



Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

Presents

**Maurice Ravel**  
**Bolero**

Teacher Resource Booklet

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# BACKGROUND

French composer Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) wrote *Bolero* in 1928. While he thought of it as one of his lesser works, it has become his most famous and popular composition.

Composed as a ballet, it was the result of a commission from Russian actress and dancer Ida Rubenstein. It gave Ravel the opportunity to work through an idea that had been simmering for some time: building a composition from a single theme which grows through harmonic and instrumental treatment.

The piece lasts 15 minutes, with the snare drum ostinato underpinning the whole work. The drummer plays 4050 notes in the process, with a never-varying tempo! After a number of repetitions of the theme, *Bolero* eventually modulates from C major to E major, releasing “the pent-up tension with a burst of fireworks”. (ABC Classic FM).

# PATTERNS IN MUSIC

Composers use patterns in music to help form a structure and give the music shape and order. We also find patterns in our everyday life and the world around us.

## Rhythmic and Melodic Patterns Activities

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

Students will develop aural skills by listening, responding and moving accurately to the beat of music and appropriately to the style of the music.

Students will brainstorm the style of music and its intended purpose.

ACAMUM 080, ACAMUM084, ACAMUR 083, ACAMUR 087

Students will develop their understanding and performance skills of a steady beat and rhythmic pattern.

ACAMUM081, ACAMUM085

**\*\* Assessment opportunity**

## Listen, Respond, Play and Move

1. Begin by listening to *Bolero*. \*\* Ask students to listen for patterns in the music, particularly rhythmic and melodic ones. Ask them to listen for what instruments are playing repeated patterns. Are some just rhythmic and some melodic?

2. Discuss what was heard.



### Rhythm ostinato

3. Focus now on the repeated rhythmic pattern. Clap it or play it to the class.

4. \*\* Listen to some of *Bolero* again and then ask students what instrument it was played on in the early stages of the music. Did other instruments join in playing that rhythm?

5. Teach the repeated rhythm to the class one bar at a time. Continue to echo this rhythm until the students can repeat the 2-bar pattern with success.

6. Show students the written notation and ask them to follow it from the board while clapping the repeated pattern.

7. \*\* Try clapping the rhythm along with some of the recording of *Bolero*.

For younger students just clapping the beat along to the repeated drum rhythm will help focus their listening on the strict rhythm.

8. Focus now on listening to the melody, which begins with the flute. Ask students to listen to the style of the playing and think of words to describe it.

9. Brainstorm these ideas on the board. Was it smooth or jerky? Separated notes or flowing notes? Loud or soft?

10. \*\* Discuss and brainstorm the purpose of the music. What ideas or pictures come to mind while listening to the melody evolve in the music? What is the music about? Why did Ravel compose it?

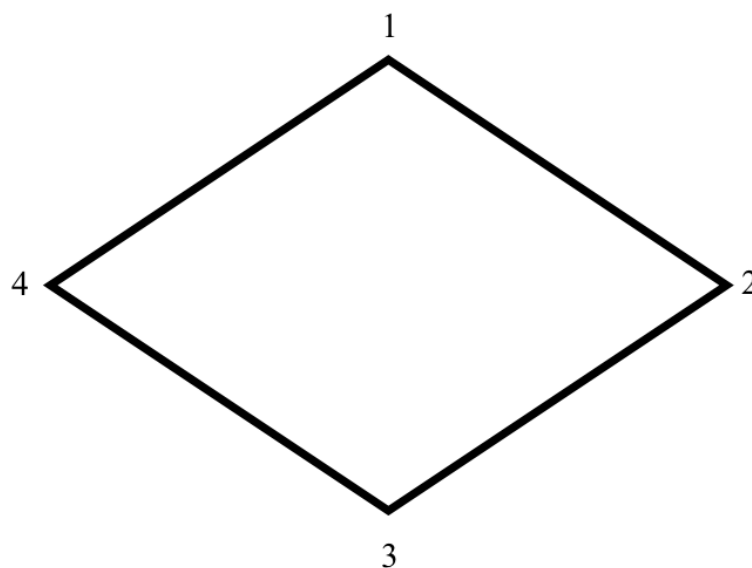
## Movement activities based on *Bolero* rhythmic pattern and flowing melody

### a) Movement Activity 1 “Two sides to a coin”

1. Explain to students that the repeated rhythm and the flowing melodic line are like the two different sides on a coin, heads and tails. While they are different, they belong to the one thing.
2. Using the heads and tails analogy, divide the class in half. One group will focus on the beat and repeated rhythmic pattern (Head) while the other half of the class will focus on the flowing melody (Tail).
3. Give the melody group a dance scarf or ribbon to aid their creative movement. The beat and rhythm group could just use their bodies to respond to the strict beat and rhythm.
4. Play *Bolero*, asking each group to begin moving only when they hear their part and to stop moving if their part ends. (There are two bar rests in the melodic line of the music but the repeated rhythm plays continuously.)  
\*\* Each group should respond with movements appropriately to match their part.
5. To assist the melody group, show the class Torvill and Dean’s Ice Dancing routine performed to *Bolero* in the 1984 Winter Olympics. Videos of this performance can be found on YouTube. The flowing nature of the ice dances and their costumes should help with movement ideas.
6. After a first attempt, share movement ideas as a group. What movement ideas suited the repeated rhythm with body movement alone? What movements suited the flowing melodic line incorporating the dance scarves?
7. \*\* Repeat the movement to music process again observing how each student is responding to what they are focusing on in the music.
8. Swap parts and perform the activity again.

### b) Movement Activity 2 “One side of the coin”

1. Focus now on the flowing melodic line only. Divide the class into even groups of 4. The dance scarves would enhance this activity but are not essential.
2. Arrange each group into a diamond shape. See diagram. Each diamond group will need free space around them so perform this activity in a large open space.



3. The head of the diamond will begin the movement activity. Listening to *Bolero* from the beginning, ask the head of the diamond to begin a movement once the melodic line starts. The other three students in the diamond must copy the movements performed by the leader.
4. The leader of each group will change during the 2 bar breaks in the melody, therefore all members of the group must listen carefully to the music. When the melody breaks all members in the diamond turn to their right to follow the next leader, group member number two.
5. \*\* This activity continues until all four members of the diamond have been the movement leader.

Initially, students may need prompting when a melodic phrase ends and the 2 bar rhythmic breaks occur. To perform this activity successfully, students need to listen very carefully to the music.

#### *Create your own*

This activity can be developed further by giving each diamond group time to work as a small group, and devise a movement sequence to perform to the class. As in the whole class activity, each member of the diamond should have a turn as leader of the movement during the performance.

\*\* This movement activity could be used as an assessment piece and filmed to allow for student feedback.

# TEXTURE IN MUSIC

Music has texture. Composers use texture to add interesting layers of sound to their music.

## LEARNING INTENTIONS

Students will identify and explain texture variations heard in Bolero.

ACAMUM080, ACAMUM084

Students will compose music focussing on changes in texture and perform these to or with the class.

ACAMUM082, ACAMUM085

## \*\* Assessment opportunity

## Listening for Textures

Ask students to brainstorm types of texture in every day life. Showing different types of material or visual art works could help scaffold discussion about texture.

1. Ask students how composers add texture to the music they compose.
2. Listen to *Bolero*, pausing the music during the piece. Pause the music early in the piece while the texture is light with very few instruments playing. Throughout the piece the texture becomes thicker with more instruments joining in and adding new rhythms and thicker harmony.
3. \*\* Following the focused listening, ask students the musical ways texture is added to the music.

For example: increased instrumentation, changing dynamics, different rhythms, different melodies, thicker harmony, articulation of notes, such as accented notes and staccato notes.

## Experimenting with texture:

### a) Creating and Performing Activity

1. After listening to and brainstorming the ways in which a composer adds texture to music explain to students that the class will create a piece of music together which grows in texture just like *Bolero*.
2. Students select an untuned percussion instrument to play. The teacher may wish to limit this to one type of wood, metal, skin and shaker to simplify the process for younger children.
3. When all students have selected an instrument, as a class, group the instruments together in families, such as woods, metals, skins. Refer to this arrangement as being similar to that of the orchestral families of strings, woodwind, brass and percussion.
4. When the instruments are grouped together, ask each to experiment with the sounds their instruments can make and ways of playing them. For younger students a demonstration by other students or the teacher will help generate some ideas. List ways of making sounds on the board, such as long sustained sounds, short sounds, loud and soft sounds, a repeated rhythmic ostinato or a steady beat.
5. After experimenting, bring the class back together and ask students to share their ideas.
6. As a class choose or vote on a sound pattern each group will play. Each group's sound pattern should be different from the other groups.
7. \*\* Listen to each group play their sound patterns and then decide as a class, the order to introduce each new sound pattern to create a piece of music with growing texture.

For example:

- Woods begin with a short staccato beat pattern repeated several times.
- Drums are added next with a sustained sound produced with rubbing hands on the drum skin.
- Triangles are added next with loud repeated strike notes.
- Finally, maracas are added with short shakes playing a repeated rhythm pattern.

8. When the class has decided on the order and layering of the instrument parts represent this with a graphic score on the board so students can visually understand the layering of texture as well.

9. \*\* After rehearsing the class texture composition, record it and play it back to the children. After listening they can provide feedback about the piece and how successful they thought the developing texture was in the music.

## b) Creating a Musical Ice Cream

This activity is designed for students in middle primary with experience in creating music in groups. Ideally students will have already listened and discussed the growing texture of *Bolero* and participated in the first creative texture activity.

1. Divide the class into groups of four students. Explain to students that they are going to create a piece of music, which grows in texture from thin to thick.
2. To facilitate the concept of thin to thick or light to heavy, play the class *Bolero* to remind them of the compositional technique of building texture in music.
3. Show the students the diagram of an ice cream.

**(See diagram at the end of the activity)**

4. Ask students to describe the shape of it from the point of the cone to the top of the ice cream.

The shape grows from a fine point into a widening cone and then is topped with a rounded ball of ice cream on top. This shape is a visual example of the growing texture in *Bolero*.

5. Ask students to devise a piece of music that grows in texture. Using the ice cream cone template, students will add a new layer of music to each widening section of the ice cream cone, finishing the piece of music with all instruments playing together to form the rounded ice cream on top.

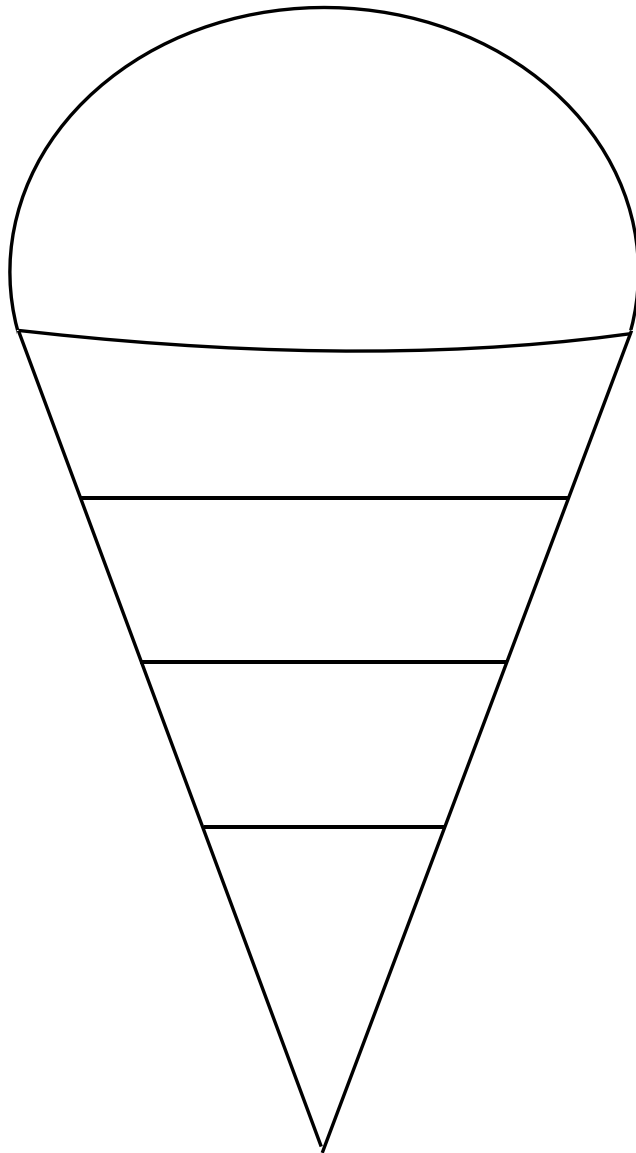
Guidelines for the creating the Musical Ice Cream composition.

1. Start at the tip of the cone with one instrument playing a part.
2. Add a second contrasting instrument and player to the second layer of cone.
3. Add a third contrasting instrument and player to the third layer of the cone.
4. Add the final instrument and player to the top layer of the cone.
5. Finish the piece with all instruments playing a “tutti” ending. The ending forms the ice cream on top of the cone. The ending “ice cream” music should be a little different to the layers of “cone” music with all instruments finishing the piece together.
6. What the students decide to play on each instrument and in each layer is up to them. Older students could build up layers of different rhythm or pitch patterns where younger students may wish to create sustained or short sound effects on their instruments. A discussion about musical balance between parts is important.
7. \*\* Students should write or draw on their ice cream template the instrument each layer introduces and some graphic way of showing the sound being created by that instrument. Students playing rhythm or pitch patterns could notate these on their ice cream template.
8. After the group compositions have been devised, students will need adequate rehearsal time to prepare the piece for performance.



9. \*\* All groups will perform their piece to the class. These could be videoed or recorded and shown to the students as a form of feedback and for assessment purposes.

NB Increase the ice cream template to A3 size to make it easier for groups to write on.



# DYNAMICS IN MUSIC

Composers use changes in dynamics to add expression to their music. Changing how loud or soft music is can change the impression created by the music. Sometimes changes in dynamics are a sudden contrast and sometimes they are gradual.

## LEARNING INTENTIONS

Students will listen, identify and explain dynamics variations heard in Bolero.

ACAMUM080, ACAMUM084

Students will compose music focussing on changes in dynamics and perform these to or with the class.

ACAMUM082, ACAMUM085

Students will create their own rhythms or melody and play these on classroom instruments.

ACAMUM082, ACAMUM086, ACAMUM090

Students will notate their composition using traditional or creative notation.

ACAMUM095

## \*\* Assessment opportunity

## Listen, Discover and Create

1. Listen to *Bolero* from beginning to end. Ask students to pay particular attention to the dynamics in the piece.
2. Discuss what happens with the dynamics throughout the piece. (The music slowly increases in dynamics throughout the piece).
3. Explicitly teach the concept of crescendo. This happens gradually throughout the whole piece of *Bolero*.
4. Try playing a whole class crescendo using voices or classroom instruments.
5. Ask students if they know the names for the different levels of loud and soft in music. List these on the board.
6. If students do not know these, teach them explicitly.

## Dynamic names and symbols.

**pp: Pianissimo = Very soft**

**p: Piano = Soft**

**mp: Mezzo-piano = Moderately soft**

**mf: Mezzo-forte = Moderately loud**

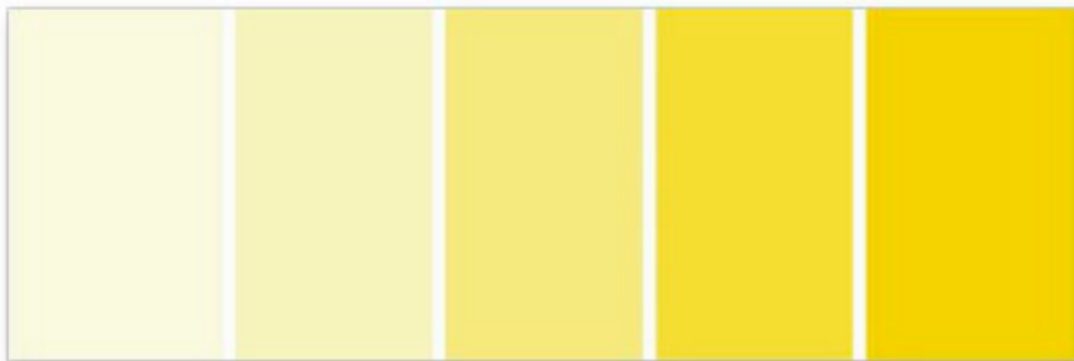
**f: Forte = Loud**

**ff: Fortissimo = Very loud**

7. Explain to the class that the dynamics in *Bolero* evolve as follows  
pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff.

## Paint a Performance Piece

To experience the composer and musician's job of increasing dynamics in the music they compose and play use a Paint Colour Sample Card, such as this one, to create a musical composition which grows in dynamics.



Firstly, create a composition as a class to model the learning process, then have students continue the process by creating an individual version.

### CLASS COMPOSITION

1. Show students a couple of paint colour charts where the colours move from lightest shade to darkest shade down the chart.
2. Explain to students that the lightest colour is going to represent the softest dynamic moving through in dynamic steps to the loudest dynamic represented by the darkest colour.
3. Ask students what the softest dynamic they want to start with is. Starting with pp or p would be best.
4. \*\* Using the visual colour chart, write on the graded dynamics for each colour asking students to tell you the correct musical names for the dynamic levels. For example, a 5 shaded colour chart might be: pp, p, mp, mf, f.
5. When the dynamics are written on the chart, ask the class to write an 8-beat rhythm pattern to play. Refer to the 8-beat, repeated rhythm pattern from Bolero as an example. (The rhythms used will depend on the experience of the children).
6. When the rhythm has been created and decided on, write this on the board next to the lines of the colour chart and dynamics.
7. Practice the composed rhythm by clapping it, using body percussion and then untuned percussion instruments.
8. When the rhythm is known by the class, add in the graded dynamics referring to the graded colour chart while moving through the "painted" piece of music.
9. Rehearse the piece focusing on the changing dynamics in each layer.
- \*\* When the piece is prepared, video or sound record a performance of it and share it with the class.
10. \*\* Discuss the success of the dynamic changes in the piece.

### Paint an individual Performance Piece

The class composition above can easily be developed into an individual or small group composition task.

Provide students with a selection of colour charts that they can choose from or add to the creative process by having the students create their own graded colour chart using pencils, crayons or textas.

\*\* Once the colour chart is created, continue the activity in the same way as the whole class version.

# TIMBRE AND FORM IN MUSIC

Timbre is the tone colour created by instruments and the way they are played. Form is the way a piece of music is built and put together.

## LEARNING INTENTIONS

Students will learn that music has a structure.

ACAMUM080, ACAMUM084, ACAMUM088

Students will listen and learn to identify instruments by their timbre.

Students will learn to sing the opening melody of *Bolero*, attempting to match the pitch and rhythm accurately.

ACAMUM080, ACAMUM084, ACAMUM088

ACAMUM081, ACAMUM085, ACAMUM089

Students will play classroom instruments to perform written rhythm patterns.

ACAMUM081, ACAMUM085, ACAMUM089

Students will create their own rhythms or melody and play these on classroom instruments.

ACAMUM082, ACAMUM086, ACAMUM090

Students will notate their composition using traditional or creative notation.

ACAMUM095

## \*\* Assessment opportunity

*Bolero* has a repeated melodic theme throughout the piece. It is made up of two sections which move around each other. The music is interesting to listen to because the timbre of the melodic line constantly changes as the melody is passed around the different instruments and families of the orchestra. The opening bars of the two sections are notated.

### Melody section 1



### Melody section 2



Play students the melodies on the piano and ask students to try and sing along. This may take a few attempts. Teach the melodies one phrase at a time.

## Listening Activity: Who dunnit? A timbre investigation!

Explain to students that they are musical detectives who have to help investigate which instruments of the orchestra steal the melody away from the flute at the start. The melody keeps being taken by different members of the orchestra, sometimes from the same family

and sometimes two different families are working together! Find out who has the melody at the end of the piece.

Before beginning this activity, it would be very helpful for students to have prior knowledge of orchestral instruments and the sound they make and the instrumental family each belongs to.

1. Who are the suspects? Review orchestral instrument families with students. Refer to the TSO *What is a Symphony Orchestra* section of the TSO Education website to identify and classify the instruments into families.
2. Explain that the composer, Ravel, decided to pass the melodies around the orchestra in his piece *Bolero*. Ask students why they thought the composer might decide to do that.
3. What does the melody sound like? Play students the melodic theme the first time it is heard on the flute.
4. Give students a picture of the instruments of the orchestra placed in their family groups. (There are excellent examples on the TSO website in *What is a Symphony Orchestra*). Explain that they need to use the picture to identify which instrument they can hear playing the *Bolero* melodies.
5. Play a recording of *Bolero*, pausing the music after each hearing of the melody. Each time ask students what instrument (s) they think is/are playing the melody.
6. Who dunnit? When the instruments are identified each time ask students to try to explain how they know. What is their evidence? Answers should include comments about the timbre of the instruments and the families they belong to.
7. The verdict is? The following chart gives the score order of the instruments who “steal” the melody throughout *Bolero*. Aim to complete the “how do you know” section.

Order	Instrument/s	How do you know?
1	Flute	
2	Clarinet	
3	Bassoon	
4	E flat clarinet	
5	Solo oboe d’amore	
6	Flute and muted trumpet	
7	Tenor saxophone	
8	Soprano saxophone	
9	French horn and celeste	
10	Woodwinds	
11	Trombone	
12	Woodwinds	
13	Violins	
14	Most of the orchestra	

8. Play a Youtube clip of *Bolero* that shows the instruments clearly as they each have their turn. The one of Gustavo Dudamel conducting the Vienna Philharmonic has great close-ups.

## Activity extensions

1. An “investigation” into why Ravel has included the Tenor and Soprano Saxophone in the orchestra.
2. What is an oboe d’amore? (It is a double reed instrument sitting between the oboe and cor anglais in size and pitch). With the class, perform an internet search about it.
3. Why does the trumpet sound different in melody 6? What reasons might the composer Ravel have for muting the trumpet? (Perhaps balance, as it is sharing the melody with the flute.) What is a mute?
4. Instead of giving the students a picture of the whole orchestra, give them a picture of one instrument only from the melodic sharing list above. \*\* Students can raise their picture in the air when they hear it play throughout the piece.
5. Listen to other pieces of music where a melody is shared around to help reinforce the different timbre of orchestral instruments. *Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra* is an excellent example.

## Pass the Musical Parcel Activity

1. Prepare a musical parcel just like the one used in the game “Pass the Parcel” at children’s birthday parties. Instead of the usual prizes in the layers of paper, add a card with a rhythm pattern and a graphic of a classroom instrument to each layer. The rhythm patterns should be appropriate to the knowledge and skills of the class. The number of layers is optional, depending on whether it is necessary for every child in the class to have a turn. Classroom instrument graphics can easily be found using a Google internet search, or draw your own!
2. Sit the class in a circle. Inside the circle place one of each instrument which appear on the rhythm card.
3. Explain to the class that each layer of the parcel has a rhythm pattern and instrument picture on a card. The rhythm on each card will be one of two options (like the two melodies in *Bolero*).
4. To start the game, explain to the class that they will need to pass the parcel around the circle while the music *Bolero* is playing. To add to the music skills explored in the game, insist that the students pass the parcel in time with the beat of the music. This will focus their listening and reinforce their beat skills.
5. Start the music and begin the game. Stop the music and see which student is holding the parcel. This student will unwrap a layer of paper to reveal a card with a rhythm and instrument on it.
6. The student will need to look at which instrument graphic is on the card and collect this instrument from the centre of the circle.
7. \*\* Ask the student to play the written rhythm from the card on the specific instrument. Student may need some support to play their pattern with success.
8. The instrument should be returned to the circle and the game continue.
9. Continue the Pass the Parcel game until all the layers have been unwrapped and performed.
10. To finish the activity, explain to the children that passing the musical parcel around (with the two rhythm patterns and playing these on contrasting instruments) is like passing the two melodies shared around the orchestral instruments in *Bolero*.

## Pass the Music Around: Composition Activity

After playing “Pass the Musical Parcel” game, introduce a composition activity incorporating the same ideas.

1. Remind students that passing the musical parcel around (with two patterns, playing these on contrasting instruments) is like passing the melodic line around the orchestral instruments in *Bolero*.
2. Perhaps listen to some of *Bolero* again and ask students to identify when the melodic line changes to a different instrument.
3. Explain to students that they are going to compose a piece of music, like *Bolero*, that shares the melodic line around from one instrument to another.
4. \*\* Form groups of four to six students. To begin with the group should compose two rhythms they can all play.
5. \*\* The group should notate their two rhythms. This could be done with traditional notation or graphic notation.
6. When the rhythms are composed each group member should choose a different instrument to play their rhythm on.
7. When the instruments are chosen the group should decide on the form of the piece; basically, what order will they perform.
8. When the form of the piece is decided the group should rehearse their piece focusing on smooth transitions from one instrument player to the next.
9. \*\* When groups have had sufficient rehearsal time each group should perform their composition to the class.
10. To prepare for the performances explain to the class audience to focus on the rhythm being passed from player to player and the instruments chosen by each performer.
11. \*\* Following each performance, discuss with the class how many times they heard each rhythm pattern. Also discuss the timbre of the instruments chosen and classify them: for example, which were woods, metals, skins or shakers.
12. The performances could also be video or sound recorded for further feedback and assessment.

This activity can easily be expanded in difficulty by changing the focus to melodic patterns. Students with more experience in playing melodic instruments and creating melodies could create a piece composing two simple melodies played on different melodic instruments. Different timbres can be highlighted by a group of different melodic classroom instruments such as xylophone, metallophone, glockenspiel, marimba, recorder, guitar and ukulele.

# ASSESSMENT

Successful completion of any of the activities in this pack will offer evidence against one or more of these outcomes, at the appropriate level for your students:

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR MUSIC, Version 8.1 (sourced 25/01/2017)		
F-2	3-4	5-6
<b>ACAMUM080</b> Develop aural skills by exploring and imitating sounds, pitch and rhythm patterns using voice, movement and body percussion	<b>ACAMUM084</b> Develop aural skills by exploring, imitating and recognising elements of music including dynamics, pitch and rhythm patterns	<b>ACAMUM088</b> Explore dynamics and expression, using aural skills to identify and perform rhythm and pitch patterns
<b>ACAMUM081</b> Sing and play instruments to improvise and practise a repertoire of chants, songs and rhymes, including songs used by cultural groups in the community	<b>ACAMUM085</b> Practise singing, playing instruments and improvising music, using elements of music, including rhythm, pitch, dynamics and form in a range of pieces, including music from the local community	<b>ACAMUM089</b> Develop technical and expressive skills in singing, playing instruments with understanding of rhythms, pitch and form in a range of pieces, including music from the local community
<b>ACAMUM082</b> Create compositions and perform music to communicate ideas to an audience	<b>ACAMUM086</b> Create, perform and record compositions by selecting and organising sounds, silences, tempo and volume	<b>ACAMUM090</b> Rehearse and perform music including music they have composed by improvising, sourcing and arranging ideas and making decisions to engage an audience
<b>ACAMUR083</b> Respond to music and consider where and why people make music, starting with Australian music, including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	<b>ACAMUR087</b> Identify intended purposes and meanings as they listen to music, using the elements of music to make comparisons, starting with Australian music, including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	<b>ACAMUR091</b> Explain how elements of music communicate meaning by comparing music from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.