

VOYAGE of MUSICAL DISCOVERY

EDUCATION KIT

RACHAEL BEESLEY & NICOLE VAN BRUGGEN CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

NUMBER	03	TOPIC	MUSICAL IDENTITIES
DATE	AUGUST 2023		NSW

AUSTRALIAN
ROMANTIC
CLASSICAL &
ORCHESTRA

RICHARD GILL AO | FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

VOYAGE

LIVE



IMAGE CREDIT Robert Catto

NSW

Tuesday 7 August
6.30-8.00pm
City Recital Hall
2 Angel Place, Sydney

**Australian Romantic & Classical
Orchestra**

Conductor | Rachael Beesley

MENDELSSOHN
Symphony No.3 in A minor,
Op.56 'Scottish' (1843)



IMAGE CREDIT Keith Sanders

Ensemble Offspring

Brenda GIFFORD
Bardju (Footprints) (2017)
Gambambara (Seasons) (2017)

Nardi SIMPSON
Of Stars and Birds (2020)
Wilga's Last Dance (2019)

Fiona LOADER
Lorikeet Corroboree (2015)

Visit www.arco.org.au/voyage
for booking information

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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.

TEACHERS

MUSICAL IDENTITIES

How to integrate this material into the classroom

To learn about some of the many *Musical Identities* behind music and its creators, this Education Kit consists of:

TASKS

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

Felix MENDELSSOHN

Symphony No.3 in A minor, Op.56 'Scottish' (1843)
Movts. 1 & 2

Brenda GIFFORD

Bardju (Footprints) (2017)
alto flute, bass clarinet, vibraphone, cello

Nardi SIMPSON

Of Stars and Birds (2020)
flute, clarinet, vibraphone

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

NSW

The activities in this Education Kit and in the live Voyage presentation address the concepts of music through the learning experiences of performance, composition, musicology and aural skills within the context of a range of styles, periods and genres.

The kit materials are suitable for all secondary year levels, and specifically address the following areas of the curriculum:

Stage 5: Years 9–10 (Elective Music)

Develops knowledge, understanding and skills in the musical concepts through listening as a means of extending aural awareness and communicating ideas about music in social, cultural and historical contexts.

Stage 6: Years 11–12 (Music 1)

- Australian music
- Music and the related arts
- Music for small ensembles
- Music of the 18th century
- Music of the 20th and 21st centuries

Stage 6: Years 11–12 (Music 2)

- Music 1600-1900 (Core)
- Australian music (Core)
- Music of the last 25 years – Australian focus (Elective)
- Classical music (Elective)

Specific concepts covered across all year levels:

- graphic and traditional notation
- combinations of voices and instruments
- methods of sound production
- the linear and vertical arrangement of music
- composition and its relationship to form and structure
- music creation and arrangement through improvisation
- performance as a means of self expression and communication

MUSICAL IDENTITIES

DISCUSSION

Cultural, Political, Social, Personal

Who am I?

How do I describe myself?

Where do I belong?

Is the music we like and listen to an important part of our identity?

Is it important to label and categorise music?

Can music itself have an identity?

How should we refer to the identities of historical composers and works today?

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.

To understand a little more about musical identities, a good place to begin is to look at our own identities. Through discussion, it should become clear that there are often no clear-cut answers to the questions on the left. And even when certain things may feel clear, these can change in the blink of an eye, and these changes are different for each individual.

We are a mixture of nationalities, genders, ages and origins, and our identities are not or should not be only defined by what our passports or birth certificates say, where our parents were born, where we happen to be living, or even our names.

How does this apply to music and sound?

This also applies to music and its creators. Through marketing material and program notes, we are often led to believe that the cultural, political, social or even personal identities in music are fixed and uniform. While it is sometimes helpful to know from when and where a work or its creator and/or performers are from, this information **does not tell the whole story**. This makes the study of music exciting and it is also why this is a **Voyage** and not a final destination. Throughout the material that follows, the aim is to pick up new and enriching pieces of information along the way – this informs the music we hear and create and leads to understanding more about who we are in the world.

The problem with much market-driven classical music programming today is that composers and works are often presented in very generic terms – along the lines of *there is something in our program here for everyone*. While this may apply to some events, this rhetoric forgets that liking or following a certain group or style of music is very often a type of niche activity. The original Punk or Rock fans dressed and behaved a certain way – signals and signs that they belonged to a sort of secret club. If the aim of that music was to appeal to mainstream tastes, then it wouldn't have been so innovative. Musical identities through history have always been about a certain degree of exclusivity and this brings with it a sense of community and belonging. If two people both love a certain style of music, then there's a good chance they'll get along well with each other!

As an experiment, we are going to set aside the **Scottish** subtitle associated with Mendelssohn's symphony and look instead at some of the different features of the work itself. And if you are not convinced about the limitations of labels and names, consider this: MacDonald is originally a Scottish name, but it would be ridiculous to try and argue that there is anything distinctly Scottish about a Chicken McNugget.

A line often practised by those critical of what they call wokeism, is that history can't be rewritten. Yet, with the study of music and its history, we are not time travellers and we cannot listen and analyse with anything other than our contemporary ears and brains. For this reason, it is acceptable to form fresh opinions and viewpoints about historical works and composers. This is one of the main reasons that the Voyage material looks at earlier works alongside recently-composed ones. It places creative context in the foreground, and from this vantage point we can become aware that musical identities are always shifting and evolving.

MIND WANDERING

Mendelssohn wandered among the ruins of an ancient chapel at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh, and was fascinated by the missing roof and that ivy and grass had taken over where the altar had once stood. This we know from a letter he wrote, but we can't possibly know exactly what he thought and felt that day, nor what other conversations and thoughts he had in the years between then and when the **Symphony No.3** was eventually written, revised, rehearsed and performed.

We're often told not to let our minds wander, to concentrate on a single task, and to limit distractions. However, brilliant ideas, original thoughts, and solutions to problems tend to arise when you least expect them and that often means when you are thinking about or doing something totally unrelated.

Anyone with experience in meditation or mindfulness will know that it takes practice to think of nothing, and that focussing the thoughts on a specific image or repeating phrase can often help. Try it with the first movement. Rather than being prompted by the usual descriptive words of dark, foreboding or Scottish, let the sound itself steer you in other directions and observe whatever random thoughts come and go...

MEDIA

Historically Informed Performance / AUDIO

Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century | Frans Brüggen (2013)

▶ [Tidal](#)

▶ [Spotify](#)

Recent modern orchestral performance / MUSICIANS

WDR Symphony Orchestra | Cristian Măcelaru (2021)

▶ [YouTube](#)

Follow along with the score / SCORE

London Symphony Orchestra | Claudio Abbado (1984)

▶ [YouTube](#)

The fusing of architecture and nature?

How might the ruins look underwater?

Felix imagines a future world where the wealthy and powerful countries don't take advantage of those less fortunate

If you wish, imagine the ruins of an old building as a starting point then allow the music to fill in some blanks – past, future, plausible and absurd

Mendelssohn recalls one of the many stories told by scientist, explorer and philosopher Alexander von Humboldt – a frequent guest at the family household



Felix's talented sister Fanny decides to ignore the wishes of others and become a full-time composer

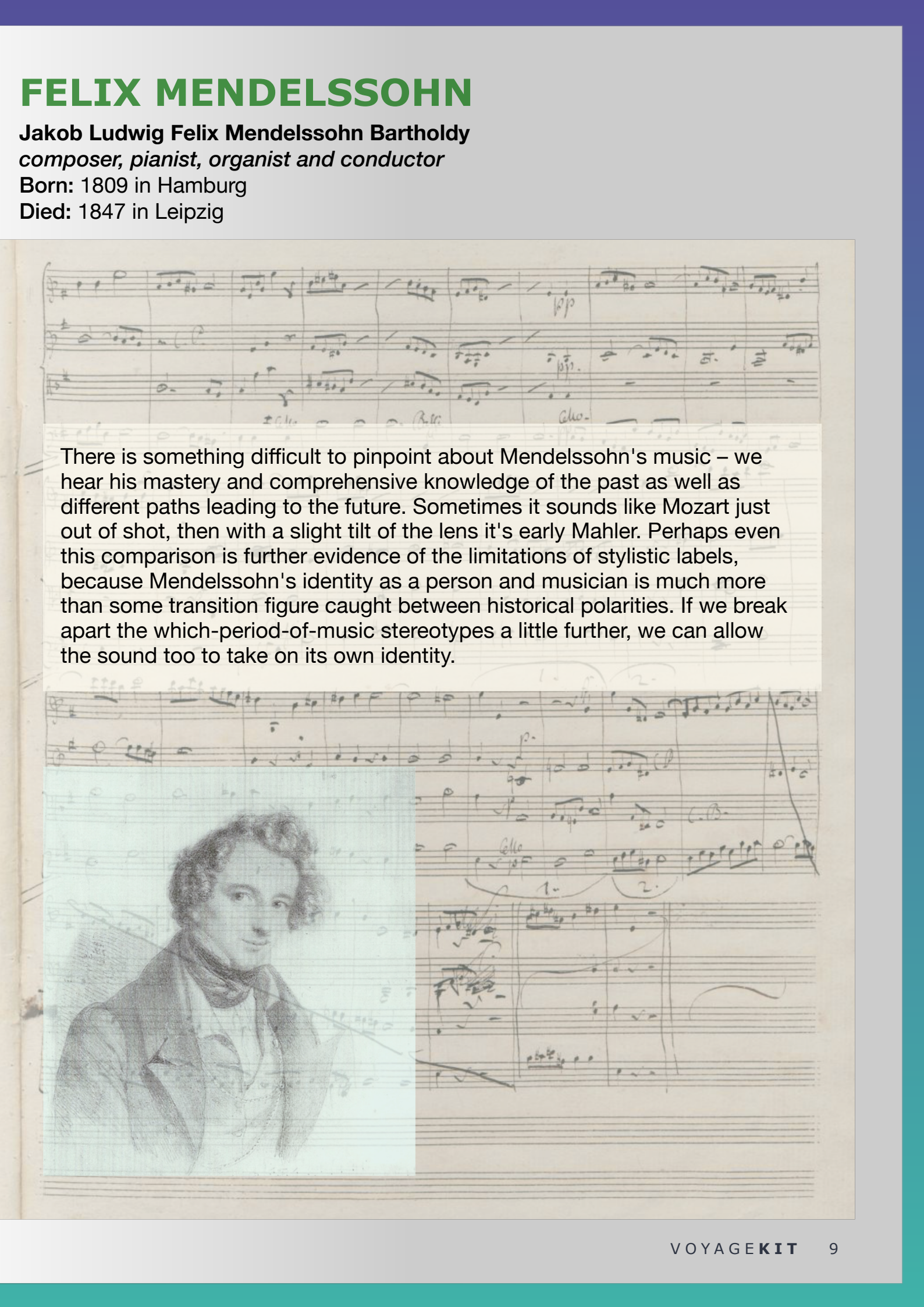
Humboldt explains some of the extraordinary things he learns listening to the people he meets around the world on his travels

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy
composer, pianist, organist and conductor

Born: 1809 in Hamburg

Died: 1847 in Leipzig

The background of the page is a large, detailed image of handwritten musical notation on aged paper. The notation consists of several staves with various notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'p' and 'f'. A semi-transparent rectangular box is overlaid on the lower-left portion of the page, containing a portrait of Felix Mendelssohn and a block of text. The portrait is a black and white engraving of a young man with curly hair, wearing a dark jacket and a white cravat. The text is in a clean, sans-serif font.

There is something difficult to pinpoint about Mendelssohn's music – we hear his mastery and comprehensive knowledge of the past as well as different paths leading to the future. Sometimes it sounds like Mozart just out of shot, then with a slight tilt of the lens it's early Mahler. Perhaps even this comparison is further evidence of the limitations of stylistic labels, because Mendelssohn's identity as a person and musician is much more than some transition figure caught between historical polarities. If we break apart the which-period-of-music stereotypes a little further, we can allow the sound too to take on its own identity.

PENTATONIC

Below are a few of the common pentatonic scales – notice that they are all a combination of tones and semitones (so-called hemitonic scales).

After playing and listening to the examples below, identify at least two pentatonic patterns in the second movement of Mendelssohn's symphony.

Which pentatonic patterns do you hear?

Which instruments play them?

What keys are they in or what notes do they start on?



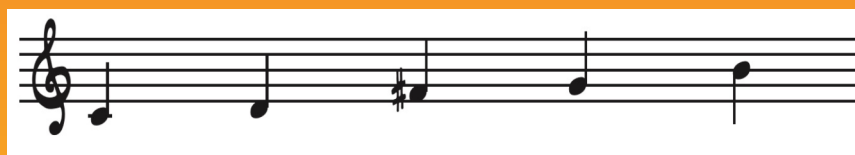
Major Pentatonic

Minor Pentatonic



Pelog

Hirajōshi



Firstly, [here's a link to download the score](#) of the symphony – it may be easier for some groups to find the pentatonic patterns by following the notation. The second movement begins on page 82 (PDF page 86).

Some instances to get you started:

Score Page	Instruments	Scale	Key
83	Clarinet	Major	F
84	Clarinet	Major	F
86	Flute / Oboe	Major	F
88–89	Horn / Violin I	Major	F
88–89	Bassoon / Cello / Bass	Major descending	F
90	Clarinet / Bassoon / Viola / Cello	Major	G
90	Clarinet / Bassoon / Viola / Cello	Minor	A
91	Clarinet / Bassoon / Viola / Cello	Pelog	B

MAJOR

The black keys on the **piano** are F# major pentatonic.

The major pentatonic can also be heard in the following Indian raga: **Bhoopali** (Hindustani), **Mohanam** (Carnatic), and **MullaitheemPaaNi** (Tamil). It also corresponds to the **gong** mode in Chinese music.

MINOR

A **guitar** is tuned with only notes from the E minor pentatonic.

The minor pentatonic can also be heard in the following Indian raga: **Dhani** (Hindustani), **Shuddha Dhanyasi** (Carnatic), and **Aambal** (Tamil). It also corresponds to the **yu** mode in Chinese music.

HIRAJŌSHI

This is one version of the Japanese **Hirajōshi** mode. The original names and notes vary from region to region and correspond to different **koto** string tunings.

PELOG

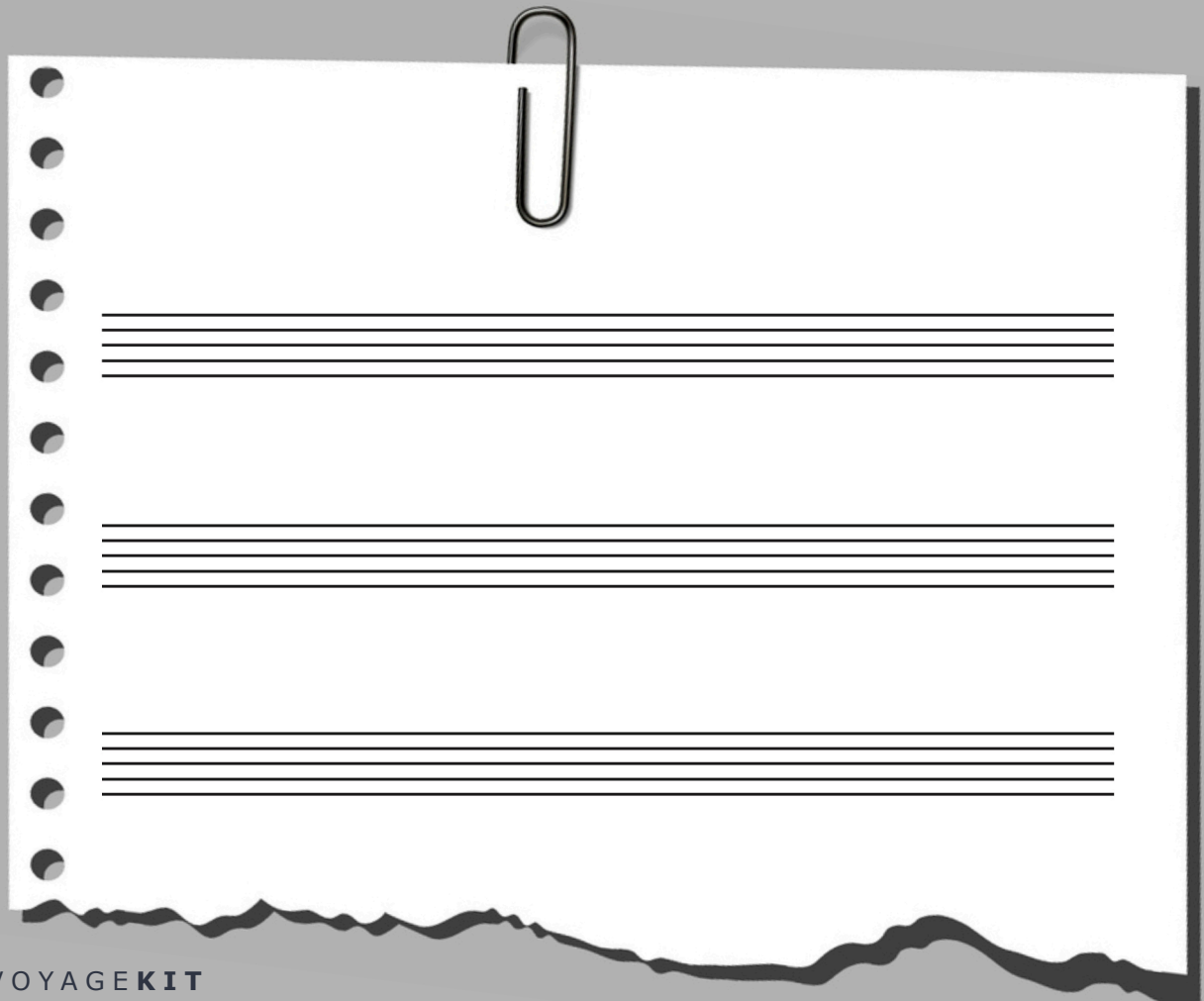
A Western notation approximation of one of the many different versions of the Javanese **pelog** – can be heard in **gamelan**.

ACTIVITY

PENTATONIC PLAY

The brilliant thing about composing and improvising with pentatonic scales is that it is relatively easy to find good-sounding patterns and repeat them either starting on different scale degrees or transposing them.

Spend no more than 10 minutes writing a short melodic sequence by choosing one of the pentatonic scales from above and experimenting with different combinations and orders of notes. If you feel some new notes are needed, keep the same scale but transpose it to a different starting note. Don't worry too much about notating the rhythms perfectly – look at this exercise as a sketch pad for melodic shapes. You could revisit it later as raw materials for a different project, or take it as a basis for improvising.



TEACHERS

Even when looking more closely at the harmonic and rhythmic elements of the symphony, identifying any of the musical material as distinctly Scottish is inconclusive. There are general claims that the snappy dotted rhythms of the second movement are typical of Scottish folk music, especially in combination with the pentatonic melodic shapes, although none of Mendelssohn's music here directly quotes or references existing tunes. What seems more likely is that Mendelssohn absorbed some of the rhythmic and harmonic fragments he may have heard on his travels, and later created something quite new with them. Today it could be argued that this was more culturally sensitive than many of his contemporaries who collected, copied or superficially paraphrased whatever they could get their hands on. Issues of cultural appropriation and the Eurocentric/colonialist worldview in music are currently being hotly debated in many education and performance institutions around the world. This topic is discussed in more detail in Voyage Kit #2 from 2022 – *Cultural Narratives*.

Mendelssohn was very astute to build melodic material with the pentatonic scale. Various five-note scales can be found all around the world and in many styles and cultures, and as building blocks these are certainly more universal than the major-scale architecture of mainstream European classical music. The early-twentieth century European educators knew this too, with Kodaly, Orff and Waldorf (aka Steiner) music learning for young people based on pentatonic patterns.

[Naima – John Coltrane](#)



[Woody Shaw's trumpet solo on Child's Dance](#)

[Ravel – Jeux d'eau](#)

THE POWER of the PENTATONIC

[Watch this clip](#) of Bobby McFerrin leading an audience to predict pentatonic patterns, and try the same exercise with the class.

Auld Lang Syne
Amazing Grace

[Sir Duke – Stevie Wonder](#)



[Short introduction to Indian Carnatic ragas and Western equivalents](#)

ENSEMBLE OFFSPRING

“

At the heart of Ensemble Offspring’s mission is an unwavering commitment to the creation and dissemination of living new music. Since forming in 1995, they have commissioned and premiered over 350 new works, solidifying their position as the foremost champions of contemporary music in Australia. In particular, they actively promote underrepresented voices including female-identifying, First Nations, and emerging artists.

”

→ [Read more](#) about the ensemble and its members

IMAGE CREDIT Keith Sanders



Brenda Gifford

Bardju (Footprints) (2017)

alto flute, bass clarinet, vibraphone, cello

[Hear *Bardju*](#)



“

Bardju represents our collective journey and tells us that we should tread lightly on Mother Earth; and it also represents my personal journey as a Yui woman. Through this piece, I recalled my memories of country. My music grounds me in, and gives voice to, my culture. I do not create in a vacuum, and my culture is at the core of my creativity.

”

– Brenda Gifford ([read more](#))

Listening to *Bardju* is an excellent introduction to not only Brenda Gifford's compositional voice, but also the different identities of the members of Ensemble Offspring.

Note how the instrumentation in combination with the interpretation so successfully portrays the different layers of identity – personal, cultural, historical and collective paths extending in multiple directions.

INSTRUMENTATION (composer)

The four instruments each have their particular voice and tonal identity, but where it gets really interesting is when the registers and timbres overlap and merge creating moments of shared awareness.

INTERPRETATION (players)

The score notation (see following pages) is a starting point. This is a theme discussed in other Voyage kits (Kit #2 / 2023 – *Cultural Narratives*), and should always be remembered when performing, writing and/or listening to music. A notated idea is played with and moved around as the style and music suggests, and this is something that can only happen when people communicate and react to one another. Listen in particular to the rhythmic freedoms taken with the placement of the low bass clarinet tones, and how this spirit naturally evolves into an improvised solo. In different performances of this piece, the players sometimes make changes to the basic form – e.g., when and how many times different sections are played. This is not so different from the jazz improvisors' approach of the leadsheet being a work's scaffold rather than blueprint.

Bardju

(Footprints)

Composed by Brenda Gifford

A

Alto Flute

Bass Clarinet in Bb

Vibraphone

A

Violoncello

pizz.

mf

5

A. Fl.

B. Cl.

Vib.

Vc.

f

6

6

3

bend

6

9

A. Fl.

B. Cl.

Vib.

Vc.

13

A. Fl. *f* 6 6

B. Cl. ϕ $b\alpha$

Vib.

Vc.

15

A. Fl. 3 bend 6

B. Cl. ϕ $b\alpha$

Vib. *mf*

Vc.

B 18

A. Fl. *ff* *f* 3 3

B. Cl. *f*

Vib. *f* arco. 3 3

Vc.

BIRDS ACTIVITY

Go out and listen to and/or record some bird sounds.

Learn them by copying them with your voice, whistling or playing on an instrument. The end result can be something inspired by birdsong rather than an exact replica.

Come back inside and form groups of three or four and communicate with one another with your learnt sounds. See where it leads you. These are the ingredients of music making – listen, imitate, interact, modify. You choose when and what.

Combine the smaller groups to form a larger one. As different creatures and identities come into focus, others might recede and morph into the sounds and movements of the stars, seasons, footprints, clouds and light.

Along with the birds themselves, these are the things that transcend our modern and arbitrary political borders. And despite being as old as life itself, when released into the air as sound vibrations they are as fresh, original, and as contemporary as ever.

Finally, in the words of Pippi Longstocking:

*I've never tried this particular thing before,
so I'm definitely going to be able to manage it.*

Nardi Simpson

Of Stars and Birds (2020)

flute, clarinet, vibraphone

Nardi Simpson writes:

Of Stars and Birds was written after an invitation to contribute to Ensemble Offspring's birdsong collection. As a new composer in the earliest development stages of my craft, I worried how my work would stand alongside the pieces of experienced, accomplished composers who had already contributed to this series. As an Aboriginal musician with limited music theory, I also worried if I could create something of a standard suitable for the ensemble and its project partners. In times like this I look to culture to provide guidance. I quickly realised Yuwaalaraay knowledge, connection and relationship to birds equalled the complexity and detail of advanced musical theory, compositional practice and creative conception. So I worked hard to imbue this piece with the things I know well, cultural concepts and knowledge, enabling a transformation away from a commissioned composition and into an extension of my own lived and practiced cultural experience.

Of Stars and Birds developed then from a significant Yuwaalaraay story ending in the creation of the southern cross but traversing the enormity of land, lore, death and rebirth. Birds weave this story into our dreaming cosmos, the conventional limitations of earth, sky, death, day, life and night dissolving and creating its own universe of existence- a bit like my compositional craft, a mixture of traditions and teachings, an extension of the storytelling and songmaking of Australia's First People's and the explorations and expressions of a new composer at the beginning of an exciting musical journey.

TEACHERS

← *in preparation for the activity, generate a discussion and gather reactions and impressions of the work*



[Video of performance](#)

Many composers over the years have been occupied with the task of transcribing and/or translating birdsong into music. One of the difficulties can be deciding if and how to notate these often complex sounds. In a similar way to the well-intentioned collecting of melodies and rhythms from around the world by Western musicians and scholars, a significant part of the original meaning, context and relevance can go missing in the process. This is especially the case when the material stems from an aural tradition and/or is improvised.

For that reason, the activity on the left provides practice in improvising, learning by ear, reacting, and converting feelings and impressions into sound. Encourage the students to take inspiration from Nardi Simpson drawing on her own cultural experiences – not necessarily as autobiographical statement but personal and unique musical identity.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

① DESCRIBE

Choose one piece of music or movement from this Voyage program (refer to page 2) and write 150 words to introduce it to someone who has never heard it before.

Avoid making this a biography of the composer – we are not looking for a Wikipedia entry, but an accessible listening guide.

Your words should lead the listener by the hand so that they can gain some extra insights into the music. Don't necessarily describe what happens chronologically, but instead find an imaginative and personal way to set the scene.

Are there processes and patterns to listen out for? How do the the players interact or communicate?

Include information about birthplace, gender and age only when this provides essential information about a work's cultural, political, social, personal or musical identity. Remember that sound is sound – and like taste and smell – its meaning cannot be reduced to a thumbnail of dates and place names and especially when these become pigeonholes.

2 WHO AM I?

We often have trouble knowing who we are – our place in the world and how others see us. This can lead to doubt and insecurity, and it's hard to create art and music when you have doubts and worries circling and amplifying themselves in your brain. This activity can help us recognise that even though these are normal human patterns, they nevertheless often become blown out of proportion.

Attach an A4 piece of card or thick paper to each person's back with masking tape. Move around slowly in a group, and anonymously write a couple of positive words on each person's sign describing what they do best, or something unique or particularly wonderful about them. In this exercise age, nationality, height, gender, skin colour, religion, football team and any other arbitrary category are not relevant.

When finished, take off the signs, read them calmly to yourselves and keep them somewhere safe so you can refer to them if things get rough.

SYMPHONIE

Nº 3.

componirt und

Ihrer Majestät

der Königin **VICTORIA** von England

zugeeignet

von

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-
BARTHOLDY.

Die einzelnen Sätze dieser Symphonie müssen gleich auf einander
und nicht durch die sonst gewöhnlichen längeren Unterbrechungen vo
ander getrennt werden.

The individual movements of this symphony should
immediately follow on from one another, taking care to
avoid the otherwise conventionally long interruptions.

3 CONCEPT ALBUM

At the bottom of the previous page are Mendelssohn's instructions copied and translated from the opening pages of the score to Symphony No.3. This is notable because he clearly intended the work to exist as a self-contained statement. What's doubly interesting, is that contemporary concert programmers and performers are bringing this idea back onto the stage. In this case, the intention is more than merely eliminating the applause and coughing between movements, to move in the direction of a carefully-curated and thematically-structured program.

A recent concert from the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg illustrates this:

[»Maria Mater Meretrix«](#)

Ensemble Resonanz

Anna Prohaska | soprano

Patricia Kopatchinskaja | violin and musical direction

A musical mosaic created with works by composers ranging from Hildegard von Bingen to Antonio Caldara, and Joseph Haydn to György Kurtág: Mary in the minds of people, in fragments and rosaries, in satire, in syntax.

The concert was extraordinary and surprisingly unified – enhanced by transitions where musicians moved to different areas of the hall and stage, creating gentle acoustic crossfades between works and centuries.

In your streaming platform of choice, locate as many of the works and movements from this Voyage of Musical Discovery (refer to page 2) as you can. Imagine that the orchestra and guest ensemble are on stage together, and design a new concert format that features each piece and movement, but carefully placed in an order that you decide. You may add one or two extra works of your choosing, provided they could theoretically be performed by one or other of the groups or performers on stage.

Devise a theme, think about transitions, crossfades and key, tempo and texture similarities/contrasts between the works. Try out the order by making a playlist, and share it by providing a brief written or spoken introduction explaining your rationale and choices.

Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* is one of the great concept albums of all time – it is worth listening to from start to finish with headphones and no interruptions. And no shuffle play!

VOYAGE of MUSICAL DISCOVERY

RACHAEL BEESLEY & NICOLE VAN BRUGGEN CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

DESIGN & INNOVATION

MARCH 2023

CULTURAL NARRATIVES

JUNE 2023

www.arco.org.au/voyage

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