

# Creative Activities for Instrumental Groups & Ensembles

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Maryborough Music Conference  
July 2023

## Group lessons:

- Provide holistic opportunities to cover the widest possible range of musical experiences
- Accommodates peer-to-peer learning, empowering students as learners as they interact & problem-solve with their peers.
- Facilitates effective implementation of creative tasks including improvisational and exploratory activities.
- Allow students to develop their skills while observing each other.
- Provide opportunities for class discussions which offer deeper learning experiences. Students can reflect on their learning together.

Group learning allows us to 'step back' and watch out students work. Teachers can listen to students engage with each other as they discuss their ideas... their use of language is important in gauging their level of understanding of the tasks.

## Aural Skills:

- Are the most fundamental skills required to play music. If students can predictively hear what they are doing or about to do, they are well on the way to developing independence as musicians.
- Inform notation reading by allowing students to make the connections between 'sound and symbol' — the same as any verbal language.
- Give students confidence to work out the music on their own as well as explore improvise and compose.
- Allow the exploration of numerous styles of music with or without notation.
- Allow the players to correct intonation and understand harmonies.

*If we advocate that music is a form of self expression, then music needs to be taught in a way that reflects this; by giving opportunities to students for musical self expression from the beginning.*

# Activities for Groups & Ensembles

## Start! Stop!

Students learn the conducting cues to 'start' and 'stop' (cut off). Students respond to given cues, watching for cut-offs while practising producing sound. The teacher conducts varied lengths of playing and gaps.

### Extension Activities:

- When the game is known, use students conductors.
  - Advanced bowing techniques can be used in this setting as a way to explore new skills in a 'lower stakes' setting, allowing for many repetitions.
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## Mind Your P's & F's

This follows on from the previous activity.

Students learn conducting cues for dynamics. Repeat the activity with 'starts', 'stops', and dynamics too. Vary the dynamics with crescendos and decrescendos but also stay at one dynamic level too. Ask students what they had to change to produce the correct dynamics.

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## 5 Beats, Ready Go!

Call the signal '5 beats, ready go' (to the rhythm *ta ta ti-ti ta*). Students respond playing 5 crotchet notes. Call '4 beats, ready go', and students play 4 crotchet notes in time, continuing counting down to one beat.

Mix it up:

- Reverse the order
  - Use random numbers
  - Change tempo
  - Change dynamics
  - Merge the first three activities.
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## Pluck in Time

Students each plucks a single crotchet note (the same note) evenly around the circle. Next, students alternate between playing a single crotchet beat and two quaver beats, giving a *ta ti-ti* rhythm around the room — still on the same note. Once the tempo has settled, students choose any single note from a scale or tetrachord, (their own note choice) and decide to play that note as a single crotchet or two quavers.

One student starts and the students play a few laps around the circle.

- Were there any strong melodic moments?

Reverse the order

- Which one did we like better, why?
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## The Arpeggiator

Students play a one-octave arpeggio which they learn aurally. To be in 4/4 time, play crotchet beats with a minim final note. Repeat in a 'loop' until students are able to play it confidently. Next, the class plays the arpeggio but this time the teacher plays an ostinato over the top. Do this as a 'loop' many times.

Stop the class. Who has learned the teacher's ostinato having only heard it played while the students were playing the arpeggio?

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## Read the Room

The full lesson plan for this activity can be found [HERE](#)

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## Strings Together & Band Together

[www.inapiece.com.au](http://www.inapiece.com.au)

20 lesson plans, all aural activities. Activity summary

- Skills grid
- Tips for classroom composition and creative activities
- Introduction and classroom set-ups
- Focus learning points
- Step by step instructions
- Extension activities
- Discussion points for students
- Teacher notes — pedagogy underpinning each activity

