

RACHEL EMMA LEWINDON

Music has been a pillar of my life from a young age and a medium through which I can make sense of both the world and myself. After an adjacent career as an international ski instructor, I moved from Brisbane to complete my undergraduate in Interactive Composition at the University of Melbourne. It was there that my passion for collaborative live performance, composition and sound design, and the interrogation of the ‘experience’ of sound began.

Whilst studying, my practice gravitated towards creating work founded in research and thematically driven concepts. My honours research explored the perception and cognition of time in music, specifically the role of form through repetition and structural boundaries of musical events and thus perceived duration. This culminated in a chamber opera based on Virginia Woolf’s novel *Orlando* which was later developed into a full scale work, premiered in 2023. Within this work, I explored collaborative and devising frameworks to create layered perspectives on themes of gender, time and self that were then woven into aleatoric sections of the score. These formative explorations solidified my passion for interdisciplinary collaboration and the role of sound and music in ‘world-building’ for live performance; the foundation for my career here in Australia as a composer, sound designer, producer and lecturer.

Throughout my professional work across theatre, music and dance, I strive to blur the boundaries of sound and live performance. Utilising electro-acoustic techniques and principles, I create sound that doesn’t simply score the work but aims to actively contribute to the thematic undercurrents and world of the work. My creative process utilises the coalescing of composition, sound design and system design by integrating them into a fluid, cyclical process. Magnification of the underlying thematic material in the work informs the compositional language, as diegetic properties of the world are recorded, processed and combined with the non-diegetic composition. Through iterative spatialisation, these familiar yet abstracted sounds create translucent boundaries of reality, unfurling sonic ecosystems that are fundamentally grounded in the DNA of the work. My approach is influenced by feminist post-humanist philosophies; utilising technology *not* as a replacement or enhancement but as a co-contributor and active collaborator. This was a key research topic and creative intention for my work */Esis*.

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I'm fascinated by 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. I am driven by discovering and establishing the sonic properties and rules around an experience, then breaking and reforming them to create new meanings and associations. The concept of *Sonic Dramaturgy* aligns itself well with my creative intention, and is a lens through which the whole experience of the sound is considered.

The driving desire for my postgraduate study is to further explore the creation of meaning and sonic world-building through principles of perception and cognition. How can the ordering of sonic events, timbral quality, presentation form and spatialisation create or alter our perception of reality, and ultimately craft new narratives? I've explored these questions in smaller interdisciplinary works, but further interrogation into the subject matter is needed to formalise and refine my creative practice. Additionally, I would like to develop my scoring techniques to integrate my use of thematic and electronic components further, as seen in my work '*the truth slips through my fingers to the floor*'.

The DMA model in the USA, compared to Australia, is particularly exciting to me as it offers significant time for the creative work to inform the dissertation. I hope to spend the first few years of the program interrogating my research and composition methodologies by using the sound kitchen and visiting ensembles to explore the creation of meaning using technology, form, timbre, spatialisation and interactivity. Through these experimentations, I aim to formulate compositional and analytical frameworks in sonic dramaturgy for live performances and audience experience.

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

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Additional Princeton faculty are quintessentially aligned with my research and creative areas of interest, notably Professor Elizabeth Margulis' studies in music cognition and perception and The New Instrument Research Lab. My initial lesson with Jeff Snyder showed the potential for expanding my knowledge of instrument design, as seen in my work for */Esis*, and I would benefit from further prototype development and guidance.

One aspect that struck me about the creative atmosphere at Princeton was the level of rigour and directness around intention, yet a celebration of care and passion. I want to interrogate my ideas and challenge my ways of making in an environment that champions my creative perspective, yet pushes my compositional limits. Additionally, I value this type of space deeply as an educator and am eager to learn more about the ways in which I can refine my established teaching pedagogy.

From a professional perspective, my intention to study in the USA, particularly Princeton and the East Coast, is to immerse myself in the rich theatre and live performance industry. Though it is a large decision to step away from my career here, expanding my professional network and refining my creative practice will benefit all aspects of my artistry and therefore the ongoing partnerships here in Australia.