

# VSO

The Concert Hall.ca

presented by  TELUS

# VSO Connects

## Questions?

education@vancouverSymphony.ca  
<https://theconcerthall.ca/the-music-room>

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*\*Note - For the first lesson of this module, teachers may choose to hire a post-secondary music student. Please contact the Vancouver Symphony Education Department at [education@vancouverSymphony.ca](mailto:education@vancouverSymphony.ca) for more information.*

### Overview

#### **Suggested Audience: Grades 7–12**

- It is recommended that the students are registered in Instrumental Music.

#### **Essential Understanding**

- Students will create their own soundscape compositions using online software and through collaboration with fellow students. They will gain a greater understanding of contemporary music history and innovations by Vancouver composers, such as Soundwalking. Concepts of Sound Density and Acoustic Ecology are introduced.

#### **Links to Core Competencies**



##### Communication

- Connect and engage with others to share and develop ideas.
- Acquire, interpret, and present information in innovative ways.



##### Creative Thinking

- Novelty and value: Students get creative ideas that are both novel and have value. There are degrees of novelty—an idea may be new to that student or it may be new to their peers, or it may be novel to a larger community.



##### Critical Thinking

- Develop and design a creative project.
- Analyze the significance of a musical work.



##### Social Responsibility

- Explore how art can comment on social and global issues.

#### **First Peoples Principles of Learning**

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational, (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.



UNDERSTAND

#### **Big Ideas**

- Aesthetic experiences have the power to transform the way we think and feel.
- Music offers unique ways of exploring our identity and sense of belonging.
- Collaborative music experiences can build community and nurture relationships with others.

## Learning Standards

 <b>Curricular Competencies</b>	 <b>Content</b>
<p>Explore and Create</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore a composer's musical and expressive intentions.</li> <li>• Explore a variety of contexts and their influences on musical works, including place and time.</li> </ul> <p>Reason and Reflect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe, interpret, and consider how musicians use techniques, technology, and environments in composition and performance.</li> </ul> <p>Communicate and Document</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Express personal voice, cultural identity, and perspective through music.</li> </ul>	<p>Elements in the Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Technical skills, strategies, and technologies.</li> <li>○ Contributions of innovative artists from a variety of genres, contexts, periods, and cultures.</li> <li>○ Personal and social responsibility associated with creating, performing, and responding in music.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Students will become aware of and experience the following learning standards.

### **Prelude: Introduction to Electronic Music and Soundscapes (PSMS OR Teacher)**

45 minutes

- 1-2 mins. Explain that the way composers have represented different musical ideas, such as bird calls, has changed over time because of the advent of technology.
- 5 mins. Play excerpt from Beethoven's *Symphony No.6*. Briefly explain the background of the piece, including how long ago it was composed. Suggested questions:
  - Which instruments are featured here, and which birds do you think they are representing?
  - How does this contribute to the subtitle of the symphony, 'Pastoral'?

**Beethoven, Symphony no. 6** – <https://youtu.be/p4CCU2-AFZE?t=1166>

*Ludwig van Beethoven's sixth symphony was composed in 1808 and first performed on December 22nd, 1808. This movement is called 'Pastoral', and depicts a peaceful woodland scene. The flute imitates the sound of a nightingale, the clarinets imitate a cuckoo, and the oboe represents a quail. (19:30).*

- 5 mins. Play excerpt from Respighi's *Pines of Rome*. Explain that Respighi used a phonograph recording of a real nightingale, which had never been done in orchestral music before. Suggested question:
  - How is this a different experience as a listener than Beethoven's imitation of the nightingale using a flute?

**Respighi, Pines of Rome** – <https://youtu.be/mdve48nptNk?t=924>

*Ottorino Respighi's 'Pines of Rome' was completed in 1924, and premiered on December 14th 1924 in Rome. This movement depicts the full moon shining on a temple on a hill. To create the sound of the nightingale, Respighi requires the orchestra to use a phonograph recording of birds.*

- 10 mins. Play excerpt from Edgard Varèse's *Poème électronique*. This is pure electronic music, where he creates a sonic experience using both recorded and computer generated

sounds. While listening, try to figure out which sounds are computer generated, and which are recorded.

- *There is a suggested Nearpod Quiz that goes with this assignment. Please contact [education@vancouverSymphony.ca](mailto:education@vancouverSymphony.ca) for login information.*
  - If not using Nearpod: Varèse asked the question: “what is music but organized noises?” Discuss and debate: What do you think separates the definition of music from sound? Is there a difference?

Varèse, **Poème électronique** – <https://youtu.be/zEvS0EthYbU>

*Edgard Varèse composed this piece to be played at the Philips Pavilion in the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair. He composed it with the intention of liberating sound from music and uses noises that are not usually considered “musical” such as sirens, scraping sounds, and an “airplane rumble.”*

- *3-5 mins. Introduce the concept of Sound Density. Ask the students what they think this term may mean.*
  - *Sound Density - Sound Density describes the dimension of musical texture related to how many sounds are happening concurrently. An instance of high sound density would involve many sounds happening together (eg. a symphony orchestra playing a tutti section), and ‘low density’ would describe an instance of few sounds (eg. a solo voice and guitar).*
- *10 mins. Play a five minute segment from Vancouver composer Hildegard Westerkamps’ composition Talking Rain. Have the class listen deeply, with their eyes closed.*
  - *There is a suggested Nearpod Quiz that goes with this assignment. Please contact [education@vancouverSymphony.ca](mailto:education@vancouverSymphony.ca) for login information.*
    - If not using Nearpod:
      - Some moments are “low density” - few noises, such as 5:00.
      - Some moments are “high density” - lots of different noises, such as 9:18.
      - What are some high density and low density environments you are exposed to each day?
  - How do the different segments make you feel? Tense? Stressed? Relaxed?
  - How does a piece like this speak to contemporary environmental issues? How does noise pollution impact your daily life? How actively do you listen on a daily basis?
  - Do you consider this kind of composition to be music?

Westerkamp, **Talking Rain** – <https://youtu.be/VZF88yrK5Gg?t=263>

*Hildegard Westerkamp composed this piece in 1997 from different locations around BC, including Vancouver and Haida Gwaii. The last section, (16:45) was recorded during a soundwalk in Lighthouse Park, and footsteps can be heard. The class will be completing a soundwalk next lesson*

### **Soundwalking and Project Introduction: Teacher**

60 minutes — See attached assignment worksheet and teacher guidesheet.

- *10 mins. Introduce the concept of Acoustic Ecology: the study of the relationship between people and the sounds in our environment. These studies were pioneered by Vancouver composers at SFU, such as R. Murray Shafer, who created the World Soundscape Project. Listen to the Vancouver Harbour in 1973, from that project: <http://www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio-webdav/excerpts/HarbourAmbience.mp3> (3:57)*

- Discuss. What sounds can you hear? What sounds do you think would be different today?
- This originally was a musical concept of active listening, but has branched out into other disciplines as well. Which other disciplines do you think would be keenly interested in studying the relationships between humans and their environment, and why?
  - Ex. Marine biology, urban planning
- 3-7 mins. Tell the class that you will be going on a soundwalk - a mindful walk whose purpose is to pay attention to the acoustic environment in which we live.
  - Optional: Play segments of CBC Ideas program, which includes Hildegard Westerkamp as an interviewee: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/radioideas/the-signal-of-noise-1.2913370>
    - Potential timepoints: 10:30-14:45, 30:00-31:45
- Lead a 10-15 minute outdoor soundwalk. This will prepare students for their own soundwalks at home. Use prompts from the Teacher's Guide. Bring assignment sheets to hand out after, or send out digital links beforehand.
- Split the class into groups of 3-5. Introduce the composition assignment, walking the class through the project steps.
  - Have students brainstorm for their compositions with their groups outside for the remainder of class.

### **Go on a Soundwalk: At-home assignment**

Ten minutes

- Record at least four thirty-second audio clips
  - Try to capture various contrasting sounds
  - Can be recorded on phones. *\*Ensure they can be saved as mp3 files. Note that some pre-installed voice memo apps may not work. See suggestions below\**

### **Composition project: Teacher**

Suggested number of classes: 2. 45-60 minutes each. Requires use of computers.

- 10-15 mins. Listen to Butler's *And Birds Do Sing*, along with the associated interview.
  - What are some of the techniques that the composer uses to change the mood throughout the piece?
  - How does the birdsong of this piece differ from Beethoven's, both in its choice of instruments and mood? (Refresh students' memories by playing Symphony No. 6 from the first class)
  - How can music, of any genre, speak to and promote social change?
  - Brainstorm methods students can use in their own compositions to speak to issues that are important to them.

Butler, **And Birds Do Sing**: <https://theconcerthall.ca/episode/sturm-und-drang-haydn-butler>  
*This piece was commissioned in 2010 by the Victoria Symphony Orchestra. Jennifer Butler began composing this piece with the idea that it would be an introspective journey that would grow continually more desolate, in a pessimistic response to the challenges of the 21st Century. However, after the birth of her daughter, she found herself drawn to sounds of hope. After an ominous opening, the clarinet enters with a call of alarm, which gradually grows to overlapping melodies based on birdsong. She incorporates fragments of a hopeful melody, which gradually lengthens to an eight-part canon.*

- Have students compile and edit their compositions based upon Project Sheet and Audacity/Soundtrap Guides. Provide assistance as necessary.

*Optional: have students record samples of playing their instruments to contribute to the soundscape. Encourage them to explore non-traditional sounds on their instruments, such as clicking their keys, blowing air with no pitch etc. These are called extended techniques, of which Varèse was an early pioneer!*

### **Presentation of Finished Compositions: Teacher**

45 minutes

- Each group will have nominated one composition to be presented to the class.
  - Have the composer discuss their intentions behind the piece
  - Each student in the group shares where they collected their recordings.
- Have students self-reflect and discuss the experience, as well as the value, of deep listening and soundwalking.

### **Feedback Forms**

Please complete the attached Student and Teacher Feedback Forms to [education@vancouverSymphony.ca](mailto:education@vancouverSymphony.ca). The information we receive will help us improve and refine the program for future implementations. We encourage you to send your soundwalking compositions to us, with student approval; selected pieces may be featured on TheConcertHall.ca.

### **Suggested Resources**

#### **Music**

- Beethoven *Symphony No. 6*: <https://youtu.be/p4CCU2-AFZE?t=1166>
- Butler *And Birds Do Sing*: <https://theconcerthall.ca/episode/sturm-und-drang-haydn-butler>
- Respighi *Pines of Rome*: <https://youtu.be/mdve48nptNk?t=924>
- Westerkamp *Talking Rain*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZF88yrK5Gg>

#### **Soundwalking**

- A guide to soundwalking: [https://www.hildegardwesterkamp.ca/writings/writingsby/?post\\_id=13&title=soundwalking](https://www.hildegardwesterkamp.ca/writings/writingsby/?post_id=13&title=soundwalking)
- Soundwalking as ecological practice: [https://www.hildegardwesterkamp.ca/writings/writingsby/?post\\_id=14&title=%E2%80%8Bsoundwalking-as-ecological-practice-](https://www.hildegardwesterkamp.ca/writings/writingsby/?post_id=14&title=%E2%80%8Bsoundwalking-as-ecological-practice-)
- About soundwalking: <https://newmusic.org/soundwalks/>

#### **Composition Tools**

- Audacity Sound Editor: <https://www.audacityteam.org> (free, open source, download)
- Soundtrap Sound Editor: <https://soundtrap.com> (user friendly, free, browser based)

#### **Free Sound Recording Apps**

- Android: Easy Voice Recorder, Voice Recorder, etc.
- Apple: AVR Awesome Voice Recorder, etc. (If students use built in Voice Memos - it records in m4a, and they can convert to mp3 using Apple Music app)