

## *Tane and the Stars* music unit

# Lesson sequence

### Introduction

Start each session with a game that engages students in listening, while using a range of sound sources of various categories.

### Pass around the sound

For example, try the 'Pass the sound around' game, as follows:

1. In a circle, students explore several sounds with their instruments.
2. Each student passes their instrument to the right, to the second person along.
3. Students explore sounds with their new instruments.
4. Students play sounds one after the other around the circle ('passing the sound around' to the left). The aim is to race the sounds around the circle, with the proviso that the next person can play only after the sound from their neighbour has died away.
5. If/when the same sound is played twice, change the direction of the sound around the circle.

Try the following variations:

- play sounds fast/slow/soft/loud;
- find a different way to play the instrument;
- play in groups of instruments with similar tone colours.

## Session 1: The sky

### Preparation

Set the scene for the story of the myth through questioning and discussion, such as through the following process.

1. Read the story aloud and discuss the pictures.
2. Find clues from the images and the text about what kinds of sounds might suggest the characters of sky, Tane, basket, stars, and moon.
3. Ask the students: "How does the artist portray each character through use of colour, shape, and size?"
4. Share the learning intentions of the unit with the students, and suggest that their work could become a soundtrack for a series of images from the book.

### The sky – ideas

- Model the character of sky.
  - Ask: "What words and phrases might describe sky?"
  - Ask: "How might we portray sky by using space and sound?"
- Students use their bodies to show the spiral shape that sky is given in the book, and describe the image.

### The sky – sound possibilities

- Ask: "What sounds could we make to represent descriptions of sky?"  
Such descriptions could include 'vast', 'darkness', 'never-ending'.
- Experiment with continuous sounds, using vocal and body sounds, found sounds, and spun drones (bull-roarers) – see *Our Music*, page 35. Some examples are:
  - dull, low sounds made by randomly flapping thick card;
  - hiss of a brush stroking the skin of a drum in a circular movement.
  - Pass sounds continuously around the spiral shape that the students made with their bodies.
  - Ask: "Which sounds suggest the mood of sky best?"
- Ask: "How else might we build a soundscape of sky?"

### Developing sound possibilities

- Discuss ways of using contrast to alter mood as the soundscape progresses, for example:

- gradually increasing volume;
- changing the number of players;
- altering the colour of the sounds by changing sound sources.

### Group task

- **Aim:** To build a sound work that expresses mood, using continuous sounds. When choosing and combining these sounds, encourage students to consider the pictures in the book, and the descriptions of the sky they came up with in 'The sky – sound possibilities'.
- **Process:** Divide the class into groups of 4–5 students.
  1. Provide each group with sound sources that make continuous sounds, such as hand-drums with soft-haired brushes, plastic/metal bowls with marbles inside, and autoharps.
  2. Encourage the groups to find techniques of playing these and other sound sources.
  3. Allow time for groups to explore, select, combine, organise, and refine their piece.

### Share work in progress

- Audio- and video-record students' work, and play it back to them.
- Support students' feedback to their peers by prompting them.
- Work with the students to clearly identify the process they have worked through to create their sound work.
- Invite each group to draw, in a simple way, the intent of their soundscape.

## Session 2: The stars and the kete

### The stars – ideas

Use a similar approach to the sky session, such as:

1. Focus on the book's images related to stars.
2. Encourage students to share their knowledge about stars, and to come up with descriptive words and ideas. For example:
  - bright,
  - twinkling,
  - shooting stars,
  - distant clusters,
  - the sun is a star.

### The stars – sound possibilities

- Prompt students with the following questions:
  - "What kinds of sounds might we use to portray different kinds of stars?"
  - "How might we show the building of stars? Would we use the same sounds to show the scattering of the stars?"
  - "What techniques are needed to play short, dry sounds? What different techniques are needed to play sustained and/or twinkling sounds?"
- In pairs, students experiment with sound sources to find sounds that 'ring on' (are sustained). For example, this can be done by using a variety of beaters with things like:
  - chains,
  - triangles,
  - tins,
  - metal cheese graters,
  - suspended metal rods,
  - glasses,
  - water.

### The kete (basket) – ideas and sound possibilities

- Ask: "What do you notice about the pattern on the kete (basket) in the pictures from the book? How might we show this weaving pattern in sound?"
  1. Model the weaving pattern in sound, taking turns with a student to vocalise.

2. In pairs, all students 'weave' a gibberish conversation.
- Ask: "How might we build a rhythmic conversation using bamboo, poi, and/or stones? What kind of overlapping pattern could we create?"
    1. Work with students to visually display the process of creating the overlapping pattern.
    2. Encourage students to explore, select, combine, organise, and refine the piece.

### **Group tasks**

- Using natural sound sources (such as poi, bamboo, and stones), build a sound-piece that is woven rhythmically as a 'conversation' between the sounds.
- Using a range of metal sound sources, and interesting ways of playing and combining their sounds, build a sound picture of stars that expresses mood. Consider:
  - the making of the stars;
  - different ways stars appear, such as 'twinkling' and 'shooting';
  - stars being thrown into the sky.
- Divide the class into groups of 4–5 students with tasks related to the images of stars or the kete. As a variation, ask one group to choose their own materials to build sounds to represent the moon.

### **Share work in progress**

- Share with one group at a time.
- Audio- and video-record students' work, and play it back to them.

First sharing session:

1. Ask two or three listeners to factually describe what they heard. For example, "I heard contrast in the way you used spaces between the sounds." Encourage use of specific music vocabulary.
2. Ask students to personally interpret what they heard.

Before next sharing session:

1. Encourage groups to refine their work after the first sharing session by asking:
  - "What might we alter to improve our sound pieces?"
  - "How best might we show contrasts between making the stars and scattering the stars?"

2. Prior to the next sharing session, encourage students to prepare by asking "What changes, if any, did you make to your piece after the first session? Why?"

## Session 3: Tane motif

### Tane – ideas

- Review pictures and text in the book to identify what Tane does in the sequence of the story.
- Explain that Tane is going to be represented by a musical 'motif'. Explain the concept of 'motif' – a brief, identifiable, musical idea, that may be repeated and developed further.

### Tane motif – rhythmic possibilities

- Explore and echo short rhythmic patterns in the air with two beaters. Encourage some students to take the lead while others imitate.
- Demonstrate and chant a rhythmic motif that can be repeated and extended, such as, "Tini whetu, tini whetu, tini whetu ki te rangi".
- Ask: "What do you notice about the movement of pitch between the sounds?"

### Tane motif – melodic possibilities

- Listen to an excerpt from Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* in which the wolf motif is played.
  - Ask: "What do you notice about the wolf motif? What has the composer done to develop it further?"
- Listen to Hirini Melbourne's *Namunamu*.
  1. Ask: "What do you notice about the way Melbourne uses his motif? Has he used a wide or narrow range of pitches?"
  2. Discuss the essence and the feel of this example of Māori music, especially how it differs from the European (Prokofiev) example.
  3. Talk about Hirini Melbourne's contributions to Māori music.
- Students chose partners, and each pair is given a tuned percussion instrument with the bars for the C pentatonic scale (that is, with the B natural and E natural bars removed or marked).
  1. Ask: "How might we express the phrase 'He purapura whetu' (seeding stars)?"

2. Students experiment in pairs, using any two pitches selected from the C pentatonic scale (that is, C natural, D natural, F natural, G natural, A natural). Explain the terms 'pentatonic' (five-tone) and 'scale' (ladder of pitches).
3. Students first chant their motif, then play it with fingers on the tuned percussion, before using the beaters.

### Share work in progress

- Find in the text where Tane was sad.
  1. Ask: "How might you change your motif to suggest a mood of sadness?" For example, by altering the tempo and the dynamics.
  2. Allow time for students to alter their work, then share some examples.
  3. Ask a few students to describe factually what they hear.
  4. Ask some students to offer a personal interpretation of what they hear.

### Group task

- Each group builds a motif, which may be played or sung, using a different part of the story but the same rhythmic pattern – that of the words: "He pu-ra-pu-ra whe-tu" (meaning 'seeding stars').
  - **Group 1** – Use text and picture(s) for "Tane made the stars" section. Ask: "How might you develop this motif to suggest this way of making?"
  - **Group 2** – Use text and picture(s) for "Tane made a big basket" section. Ask: "How might you develop this motif to suggest a process of making?"
  - **Group 3** – Use text and picture(s) for "Tane took them up to the sky" section. Ask: "How might you develop this motif to show the movement of flying high?"
  - **Group 4** – Use text and picture(s) for "Tane scattered them over all the night sky" section. Ask: "How might you suggest Tane's strength and movement in the way you play the motif?"

### Share work in progress

- Each group shares their motif.
  - Ask two or three listeners to factually describe what they heard, followed by some personal interpretation. Encourage use of specific musical vocabulary.
- Audio- and video-record students' work, and play it back to them.



## Session 4: Bringing it all together

### Linking the motifs

Students share ideas about ways the sound-pieces could be ordered or linked together. The sequence could be determined by the story sequence (forwards/backwards), or by linking contrasting sound-pieces randomly. Alternatively, each sound-piece could stand alone.

### Performance

If the class decides to prepare a performance of their sound-pieces for an audience, several rehearsals would be required. When planning these sessions, consider the following points.

- Students could be encouraged to develop specific performance skills and techniques, such as focusing on co-ordination and timing.
- It is important students understand that they need to not only refine (alter to improve) their work, which takes time, but also to rehearse ('re-hear' the decisions already made) prior to a performance, when all the details, including starting and finishing, are practised.

### Evaluation

Encourage students to evaluate their own and others' creative musical inventions, based on agreed creating and performing criteria (as suggested above).