A series of music lessons for implementation in the classroom F-10.

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These resources were developed by Sydney Symphony with funding and support from the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and Education.
Five lessons for easy implementation in the classroom based upon the Spirit Ground by Australian composer Ross Edwards.

Year level: 7-8

Sydney Symphony Bite Sized Music Lessons

Teacher Notes

This is a series of short 15 minute lessons for easy implementation in the classroom based upon Ross Edwards’ piece *Spirit Ground*.

Written in the language of the Draft Australian Curriculum in the Arts they include activities in each of the music learning areas: performing, composing and listening and identify the key competencies reinforced in each activity.

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**Lesson Index**

**Lesson 1:** A series of aural and score reading tasks to focus listening on specific use of the elements in the opening section of Edwards work.

**Lesson 2:** has a focus on rhythm and changing metre in a series of clapping, reading and movement activities using words and notation. Students will demonstrate their understanding of these concepts in a short composition exercise.

**Lesson 3:** involves performing material from the piece in unison and parts.

**Lesson 4:** uses some of Edwards’ techniques to craft their own timbre composition, chant and arrangement in Phrygian mode.

**Lesson 5:** considers articulation in the shaping of a tune. There is some score study and observation of how the elements of music are manipulated to depict a program. This understanding is then applied to a composition task.
Composer: Ross Edwards (born 1943)

Ross Edwards is one of Australia’s most distinguished composers. His work can be divided into two distinct styles. The first is characterised by a contemplative, austere quality and is often referred to as his ‘sacred’ style because of its alignment with certain oriental traditions of meditational music. The other is his ‘maninya’ style, characterised by such qualities as lightness, spontaneity and the impulse to dance. The word ‘maninya’ symbolises the dance and chant qualities evident in works written in the ‘maninya’ style. *Spirit Ground* is an example of this. Edwards’ composition reflect his interest in the sounds of the natural environment, particularly birdsong, insect and frog rhythms and Australia’s cultural diversity with a particular sensitivity to Aboriginal culture.

“As I composed *Spirit Ground* I tried to make it radiant, exuberant and above all about Australia. The work opens with what sounds like preparation for some type of ritual: insistent dance-chant rhythms pounding over earth based drones. There are interjections by the crickets and the air is full of joyous birdsong. Fragments of an Ave Maria plain chant which I have come to associate with mother earth may be heard. There are also melodic references to the music of South East Asian Cultures which also retain a spiritual connection to the earth.” Ross Edwards

In 2010 a ceremony to dance the river spirit back to the land during a drought, something that had not occurred for over 100 years. “We believe when you dance on the land, you’re letting Mother Earth know you still care about her,” a Ngarrindjeri elder explained. “This is about restoring the energy, dancing the spirit back into this country, dancing the spirit back into ourselves, into the Aboriginal people.”

Instrumentation

Woodwind: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoon
Brass: 2 horns, 2 trumpets
Percussion: Vibraphone, Burmese gong, woodblock, 2 congas, floor tom, glockenspiel, suspended cymbal, tam tam, tambourine, 2 bongos, bass drums.
Strings: Violin 1, Violin 2, viola, cello, double bass

Teaching Notes

Key musical concepts contained in this work
- Grouping of beats into a bar, irregular time signatures
- Irregular and regular patterns rhythm and pitch patterns, ostinato.
- Articulation and dynamics.

At the conclusion of the activities students should be able to:
- Perform themes and the opening section of this work.
- Recognise instruments and patterns from this work.
- Perform patterns with changing metre.
- Worked with a motive in 5/8 time.
- Have improvised motives and patterns based upon a mode.
### Listening Guide

<table>
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<th>Audio Cue</th>
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| 0:00–0:18 | - Opening rhythm section played by percussion: floor tom, timpani and woodblock.  
- Irregular beat created by changing time signatures.  
- The music builds organically with each entry. |
| 0:18–0:54 | - Brass enter with spirit dance theme:  
| | [Image](image)  
| | Answered by strings.  
| | Section repeats. |
| 0:55–1:21 | - New idea in the horns derived from the ending of the first theme:  
| | [Image](image)  
| | Answered by strings.  
| | Repeated in lower register again by horns and other instruments toss the answer around the orchestra.  
| | Oboes play this 2nd theme and extend it slightly into a longer descending tune.  
| | Texture thins and the music winds down. |
| 1:22–2:08 | - Solo violin enters softly playing a twisting melody of running quavers.  
| | High pitched light texture accompaniment and some answering of these long phrases by the cellos.  
| | The effect is of the violin dancing with a number of the individual instruments: clarinets, violas, bassoons, oboes, flutes. |
| 2:18–3:13 | - A repeat of the material played at the solo violin entry this time shared between all the strings.  
| | The solo violin reclaims the melody accompanied by strings.  
| | The patterns become more fragmented, rhythmic and accented. |
| 3:13–3:47 | - Calm quieter section with legato flowing melody played by the oboe.  
| | Fragments of the violin entry theme appear as accompanying ideas in the winds.  
| | Violin plays slower descending patterns of longer note values.  
| | Excerpt ends. NB a longer excerpt may be performed in the concerts. |

Indigenous dancers dancing the river spirit back to the earth in a ceremony
Visual Guide – digital teaching materials

A presentable interactive classroom PDF is included as a separate download to use with these lessons. In this download you will find:

- Slide Three: Introduction
- Slide Four: Lesson 1 – Listening & Performing
- Slide Five: Lesson 2 – Rhythm & Movement
- Slide Six: Lesson 3 – Performance & Arrangement
- Slide Seven: Lesson 5 – Listening & Composing
Lesson 1: Listening and Performing

1. Think about rituals around the world where music plays a role and the types of music that is played to celebrate them. Some ideas may include: Chinese New Year; a wedding; the New Zealand haka; the arrival of a monarch.

2. Listen to the opening of *Spirit Ground* (cue 0:00–0:18) and answer the following questions.
   a) What instruments do you hear? *(Drums and woodblock.)*
   b) What family of the orchestra do they belong to? *(Percussion.)*
   c) How does Edwards attract the attention of the audience? *(Loud drums of different types and the high pitched woodblock, repeated patterns increasing the rhythmic activity and volume which gradually create a musical climax where the other instruments enter.)*

3. Listen to the opening of *Spirit Ground* while following the score excerpt provided.
   a) Identify the name of the three percussion instruments on the score. *(Floor tom, woodblock, timpani)*
   b) Some of these have no pitch and others have pitches. What information on the staves tells you this? *(Timpani has a clef = pitch; the others do not.)*
   c) What string instruments are also included on the score? *(Violin 1 and 2, viola, cello, double bass.)*
   d) At what volume do the instruments enter? *(ff – fortissimo, very loud)*
   e) What are the numbers on the staves and what do they mean? *(A time signature; tells you how many and what types of beats per bar.)*
   f) Write in full the names of the instruments down the side of the second page of score. *(Clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, timpani, percussion, violin 1, violin 2, viola, violoncello, double bass.)*
   g) Each of the wind instruments are divided into how many parts? *(Two.)*
   h) The trumpet 1 is the first instrument to have the spirit theme in bar 17. Mark this part (bars 17–19) with a highlighter.
   i) Which instrument plays this theme next in bar 20–22? *(Violin1)*
   j) The theme is not exactly the same. How has it been changed from the trumpet’s original statement in bars 17–19? *(Notes have been added and repeated pitches fill the space where the trumpets had rests.)*
   k) What does the ‘5’ under the semiquavers mean in the bassoon line? *(It is a quintuplet – 5 semiquavers played in the time of 4.)*
   l) What is the pitch of the opening viola note in bar 16? Note it is written in an alto clef! *(G)*
Lesson 2: Rhythm and Movement

1. Listen to the opening again and describe how the rhythm sounds. *(Strong, tribal, uneven)*
   a) Encourage younger students to use their bodies when describing what they hear.
   b) What sort of ritual might this music suggest?

2. There is a very clear pulse in this music. What makes it unusual and dance like are the ever changing and unusual groupings of these beats into bars. For example, one bar may have 6 beats, the next 3 and then one with 4. The result is that the beat feels uneven or irregular.

Here is an example of how Edwards creates this musical effect.
   a) Clap the pattern below keeping a regular beat. Make the first of each group stronger than the others.

   4 claps  2 claps  3 claps  4 claps  2 claps  3 claps  2 claps  5 claps

   b) Transfer this into a clap and patsch (knee slapping) pattern where the first count is a clap and the others in the group are played on the knees.

3. Here is the same pattern using ♦ beats. Repeat the activity, this time reading from the music.

   ♦♦♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|  ♦♦♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|  ♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|  ♦♦|♦♦|♦♦|  ♦♦♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|  ♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|  ♦♦|♦♦|♦♦|  ♦♦♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|

   a) Clap the pattern again remembering to place a strong sound on the first of each group and a weaker sound on the other counts in the bar.

   Older students: add a time signature for each bar – as the basic pulse is a quaver the underneath number will always be an 8 and the number on top equals the number of quavers in each bar.

4. Play the rhythms now using classroom percussion. Identify your loudest instrument and have this one only perform on the first beat of each bar.
   a) Repeat activity 3 using the rhythm below or one you invent.

   ♦♦♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|  ♦♦♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|  ♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|  ♦♦|♦♦|♦♦|  ♦♦♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|  ♦♦|♦♦|♦♦|  ♦♦♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|  ♦♦|♦♦|♦♦|  ♦♦♦♦|♦♦|♦♦♦♦|

5. By changing the number of beats in each bar the composer has made the music sound irregular and unexpected.

   You can achieve the same effect by reading a poem as if you were a robot. When a robot reads text no word is accented more than any other so the natural rhythm of the words is lost.
6. We will now put words to these patterns using syllables to show each sound.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{♩♩} &= \text{ap-ple} \\
\text{♩♩♩} &= \text{straw-ber-ry}
\end{align*}
\]

a) Copy the pattern below into your books. Colour the groups of threes in red and the twos in blue to make it easier to read.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{♩♩} &| \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \\
\text{♩♩} &| \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \\
\text{♩♩} &| \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \\
\text{♩♩} &| \text{♩♩} | \text{♩♩} | \\
\end{align*}
\]

apple x 3
strawberry x 7
apple/strawberry x 2
apple x 2

b) Now learn this pattern:

c) This is how Ross Edwards has grouped his beats in the opening drum section. Listen to the opening while you say the pattern – you need to be relentless from the second line because the timpani entry feels like it comes at the start of a pattern but effectively it is at the end!

d) Create a movement that represents the 2 beat pattern and one for the three beat pattern. Practice the pattern while the teacher counts it out keeping time with a tambour or small drum.

e) Perform your movements with the opening 18 seconds of the piece in the Classroom PDF.

Composing activity

7. Students repeat this activity writing their own rhythm piece with changing time signatures.

a) Set up a time signature template. Make sure you always keep the bottom number in the time signature a 4 or 8 (such as 3/8, 2/8 and 5/8 etc. OR 2/4, 3/4 and 6/4 etc.) so that there is always a constant pulse even though the time signatures are changing.

b) Add three or four un-tuned percussion instruments which have contrasting pitches.

c) Create rhythm patterns for each of the patterns – Hint: Edwards made his effective by keeping a strong ostinat in the timpani and not having all the parts perform at the same time.

d) Consider also how effective Edwards’ introduction is in the use of sound AND silence
Lesson 3: Performance and arrangement

1. Sing the Spirit Ground theme first learning the rhythm in the chant below then add the pitch to sing it:

```
Old ground spirit dance
stamp a-round and clap your hands
Come and join my spirit dance we'll
sway and stamp and clap our hands
```

a) Watch some indigenous dancing and use those ideas to invent a body percussion accompaniment.

b) Now learn the other important theme as a chant – just saying the rhythm of the words.

c) Experiment with half the class chanting the full theme whilst the others chant or clap the rhythm of this 2nd theme as an accompaniment pattern.

d) What musical similarities do you notice between these two themes?

2. Performance Activity

i) Play this classroom arrangement of the opening percussion lines. The top two lines are for non pitched percussion the bottom line is for a piano or low instrument that can play the notes C and G.

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<th>Perc 2</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Xylo C &amp; G</th>
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<th>Perc 3</th>
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ii) Once this is secure, play with the Classroom PDF audio track (page3).
Lesson 4: Composition Activities

1. Writing a sound scape
   a) Consider a place in Australia you might want to celebrate with sound.
   b) Discuss what sorts of environmental sounds would be associated with that place. Make a list of the sounds in the box below with the symbols you might use to show these sounds on a graphic score.

   | flickering light | totem and song | rhythms of the earth |
   | spirit of ancestral dreaming | stamp on tribal land |

   c) Create a sound scape using these sounds on a board or large piece of cardboard.
   d) If you have access to technology you might select a number of sampled sounds and organise them into a sequence which will represent that particular environment.

2. Writing a Spirit Ground Chant
   a) Use the box below to collect a collection of phrases related to the idea of Spirit Dance. Some ideas are included already.

   b) Performance using Improvisation:
      - Set up the three beat pattern (doh soh soh) on the notes E B B.
      - Now make up a series of three beat patterns that can be used as an accompaniment to this based upon the rhythms of the words in your chant. Below is the Phrygian mode – a favourite scale of Edwards. Play through the scale for familiarisation, echo patterns played by the teacher, and then in pairs improvise some question and answer phrases using the Phrygian mode.
      - Use the pitches notated below and the rhythm of the word patterns from the box above to add additional accompaniment layers.
      - Make up your own spirit dace tune improvising on these notes about your accompaniment patterns. Take turns around the class playing your theme whilst a small group continue with the accompaniment.
Lesson 5: Listening and composing

a) Edwards uses musical articulation to enhance the dance feel in *Spirit Ground*. Learn to play the pattern again with the articulations marked:

![Musical notation]

NB a dot above the note makes it short (staccato)
a line connecting some notes make them smooth (slur)
a > above the note means to accent it (accent)

b) This version of the theme has no articulation markings.
Choose your own articulations and experiment with ways of adding expression to the rhythm.

![Musical notation]

c) Listen to the violin entry (cue 1.22)

i) Describe how this tune is different to the opening one. *(more tuneful, long phrases, legato, freer rhythmically)*

ii) Edwards music reflects he sounds of nature. What part if nature might this be? *(birds)*

iii) How does the accompaniment support the violin?

d) Use this motive and only the pitches in it (E, F, A, C, E’) to create a short arrangement based solely on this musical idea. Consider the following in your dance arrangement:

- Creating chords which are built from these notes.
- Using the motive in different registers.
- Taking fragments of the theme to form an ostinati accompaniment patterns.
- Using the theme canonically.
- Changing time signatures to make the rhythmic flow less predictable.
- Exploring available tone colours and sounds from your classroom.

e) Listen now to the whole excerpt. Edwards uses lots of percussion. Why do you think that is? *(extend the range of colours available to him, to better replicate sounds of nature, Australia and Asia)*.

f) Look at the score excerpt bars 1-22. The work is programmatic.
What aspects of the music are suggesting a celebration of the earth?
Score excerpts kindly provided by Ross Edwards for Educational use only.