# KIRAVANU A NEW CHILDREN'S OPERA

with libretto by Mary Elizabeth, music by James Humberstone and classroom activities by both.

## SAMPLE TEACHING KIT

for Primary Schools K-6

For FURTHER INFORMATION: www.mlcsyd.nsw.edu.au or email music@mlcsyd.nsw.edu.au





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### Introduction

#### About the pedagogy of Kiravanu

The children's opera *Kiravanu* has been written to integrate into the K-6 curriculum. In its current form, each scene is accompanied by music and cross-curricular lesson plans which are mapped to the NSW syllabus. In 2009 mapping to all Australian state and territory syllabi will be completed.

The benefit of this approach is that preparing the opera in your school shouldn't have to involve hundreds of hours of outof-school rehearsals. The majority of the opera can be taught in class and then brought to the stage within a few weeks.

The characterisation of the opera relates to age groups, so that the whole school doesn't have to learn all of the opera. The characters are:

- *Kiravanu* Years 5 and 6
- Creatures Years 3 and 4
- Elements Years K, 1 and 2

There are also solo parts for both students and teachers as well as many opportunities for instrumentalists to solo. There is a professional pit orchestra score but this can be substituted by a recording provided on CD.

#### The story of *Kiravanu*

The story of *Kiravanu* was conceived by Mary Elizabeth, a specialist language, literacy and curriculum expert based in the US, and James Humberstone, composer and music educator. The libretto was written by Mary Elizabeth. She introduces the opera:

It was a very dark moment in the history of the world—the present moment, as it happens—and Father Time knew that something must be done if the destructive disregard of the world and its denizens was not to have the direst consequences for all. By now, there was no chance that a single hero or even a small group could do enough to bring us back. No: only the concerted effort of the many could address the issues of global warming, drought, famine, endangered species, poverty, and pollution with which the world was fraught. And so, Father Time took the daring step of calling forth the Kiravanu—the spirits of each and every natural place in the world—to gather with him and see what might be done to save the world. But the Kiravanu cannot stay long from their homes without detriment to the world. Will they take the risk of answering Father Time's call? Is there enough time to accomplish anything before they must return home? And where can they find the help that is so sorely needed?

#### What's in this sample teaching kit?

We've included two complete pieces of music from Act I of the opera, and included all of the related lesson plans. You could take these into your classes today and teach them as stand-alone lessons quite easily. Also available are sample recordings of both works, with and without the vocal parts (so you can use them as backing tracks in your classroom to practice performance).

In *You May Safely Go*, Eileen and John, parents of twins Pat and Molly, are giving their permission for the twins to explore the woods where they are camping (you might rightly suspect that Pat and Molly may find the *Kiravanu*!). In *Call of the Creatures*, the Kiravanu call the Creatures to help them save the world, and they call them by groups.

# Summary of cross-curricular lesson plans in entire opera

(Ones included in this kit in bold)

Lesson plan	Eng.	Sci.	HSIE	Arts	PDHPE
Cross-curricular Themes in the Opera					
Comprehension and Integration Questions for Kiravanu	V		$\checkmark$	ν	
Imagination and Literature				V	
Poetry in the Libretto					
Dialect					
The Writing Process: Rewriting/Editing					
Kiravanu Alphabet					
References and Allusions					
Rhetorical Figures					
Sensory Language					
Contrast					
Possible Ending					
Characterization Continuum					
Theme					
Animal Categories		$\checkmark$			
Places					
Natural Disasters and Environmental Impact					
Introducing the Opera					
Kiravanu Character and Movement					
Plot				$\checkmark$	
Setting I				$\checkmark$	
Characterization				$\checkmark$	
Setting II				$\checkmark$	
Animal Behaviour and Movement					
Extending Animal Characterization				$\checkmark$	
Elements Character and Movement				$\checkmark$	
Decision Making	ν				
Persuasion		ļ.	1	ľ	



## Kiravanu Music Lesson Plans

Music lesson plans relating to Act I, scene i You May Safely Go

#### Cross curricular related lesson plans:

- Cross Curricular Themes in the Opera
- Imagination and Literature
- Poetry in the Libretto
- Characterization
- References and Illusions
- Settings
- Sensory Language
- Writing Process

#### Musical concepts

Chords, instrumentation, arrangement

#### Listening

#### All years

Listen to the full performance of You May Safely Go

Discuss what the piece is about and whether students feel assured that it is safe for the twins to proceed from the assurance their parents give them.

NSW outcomes and indicators MUES1.4, MUS1.4

#### Performing

#### Years 3-6

There is a choral arrangement of *You May Safely Go*. The range will be too high for very young groups, but you should be able to attempt it with years 3-6. Rather than singing in parts, the whole class should learn all parts. Singing in parts becomes an extension.

NSW outcomes and indicators MUS2.1, MUS3.1

#### Organising Sound

#### Years 3-6

The whole of You May Safely Go is based upon two alternating chords. These are:



To make these chords easier to perform on melodic percussion instruments, we will transpose them into C:



Write these chords on a whiteboard, or project the page at the end of this document with a data projector. Get students to name the notes in the chord and write them on if you feel this is helpful.

Students should play melodic percussion. Try voicing the first chord in different ways – you could allow children to choose any note they like from the four, or you could ask one child to tell other children what to play (the role of the arranger), or you could arrange the chord yourself. Once each child has a note from the chord to play, they should play it for four crotchets.

Go through the same process for the second chord. After playing it and deciding on an arrangement, reinforce to the class that each child has *two* notes: one for each chord. They may be the same note. Then play the two chords alternately, one bar of crotchets for chord one, and one bar for chord two, repeating.

Try playing quavers instead of crotchets. Try minims. Try changing the frequency of notes for xylophones and metallophones (metallophones longer notes).

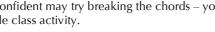


Then, sing You May Safely Go over the two chords. They may need help pitching the first note of each section, so remember that you're singing a tone higher than the vocal score when you give pitches.

#### Extension

Students should work out the melody on xylophone or recorder, and play a solo over the accompaniment. Students should improvise over the two chords.

Look at the score and see how the chords have been written in different ways (broken chords), especially in the opening. Students who are confident may try breaking the chords - you may find this easier as a small group activity rather than a whole class activity.



NSW outcomes and indicators MUS2.2, MUS3.2

#### Music lesson plans relating to Act I, scene ii, Call of the Creatures

#### Cross curricular related lesson plans:

- Cross Curricular Themes in the Opera
- Characterization
- **Animal Categories**
- Animal Behaviour and Movement

#### Musical concepts

Descriptive writing (programmatic music) Many performance aspects

#### Listening

#### All years

Listen to the recording of Call of the Creatures. Some of the song is quite funny. Why is it funny?

When we hear the invitation to the Insects and the Birds, the pit orchestra make some sounds that suggest these instruments. Listen to these sections and describe what you hear.

The writing is descriptive of the animals themselves. When we write music to describe an object or a place or a feeling we can call this programmatic music.

Collections of recordings such as Norton or Kamien include a lot of programmatic music for wider listening.

#### **Extension listening**

Listen to and study Saint-Saëns' Carnival of the Animals. In this work, as well as sometimes imitating the sounds that creatures make (eg the clarinet in The Cuckoo in the Forest) as happens in Call of the Creatures, Saint-Saens represents creatures musically: for instance, the elephant is slow and low to represent its large size. Explore the music by thinking of appropriate movements to go with each section of the music and discussing how each section represents each animal or group of animals.

#### Years 4-6 only

At the end of these lesson plans are excerpts from the score for projecting in the class or printing out. Listen again to the recording, listening out for these strange sounds. Introduce the term extended techniques to the oldest years.

The computer program Sibelius Instruments contains recordings of many extended techniques for most orchestral instruments.

In addition, this song can be used to introduce the 6/8 time signature. Examine why it sounds quite different to 3/4, which has the same number of guavers in the bar (the Dance of the Creatures, which ends Act I scene ii is very deliberately a 3/4 version of the same chord pattern, so comparisons can easily be made). Introduce the terms compound and simple time.

NSW outcomes and indicators MUES1.4, MUS1.4, MUS2.4, MUS3.4

#### Performing

This movement is divided into several parts: the Kiravanu call to the various groups of Creatures; each group of Creatures responds to the Kiravanu; and the Kiravanchestra plays on-stage percussion parts. As such, there follows a guide to how you should approach all of this material with different age groups, and then detailed lesson plans for learning the material.

#### Years K-2

May enjoy learning parts of the song, especially the animal parts, although they may find the chorus easiest to join in with.

#### Years 3-4

The singing parts of the creatures are divided into amphibians (frogs and newts), insects (ants and butterflies), reptiles (lizards and snakes), birds (storks and morepork owls) and mammals. The mammals have their own song, so they may be

taken from the stronger singers or generally from year 4. Other groups should be chosen to balance stronger and weak voices.

#### Years 5-6

The Kiravanu have simple ostinato-based melodic percussion parts throughout the *Call of the Creatures*. In addition, it is the Kiravanu and Father Time who call the Creatures, so they should all learn the whole song, concentrating on their parts.

#### Amphibians

When the amphibians first speak, we hear them speaking in their native tongue. The text has been very carefully thought out and therefore should be learned spoken first. The meaning and pronunciation are given here:

Kurutty, kurutty, Brekekekèx	Kurutty: Hungarian frog. Kurutty is reportedly pronounced "kurutch" – so 2 syllables, not 1. The rhythm should therefore be: Ku - rut-ty Ku - rut-ty Ku - rut-ty Ku - rut-ty Ku - rutch Ku rutch		
	Brekekekèx: Greek Frog.		
Koàx, koàx, koáx (Shhhhlp-shhhhlp)	<b>Koàx: Greek frog</b> . Ancient Greek "I can quote the croaking chorus from The Frogs of Aristophanes."		
	Notes for anyone not fluent in International Ranidae and Caudata:		
	<b>Shhhhlp-shhhhlp: Newts</b> . This is not voiced, and should be made while sucking in air, so it cannot be sung exactly, but should be added rhythmically by the newts – which must be in chorus in order for the sound to carry.		
Kero kero, Kwak kwak, Kva-kva,	Japanese, Dutch and Russian frogs		
Goonk goonk, Rek rek, Coa (Shhhhlp-shhhhlp).	<b>Goonk: Bullfrog</b> . Goonk is made up to represent guttural bullfrog sound.		
	Rek rek: Tree frog. Made up for tree frog		
	Coa: French frog. French /koh-wah/		

The amphibians should then be broken into the nine groups of different frogs and newts above and given a part each in this verse. Together it works like this:



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#### Reptiles

Similarly, reptiles break up into two groups of Lizards and Snakes. Reptiles should be encouraged to understand the humourous tension between them and the amphibians (ie they want to eat them, but King Elyasu will not let them).

#### Birds

The Morepork owls should listen to the sounds of Morepork owls from New Zealand so they can imitate the sound. See 'MOREPORK', from An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, edited by A. H. McLintock, originally p published in 1966. Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 18-Sep-2007. URL: <a href="http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/1966/M/Morepork/en">http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/1966/M/Morepork/en</a>. The sound can be heard at <a href="http://www.teara.govt.nz/TheBush/NativeBirdsAndBats/BirdsOfPrey/2/ENZ-Resources/Standard/1/en">http://www.teara.govt.nz/1966/M/Morepork/en</a>.

#### Other creatures

The other creatures are more straight forward. For mammals, see the lesson on Song of the Mammals.

#### Kiravanu – song

The call (song) should be taught before the percussion parts, as this will make learning the parts easier: students will understand that there is are verses and a repeated chorus, and their structure (especially for the interruptions, which make counting harder – better to learn by rote).

In class, it may be easier to sing all parts, including Queen Kirelya's opening first verse. It will certainly be more engaging than waiting for the other parts. However, for learning their part only, the CD contains versions of *Call of the Creatures* with the answering parts only (there is one version with only the Kiravan calls, and one with only the Creature answers).

#### Kiravanu – melodic percussion

After learning the song, learn the melodic percussion parts. If possible, learn as a class, and sing at the same time. Remember that there should be (at least) twice as many xylophones to metallophones.

Don't learn the chorus and the verse accompaniment at the same time: spend one week perfecting each before introducing the concept of playing both. Teach the students each part by playing it all together. Then divide the class into parts and layer them in. The patterns for the verse are:





In the soprano and alto metallophone chromatic notes have been given as cues only where this is possible. The patterns for the chorus are:



Once each pattern has been learned, perform while singing. Perform with the backing of the pit orchestra on the CD. NSW outcomes and indicators MUES1.1, MUS1.1, MUS2.1, MUS3.1

#### **Organising Sound**

#### All years

Going back to the listening lessons, brainstorm sounds that other creatures make. You could give the students parameters for their brainstorming:

- K-2: Farm creatures
- 3-4: African creatures
- 5-6: Native creatures of your own country, or domestic pets

List the creatures and ask students to make the appropriate sounds.

On a whiteboard, write the name of each creature, the sound it makes get children to design a shape to represent that sound.

#### Years K-2

Create a graphic score that might represent a trip through a farm, or a story based on a farm like *Chicken Licken*, or *The Little Red Hen*. Perform the score as a class, with groups of children playing different creatures.

#### Years 3-4

Create a graphic score that might represent an exploration of a part of Africa, or a story based in Africa like *The Lion King*. Perform the score as a class, with groups of children playing different creatures.

#### Years 5-6

Looking at the list of creatures, think of an instrument that could make a similar sound to that creature or a sound representative of that animal (link to the listening on Saint-Saens *Carnival of the Animals* above).

Where possible, choose instruments that members of the class play, or choose from a wide range of classroom percussion instruments.

Thinking of a narrative, arrange the sounds as a graphic score, and perform as a class.

If possible, notate the individual sounds.

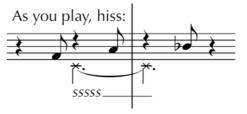
NSW outcomes and indicators MUES1.2, MUS1.2, MUS2.2, MUS3.2, MUS1.3, MUS2.3, MUS3.3













## Cross curricula lesson plans

#### Sensory language

#### Objective(s):



• Introduce/review sensory language as it is used in the libretto.

• Sensory language engages the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, by images that appeal to

the senses. Sight is the sense most often invoked, and taste usually the least. Sensory language helps readers imagine the scene in the "movie" in their minds. It helps bring the black and white of the printed book to life.

In a libretto, the sensory language (accompanied by illustrations) in the stage directions, helps the director, the set and lighting designers, the costume designer, the composer, and the actors imagine the scene, so they can each contribute in their own way to bring it to life for the audience.

After you finish reading through each scene with the class, you may wish to show them the relevant part only of the set design and costume documents for examination, and to give them a sensory feel for the opera.

• Ask students whether the names of places in the Prologue evoked the sense for them and ask them to identify what was evoked.

- Have students identify the appeals to the senses in "I Remember These Woods" and "You May Safely Go."
- Discuss the "feeling" that Molly describes Do you think her experience should be described as sensory?
- As the animals are named in Act I, scene ii, ask students if the names of the animals engage their senses.
- Be sure to bring this topic up again when you reach the song "Kiravan Wisdom" on page 48.

#### Settings II

Objective(s):

- Understand the places seen and referred to in the opera.
- Categorize places by various schemes.

#### I. NATURAL AND BUILT PLACES AND ENVIRONMENTS

1. The location in I, i is based on a special place Kangaroo Valley, NSW. It is a set in a beautiful, scenic area. This material is adaptable to all levels.

• Locate Kangaroo Valley on a map and/or Google Earth. Talk about distance from your school, how long it would take to reach, etc.

2. Introduce this picture of Kangaroo Valley and ask any students who have been there for further description. Discuss the following:

- The "feel/mood" of the place? (relaxing, peaceful, calm, safe.)
- The actual physical attributes (lake, trees, clearings, campsite)



**3.** Have students compare the settings in the Prologue with the camp setting.

• Real/imaginary? (Prologue has two imaginary/magical places: the Empty Place and the Haven, while I, i features one real or at least realistic place.)

• Compare/contrast elements of the settings. (Prologue goes from night to morning; campsite is daytime. Haven and Campsite both have trees. All three places are natural—not built.)

4. Focus on I, i, using questions to elicit differences between the campsite and a city environment.

• How do the characters say the campsite differs from the city?

- What other differences can you notice?
- Have you seen any signs of a built place in the opera? Do you expect you will? Why or why not?

• What items does the script say the family brings to the campsite? (tent, picnic hamper, backpacks, flashlight, other camping gear)

• What other items might they have with for a camping vacation? (swim suits, towels, food, cots or air mattresses, iPods, books, musical instruments, etc.)

• What is the one item that the girls have when they leave the campsite at the end of the scene? (Pat's flashlight)

#### **II. MAGICAL SETTINGS**

**5.** Continue discussing the other environments of the opera as they are revealed: The Haven in I, ii; the High Seat of the Council of Elements in II, i. Also consider how the Empty Place recurs in I, iii and with a variation in II, ii.

#### **Animal Categories**

Objective(s):

#### • Categorize animals by various schemes.

This material is adaptable to all levels. It is meant to precede Animal Behavior and Movement.

1. Use familiar examples to introduce or review the basic hierarchy for categorizing animals (also called biological taxonomy or scientific classification):

Kingdom - Phylum - Class - Order - Family - Genus - Species

as appropriate for the students' level. An example would be to draw a chart showing food as the top level, followed by a level with vegetables, fruit, meat, dairy, beans and legumes, grains. Ask students to supply items for the third level down, such as cucumbers, peaches, chicken, yogurt, chickpeas, and wheat.

You may wish to mention that neither the food nor the animal system is completely standardized, and not all scientists and nutritionists agree on either one. (This will become obvious when you reach some specific classifications in the Animal Movement Lesson Plan, so mentioning it now will save you from backtracking later.)

Introduce the game "Animal, Vegetable, Mineral" (explaining that *vegetable* in this context means any plant) as a fun way to practice with hierarchies. Encourage students to develop other categorization systems that can be useful as they play, for example, categories of place (indoors/outdoors) or categories of work (used in a school? used in an office?).

2. Introduce, or invite students to invent, a mnemonic for this hierarchy:

• Kings Play Chess On Fat Green Stools.

• King Philip Came Over For Good Spaghetti.

Something visual and silly is likely to work well.

3. Explain that the groups of animals called in Kiravanu are classes, as Queen Kirelya says (p. 25).

- Invite students to recall the five classes in the opera if they can. Mammals, Amphibians, Reptiles, Birds, Insects.
- Provide or elicit age-appropriate definitions of each class.
- Ask students to brainstorm animals that do not fit any of these five classes. (Fish—mentioned by Kirelya; spiders, jellyfish, shellfish, sponges, centipedes, etc. may be familiar.)

4. As appropriate, ask students to construct a hierarchy of their favorite animals in each class by drawing a picture, creating an Excel file that is hierarchically arranged, or in some other way.

• Younger children may be allowed to use primarily genus identifications or mix genus and species. Older students may be asked to provide up to a full hierarchy.

5. Now, invite students to imagine different systems for classifying animals and help them to apply them.



Possibilities include:

- Classification by habitat
- Classification by colour.
- Classification by size.
- Classification by interactions with humans (pet, assistant, work helper)

6. Special cases may be researched by older students or students with a particular interest.

#### Examples of problematic categorization include:

• panda bear

http://science.jrank.org/pages/5005/Pandas-Evolution-classification.html

http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Ailuropoda\_melanoleuca.html

koala bear

assets.cambridge.org/97805216/50748/excerpt/9780521650748\_excerpt.pdf

• platypus

assets.cambridge.org/97805216/50748/excerpt/9780521650748\_excerpt.pdf

• dinosaurs

http://www.dinoruss.org/de\_4/5c52c83.htm

• bacteria

7. As appropriate, encourage students to explore various different schemas for animal classification individually or comparing and contrasting the systems.

- Carl Linnaeus
- Ernst (von) Haeckel
- Robert Whittaker
- Carl Woese, et al.
- Cladistics

An overview appears here:

http://www.cartage.org.lb/en/themes/Sciences/Zoology/Biologicaldiverstity/Classification/Classification.htm An article on Cladistics appears here:

http://www.geology.wisc.edu/~museum/hughes/cladistics\_notes.html



## You May Safely Go

Words by Mary Elizabeth Music by James Humberstone

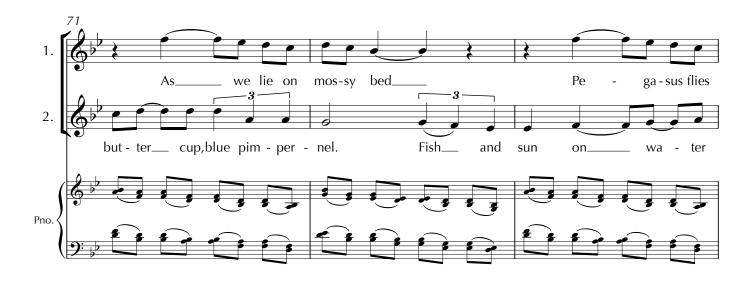


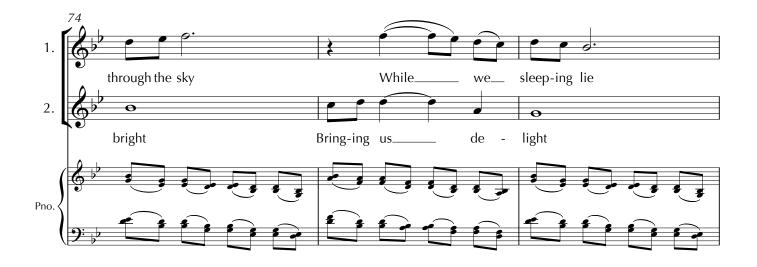


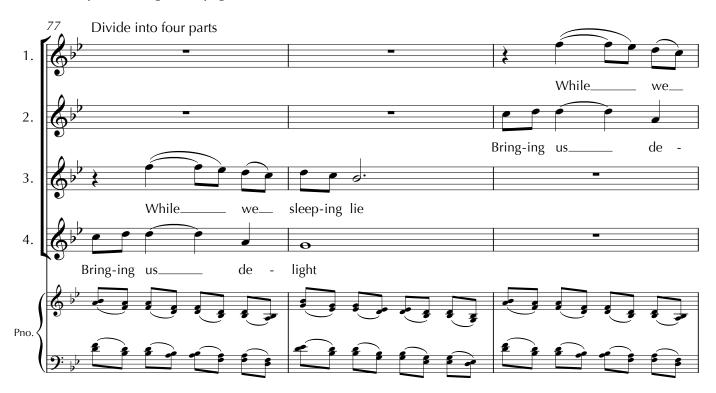


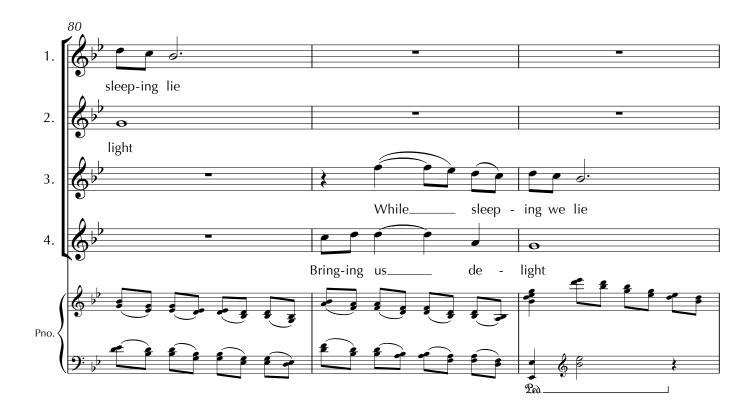














#### Call of the Creatures























