Project Overview

The genesis of Soundscape started in semester 1, 2017 as a project undertaken by team MusiCo for the Physical Computing and Interaction Design course (DECO3850) at The University of Queensland. During this 13 weeks course, we took an idea and through ideation and an iterative design process we developed a concept called SoundGarden. SoundGarden was an interactive interface where people of any age and ability could work collaboratively to create a piece of music. Using the course outline aim of '*being a physical project designed for playful and open-ended interaction'* the team wanted the concept to be easy to play but be able to create recognisable music compositions.

SoundGarden evolved from the group's interest in music and our own personal experience of playing music and learning an instrument. Children are exposed to the experience of playing a musical instrument at a very young age and for many (no matter how good they are) the fear of failure or stress of playing is too great and they give up and are happy to listen or share others music.   Our research showed that many people found learning the musical language was difficult and often didn't get past more than the basic rudiments of music before they lost interest.

The project goals were to simply create an intriguing structure that invited people to come and play. Having shapes and no specific reference to musical instruments we hoped to take away the prior fears of playing an instrument and anyone could have a positive experience composing a music. The tactile surface provided a sensory experience while they explored the possible variations of the music loops which in turn created a visual display of their performance for them and the audience.

In Semester 2, 2017 Shiva Balachandran and I (Trevor Hunter), further developed the project as part of DECO700 - Special topic. The first innovation was to change the name to Soundscape. The project was developed in a joint venture between ITEE and the University of Queensland Music department. Working with the iPad ensemble employing a participatory design process we developed a large tactile interface that allowed them to extend their performance capabilities from the intimacy of the iPad to the larger interface. This made them an integral person in the whole performance and a performance that was engaging for the audience as well.

The digital musicians of the iPad Ensemble provided valued ideas and feedback to allow us to create and develop a specific interface that provided them with a usable platform where they could create and perform music for their semester assessment and future performances.