

MSO

CLASSROOM

SIMPLE GIFTS ARRANGEMENT

SUGGESTED FOR:

Students with 2 or more years of musical training.
Can be completed in collaboration or individually.

RESOURCES:

Your instrument or a piano, recording device.

TIME: 15–60+ minutes.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

Attend the MSO Classroom session exploring Aaron Copland's iconic *Appalachian Spring*.

Copland famously includes the well known folk melody affectionately known as "*Simple Gifts*". Take a listen to your MSO performing Copland's original setting of [Movt. VII Shaker Melody "The Gift to Be Simple"](#).

The first statement of the Simple Gifts melody occurs in the sonorous middle range of the clarinet and is accompanied by sparsely scored violins playing high in their range. The second statement hears the clarinets upper range shadowed by bassoon playing in parallel harmony. The resonant cello performs the third statement in rhythmic augmentation (the rhythmic values are doubled) creating a sense of broadness, before succumbing to the upper strings presenting the same melody in canon. The upper strings continue with the fourth iteration of The Gift to Be Simple, lifting the energy with an ascending key change, dimanuted melody (rhythms halved) and detached articulation to contribute to a spirited dance-like character. In the penultimate statement, the melody is passed through the flute and clarinet (again rhythmically augmented) before a final grandiose statement hears the melody in the upper voices triumphantly soaring over the emphatically grounding low voices accenting beats 1 & 3.

THE TASK:

Develop your own arrangement of *The Gift to Be Simple*.

DEVELOPMENT:

Step 1) Pick up your instrument and learn the melody of *The Gift to Be Simple* (see notation below).

Step 2) Consider the character you would like to create with your arrangement and how you might use the elements of music to imbue this (e.g. fast tempo, short rhythms, detached articulation and high register = spirited and playful character).

Step 3) Record yourself playing the melody. Listen back and imagine the sound of your own accompaniment...

- What instruments do you hear?
- Does the accompaniment play the same rhythm as the melody or something different?
- Is the accompaniment rhythmically busy or simple?
- Are there times where the melody is played without accompaniment?
- Does the harmony sound simple or use some chromatic passing notes for some extra spice?

CURRICULUM LINKS

- Victorian F–10:
 - Music — *Explore and Express*
 - Music — *Music Practices*
- VCE Music Performance:
 - Unit 2 Outcome 4 — *Organisation of Sound*
 - Outcome 3 — *Music Language*
- VCE Music Style and Composition:
 - Outcome 3 — *Creative Response*

REFINEMENT & RECORDING:

Step 4) Refine your arrangement by playing your imagined accompaniment on your instrument, a piano or inputting it into a notation program like Sibelius, Finale, Dorico or Noteflight etc.

Step 5) Try using a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) like Garage Band or an acapella app to re-record your melody and add your accompaniment.



EXTENSION #1: MAKE IT A MOVEMENT

Repeat steps 2 to 5 (see above) to create 2 or more statements of the melody and accompaniment. Pull your different versions together to create an entire movement just like Copland did.

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THE GIFT TO BE SIMPLE

JOSEPH BRACKETT JR. (1848)

Musical notation for the first system, measures 1-4. The system includes a vocal line in treble clef and an accompaniment section labeled "ACCOMP" with two staves (treble and bass clefs).

5

Musical notation for the second system, measures 5-8. The system includes a vocal line in treble clef and an accompaniment section labeled "ACCOMP" with two staves (treble and bass clefs).

9

Musical notation for the third system, measures 9-12. The system includes a vocal line in treble clef and an accompaniment section labeled "ACCOMP" with two staves (treble and bass clefs).

13

Musical notation for the fourth system, measures 13-16. The system includes a vocal line in treble clef and an accompaniment section labeled "ACCOMP" with two staves (treble and bass clefs).

BIOS



NICHOLAS BOCHNER

After training in Adelaide and London, Nicholas spent 3 years as Artist-in-Residence at the University of Queensland as part of the ensemble *Perihelion*, forging a strong reputation as an exponent of contemporary music. He joined the MSO as Assistant Principal Cello in 1998. Since then he has appeared as a soloist, chamber musician and recitalist. He has also taught cello and improvisation at the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM).

Nicholas has always had a strong commitment to music education and community engagement. In 2010 he was awarded the Dame Roma Mitchell Churchill Fellowship to study the LSO's iconic Discovery program and the use of improvisation in training classical musicians at the Guildhall School of Music.

In 2016, Nicholas' considerable experience as an orchestral musician and his passion for communication led him to undertake a fellowship at ANAM where he developed, conducted and presented educational concerts for primary school children. During the fellowship he was mentored by Paul Rissmann, Graham Abbott and the legendary Richard Gill AO. Since then he has presented educational concerts for children and adults for MSO, ANAM and the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra.

In 2020 he was named the MSO's Cybec Assistant Conductor for Learning and Engagement. He is also the conductor of the Melbourne University Biomedical Students' Orchestra. In support of his work as an education presenter, Nicholas has been studying conducting with Benjamin Northey and won a coveted place at the TSO's 2019 Australian Conducting Academy.



JAMES LE FEVRE

For the past 15 years, James Le Fevre has been sharing his passion and enthusiasm for music education with students and colleagues from around the country across the Independent, Catholic and State School systems. He was recently appointed as Head of Music at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School having served as The Arts Learning Area Leader and also Director of Bands at Our Lady of Sion College for 7 years prior. As an active member of the music community, James performs regularly across a wide range of genres and is forging a reputation as an engaging presenter and conductor. He proudly serves as the Immediate Past National President and as a Vice President of the Australian Band and Orchestra Directors Association – Victoria.

James holds a Bachelor of Music with Honours from the Australian National University majoring in Jazz Saxophone, and education qualifications from Monash University. In 2016, James completed studies in Education Leadership on scholarship to the Expert and Leading Teachers Colloquium through the National Excellence in School Leadership Initiative.

Thank you to our content and resource consultants:

James Le Fevre, Head of Music, Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School



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