Music itself doesn't do anything. It isn't alive and it isn't a language, but nor does it belong in a glass case in a museum. What is important is the **context** in which it is created, performed and listened to and the surrounding discussions. And these involve you!

In Todd Field's 2022 film *Tár*, the main character (played by Cate Blanchett) is an accomplished conductor who grapples with many of these very questions. In a scene early in the film and set at The Julliard School in New York, she urges the university students to respect the canon of Classical music and Bach in particular. She comes across as self-aggrandising and her arguments are flawed, but one has the feeling – and this is intended – that she is trying to convince herself as much as she is the Gen Z students. Now is the time to interpret something anew, she implores, and it's always the question that involves the listener and never the answer. And most significantly, she asks **how music makes us feel** – a sentiment poignantly echoed toward the end of the film when she watches a <u>video of Leonard Bernstein</u> address the same question.

Throughout the following material, let us agree to come back often to this question:

How does the music make you feel?

Observe the way these feelings change with each additional layer of information, and notice our own cultural narratives coming into focus along the way.



CLIMATE NOTES

The *Climate Notes* project further draws on the importance of articulating how something actually makes us feel. It is a multimedia performance and installation created by violinist Anna McMichael in collaboration with percussionist Louise Devenish – both are heads of department at the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music and Performance at Monash University in Melbourne.

Their project grew from an initiative by Joe Duggan - a science researcher at the Australian National University (ANU). He explains:

From 2014 to 2015 I approached the world's leading climate scientists and asked them to respond to one simple question:

How does climate change make you feel?

Their responses were truly moving.

One of the scientists asked was the late Emeritus Professor Tony McMichael, AO – ANU epidemiologist, environmental health expert, and Anna McMichael's father. His letter included the following:

It's sad when a society like ours can't see further than its bank balance, and stumbles blindly into a future when children won't be able to enjoy the flowing rivers, mountain snow, coloured birds and bush animals.

Many of the scientists have updated their letters in the intervening years, and these can be seen on Duggan's <u>Is This How You Feel?</u> website. For their extension of this project, Anna and Louise commissioned works from six Australian contemporary classical composers, asking them to create musical responses to the scientists' letters.

Anna explains that in combination with the live performance there is "a rolling video of all the climate scientists' letters, a wall where all the public can write letters, and then video of the musical letters – the composers' works."

The event took place over several weeks in September 2022 at the National Herbarium of Victoria in Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens. The multiple angles and different media contained in *Climate Notes* – literary, musical, art, installation, nature and climate – engaged a wide spectrum of visitors and is a perfect example of a relevant contemporary cultural narrative expressed through music.

Watch <u>this short video</u> to get an impression of the interactivity, sound and overall feel of *Climate Notes.*

The Compositions

Cathy MILLIKEN | Red Garden (violin, percussion) video filmed at the Red Sand Garden, Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne

Daniel BLINKHORN | Unequal Forms 1-3 (violin with preparations, percussive instruments and objects, electronics, field recordings of biomes)

Kate MOORE | Bloodwood Variations (violin solo), video Yengo National Park Photo Journal

Damian BARBELER | Pressed (violin, vibraphone, electronics) video by Barbeler using images from the plant archives of the State Botanical Collection of Victoria

Bree VAN REYK | How We Fell (performed using custom percussive/string instruments by van Reyk named 'Replica Trees'



See this video for extracts of each work

Bree van Reyk – *How We Fell* Text, Sounds, Instruments, Actions

Author	Text	Sounds + Instruments	Type of Action	Duration/ editions
Anna McMichael	a sufficient catastrophe	the sound of whatever follows a sufficient catastrophe	only one person plays, the other watches	
Prof. Gabi Heger	a slow threat	muted irregular pulses on gongs		long
John Fasillo	immediate action		open, spontaneous and freely responsive to each other	short (5s-10s)
Prof. Lesley Huges	wrapped in a blanket of collective determination	tutti strings in 'finale' type material.	repetitive, pulsing, developing, an arc to a climactic point, staying at that point for a while, then stopping determinably.	long (1-2m)
Em. Prof. Will Steffan	a potentially uncontrollable state	wild, random	wild, random, forceful	very short.
Em. Prof. Will Steffan	tipping cascade	sfz extreme hairpin crescendo tremolos on all strings	impulsive	med-long
Dr Jennie Mallela	tipping point	short crescendo tremolos with accented ends on two upper strings	impulsive	short-med. several editions
Prof. Katrin Meissner	an uncontrolled, risky experiment		an uncontrolled, risky experiment. don't talk at all about what you're going to do, just do it for quite a while without paying particular attention to what the other player is doing	quite long
Linden Ashcroft	inaction	no sound	inaction. stand poised to do something, but do nothing. do this several times	indeterminate

These are excerpts from the score to Bree van Reyk's *How We Fell*. The columns contain specific information for the performers. In some cases – e.g., where a field is empty – the sounds, techniques and actions are either self-explanatory or up to the player to decide. For musicians used to conventional notation, this approach might seem unusually open but consider the following. Compare a work like this to a blank page (i.e., play whatever you want!) to realise that here there are in fact many constraints in the form of words, instructions, timings, actions and pre-planned instrumental combinations and textures. Different performances of this piece may be different lengths and vary in the detail or order of some of the events, yet if you compared them side by side they would all still be recognisable as being *this particular work*. One of the reasons for this is that the instrument itself has been designed and built with the actions of the players in mind, and this allows the score to stay flexible. The following page shows some of the instructions for setting up the instrument.

Replica Trees / crazy guitarpercussion-tree things with heaps of sharp edges but good sounds set-up manual





set the middle bridge 50cm from the top end bracket (from the inside edge of the bracket where the strings come out)





hand-saw blade attached on angle with small fatheaded screws



attach large leaves through hole in handsaw using single knot and small wooden ball as a washer/stop





INSTRUCTIONS & ACTIONS

ACTIVITY

Taking the above list as inspiration, experiment with building a score that is made up of instructions and actions.

Work alone or in groups of two or three.

Materials Needed

- sheet of A3 paper
- a ruler
- pens and pencils
- eraser

Draw a line across the long edge and make columns with the following categories. Use pen for the lines and category headings and pencil for filling in the details.

SOUND MAKER	TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION	PERFORMANCE ACTION	
An object in the room that can make sound	How to make the sound / Specific playing technique	What happens to the sound when interacting with others	
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TEACHERS

The reason for this activity is to allow the students to experience the shift in focus from instruments and notation to **ways of playing** (technical instructions) and **interacting** (performance actions). Encourage them to express their instructions in everyday language – find alternatives to the familiar musical terms of *crescendo*, *staccato*, *accelerando* etc.

In the *How We Fell* example there is a bit of overlap between the information in the columns, and this reflects the reality while playing. However, to get used to this method of scoring, be specific with the information in the boxes – i.e., make the distinctions clear between the *what* (Sound Maker), the *how* (Technical Instruction) and *with whom* (Performance Action). This can take some practice, though three or four individual horizontal entries are enough for now.

SOUND MAKER

Assemble a few sound-making objects from around the room – they don't have to be official instruments. Anything that makes a sound, including the voice or hands and feet. Don't think about instrument choice too much, and one object per horizontal line in the A3 table.

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTIONS

Describe in a few words how the sound maker should be played or how the sound is produced – be inventive and ask *what can I do with this*?

Words such as:

short burst airy sounds repetition soft to loud in quick succession tap lightly scrape

These are playing techniques or musical ideas – choose words rather than graphic symbols.

PERFORMANCE ACTIONS

These explain what to do with the sounds and how to interact with other players. Where do the sounds go, and who do they meet along the way?

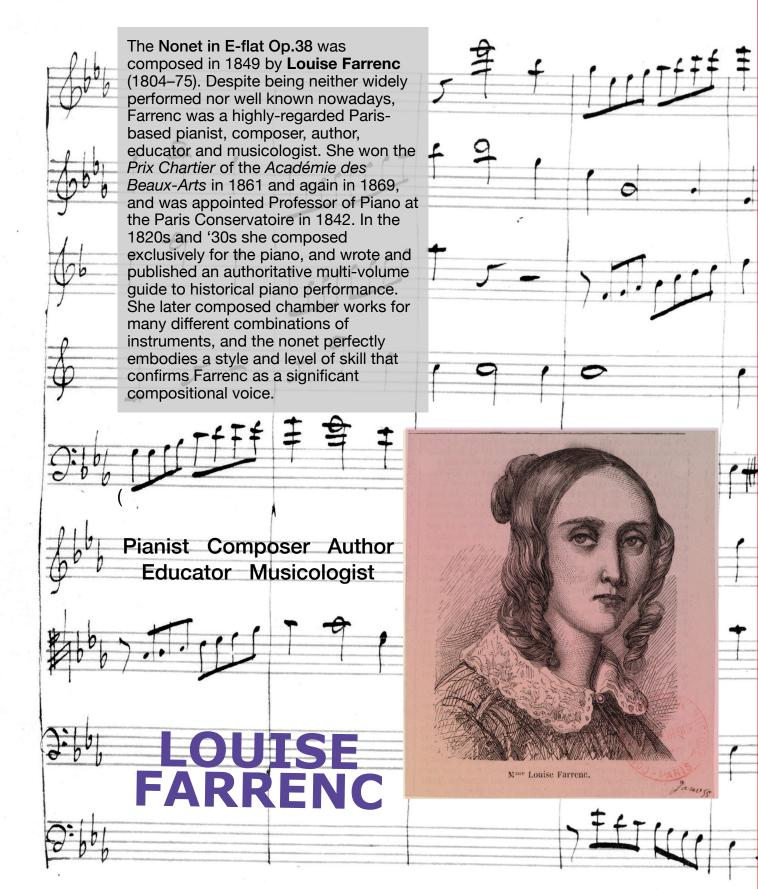
Try phrases such as:

lead another playermimic something softonly echoesintense dialogue with xgradually take over another person's rhythmignore everyonedo the opposite to y

At this stage, the idea is not to tell a story or make a full work – it's a draft and initial exercise in guided improvisation.

When the first drafts are done, the students should assign an instrument or two to different players. Get them to play each piece for the others without them speaking or adding to the instructions verbally. See what happens, ask for quick feedback from the players and listeners and have the score creator make notes of any possible changes or organisational adjustments for later.

Remind everybody that it's okay to leave some things up to chance or accident and there does not need to be wall-to-wall sound – i.e., music needs silence!



Compositrices – New Light On French Romantic Women Composers

In 2023, a new 8-CD recording was released of over ten hours of music by Augusta Holmes, Charlotte Sohy, Cecile Chaminade, Clemence de Grandval, Hedwige Chretien, Helene de Montgeroult, Henriette Renie, Jeanne Danglas, Lili Boulanger, Louise Farrenc, Madeleine Jaeger, Madeleine LeMariey, Marie Jaell, Marie-Foscarine Damaschino, Marthe Bracquemond, Marthe Grumbach, Melanie (Mel) Bonis, Nadia Boulanger, Pauline Viardot-Garcia, Rita Strohl, Virginie Morel. It's on Tidal and Spotify – start listening today!

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Nonet in E, Op.38

5574 15 15 15- 5- 15-

AUDIO listen to Movt. 1

41550

SCORES

Original manuscript in composer's handwriting

Newer typeset version

Tension & Release

Our feelings and responses to music are often triggered by subtle shifts in harmony. As listeners we sense an interplay of tension and release, though it can be sometimes difficult to know precisely what it is in the chords that's causing the different reactions. Farrenc's Nonet is filled with modulations that are surprising for a number of reasons. First, considering the time the work was composed, she chooses unconventional destination chords and second, she reaches them by way of rich harmonic pivot chords. As can be heard and seen in the following example, there is already a strong suggestion of the sort of chromatic harmonies that the late-Romantic, early-Modernist, Impressionist and jazz composers would go on to develop.



Nonet in E[,], Op.38 – Movt. I

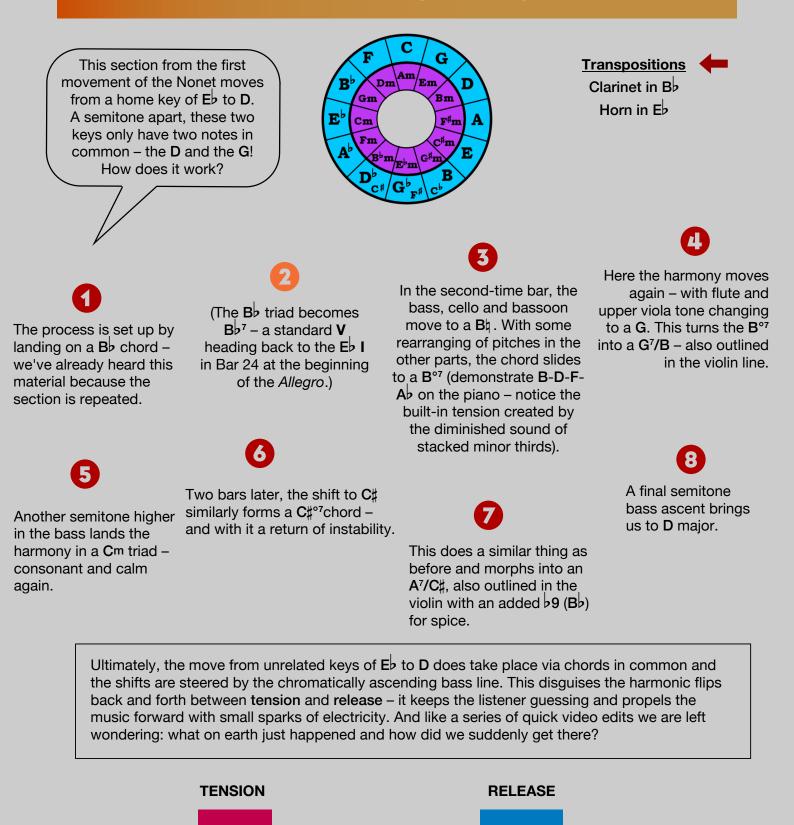


listen to this excerpt at least three times (7:16–7:25) 2nd ending

TEACHERS

Quick Background to Modulation

Music of the Classical period, as well as thousands of pop songs and jazz standards years later, modulates frequently by way of related chords. You would most likely have encountered this already with the **Circle of Fifths** – modulating to adjacent keys in the circle means there are lots of notes that both the old and new keys have in common. That means that the change of key can be smooth – a new sense or home is created for the listener by way of a transition that isn't too jarring or disorienting.





By listening and/or looking at the score, locate another passage of harmonic action in the first movement – even just two adjacent contrasting or rich-sounding chords.

- Identify all the vertical notes remembering to take into account the transpositions
- Figure out what each chord could be in most cases it will be either a major or

minor triad and sometimes with extensions, or extra flavour notes

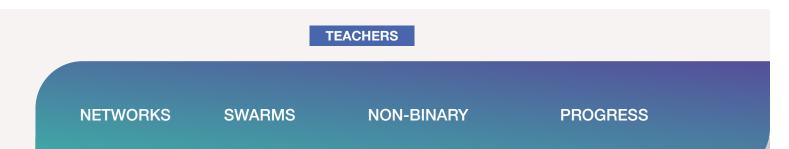
- Give it a chord symbol
- Try to calculate the progression or harmonic road map (V-I / I-IV etc)
- Describe the effect it has on you

This is one of the best ways to understand how harmony works – listening and labelling to figure out what's going on behind the harmonic scenes. Sometimes the answers are not clear cut and that's okay.

Each time you do such an exercise it gets easier, and the skills you gain will seep into your own playing, improvising and composing regardless of the musical style. And most importantly, like adding filters and effects to an image, it expands your creative toolkit for placing layers of contrast, surprise and ambiguity into the music.

And whether a custom-designed instrument, the interaction between personalities, a new interpretation of a letter, colour, thought or feeling, or even a single unexpected chord – these are the musical nuts and bolts of cultural narratives...





Farrenc's Nonet contains many examples that resemble what contemporary network theory researchers refer to as assemblages or swarms – collections of different elements working independently but in a synchronised and coordinated way.

Vertical clusters of notes formed into chords fit the swarm theory – the individual notes taking on different roles to form new entities. And chords arranged horizontally work together to form an entire patchwork of tension and release. Thinking of music in this way gives us the freedom to build whatever chords and structures we want – the ears can ultimately decide what works and what doesn't.

Globally, the ensemble of strings and winds mixed in an uneven grouping (i.e., 5 and 4) is also a type of assemblage – and was a fairly uncommon instrumental grouping at the time. Then the writing of the different instrumental lines in almost every passage is intrinsically democratic – voices working together and each with something different and important to say.

How is any of this a cultural narrative?

The blurring of boundaries between traditionally binary opposites is exciting and makes life interesting. It makes us feel something!

where land and sky meet on the horizon

twilight

winter | summer

light and shadow

sweet and savoury

Montagues and Capulets / Sharks and Jets

Heaven and Hell

gender

live | sampleo

rtificial Intelligen

uman vs. machine

brainstorm to add to this list ...

Art and music can help us realise that there is a fluid interconnectedness between different or parallel worlds. A piece such as Farrenc's – even when from a different historical period – can prompt us to question some of our own inflexible opinions and standpoints. And this can lead to change and progress including in areas outside music.

ACTIVITIES

1 SOUND SCULPTURE

One of the ultimate actions of creating music is building the instrument itself!

- Collect materials to build an evolving outside sound sculpture
- Upcycle objects from garden sheds or broken classroom instruments
- Hang things from trees

• Enlist the help of parents or others in the community who have expertise with tools and trades – cutting, joining, drilling etc.

Nicolas Bras builds instruments with construction workers in France

2 LETTERS to SOUNDS

Write and collect your own letters responding to the question: *how does climate change make you feel?* As Bree van Reyk did, extract some key phrases from the letters and create a list-based score. Make a new version of the sheet from before with an extra column for the words, then similarly choose existing or new soundmakers, technical instructions, performance actions, and approximate durations if you think these are necessary. Additionally, if you have the chance to build the sound sculpture, then that would be the instrument on which this new piece is played.

3 RUBBISH COLLECTION

Collect objects, rubbish, waste, packaging, recycling, paper etc. from around the school – clean if necessary, and design a huge collaborative collage. Mix up or combine similar colours or materials, and create some perspective with small and large objects. If it's easier to photograph the objects, then print them and arrange them – do so. Or a combination of real and printed?

Watch this video on artist Mandy Barker's photographs of ocean plastics for inspiration

Once finished, this is your musical score – play it on the sound sculpture if you made one or gather appropriate sound-makers from around the room to represent the different shapes, colours and densities of the collected materials.

These are all larger projects – depending on how much time you can set aside, choose any or all or freely combine parts and ideas from each.



Watch this astounding example of turning everyday objects into something creative and beautiful – including the sound design itself

A final option is to work with your own samples – then there is of course the chance to sample the sound sculpture and take these sounds to complete either activity 2 or 3.

The best app to use is <u>KOALA SAMPLER</u> – available for Android and iOS. It isn't free, but for what you get, the \$7.99 price is more than reasonable. The first digital samplers from the 1980s cost the price of approximately two houses and could only do a fraction of what KOALA can do!

Tutorial – basic operation

Tutorial – 5 Tips

The tutorials always focus on drum patterns, as this is assumed to be what consumers want. However, for this project think more in terms of soundscape or sound collage – there may be small pockets of rhythm but don't be too governed by beats. The app functions the same way, regardless of what sounds you make!

SAMPLE

Spread out and explore as if gathering objects, but collect sounds instead – take some headphones for listening as you record. Be careful of the wind and scraping, moving or talking near the microphone. Limit your recording to no more than 10 separate clips, keep them short, then find somewhere quiet to clean them up – i.e., trim unwanted noises from the beginnings or ends of clips or isolate the best bits. Make some adjustments to volume and pitch and see what they sound like reversed and/or looped. Delete what you don't need, but remember there is no undo.

SEQUENCE

Duplicate and modify a few of the cleaned-up samples, and do some test playing by tapping them in realtime to make some sequences. Shorter one-shot samples work best for this, and try without the metronome. For longer pitch-based sounds switch on the keyboard feature to hear the samples in various registers and notice if and how the timbre changes.

PERFORM

Once you are comfortable with how it all works, record the different sequences into a longer performance, sliding some effects in and out as you go.

Remember to think sound collage rather than song, like an audio version of objects arranged on paper. Combine different textures, being sure that there is variation and contrast – tension and release – among the various musical parameters. Aim to make it sound like a swarm of living and breathing entities, entering and leaving in different ways but always with direction and purpose. Save the finished file, and if you have the possibility over cloud storage to export each and open them on one device, then a further option would be to combine multiple files into one longer one.

This may all take a little bit of practice and trial and error, but it is totally worth it!

Three of the most important cultural challenges facing us today are addressing climate change, ensuring gender identity and equality, and guaranteeing proper recognition of Indigenous and colonised peoples. Music can't solve any of these issues alone, but in everything from discussions to campaigns for increasing public awareness, the creation, performance and reception of music involves a similar lively swarm of individuals working together.

Even when the things we do feel tiny and insignificant, they can still bring about change and redress past injustices. And as we have seen by looking at the works above, understanding and becoming fluent with the many actions involved in making music can refine our ability to engage with and cope with unpredictability and uncertainty in the real world.

Finally, in the words of author Hanif Kureishi "make something new everyday, something one has never done before."

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DESIGN & INNOVATION

MARCH 2023

MUSICAL IDENTITIES

AUGUST 2023

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