

# A VOYAGE OF MUSICAL DISCOVERY

## AUSTRALIAN ROMANTIC & CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA

RICHARD GILL AO | FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

### Education Kit #1 2020 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 4 March 2020, 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 cappella 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 **Motivic Development** from a little-known symphony written in 1803 through to real-time composition for saxophones and loop station.

#### **Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra**

ANTON EBERL – Symphony in E-flat major, Op.33 (1803)

Anton Eberl (1765–1807) builds an entire symphony by skilfully crafting and developing motifs. With the musicians of the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra, Co-Artistic Directors Rachael Beesley and Nicole van Bruggen guide listeners through Eberl's compositional methods, and investigate why this 217-year-old work is only now receiving its first Australian performance.

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

#### **Nick Russoniello**

NICK RUSSONIELLO – Suite for Saxophones and Loop Station (2019–20)

*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)

[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 der 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.

## Examples of Motifs in Eberl's Symphony

### Melodic



The Allegro section of the 1st movement bursts into action with this syncopated ascending scalar motif, first played by violins.

### Rhythmic



The above melodic motif is counterbalanced by a militaristic rhythmic motif that appears at different times in all instrumental families, but is particularly prominent in brass and timpani.

### Harmonic

The primary harmonic motif of the 4th movement is introduced in the opening four bars and is a I-V-I progression in the key of E $\flat$ . What makes it recognisable as Eberl travels through different keys in the movement, are the distinctive inversions and that the chords begin widely spaced and end more closely.

E $\flat$  [no 5th]    E $\flat$  triad    E $\flat$  [no root]    B $\flat$ <sup>7</sup>/<sub>F</sub>    E $\flat$  triad

## Motivic Development in the Classical Era

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, Beethoven along with their contemporary Eberl. One of the great pleasures in listening to the symphonies from this time, is hearing the inventiveness with which simple motifs are altered, fragmented, extended, transposed, disguised and otherwise developed throughout a work. In some cases, it is possible to imagine that an entire symphony has expanded outwards from a single initiating motif – like an organism growing from a single cell.

### —● Listen & Track

Locate the above motifs by listening along with the score.

[recording with score](#)

[link to score](#)

What stays the same, what changes? Already in the opening 12 bars of the Allegro, there are several examples of modified repetition and motivic variation:



Vln. I, bar 19



Bar 20



Vln. II, bar 20



Vln. I, bar 29



Vln. II, bar 29

Continue tracking the above motif throughout the movement, looking for changes in:

**rhythm** – length alterations, note repetitions, adding or omitting upbeats, moving to different beats

**interval** – note order or direction, adding intervals or extra notes, compressing intervals

**harmony** – inversions, adding extra notes, chord substitutions

**melody** – transposition, contrapuntal accompaniments

(adapted from Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*. London: Faber and Faber, 1967, 10.)

Do the same with the rhythmic and harmonic motifs from the previous page – look for clues, and make a note of where and how each is developed. Use your ears, and not just your eyes!

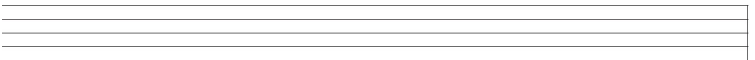
## ● Create New Motifs

Create two different versions of your own motifs in the following categories. Do not spend longer than 10 minutes on each exercise – put down the first things you think of!

### Melodic

Mimic the melodic style of Eberl – 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

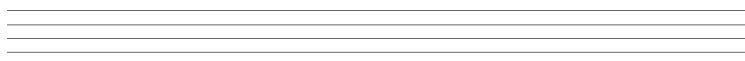
Create two contrasting 2-bar rhythms in 4. Remember that not every beat needs to be filled with activity, consider some syncopation, and make sure they can be quickly memorised and clapped or drummed on the table in cycles. Ignore the melodies you just wrote – the rhythms do not need to complement them.

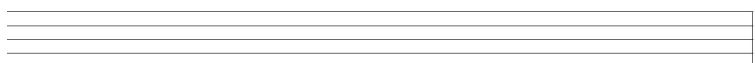
a. 

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 period – 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 back to Eberl, in practice it can be often too arbitrary to look at 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 of 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 & Envisage

Examine the score on the following pages to identify the different motivic elements, and try to imagine how a live performance might sound.

In particular, what effect does the repeating of 4-, 8-, and 12-bar phrases at the same time have on the horizontal developmental of the piece?

How might the improvised squeals at the end interact with the recorded and looped material?

Would every live performance of this work sound similar?

How does the piece end?

# 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

Do not record

Eb Baritone Sax

Gliss. through harmonics

*ff* Squeal!

**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 5 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 interesting 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

Division of motif types into melodic, rhythmic, harmonic.

Role of motivic development in music, as defined by Classical-era composers.

Situation of lesser-known Anton Eberl alongside contemporaries of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven.

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.

Composition of motifs on melodic, rhythmic and harmonic basis.

Introduction of cryptogram motif technique.

Establishment of connection between motivic development in Classical-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 2020 *Voyage of Musical Discovery* presentations and accompanying Education Kits:

#2 VOICES & INSTRUMENTS | April

**Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra**

LOUISE FARRENC Nonet in E-flat major Op.38 (1849)

**Sydney Chamber Choir**

ELLA MACENS *Stāvi Stīvi, Ozoliņ* (2019)

CLARE MACLEAN *A West Irish Ballad* (1988)

#3 TEXTURE & TIMBRE | August

**Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra**

MOZART Serenade No.6 in D major, K.239 (1776)

**Taikoz**

IAN CLEWORTH *Home* (2017)

[Voyage of Musical Discovery 2020 information](#)

## Web References

### Page 1

Voyage Booking

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

Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra | <http://arco.org.au>

Nick Russoniello | <http://nickrussoniello.com.au>

### Page 2

Alex Ross, New Yorker

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

### Page 4

Eberl score and audio | <https://youtu.be/fnvpWgtHOD0>

Eberl score

[http://imslp.eu/files/imglnks/euimg/8/83/IMSLP352941-PMLP569944-Eberl\\_Sym\\_in\\_Eb\\_D3.pdf](http://imslp.eu/files/imglnks/euimg/8/83/IMSLP352941-PMLP569944-Eberl_Sym_in_Eb_D3.pdf)

### Page 8

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

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

Soundnation | <https://soundnation.com>

### Page 10

Voyage information | <http://www.arco.org.au/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