EDUCATION KIT

VOYAGE of MUSICAL DISCOVERY

RACHAEL BEESLEY & NICOLE VAN BRUGGEN CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

NUMBER	03	TOPIC	MUSICAL IDENTITIES
DATE		JULY 2023	QLD



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LIVE



Monday 31 July, 11.30am-1.00pm

St Peters Lutheran College **Performing Arts Centre** Harts Road, Indooroopilly

Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra

Conductor | Rachael Beesley

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



Nicole MURPHY Invocations (2021) clarinet, piano, violin, viola & violoncello

Exchange (2019) clarinet & piano

Spinning Top (2016) violin, violoncello & piano

Pearl (2021) violin, violoncello & piano



for booking information

CONTENTS

GUIDE FOR TEACHERS	04
GUIDED DISCUSSION	06
MIND & MENDELSSOHN	08
PENTATONIC TASK	10
PENTATONIC PLAY	12
MEANING TASK / SPINNING TOP	14
INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY / EXCHANGE	16
MULTIPLE IDENTITIES	18

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

MUSICAL IDENTITIES

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

Nicole MURPHY

Exchange (2019) clarinet & piano

Spinning Top (2016) violin, violoncello & piano

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

QLD

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.

This program is closely aligned with the QCAA secondary school music curriculum and is ideal for Senior Music and Music Extension students in preparation for internal assessments and external exams, and is also appropriate for younger music elective students.

Specific curriculum areas covered:

Overall Syllabus Objectives - Communicating Meaning

When students compose and perform music, they express music ideas through the purposeful manipulation of music elements to communicate meaning. Audiences interpret intent and meaning through this musical communication.

Unit 2: Identities

In Unit 2, students make and respond to music that expresses cultural, political and social identities in both local and global contexts. Through the journey of critically considering how music can be used as a powerful form of expression, students explore their own musical identity.

In **Music Extension (Composition)**, the kit addresses **Key Ideas**: 1. Initiate best practice (**Unit 3 Explore**), 2. Consolidate best practice (**Unit 3 Explore**), and 3. Independent best practice (**Unit 4 Emerge**).

Across multiple year levels, the following syllabus objectives are covered: 1. apply literacy skills, 2. evaluate music and ideas about music, 3. examine music and ideas about music, 4. express meaning, emotion or ideas about music, 5. apply compositional devices, 6. manipulate music elements and concepts, 7. resolve music ideas.

Supports specific music elements and concepts of duration, expressive devices, pitch, structure, texture, timbre and the development of the following **21st-century skills** as identified in the Music Extension syllabus:

- · critical thinking
- · creative thinking
- communication
- collaboration and teamwork
- personal and social skills
- information & communication technologies (ICT) skills

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?

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.

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.

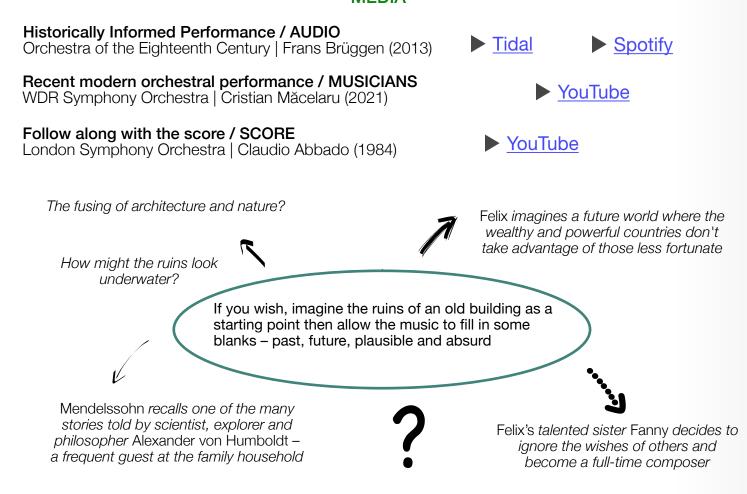
MIND WANDERING

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...







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



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.





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?







TEACHERS

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	А	
91	Clarinet / Bassoon / Viola / Cello	Pelog	В	

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

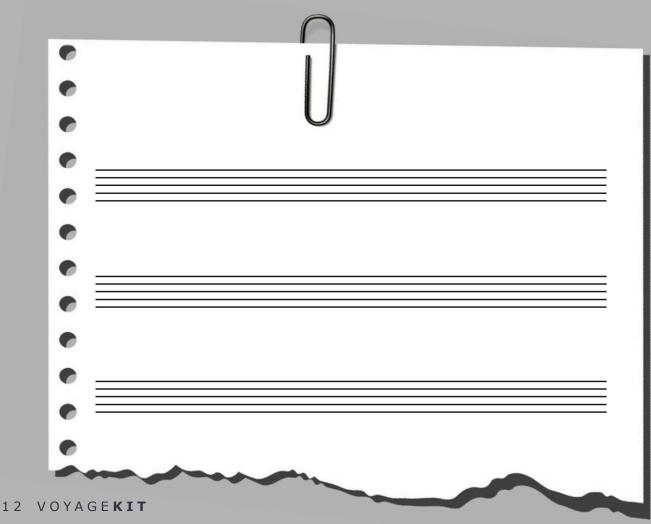
A Western notation approximation of one of the many different versions of the Javanese pelog - can be heard in gamelan.

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





Listen to the following work without reading any background information:

▶ Tidal

► Spotify

What are your spontaneous reactions?

Bearing in mind that music doesn't have to mean anything specific, what could it be representing or suggesting?

How does it make you feel?

Next, read the <u>composer's program notes</u>, and <u>discuss how this information alters your impression of the work.</u>

Scrolling further down, what are your thoughts on the notation in the score? How is the cyclic repetition and continuous rhythmic activity communicated visually to the musicians?

Would you classify this piece as having a cultural, political, social or personal identity? Or a combination of these?

Queensland-based composer **Nicole Murphy** holds a PhD from the University of Queensland (2017), and both a Master of Music and Bachelor of Music from the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University. Her works have achieved international recognition including commissions by the Royal Academy of Dance (London), Experiments in Opera/Symphony Space (New York), Wild Rumpus (San Francisco), Chamber Sounds (Singapore), and the Definiens Project (Los Angeles), as well as in Australia by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, Musica Viva Australia, and Ensemble Offspring. Murphy's *Spinning Top* is part of a 2019 CD release by ABC Classics, *Women of Note: A Century of Australian Composers*.

→ visit Nicole's website



SPINNING TOP

This task is designed to gauge if and to what extent music explains or describes a specific situation compared to its ability to suggest things. Have the students listen to the work without providing any extra information – if it's not too late, don't even tell them the title!

Spinning Top is an example of how a musical identity can be a fascinating mixture of influences and factors. Its title only hints at the many layers of possible reference – from the visual to the indirect, hidden and implied. Taking inspiration from the sculpture, which in turn is based on part of a never-completed cathedral is just the beginning. The music plays with the idea of a top spinning and teetering for an indeterminate length of time, and it is also possible to imagine the skewing of visual ratios and scale – a child's toy amongst a concrete forest of skyscrapers.

The arpeggiated semiquaver motifs in the piano part as well as the many instances of repeated pairs of short notes on the same pitches dovetailing through the parts are rhythmic devices to signify repetition and movement. However, the thing that this music does so well is that it doesn't need to spell out and describe its meaning in every bar or rhythm or note. The overall scenario or even just the title is already enough to set a whole chain of maybes and what-ifs in motion – and these can change with repeated hearings.

One listener may be completely swept along by the energy and interactions of the sounds alone while another might consider how our relationship to what constitutes an important or worthy public building or artwork has changed over the past hundred years. In this sense, we could argue that depending upon a listener's own thoughts and reactions, this music has a mixture of cultural, political, social or personal identities.

And every single response is legitimate – remember that music implies, evokes and suggests.



Spinning Top is inspired by Jarrad Kennedy's sculpture of the same name, located at the junction of Turbot, Wickham and Boundary streets in Brisbane. Kennedy's artwork marks the site of the unrealised Holy Name Cathedral, designed by Archbishop James Duhig in the 1920s. The artwork is a scale-model of the dome of the unfinished cathedral that rests on its tip in the midst of the city high rises, like a spinning top that has come to rest. The artwork is reflected in the music through perpetual rhythmic motion and the cyclic nature of repetition.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ACTIVITY

This activity plays with the idea of sounds taking on their own identities and appearing to move and change of their own accord.

Form a loose circle in the middle of the room with all participants standing – desks, chairs, backpacks, water bottles and phones should all be out of the way.

As a group, your job is to represent the sounds coming from a 1920's factory – clunks, clangs, pulleys, creaking wooden beams, steam, chains, oil and grit..

- 1. One person begins by making a single repeating sound from the factory. Going around the circle in one direction, new sounds are progressively added until everyone is involved.
- 2. At midnight the factory goes into night mode the machines keep moving, but only at the bare minimum. On cue, these newer softer and simpler sounds gradually begin they are based on the daytime sounds but each component must be switched over by hand so it takes a little bit of time until all have changed.
- **3.** Occasionally the mayor pays a visit and announces that they need to step up production. Similarly, the night sounds have to be switched back to day, then these need to be revved up into overdrive. They are still variations of the original sound but more active louder, higher or faster?

That is all a flashback, and the old factory today is a Berlin nightclub. The only thing is that the line to get in is really long, and moves very slowly. Every so often a door opens somewhere and the sounds from inside bounce out onto the street for a few seconds.

4. Without cues or pre-planning, make the sounds as a group of this entire scenario – each person deciding for themselves when to switch between imagined factory noises and in what mode, bits of overheard conversation amongst the people waiting to get in, muffled fragments of beats, traffic, or the distant sounds of people dancing and having fun...

Rearrange the circle, and try this last section a few more times. Observe how from a distance each version tends to sound similar, even when up-close the individual components vary and/or are placed at different spots in the mix. This type of guided improvisation has an autonomous energy that makes the results hard to predict – not unlike the crisscrossing of data in a network, leaves falling from trees, or clouds that morph into animals or objects...

EXCHANGE



After being awarded the Layton Emerging Composer Fellowship in 2018, Nicole Murphy had the opportunity to meet Emeritus Professor Roger Layton, supporter of the Fellowship and academic of the UNSW Business School from 1967. She subsequently began reading Professor Layton's research in marketing to gain a better sense of his background and life's work. She was surprised by the language used to describe marketing systems – many of the descriptions could have been taken directly from a review of a piece of music.

In conceiving the work, Murphy drew inspiration from what Layton refers to as the *emergent* pattern in marketing systems, and evident in the lively opening section of the piece. Layton describes these systems as "inherently dynamic, as participants respond to changing environments, perceiving external or internal catalysts that lead to action" and "ever-changing whirlpools [...] bubbling with the promise of more permanent patterns and structures." The final section takes its inspiration from *autarchy*, a term referring to economic independence or self-sufficiency, something which "often persists on the edges or fringes of more formal systems." This section retains fragments of the original motivic line, but now underpinned by the regularity of a repeated middle C on the piano, as if the pulse of stability safely carries the work out of earshot.

The study of the theoretical or technical aspects of music can often be so specialised and detailed, that we lose sight of the fact that many of the processes in composition – e.g., motivic development, form, interaction and spontaneity – can be observed in other areas of life. These can include – as explained in the above description of *Exchange* – things that we wouldn't immediately think of as being artistic or creative. This is good news, because identities travel in both directions:

- music inspired by and built from real-life processes
- things gained and learnt making music flow back into our wider world

The notion of music moving autonomously is also fascinating, and it is especially valuable to keep in mind when composing or improvising that not every aspect of sound can or should be controlled or notated. Further, this is an incentive to find different ways of representing sound that aren't rigidly fixed in time or space.

Inspired in part by the multiple angles of Cubist art, composer Edgard Varése experimented with ways to move sound beyond the horizontal and vertical architecture of rhythms and chords. He made it zigzag through a performance space with loudspeakers and offstage musicians, where it traveled not only into the inner regions of the imagination but upwards to the planets and stars.

Unexpected things happen very often in performances, for example when an actor forgets an important line it can be exciting to witness how a group reacts and keeps the action moving. And most importantly, creating music with an element of unpredictability and risk is a counterbalance to social media monoculture and conformity dressed up as empowerment.

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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.



Die einzelnen Sätze dieser Symphonie mussen gleich auf einander und nicht durch die sonst gewöhnlichen längeren Unterbrechungen von 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!

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DESIGN & INNOVATION

MARCH 2023

CULTURAL NARRATIVES

JUNE 2023

www.arco.org.au/voyage



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