

The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra in Your Classroom

Insights into the workings of music with Richard Gill AO

Arranging as Inspired by Lisa Cheney & Liszt *Nuages Gris*

Teacher Resource Booklet

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Arranging as Inspired by Lisa Cheney & Liszt Nuages Gris

In this module you will listen to and engage with the work *Nuages Gris*, a piano piece by Franz Liszt, as arranged for orchestra by the Australian composer, Lisa Cheney. Following on from this you will move to a task where you will complete your own arrangement of a piano piece. In completing your tasks you will engage with listening, analysis, creating and performing. The tasks in this module can be used as part of a course and assessment under the Australian Curriculum (ACAMUM 100/102/104) or as part of the relevant senior secondary course within your jurisdiction.

Your Preparation is to:

A Download the orchestral score provided:

Nuages Gris by Liszt arr. Lisa Cheney (https://www.tso.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Nuages-Gris_arr.CHENEY_full-score-at-10.11.pdf)

B Watch the video *The TSO in Your Classroom with Richard Gill AO, Exploring Extended Techniques with Cheney*
<https://www.tso.com.au/arranging-as-inspired-by-lisa-cheney/>

It would be good to do this as a group although it can be completed by yourself. Start with the complete piece (video: 0 - 4:04) and listen both with and without the score. For a slightly different performance, you might also like to listen to the audio recording of this work. <https://soundcloud.com/user-427073505/liszt-nuages-gris-orchestrated-by-lisa-cheney>

C Download the original piano score of *Nuages Gris*, S.199 by Liszt and follow the score while listening to the recording of the work provided, performed by pianist Thomas Misson.

Piano Score: https://www.tso.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Liszt_Nuages_gris-for-website.pdf

Audio Recording: <https://soundcloud.com/user-427073505/liszt-nuages-gris-s199>

D After listening to the piano original and the orchestral arrangement, consider the following. As an arranger, Cheney has not changed Liszt's harmony and rhythm but has creatively manipulated the music elements of texture, timbre and instrumental techniques. Richard Gill and the orchestra explore many of these in the rest of the video. See appendix 4 for specific bar numbers and audio and video time points. Consider how these music elements have been used to create a music statement. Comment on the following and describe how they contribute to the atmosphere which the arranger has set out to convey:

Lisa Cheney's statement about her process of arranging *Nuages Gris*

When I first listened to *Nuages Gris* for solo piano, it was unlike any of Liszt's works I had heard before. The music was minimalistic, used interesting harmony and dissonance, repetitive, had two haunting melodies and a very sparse texture. Musically it conveyed the foreboding and floating 'grey clouds' referenced in the title. As such, it turned out to be a very enjoyable task to explore different techniques to enhance and add to the atmosphere of the work with a full symphony orchestra at my disposal.

I challenged myself to explore variations in the orchestration of the main repeated musical motifs to avoid expressing a musical idea in the same way more than once. As such, I often wrote out a phrase five different ways before choosing the one that I liked best. You can see this approach at the very beginning of the work as the melody is passed from the unusual pairing of solo tuba and harp in bars 2-4, then to the high woodwinds in bars 4-6 before transferring to the horns and brass in bars 6-8.

As a composer, I'm attracted to creating colourful musical sound-worlds, and one of the ways I most often think about this is through instrumental timbre. The orchestration process is a lot like sculpting little 'windows of sound', whereby the sound-world is more defined by the instruments that are not playing at that point than the instruments who are playing.

In this arrangement, each instrumental family is given their moment to the rise to the foreground and shine. I was also conscious to include a contrast in texture by having a variety of solos, section work and tutti moments. Three of the most fun instrumental pairings were: the cymbal glissandi on a timpani, solo high tuba and harp at the beginning and the low piccolo and high violin harmonics towards the end. Each of these instruments has a special tone and quality, but when you combine two instruments in this way it creates something unique and a little strange. The tone colour was also altered with simple techniques such as mutes in the brass and sul ponticello in the strings.

One of the considerations to arranging a piano work for orchestra is that the piano can easily sustain pitches using the pedal. When writing for orchestra I like to ask myself "Where is the resonance coming from in this moment?" Some of the ways I incorporated this into *Nuages Gris*, were, the dovetailing of exits and entries of instruments and the use dynamics to gradually swell in and out of blocks of sound. This can be seen on the opening page where very soft string harmonics mirroring notes in the melody are sustained, or the way instrumental sections often emerge out of another or the resonance produced from asking the percussionist or harp player to let their instruments vibrate rather than dampen them. I love it when this effect creates heterophony and builds up the harmony by holding over notes in a melody, such as the woodwinds in bars 4-9.

Lastly, what makes this work an 'arrangement' and not purely an 'orchestration' is that I was more creative and free than Liszt indicated on the score. Some of the gestures and notes in this version were completely new and added by me, eg. the climatic descending chromatic run in bar 20, glissandi in the trombones and violins bars 11-13, bass clarinet flourish at bar 23 and the arpeggiated gesture in the harp and bass clarinet in bars 48-49. These additions, along with exaggerated dynamics, swells and dovetailing all help to create a bigger sense of anticipation moments of tension and release and the colour of the mysterious sound world.

Your task will be to take the given piano piece and arrange it for a minimum of three instruments. You will be creating two arrangements of the melody. One will be in a creepy and sinister mood and the second will be happy and energetic.

1. Choose one of the given piano pieces (See Appendix 1). Play it, listen to it and study it.
2. Explore instruments and make a list of all the different sounds, colours and techniques you can use of each instrument to help create the mood of each arrangement.
3. Share what you have learnt as a class group with a view to using each other's ideas – their sounds and their suggestions.
4. Prepare your two arrangements of the canon remembering to employ a range of ideas to create the two contrasting moods.
5. Perform and record your arrangements.
6. Revise and refine if the performance triggered any new ideas.
7. A **context statement** must accompany the composition: discuss how you have used different elements to create the contrasting moods.

Tips:

1. You will be making changes and adding to the source piece in your arrangement. Think about your chosen mood and each musical element. For example:

Rhythm and tempo: Is this mood (creepy/sinister, happy/energetic) fast or slow? Long or short?

Pitch and harmony: High or low? Blending or clashing?

Volume: Loud or soft?

Articulation and style: Legato or staccato?

Timbre: Bright or dark? Edgy or sweet?

Texture: Busy or simple? Cooperating or competing?

There are many ways to express each mood. Take time to notice the musical details in what you're feeling about it.

2. Think about the form you'd like to use. The piano piece gives you a base, but you can shape the energy and intensity. How do you want it to start? How do you want it to end? What happens in the middle? How might you get from one to the next? You could print out your chosen piece, cut out the staves and tape them together in a single line and use this as a timeline to plan your arrangement.

Deliverables:

- **Performance**
- **Score**
- **Context Statement**

This activity can be assessed against tasks in many music syllabuses, both Australian and overseas. Below please find some examples of where these tasks would fit in some of the Australian contexts:

Australian Curriculum:

- Manipulate combinations of the elements of music in a range of styles, using technology and notation. (ACAMUM100)
- Plan and organise compositions with an understanding of style and convention, including drawing upon Australian music by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. (ACAMUM102)
- Evaluate a range of music and compositions to inform and refine their own compositions and performance. (ACAMUM 104)

TCE

Music 3 -

- Create and present original music statements
- Read and write music statements and identify use of music elements

Music Studies 2 -

- Create and present music statements
- Recognise and use music elements in aural and written contexts

VCE

Music Style and Composition units 1-4

Appendix I

Piano starters for arrangements

I. Modal blues

The image shows two systems of musical notation for a piano starter in 2/4 time. The first system consists of five measures. The chords above the notes are Dm7, Em7, Dm7, Em7, and Fmaj7. The second system consists of six measures. The chords above the notes are Dm7, Am7, Dm7, Am7, and Dm7. The notation includes a treble clef, a bass clef, and a key signature of one flat (Bb).

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2. Ambiguous beat

The musical score for 'Ambiguous beat' is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble clef starting with a quarter rest, followed by eighth and quarter notes, and a bass line with a whole rest. The second system continues the melodic line with a slur and a fermata over the final note, while the bass line has a whole note chord. The third system concludes the piece with a final melodic phrase and a double bar line.

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3. Parallel fifths.

The musical score for 'Parallel fifths' is presented in two systems, both in bass clef. The first system contains six measures of chords, each consisting of two notes separated by a perfect fifth interval. The second system contains five measures of similar chords, ending with a double bar line.

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Appendix 2

Lisa Cheney Biography

Lisa Cheney (b.1987) is an Australian composer and arranger, hailing from Queensland and now living in Melbourne. Her music communicates through varied styles which often explore notions of connection and authenticity through fascinations with the 'edge' of beauty; expression, poeticism, fragility, delicacy, resonant space, pacing, light and dark and atmospheric soundscapes. Cheney's work has been described as 'atmospheres of unfathomable spaciousness' (Partial Durations), 'melodic slivers with plaintive intensity' (The Australian) and 'fantastic and frightening in its detail and colour' (Resonate).

Her body of work incorporates music for orchestra, chamber, voice, acousmatic collaborations, arrangements, and works for theatre and ballet.

Cheney has received several accolades, including grants from the Australia-Korea Foundation, APRA AMCOS Art Music Fund, Griffith University Owen Fletcher Postgraduate Award and the Silver Harris and Jeff Peck Composition Prize. Her music has been commissioned and performed by The Southern Cross Soloists, The Australian Voices, Queensland Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra, Plexus, Syzygy, Sydney Antiphony, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and the Australian Ballet amongst others. Her work 'The Pool and the Star' written as part of the MSO Cybec Program, was selected by the MSO for performance at the Metropolis New Music Festival under the baton of Finnish maestro Olli Mustonen.

Cheney holds a Bachelor of Music in Composition and Master of Music from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music where she studied with Gerard Brophy and Dr. Gerardo Dirie respectively. Her research into the early career experiences of female composers in Australia was supervised by Dr. Brydie-Leigh Bartleet. She is currently completing a PhD in Music at The University of Melbourne, supervised by Dr. Elliott Gyger and Dr. Katy Abbott-Kvasnica.

Cheney's passion for championing new Australian music can be seen in her role as co-founder of 'Making Waves' and an executive producer of the Making Conversation: Australian Composers' Podcast. In 2017 she was named the Victorian Young Achiever of the Year for the Arts.

For more information and music please visit: www.lisacheney.com.au

Appendix 3

Arranging a musical work and copyright

In Australia, a work is in copyright from the time it is created until 70 years after the death of its creator. If a musical work is still in copyright, you cannot arrange it without the copyright owner's permission. Usually this involves paying a license fee to the composer or publisher. APRA/AMCOS are organisations in Australia that mediate copyright licensing for most music creators.

(see <http://www.musicrights.com.au/fact-sheets/copyright-duration/>

<http://www.musicrights.com.au/fact-sheets/sheetmusic/>

<http://www.musicrights.com.au/fact-sheets/making-adaptions/>)

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- share it, including for profit

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Appendix 4

Audio and video time-points

Bar # Piano Score	Piano Audio	Bar # Orchestra Score	Orchestra Audio	Video: playthrough	Video: focus or closeup	
		1	0:02	0:11	10:03	Tam tam
1	0:03	2	0:07	0:16	11:21	Tuba & harp
					13:56	Violin harmonics
					21:53	Harp harmonic close-up
3	0:11	4	0:18	0:26	17:14	Winds
5	0:20	6	0:30	0:35	16:08	Strings: tremolo
9	0:38	10	0:54	0:54		
13	0:57	14	1:15	1:12		
14	1:01	15	1:21	1:16	24:55	Whip
					25:48	Brass staccato
					26:45	Violas
15	1:06	16	1:26	1:21		
17	1:15	18	1:36	1:30	29:47	Harp: bisbigliando
19	1:25	20	1:48	1:39	31:53	Strings
21	1:37	22	1:57	1:47		
23	1:46	24	2:08	1:56	34:28	Bass clarinet
27	2:03	28	2:31	2:15		Timpani with cymbal close-up
33	2:28	34	3:05	2:40	37:38	Sul ponticello
36	2:40	37		2:55		Brass mutes close-up
37	2:43	38	3:27	2:59		
40	2:53	41	3:44		43:07	Triangle
42	3:00	43	3:56	3:19	39:27	Harp
					43:14	Harp close-up
44	3:08	45	4:08	3:34		Violin solo close-up
47	3:24	48	4:24		43:50	Piccolo
48	3:30	49	4:30	3:52		Timpani with cymbal close-up