

# RACHEL EMMA LEWINDON

Music has been a pillar of my life from a young age, playing piano, Jazz Bands, Choirs, Queensland Youth Orchestras and simply 'noodling' - as my family coined - enjoying creating melodies and little musical worlds. However you'll notice some time between my high school graduation and undergraduate degree, this was to pursue an adjacent career for a short time as a professional skier, but music was ever-present, playing in jazz bars in Japan and organising community jam nights for the local and international workers.

Moving down to Victoria to complete my undergraduate in interactive composition marked a shift to pursuing a passion, and I loved every minute of creating with my peers, collaborating with other disciplines and immersing myself in the knowledge of sound creation. It was here at the Victorian College of the Arts that my passion for collaborative live performance, the intersect of composition and sound design and the interrogation for the 'experience' of sound began.

As part of my undergraduate, unpacking larger thematic and research driven works seemed to bring out the best in my practice. My Bachelor graduating recital, a absurd theatrical gameshow exploring Nietzsche's Three Metamorphoses from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and my honours recital a chamber opera based on Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* (which was later developed into a full scale work and premiered in 2023). These sparked a passion for the role of sound and music as 'world-building' in live performance and led me to establish a career here in Australia working in Theatre as a Composer, Sound Designer and producer.

I love creating sonic worlds. I love to explore how music makes people feel, how it weaves into our subconscious and lets us experience parallel modes of 'reality', refracting our own experiences into the larger context of humanity. Discovering and establishing the sonic properties and rules around an experience, to then break them and reform them to create new meanings and associations thrills me! The term *Sonic Dramaturgy* aligns itself well with my creative intention through combining principals of psychology, psychoacoustics, composition, perception and cognition to illicit meaning and create layered experiences.

This approach is evident throughout my practice, exploring the blurred boundaries of 'music' and 'sound' to create refracted versions of the sonic reality, using contact microphones, digital processing and acoustic sources that creates sound that doesn't simply 'hold' the world of the work but actively contributes to the narrative and thematic undercurrents. More specifically the electronic refracting of acoustic and live material to create real-time alternate realities of the sonic world we are currently experiencing. This intersect of composition, sound design and production lets me use traditionally 'delineated' steps of music making and integrate them into a fluid, cyclical process. Using scoring, sampling, musique concrete principals, artefact driven processing and timbral-driven synthesis, this process allows unique live ecosystems to form, and actively providing new perspectives on the work in real-time. This somewhat post-humanist approach to the use of technology in acoustic composition seeks to not replace the role of the performer or 'music' making but to shift it's perspective and create alongside it.

This overarching intention of perception in music through live performance and the exploration of sonic rules is what is driving my desire for postgraduate study, as I would love to spend more in-depth time unpacking the creation of meaning. How can the ordering of sonic events, their timbral quality, their spatialisation create or alter our perception, narratives and world and thus reality? I've explored elements of these

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questions in smaller chamber works and in collaboration with other mediums, but how could large force ensembles, installations and audience interactivity allow for deeper explorations of these seeming intangible measurements.

The DMA and PHD model in the USA is different than the one here in Australia, being longer and offering significant time for creative work to inform the dissertation, the masters being accumulated along the way. This is particularly exciting to me as I hope to use the first two years of the program to interrogate my underlying intention, using the sound kitchen and visiting ensembles to experiment with varying implications of meaning such as form, timbre, spatialisation and interactivity.

Princeton is particularly of interest to me as I spent a short amount of time there in July 2025 as part of the So Percussion Summer Institute as a composer, where I was able to meet several faculty members and current graduate students. I was struck by the rich and creatively abundant atmosphere. Lessons with Nathalie Joachim, Jeff Snyder as well as guest lectures from Donnacha M. Dennehy, Dmitri Tymoczko, all showing the diverse and rich faculty operating at the forefront of industry innovation and creative practice.

Prof. Elizabeth Margulis studies in music cognition is particularly interesting to me and my creative line of inquiry. Expanding from my honours dissertation was around the perception and cognition of time in music exploring the role of form through repetition and structural boundaries in the perception of musical events and thus perceived duration.

The New Instrument Research Lab is also of significant interest to me, as new instrument design as seen in my work for 'Esis' would benefit from further prototype development and guidance, as well as the integration of more interactive musical technology.

One aspect that particularly struck me about creative atmosphere at Princeton was the level of rigour and directness around intention, yet a celebration of care and passion that I haven't experienced in an institution. I am keen to interrogate my ideas, challenge my ways of making yet do this in an environment that champions my creative perspective and pushes my compositional limits. This is a key appreciation of my current Mentor Kate Neal, who also completed her PhD at Princeton.

A further aspect of my intention to study in the USA, particularly Princeton and the East Coast, is to immerse myself in the theatre community there. I truly believe that the experience will enrich my practice as a composer, educator,

I do not take stepping away from my career here in Australia lightly, but I feel that my work and creative practice will benefit from the opportunity to refine my intention, and bring back new perspectives to the community here in Melbourne. This is the reason I am only applying for Princeton this coming academic year, as I believe the ethos, community and academic fruitfulness of the environment will allow my practice to prosper. Thank you for your time.