Sun Music I (excerpt)
(1965)

Peter Sculthorpe

CD Track 15
Duration 4:10

Orchestration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brass</th>
<th>Percussion</th>
<th>Strings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Horns</td>
<td>Timpani</td>
<td>Violin I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Trumpets</td>
<td>Bass Drum</td>
<td>Violin II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Trombones</td>
<td>Crotales</td>
<td>Viola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuba</td>
<td>Tam-tam</td>
<td>Cello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chime</td>
<td>Double Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Triangle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cymbal (large and small)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guiro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Side Drum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tenor Drum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maracas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sand Block</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A score of this work may be purchased or borrowed from the Australian Music Centre library.

An activity for high school aged music students based upon the ABC Classics recording of Sculthorpe’s Sun Music.

If you would like to obtain the recording of this work referred to in these teacher resource notes, please contact education@sydneysymphony.com
Arguably Australia's best known composer, Peter Sculthorpe has had a distinguished career in composition and music education both in Australia and overseas. The level of recognition for his services to music is indicated by his Order of Australia medal and the honorary Doctorates presented to him from many universities. He is also credited with establishing the current school of composition at the University of Sydney and has been the recipient of many awards and prizes for his music.

Sculthorpe completed music studies in Tasmania before continuing his education overseas. It was not until his return to Australia in 1961 that he began to be recognised as an important figure in Australian music. His music expresses an ‘Australian-ness’ in its rhythm and sonorities. He has been influenced by Aboriginal melodies, the Australian landscape and Balinese music, which have helped him to formulate his own unique musical sound. His appreciation of Australia’s vastness and its native inhabitants is depicted through a musical language free of European musical traditions.

Peter Sculthorpe Collection

The National Library of Australia has acquired the papers of Australia’s most performed, honoured and recorded composer, Peter Sculthorpe. His 56 year career as a professional composer, mostly based in Australia, has placed him at the centre of the nation’s artistic life. The Sculthorpe collection includes correspondence, programs, reviews, cuttings, research notes, lectures, speeches, photographs, awards and personal treasures which record his childhood and family life, performances of his works, his teachings and writings. More information can be found at www.nga.gov.au

Sun Music I

_Sun Music I_ is scored for a large orchestra of brass, percussion and strings and was first performed in London in 1965 during the Commonwealth Arts Festival. It is the first in a series of works which use the sun as a theme. _Sun Music I_ provides a rich soundscape of the sun’s harshest qualities, its shadows and its immense power. Anne Boyd noted in 1968: ‘The clear delineation between brass and string sonorities results from the significance that these have for the composer: the brass represents terrestrial forces (frequently pedantic and stuttering) while the strings are associated with celestial activities (utilising sounds ranging from sustained shimmers and gleams to those that are sharply percussive and rhythmically articulated).’

The sun as a powerful influence on Sculthorpe is also evident in his other works: _Sun Music II, III and IV_; a _D.H. Lawrence Song Cycle_ (1958); _The Fifth Continent_ (1963) and _Sun Song_ (1984).

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1 Skinner G. Sun Music CD Notes, Sun Music, Peter Sculthorpe, ABC Classics 454 505-2, 1996
### Outcomes/Syllabus links

#### Music Syllabus Years 7-10: Stage 4 Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Objectives</th>
<th>Skills Outcomes</th>
<th>Knowledge and Understanding Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the conclusion of the activities students should be able to:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discuss and describe personal interpretations of <em>Sun Music I</em>.</strong></td>
<td>• aurally identifies and discusses the use of the concepts of music.</td>
<td>• understands that the concepts of music have different functions in different types of music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the tone colour of brass, percussion and strings as they occur in <em>Sun Music I</em>.</td>
<td>• demonstrates aural skills within the repertoire studied.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of characteristics of music studied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and perform examples of vibrato and glissando.</td>
<td>• listens to, analyses and discusses a range of music from various contexts.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of stylistic features in different types of music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare <em>Sun Music I</em> to other works by Sculthorpe and other Australian composers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compose/arrange a ‘sun soundscape’ using some of the techniques used in <em>Sun Music I</em>.</strong></td>
<td>• experiments with, and organises, the concepts of music when composing.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of the concepts of music through composition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• demonstrates composition skills appropriate to repertoire chosen for study.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of composition within chosen contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• notates his/her own compositions using traditional and non-traditional notation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perform class compositions of a ‘soundscape’.</strong></td>
<td>• demonstrates solo and ensemble skills through performing music selected for study.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of musical concepts in music performed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• performs music that uses different forms of musical notation.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of performance in a range of styles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Music Syllabus Years 7-10: Stage 5 Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Objectives</th>
<th>Skills Outcomes</th>
<th>Knowledge and Understanding Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the conclusion of the activities students should be able to:</td>
<td>The student:</td>
<td>The student:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discuss and describe personal interpretations of Sun Music I.</strong></td>
<td>• aurally identifies the use of the concepts of music in a range of contexts.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an increased understanding of the concepts of music within various contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the tone colour of brass, percussion and strings as they occur in Sun Music I.</td>
<td>• develops aural skills within chosen syllabus contexts.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of different styles and genres from syllabus contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and perform examples of vibrato and glissando.</td>
<td>• demonstrates skills in comparing and critically evaluating music as an art form and music in social, cultural and historical contexts.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of and discriminates between stylistic features of contexts studied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare Sun Music I to other works by Sculthorpe and other Australian composers.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compose/arrange a ‘sun soundscape’ using some of the techniques used in Sun Music I.</td>
<td>• improvises, composes and arranges music in a variety of styles and genres.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of the concepts of music in the composition process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• demonstrates composition skills appropriate to syllabus contexts.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of different syllabus contexts through the composition process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• notates own compositions using different forms of notation relevant to syllabus contexts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform class compositions of a ‘soundscape’.</td>
<td>• performs music selected for study, demonstrating solo and ensemble performance skills with appropriate stylistic features.</td>
<td>• demonstrates an understanding of musical concepts at increasing levels of complexity within works performed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• interprets musical notation used in a range of styles and genres.</td>
<td>• understands stylistic features appropriate for the performance of different styles of music.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Activity Objectives
At the conclusion of the activities students should be able to:

### Preliminary Outcomes
- The student:
  - recognises and identifies the concepts of music and discusses their use in a variety of musical styles.
  - observes and discusses concepts of music in works representative of the topics studied.

### HSC Outcomes
- The student:
  - articulates an aural understanding of musical concepts and their relationships in a wide variety of musical styles.
  - critically evaluates and discusses the use of the concepts of music in works representative of the topics studied and through wide listening.

### Activity Objectives
Discuss and describe personal interpretations of *Sun Music I*.

Identify the tone colour of brass, percussion and strings as they occur in *Sun Music I*.

Identify and perform examples of vibrato and glissando.

Compare *Sun Music I* to other works by Sculthorpe and other Australian composers.

Compose/arrange a ‘sun soundscape’ using some of the techniques used in *Sun Music I*.

Perform class compositions of a ‘soundscape’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Objectives</th>
<th>Preliminary Outcomes</th>
<th>HSC Outcomes</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Discuss and describe personal interpretations of <em>Sun Music I</em>.</strong></td>
<td>- recognises and identifies the concepts of music and discusses their use in a variety of musical styles. - observes and discusses concepts of music in works representative of the topics studied.</td>
<td>- articulates an aural understanding of musical concepts and their relationships in a wide variety of musical styles. - critically evaluates and discusses the use of the concepts of music in works representative of the topics studied and through wide listening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identify the tone colour of brass, percussion and strings as they occur in <em>Sun Music I</em>.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Identify and perform examples of vibrato and glissando.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Compare <em>Sun Music I</em> to other works by Sculthorpe and other Australian composers.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compose/arrange a ‘sun soundscape’ using some of the techniques used in <em>Sun Music I</em>.</strong></td>
<td>- improvises and creates melodies, harmonies and rhythmic accompaniments for familiar sound sources reflecting the cultural and historical contexts studied. - demonstrates a willingness to accept and use constructive criticism.</td>
<td>- improvises and composes music using the range of concepts for familiar sound sources reflecting the cultural and historical contexts studied. - demonstrates a willingness to accept and use constructive criticism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perform class compositions of a ‘soundscape’.</strong></td>
<td>- performs music that is characteristic of the topics studied. - comments on and constructively discusses performances and compositions.</td>
<td>- performs stylistically, music that is characteristic of topics studied, both as a soloist and as a member of an ensemble. - critically evaluates and discusses performances and compositions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Listening Guide

If you would like to obtain the recording referred to in this material please contact education@sydneysymphony.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>CD Cues</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1-6   | 0:00-0:24 | Lento   | • Slow introduction begins with gong.  
• Falling trumpet minor 7ths. |
| 7-12  | 0:25-0:47 | Figure 1 | • *a tempo*  
• Rhythmic brass patterns with a powerful crescendo.  
• Introduction of violin quarter-tone vibrato\(^2\). |
| 13-18 | 0:48-1:05 | Figure 2 | • Rhythmic string patterns produced by various percussive techniques, eg playing with the back of the bow between the bridge and the tailpiece; slapping the resonant part of the instrument. |
| 19-24 | 1:05-1:38 | Figure 3 | • String vibrato on chord clusters\(^3\) with a strong crescendo followed immediately by a diminuendo. |
| 25-43 | 1:38-2:34 | Figure 4 | • Slow *glissando*\(^4\) beginning with the timpani, then strings.  
• Guiro added.  
• Quarter-tone vibrato in violins. |
| 44-48 | 2:34-3:00 | Figure 5 | • Rhythmic string motives continue with double bass prominent.  
• String *glissando* continue, with a rallentando followed by an accelerando. |
| 49-52 | 3:00-3:27 | Figure 6 | • Brass patterns similar to Figure 1 appear. |
| 53-62 | 3:28-end | Figure 7 | • *Pizzicato* string rhythm.  
• Timpani and cello *glissando* reappear.  
• Quarter-tone vibrato reappears in the violins. |

\(^2\) *Vibrato*: the wavering in pitch. Sculthorpe often directs the strings to use quarter tones.  
\(^3\) *Clusters*: microtonal chords, eg chords that are a major or minor 2\(^{nd}\) apart.  
\(^4\) *Glissando*: sliding up or down between different notes passing all notes in between.
Listening

In 1965 Bernard Heinze invited Peter Sculthorpe to compose a piece for the Sydney Symphony to perform at the Commonwealth Arts Festival in London. Heinze suggested, ‘…write something without rhythm, melody and harmony’. The result was Sun Music I, which contains little rhythm, melody or harmony in the conventional sense. ‘At the time this kind of post-impressionistic work was known as a ‘sound piece’.⁵

1. (a) Sun Music I is a ‘soundscape’ of images which describe aspects of the sun. Gather paintings and photographs depicting the sun and suggest what images a composer may try to create in a ‘soundscape’ of the sun.

   (b) Listen to Sun Music I and discuss the students’ impressions of the music.

   (c) What images of the sun does Sun Music I portray?

   (d) What musical features has Sculthorpe used to paint a ‘soundscape’ of the sun?

2. Discuss the orchestration of Sun Music I.

   (a) What instrument families play in the piece? (brass, strings, percussion)

   (b) Suggest why Sculthorpe may have chosen to omit woodwinds from Sun Music I. (Sculthorpe said ‘…(the) whole body of brass represents terrestrial forces while strings are associated with celestial activities.’⁶ See background information on Page 12.)

Listen to the following sections of the excerpt from Sun Music I.

3. Lento, CD cue 0:00-0:24

   (a) Describe what happens in the Introduction. (Tam-tam enters first, followed by a descending trumpet melody based on falling minor 7ths.)

   (b) How does the Introduction set the scene for the piece?

4. **Figure 1, a tempo section, CD cue 0:25-0:47**

   (a) What instruments play a short rhythmic pattern? *(Brass: horns, trumpets, trombones and tuba)*

   Listen for the recurrence of the rhythmic pattern at Figure 6, **CD cue 3:00**.

   (b) Sculthorpe introduces a rapid quarter tone *vibrato* in violin II. Discuss this technique and identify its use in this section of music.

   (c) If possible demonstrate a quarter tone on a stringed instrument, beginning with a tone, a semitone and then a quarter tone. Students could try to sing a quarter tone.

   (d) Explain that other cultures, particularly Middle-Eastern ones, use many quarter tones in their music and play some examples.

   (e) Listen to the rest of *Sun Music I* to discover how many times Sculthorpe uses this technique in the excerpt. *(5 times)*

   (f) What feature of the sun do you think the composer may be illustrating with this technique?

   (g) Examine Bars 11-12 of the score on Page 19 to see how this technique is notated.

5. **Figure 4, CD cue 1:38-2:34**

   (a) Sculthorpe uses *glissandos* in the percussion and string sections. Identify occurrences of *glissandos* in this section.

   (b) Which two percussion instruments play *glissandos* in addition to the strings? *(timpani and guiro)*

   (c) Examine Bars 26-32 of the score on Page 20 to see how this technique is notated.

   (d) *Glissandos* can be practised vocally as a way of demonstrating the technique. Students hum to ‘mm’, then ascend and descend in pitch. Give clear hand signals to indicate ascending and descending.

   (e) Practise a second *glissando* to ‘ahh’, but this time include a *crescendo* and *decrescendo* (getting louder and softer).

   (f) Perform the two *glissandos* together, making the first very slow and the second faster.

**Extension**

Listen to the other *Sun Music* pieces by Sculthorpe and discuss the similarities and differences between them and *Sun Music I*. Then compare these with other Australian works written in the 1960s.

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7 *Glissando*: sliding up or down between different notes passing all notes in between.
Composing/Performing

1. Students work in small groups to create a composition about the sun using some of the features discovered in *Sun Music I*.

   (a) **Introduction**
   
   - Use a gong or other sound source to introduce the piece. Decide how long this should sound. (If a gong is not available, other alternatives which work well are a large suspended cymbal or a suspended large frying pan/wok struck with soft beaters.)
   - Introduce a melody on metallophones based on falling minor 7ths (or another interval).

   (b) **Quarter tone vibratos**
   
   Students experiment with quarter tone sounds using glasses of water.
   - Use two matching glasses. Fill with slightly different water levels so that one sounds slightly higher in pitch than the other. (Although the sounds produced will not be accurate quarter tones, it is important to stress to students that they are looking for a slight rise in sound.)
   - Hit the glasses with hard mallets in very quick succession.
   - Mark the water level on the glasses with a permanent texta so the pitches can be reproduced quickly.
   - Add these sounds to the composition, deciding on the length this section should take.

   (c) **Vocal glissandos**
   
   - Use the vocal *glissandos* from the previous activity as a basis for this section of the composition. Many variations can be used for this section.
   - Decide on the number of seconds each section should take.
   - Add *rallentandos* and *accelerandos* (varying tempo) for interest.
   - Add other percussion instruments, eg guiros and large drums. (Drums can change pitch if fingers are used to put pressure on the skin after they have been struck. Work from the outside in or vice versa).

   (d) **Additional Metallic Percussion**
   
   - Add instruments such as wind chimes, triangles, finger and normal cymbals for variety and to enhance the composition.

2. Construct a graphic score to show the order and duration of the sections of the composition.

3. Perform and record the composition.

4. Discuss the effectiveness of the composition(s) and compare with *Sun Music I*. 

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*Online Resource*
References


Covell R., Annotated notes.


