# A VOYAGE OF MUSICAL DISCOVERY

## AUSTRALIAN ROMANTIC & CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA

RICHARD GILL AO | FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## Education Kit #2 2020
## VOICES & INSTRUMENTS

**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 **Tuesday 28 April 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* #2 – **Voices & Instruments** – shines the spotlight on women composers from the past and present. The Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra's chamber musicians and Sydney Chamber Choir introduce the interplay of instruments and voices to discover converging musical roles and personalities.

**Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra** arco.org.au

LOUISE FARRENC (1804–75) Nonet in E-flat major Op.38 (1849) – an embodiment of a style and level of accomplishment that confirms Farrenc as a significant compositional voice, despite being neither widely performed nor well known today.

**Sydney Chamber Choir** sydneychamberchoir.org

CLARE MACLEAN (1958–) *A West Irish Ballad* (1988) – a contrapuntal modal setting of an anonymous Irish love poem.

ELLA MACENS (1991–) *Stāvi Stīvi, Ozoliņ* (2017) – based on a traditional Latvian folk text depicting a storm threatening to break the boughs of an oak tree.

Voyage of Musical Discovery
booking information

word

polyphony   individual   interplay

identity

**contrast**   *harmony*

vocalize   **voice**

**articulate**   **instrument**   reveal

*speak*

*ensemble*   sustain   *text*

blend   **express**

linear   orchestration

## Voices & Instruments

By studying and and working through musical examples from three different composers spanning over a century and a half, a number of important compositional techniques can be revealed. An instrument in an ensemble may imitate a voice – its way of joining notes, range or sonority. A voice in choral music may imitate an instrument – its techniques, timbre or phrasing. Musical voices move independently and express opinions, whether vocalised or not. And they come together to form homogenous and unified textures. Different voices and instruments can be skilfully paired to forge new orchestrational colours, and the voice of a composer too can sometimes fail to be as audible as it ought to be. Understanding and replicating techniques such as these will add depth and maturity to your listening, singing, playing and composing.
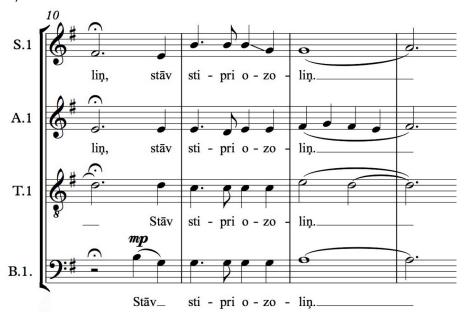
# 1. Individual Lines

Think for a moment about a visual image. There may be one or more important objects or people in the foreground that are centred and prominently lit, and these could be supported or contrasted by what is in the background. These distinctions also occur in music – and similar to a moving image – roles and perspectives alter and swap over the span of a work.

Two of the most common terms governing the behaviour and independence of musical lines are homophony (literally: same sounds) and polyphony (literally: many sounds).

**Homophonic** music is most commonly melody-dominated – for example, an upper part has a clearly identifiable melodic line and the remaining parts provide harmonic support in rhythmic unison.

*Stāvi Stīvi, Ozoliņ*



**Polyphonic** music consists of multiple independently-moving melodic and/or rhythmic lines. A Bach fugue is one of the most common examples of this, but there are many others including the following:
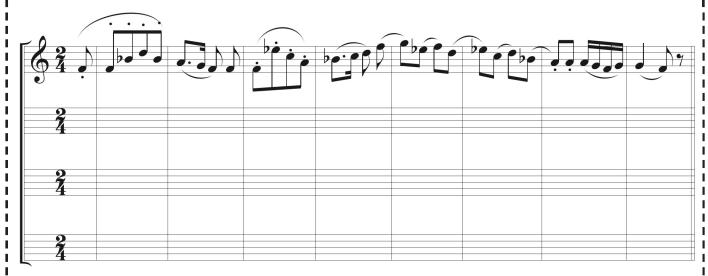
*A West Irish Ballad*



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## ─●  Creating Linearity

When composing or arranging in a homophonic style – or harmonising a melody – a helpful
method to try is the linear approach. This was a technique pioneered by composer Duke Ellington,
and continued by composers such as Oliver Nelson, Gil Evans, Clare Fischer and Maria Schneider.
Rather than worrying whether the particular chord tones are always accurately distributed
vertically in the ensemble, write each part to be melodic. The idea is that a player or singer will
always approach and play a melody in a musically expressive way. When everyone does this
together, accidental vertical clashes or harmonic ambiguities can make the overall result more
interesting rather than wrong sounding.

Set the following melody from the Farrenc Nonet in diatonic homophony as you would normally
do. Harmonise the melody in three accompanying parts – e.g., SATB, string quartet, or any other
group of four instruments.
• Decide what key it is in, how frequently the chords should change, and what chords to use
• Distribute the chord tones amongst the accompanying parts, keeping each within a singable
range



Now, take each individual part and play or sing it through on its own. Your job is to turn it into an
interesting melody by changing the notes and intervals. It takes practice, but like Farrenc's melody,
you want to aim for a mixture of upward and downward movement, some repeated motifs, large
and small jumps, as well as a few harmonic surprises. Transform your parts from static lines into
something fun to play. Ignore the overall key and chords you chose from before.

Do this to each of the parts independently. Put it all together again, and see how it sounds. Trust
your ears, and adjust anything that doesn't feel quite right – including the original melody!

The following book looks at this process in detail, and includes many examples and exercises. The
principles of linear composition can of course be applied and extended beyond a jazz idiom.

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

# 2. Words to Music

Words can provide the composer with all sorts of ideas for writing melodically – whether setting text to music, or translating the built-in rhythms and natural accents of speech into instrumental lines. The melodic choices – when skilfully done – can suggest or evoke meanings and moods that support or even reach beneath the surface of a text.

Consider the following examples, and propose some theories as to why the composer has chosen to write these melodies with the particular texts.

*Stāvi Stīvi, Ozoliņ*



*Lie-la  vē-tra____  lie-lī-jās,*  *o - zo - lam____  za-rus lauzt.*

*A big storm boastfully threatens*  *to break the boughs of the oak tree.*



*Stāv  stī - vi o-zo - liņ,  sti - pri o-zo - liņ,*

*Stand firm, stand strong, oak tree!*

*A West Irish Ballad*



*It was  late last night the dog was speaking of  you;*



*My heart is  as  black,*

*heart.  black*

*My heart is  as  black,*

## ━━● Setting Text

Go back to the collection of words at the top of page 2. Choose one and look it up in a thesaurus, then select any five or six of the synonyms you like the sound of. Australian composer Don Banks (1923–80) did a similar thing to create the text for *Settings from Roget* (1966), composed for jazz vocalist Cleo Laine (from notes in the Don Banks Archive, National Library of Australia).

Add a few joining words – e.g., I, you, is, at, of, a, the, to, from, means, this etc. – to make a sentence or two. It doesn't have to make complete sense.

Before deciding on notes or rhythms, read your sentences out loud at least six times in a row, or until you can recite them off by heart.

Pay attention to the natural rhythms of the words, the pauses and emphases, variations of pitch in the spoken voice, and what the mouth, lips, tongue and throat are doing to produce the sounds.

Identify any patterns, rhymes or similar sounding words. What are the most important words?

What does it – or could it – mean? Is a mood or atmosphere implied by any specific word or combination of words?

Translate the text into a singable phrase – make sure it falls comfortably within your vocal range. Replicate the spoken rhythms as accurately as you can, but make sure they aren't too complicated to read. As expressive enhancements, add articulations, slurs and dynamics.

# 3. Layers

A strong and well-constructed melody can withstand alteration and modification. And – in a similar way to the gradual but sometimes unpredictable actions of a character in a TV series – this makes a work interesting and keeps a listener wondering what might happen next. There are many different compositional techniques for changing a single melodic line, especially when taking avail of multiple instrumental or vocal parts.

## Unison and Doubling



Having many voices sing a melody together does not necessarily make it louder, but gives it more weight and creates a thicker and richer texture, as in this example from *A West Irish Ballad*.

## Distribute

[Farrenc audio excerpt](#)

In this excerpt from the first movement, Farrenc shares related motifs around different voices in the ensemble. Listen to approx. 30 seconds to identify which of the nine instruments have melodic material, and and how it is distributed.

## Heterophony

The technique of combining different versions of a single melodic line simultaneously across multiple parts, occurs often in the music of Stravinsky, Messiaen, Britten and Boulez.
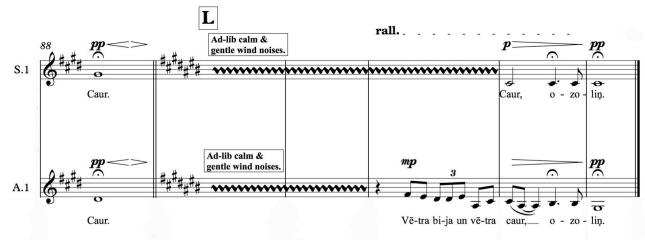


The above example from *A West Irish Ballad* does this in a way that the upper part almost sounds like an echo, or shadow of the melody.

## Distort & Extend

A further method of adding texture to a melody is to add non-conventional sounds. These can include sound effects, electronics, or extended techniques and are often notated in aleatoric boxes or improvised. In each situation, a performer is given a suggestion as to which sounds to include, but has freedom as to which exact rhythms, notes, durations and phrases they play. When a number of singers or players do this at the same time, the resulting texture can be extremely effective.



*(The wind is coming)*

Try out the ad-lib and aleatoric sections from *Stāvi Stīvi, Ozoliņ* as a group – listen to the overall effect of many small autonomous sound objects moving in their own ways.

How do the textures change if more – or fewer – voices take part?
What effect do the open sections have on the fully-notated phrases?

## Hauptstimme & Nebenstimme

In dense or multi-layered textures, it is sometimes necessary to indicate which part has the main melody or which should be most prominent. The above terms were devised by Arnold Schoenberg of the Second Viennese School, and along with special brackets above the staves in the score, they indicate the primary and secondary voices respectively in ensemble writing.
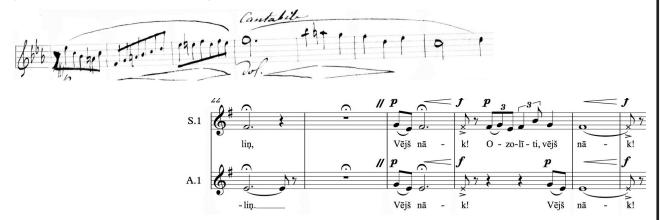


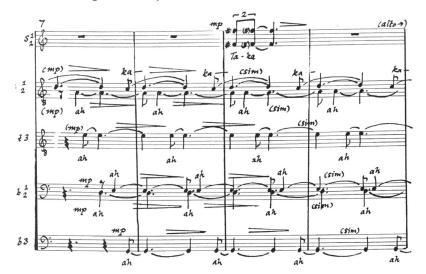Another way is to write *lead* above the part, or *melody* as Macens does in the above example.

Schoenberg also made an annotation in the margin of one of his scores, stating that the human voice is always of primary importance if it is present in a work. Do you agree?
(from Erich Leinsdorf, *The Composer's Advocate: A Radical Orthodoxy for Musicians.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, 179.)

# 4. Sustainability

One of the defining qualities of the voice is its natural ability to sustain. In lessons, instrumentalists are frequently reminded to *play as if singing*... Farrenc makes no doubt about this in the following passage for the violin, even adding *cantabile* above the sustained line.





The reverse also occurs when voices temporarily occupy an instrumental role. In the above right example from *Stāvi Stīvi, Ozoliņ*, ending the soft sustained chords with an accented k gives the impression of a note being chopped of, perhaps like the distant snap of a snare drum or even the soft click of a digital edit point.
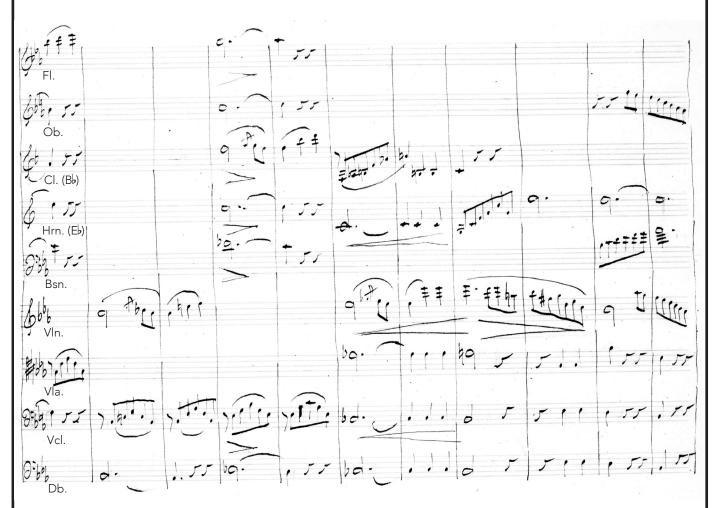


The soprano entry on the left from *A West Irish Ballad* has an instrumental quality too. The Ta-ka imitates the articulation of trumpets, reinforced by the momentary surprise of hearing an F♯ over the top of the offset and sustained quintal harmony of the other voices.

At the very beginning of *Stāvi Stīvi, Ozoliņ*, the composer combines both of the above the techniques – the voices are imitating the articulations of instruments (Dm dm and Ah–) – perhaps the chiming of distant bells.

There is an inherent length to each note on an instrument or voice, and this will vary depending upon range, dynamic, context and individual. One of the techniques that composers adopt to extend the natural sustain of an instrument is to arpeggiate, or outline the chord tones.

Note when listening to the following short passage from the first movement of the Farrenc to how the arpeggiated quavers in the different instruments activate and extend the music. In this recording, each instrument and player treats their passage in a slightly different way, and this brings the music to life.



[Farrenc audio excerpt](#)

How much are these differences due to the particular acoustic and technical qualities of the instruments themselves?
And how might these vary between period instruments and modern instruments?

When a composer develops a thorough knowledge of sustain, a world of new orchestrational possibilities open up. Rather than distributing notes and passages based on instrument family, range or volume – sustain can act as the primary criteria for deciding who plays and in what combinations. This moves a composition away from restricting instruments to traditional roles, so that fresh and unusual sound colours can be created and highlighted. This topic will be explored in more detail in **Voyage of Musical Discovery 3 – Texture & Timbre** in August.

**Final Thoughts**

There may be many reasons to account for why Louise Farrenc has not received widespread recognition as a composer. Gender politics have most certainly played a role, and despite gradual improvements to the gender imbalance, there is still work to be done to increase the opportunities for and cultural visibility of women composers. American composer Laura Karpman (1959–) believes that music itself "can serve as a vehicle for social change," and that "as with all fields, women must be at the top in order for younger people to see that this career path is even a vague possibility." (from Kelly, J. and Karpman, L. (2013). 'Laura Karpman' in: J. Kelly, *Conversations with Composers in the United States*. Boston: University of Illinois Press, 322–341.)

The compositional fluency demonstrated by the three composers discussed above should serve as a reminder that women composers must no longer be invisibile. Clare Maclean and Ella Macens tackle this issue head-on with their music. Their sophisticated techniques and originality of style ensure that each and every voice – from poet, translator, chorister and especially composer – is given the attention and audibility it deserves.

## Anticipated Learning Outcomes

Introduction of Voices & Instruments in terms of independent movement, multiple layers, orchestration, and imitating one another

Definition of homophony and polyphony with score examples

Linear compostion as concept through arranging exercise and reference text

Techniques, approaches and exercises for setting words to music

Thesaurus exercise from Don Banks as text source

Techniques for modifying melodies across multiple parts including unison and doubling, distributing and dovetailing, heterophony, and extension through aleatoric boxes and improvisation

Definition of Second Viennese School terms of *Haupstimme* and *Nebenstimme*

Introduction to concepts of orchestration following natural ability to sustain as guiding criteria

Multiple examples of instruments imitating voices, and voices imitating instruments

Arpeggiation as technique for extending a static harmony

Attention drawn to individual qualities of instruments and players, including differences between period and modern instruments and interpretation

Compostion exercise aligning all elements studied

Raising awareness of gender imbalance in composition, and suggestion that music itself can contribute to social change

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Related material is contained in further 2020 *Voyage of Musical Discovery* presentations and accompanying Education Kits:

#1 MOTIVIC DEVELOPMENT | March
**Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra**
ANTON EBERL Symphony in E-flat major Op.33 (1803)
**Nick Russoniello**
NICK RUSSONIELLO Suite for Saxophones and Loop Station (2019–20)

#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 link
https://www.cityrecitalhall.com/whats-on/events/voyage-of-musical-discovery-2-voices-instruments/

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

Sydney Chamber Choir | https://www.sydneychamberchoir.org

Louise Farrenc biogrpahy
https://www.notablebiographies.com/supp/Supplement-Ca-Fi/Farrenc-Louise.html

Clare Maclean profile at Australian Music Centre
https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/artist/maclean-clare

Ella Macens website biogrpahy
http://www.ellamacens.com/bio

Page 7
Farrenc audio (from 5:57)
https://youtu.be/v4p1q0mNjoo?t=357

Page 11
Farrenc audio (from 1:59)
https://youtu.be/v4p1q0mNjoo?t=119

Page 13
Voyage information | http://www.arco.org.au/voyage-of-musical-discovery


## Recordings and Score Links

Farrenc score on IMSLP (public domain)
https://imslp.org/wiki/Nonet%2C_Op.38_(Farrenc%2C_Louise)

Period instrument recording of Farrenc on Youtube
https://youtu.be/v4p1q0mNjoo


Maclean and Macens score excerpts have been provided courtesy of the composers and Sydney Chamber Choir.