

# Making a Music Track

## Teacher Resources

Years 3 - 6



# Welcome

Sydney Opera House is one of the indisputable masterpieces of human creativity and has long been a place for learning and sharing knowledge.

The land on which Sydney Opera House stands was known to its traditional custodians, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, as Tubowgule, meaning “where the knowledge waters meet.”

A stream carried fresh water down from what is now Pitt Street to the cove near Tubowgule, a rock promontory that at high tide became an island. The mixing of fresh and salt waters formed a perfect fishing ground. Middens of shells were a testament to Tubowgule’s long history as a place where the Gadigal gathered, feasted, sung, danced and told stories.

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### Did You Know...?

Sydney Opera House is home to eight flagship Australian performing arts companies which bring art to life every day beneath the famous shells. We are proud to partner with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Bell Shakespeare, Opera Australia, Sydney Theatre Company, The Australian Ballet, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs.

130,000 people attend performances at the Sydney Opera House, for young audiences annually. Since 2014, one furry guest has caught the attention of locals and international visitors alike. The northern VIP steps of the Opera House, otherwise unoccupied for the majority of the year, is the favourite sunbathing spot of a wild long-nosed fur seal, affectionately called 'Benny' (named after Bennelong Point).

You can now experience the Opera House, as never before, on Google's digital museum platform with 1270 digital artefacts and 50 interactive online exhibits; the Sydney Opera House's presence on the Google Cultural Institute allows people everywhere to experience the symbol of modern Australia.

# The Creative Learning Journey

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## Before the Event

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### Begin your Creative Learning Journey

Read the note from the artist on the next page to know what to expect.

Have your students think about the themes of the workshop with information and activities in these Creative Learning Teachers Resources.

Ensure you have a device in your classroom to operate Zoom. Camera & Mic required.

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## During the Event

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### Engage with the Live Digital Workshop

This event is 45 minutes in duration and designed to inspire your classroom activities.

During the event you will listen and watch as the facilitator explains the concepts and demonstrate the activities.

At key times throughout the workshop, we'll ask for student contributions - which we ask the teacher to facilitate by selecting one student to come up to the microphone.

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## After the Event

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### Continue the Creative Exploration

Follow up the event with the Post talk activities and continue the conversation with your students. What questions did they feel weren't asked? Where could they go to get this information? What did they think were the biggest learnings from the session? Can you develop any projects out of the learnings?

### Sign up for another Free Event

We offer an annual program of performances, workshops and talks to further extend the learning journey of your students. Free for all Australian Schools and offered throughout the year.

### Listen and Watch

Explore the other resources and activities on our website that could support your classroom learning program. See here: [www.sydneyoperahouse.com/learn/schools/resources.html](http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/learn/schools/resources.html)

# A Note from the Artist - What to Expect in the Workshop

Hi Teachers,

Soon you'll be taking part in the Sydney Opera House's interactive digital workshop - Making a Music Track. It will introduce your class to some different ways of creating a music track using free digital software (we'll be using Bandlab in this session).

Throughout the workshop there will be opportunities for students to contribute ideas and feedback to shape the music-making.

There will also be times in the workshop where I might ask for an individual student from each class to act as a spokesperson for the class. We'll need you to select the student, and unmute them to be heard.

**There is no need for the class to have a digital device or Bandlab open. We will all work on one track together, operated from the Sydney Opera House. You will be able to pick back up with the track where we left off at the end of the session on your own devices.**

**No prior knowledge of music theory or digital music making is necessary for this workshop.**

**However, class discussion and activities based around music in the days leading up to the workshop are highly recommended.**

The more that students come to the workshop with an active mindset, with their own ideas to contribute, rather than as passive spectators, the more rewarding they will find it.

See you next week,  
Luke



# Meet the Artist

## Luke Escombe

Luke Escombe is an internationally award-winning songwriter, musician and comedian who loves to follow his inspiration and creativity wherever it leads.

He is the creator of Chronic, a musical comedy show about living with chronic illness, and The Vegetable Plot, a nationally touring children's band signed to ABC Kids.

Luke received his early musical education in the UK, where his father's job in the rock and roll industry enabled him to see hundreds of legendary performances by artists like Freddie Mercury, Prince and Bruce Springsteen while he was just a boy.

Luke works with the Sydney Opera House's Creative Learning team through the Creative Leadership In Learning program and presenting shows and workshops with The Vegetable Plot.

Read about and watch 'The Boat of Dreams' project conducted by Luke here: <https://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/schools/school-kids-write-migrant-family-stories-song>

Luke has also recently worked with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra on Sergei Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf.

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# Before the Event

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Here are some suggested activities that will help you and your students prepare for the workshop.

## 1) Class discussion - How, when, where, what and why is music used?

As a class, come up with as many examples as you can of how, when and where music is used in society, and what it is used for.

Some examples might be:

- during the school day, to let you know that break time is over
- in movies, TV shows or video games
- in cultural ceremonies and rituals
- to help you feel a particular emotion

## 2) Student activity - Talking about a song that you have a strong connection to

Ask the students to think about a song that is important to them and write a few sentences explaining why.

- Maybe it is a song that reminds them of a particular memory
- Maybe it makes them feel happy whenever they play it.
- Maybe they identify with the lyrics and the message of the song.

## 3) Student Activity - Write song titles for an imaginary album by an imaginary band

Songs have to start somewhere, and having a list of intriguing song titles is definitely one way to get those creative juices flowing.

1. Divide the class into pairs and ask each pair to come up with some titles of songs that they would want to listen to.
2. The title might be a single word, a phrase, a common saying, a pun - it just has to have something about it that would make a listener want to press play.
3. Once you have a title from each pair, put them all in sequence to make your imaginary album.
4. Now give your imaginary album a title and come up with a band name for your imaginary band.

**Extension:** Ask each student to write an imaginary review of the imaginary album by the imaginary band. How many stars do they give it out of five? What's great or terrible or mediocre about it? Is this destined to be a classic album or is it so bad it should come with a warning label?

#### 4) Class discussion - Listening and talking about music

Play some different types of music to the class and talk about the effect they have on us. What do they make us feel? Do they make us want to dance, or go to sleep? Why does this piece of music make us feel this way?

A few examples of songs to play (feel free to pick your own)

- Bob Marley - Three Little Birds
- John Lennon - Imagine
- Psy - Gangnam Style
- Pharell Williams - Happy
- John Williams - music from Star Wars/ Harry Potter or Jaws

Musical elements you might discuss:

- Sounds - exploring Tone Colour, what kind of sounds and instruments are in the song? Are they organic/acoustic or digital/electronic?
- Vocal - is there someone singing on the song? Describe the pitch of the voice - Are they singing long, operatic notes or is it more like someone telling a story? Describe the dynamics in the song - Are they singing loud, soft, high, low? How does the sound, or tone, of this voice make us feel? Discuss how the song uses harmony.
- Beat - what kind of beat does this song have? Is it heavy/light/ fast/ slow? Is it someone playing drums or an electronic beat, or no drums at all? Can you clap the beat? Describe the tempo - how fast or slow is the song? How does the tempo affect us?
- Lyrics - what are the words saying / what is the message of the song? What is the relationship between the words and the music, do they both make you feel the same way? Do the words rhyme, how do they rhyme? What's your favourite line in the song?
- Hook - also called the refrain - this is the catchy part of a pop song that sticks in your head (whether you like it or not). It might be a vocal line, or an instrumental part. It's usually repeated many times in the song - creating the structure. Often it's the chorus, or the instrumental bit right after the chorus. Some songs have multiple hooks. What makes it so catchy?

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# After the Event

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## IMPORTANT NOTES

These post workshop activities include a mix of exercises including classroom discussions, written and creative responses and using digital music software. Choose the activities you're comfortable with in the classroom.

### If you choose to work with digital music software in the classroom:

- Ensure your students are supervised at all times
- Check the privacy settings in advance of logging them into your account
- We have used Bandlab to demonstrate digital music making but we encourage you to choose the software best suited to your class.

## A Message from the Artist

Thank you for taking part in these music making workshops with me. I enjoyed collaborating with you and hearing your creative ideas. I hope that this workshop inspired you to explore and play with digital music making programs like Bandlab, and I look forward to hearing the music you create or the responses your class takes from music.

Remember, there is no right or wrong way to use these programs. The more you experiment the more you'll discover what works for you. If you don't like something you did, just hit "undo" and try something else. Trust your instincts and follow what sounds right to you. Don't worry about whether it's "good" yet: if the ideas are flowing, just keep going.

Best of luck,  
Luke

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## 1) Talking about music: Class discussion

Select three different popular songs from different eras and listen to them as a class, without any visual accompaniment (ideally with eyes closed). Invite students to concentrate on the music as well as the words and to notice the different musical elements that make up the song, like Tempo/BPM, what kind of sounds are used, any effects you notice, the arrangement and the mix. After each song:

- See if you can identify a HOOK in the song - that's the catchy part that grabs your attention and gets stuck in your head. Maybe the song has more than one hook?
- See if you can guess the TEMPO / BPM of the song and whether it is in a major or minor key (you can google the answer). Would you describe the song as fast/slow or something else?



- Talk about the different SOUNDS used in the song - the tone colour. How would you describe them? You might use adjectives like electronic, acoustic, exciting, calm, catchy, boppy - or you might invent your own words. What instruments can you identify?
- See if you can identify one EFFECT used in the song. Examples might be Autotune on the vocal, Reverb or Delay, Distortion. Again, you can invent your own words to describe a particular effect you hear. Why do you think that effect has been used? How did it add to the overall feeling of the song?

- **WRITTEN EXERCISE:**

Finally, invite students to write about their favourite of the three songs and to explain what they preferred about it (or didn't like about the other songs) using some of the concepts you've just discussed. This is an opportunity to meet the new area of the syllabus [Creating Written Texts in Creative Arts](#) (EN3-VOCAB-01) and (EN3-CWT-01). Through note making, journalling or annotations, create a written text to explain how meaning has been conveyed through the music? What do you think this song is about and does it remind you of an event or time in your life?

## 2) Keep working on our SongStarter song

In the first activity of the workshop we used AI to generate a song idea for us based on a title suggested by the group. Now it's over to you to keep working on that idea and seeing how far you can take it. You can find your class's track here (just look for your session date & time) <https://www.bandlab.com/digitalcreative> . For step-by-step, see page 12. Please always remember to practice online safety.

Here are some ways you could develop the song further. First, open the track in STUDIO.

- **Extend the tracks**

Click on the circular arrow in the top right corner of each track and use the arrow icon to drag it across to the right. This will extend the length of the track. Another way to do the same thing is to right click on a track, hit "copy", then move the playhead to the exact spot the track finishes and click "paste"

- **Try adding a different beat**

Go to the "Bandlab Sounds" tab in the bottom right of the screen. Now select "LOOPS" and use the search bar to search for BEATS with the same BPM as your track eg search for "Beats 100BPM". You can preview each beat by clicking on it. Once you find one you like, drag it across to the start of an empty track, underneath your current tracks. If the BPM of your beat doesn't match, you can always adjust the BPM of your song, add the new beat, then change the BPM back to what it was before. The new beat you've added will now be at the correct BPM. Use the Mute function - the M to the left of each track - to switch between your old drums and new ones and see which you prefer. You could add multiple beats this way and switch between them to create an ARRANGEMENT.

- **Write some lyrics**

A good song is one where the words and music work together. Listen to the music and think about what kind of lyrics would be a good fit for this piece of music and this title.

- **Add a vocal**

If you look at the list of tracks on the left side of the screen you should see an empty track called VOICE/MIC. If not, click ADD TRACK and select VOICE/AUDIO. To add a vocal it is very important that you are using HEADPHONES, otherwise the microphone will capture all the other sounds in the track and it will sound messy. You don't need a special mic, you can just use the mic on your headphones. Once you select VOICE/MIC and have your headphones ON, turn on MONITORING so you can hear yourself. Make sure the INPUT LEVEL is showing a green line moving to the right when you talk or sing. That green line should be going about two thirds of the way across. You also have the option to switch on VOCAL FX like Autopitch and Big Harmony - these make your voice sound amazing and it's great fun to play with them. Once you are ready, hit RECORD (the red circle button at the top middle of the screen) and try out some vocal ideas. What I like to do is create multiple vocal tracks so I can try out different ideas, then I pick the one I like best.

### **3) Creative Response to our Soundscape**

In the second activity of the workshop we talked about how music is used in movies and video games to create atmosphere and make us feel like we've entered a particular environment.

Then we created a soundscape based around a particular mood, either WONDER, MYSTERY or DREAD and gave it a title.

LISTEN to that soundscape again by finding your workshop session & time [in this link](#). Use it as inspiration for a piece of writing and/or visual art.

An example might be a piece of descriptive writing, a short story, a drawing of a scene, a landscape, a map of another world, or an abstract painting that captures the same feeling as the music.

#### **Examples:**

- The painter Wassily Kandinsky was very inspired by music. He saw sounds as colours, and heard colours as sounds. Many of his most famous paintings were direct responses to pieces of music.
- Similarly, famous authors like Neil Gaiman listen to music while they write and take inspiration for their writing style from composers and songwriters.

#### **Class Discussion Point**

How does music help you in your daily life? Using the same guidelines as the written exercise on Page 8, illicit a written response from students.

## Glossary of Terms from the Workshop

**Arrangement** - All of the choices made when constructing a piece of music, such as the tempo, key, structure, what instruments are used, and when and where they come in, make up what's called the arrangement. If you think of a song as a piece of storytelling, then the arrangement is like the structure of the story.

**BPM** - Beats Per Minute. A more precise way of expressing tempo.

**Digital Music** - music made on a computer or other electronic device

**DAW** - Digital Audio Workstation, a software program that allows us to make digital music. Examples of DAWs include Bandlab, Pro Tools and GarageBand.

**FX** - Effects, or FX, are a way to change the sound of a track, thus creating an effect on the listener. Some of the most commonly used effects are reverb, delay, distortion and chorus.

**Key** - Key is a way of describing the family of notes, or musical "colour" of a piece of music

**Hook** - the part of the song that "hooks" your attention and sticks in your head. The hook is usually some catchy combination of melody, lyrics, sound and rhythm.

**Licence-Free music** - music you can use without having to ask permission or obtain a licence. All of the sounds and loops in Bandlab are Licence-Free

**Loop** - a repeating section of music. Loops are a great way to build a track quickly.

**Major Key** - A major key uses a major scale, where the root or "home" chord of the scale is a major chord. We often perceive major chords as being bright and happy.

**Minor** - A minor key uses a slightly different sequence of notes, resulting in a sound that some people perceive as darker and more sombre.

**Mix** - After you have recorded all the individual tracks of your piece of track, the next step is to adjust the volume levels and sonic character of each track, to create an overall experience for the listener. Mixing can be as simple as turning up the vocal or the drums, or a complex art in itself, involving intricate knowledge of the science of sound.

**Reverb** - Possibly the most widely used effect in music. This causes the sound of the note or chord to linger after it is played. It can also make the sound feel like it is in the distance, creating depth within a mix. Try playing with reverb on the tracks you make.

**Soundscape** - a combination of sounds that create the sensation of being in a particular environment.

**Tempo** - the speed of a piece of music. Tempo affects the way the music makes us feel.

## Further Resources

Create your own melodies with Jacob Collier

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPVR\\_EKp6Xs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPVR_EKp6Xs)

Bandlab's Youtube Page

<https://www.youtube.com/@bandlab>

7 super common chord progressions and why they work

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vyc8lezaa9g&t=511s>

Bandlab Bootcamp For Beginners: (in-depth Bandlab Tutorial)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAHn\\_0Vy-Zg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAHn_0Vy-Zg)

What's the sound of colour? Kandinsky and Music

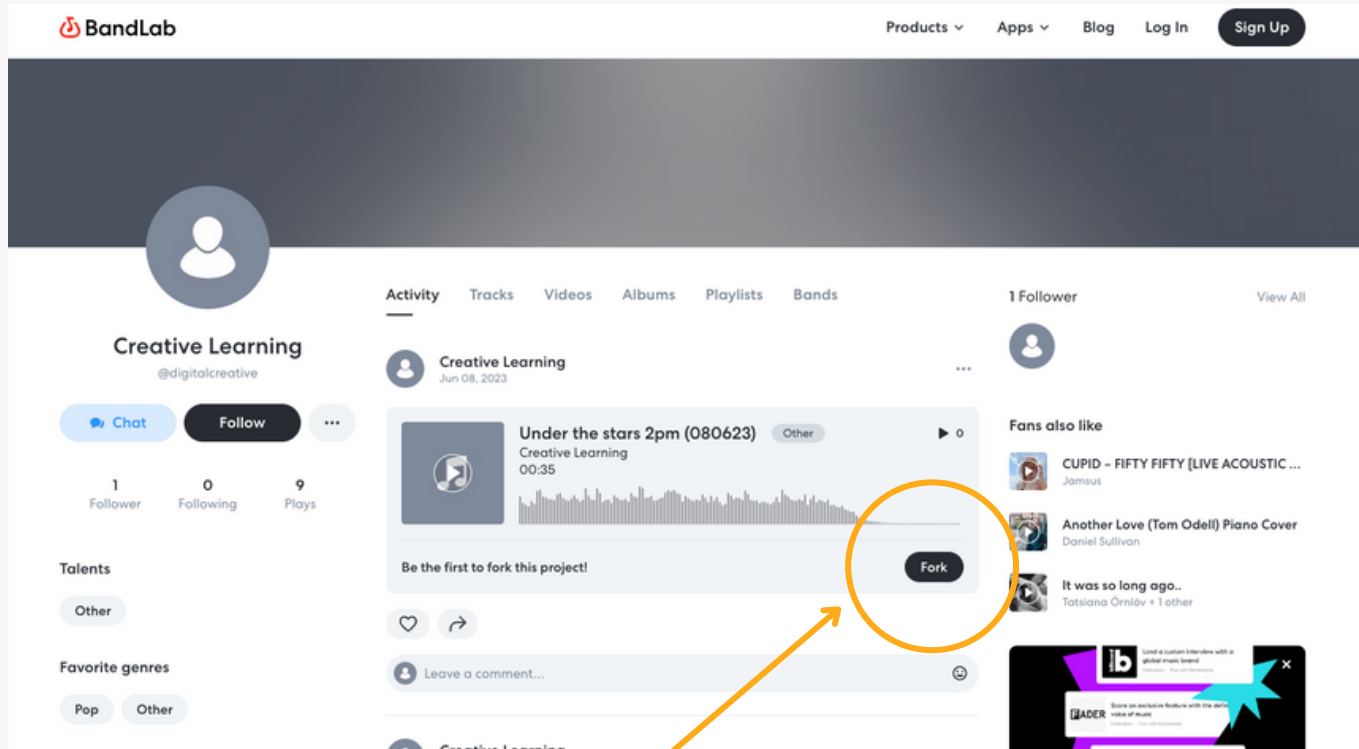
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xDnxkzQtdl>

# Accessing the in-workshop tracks - Step by Step

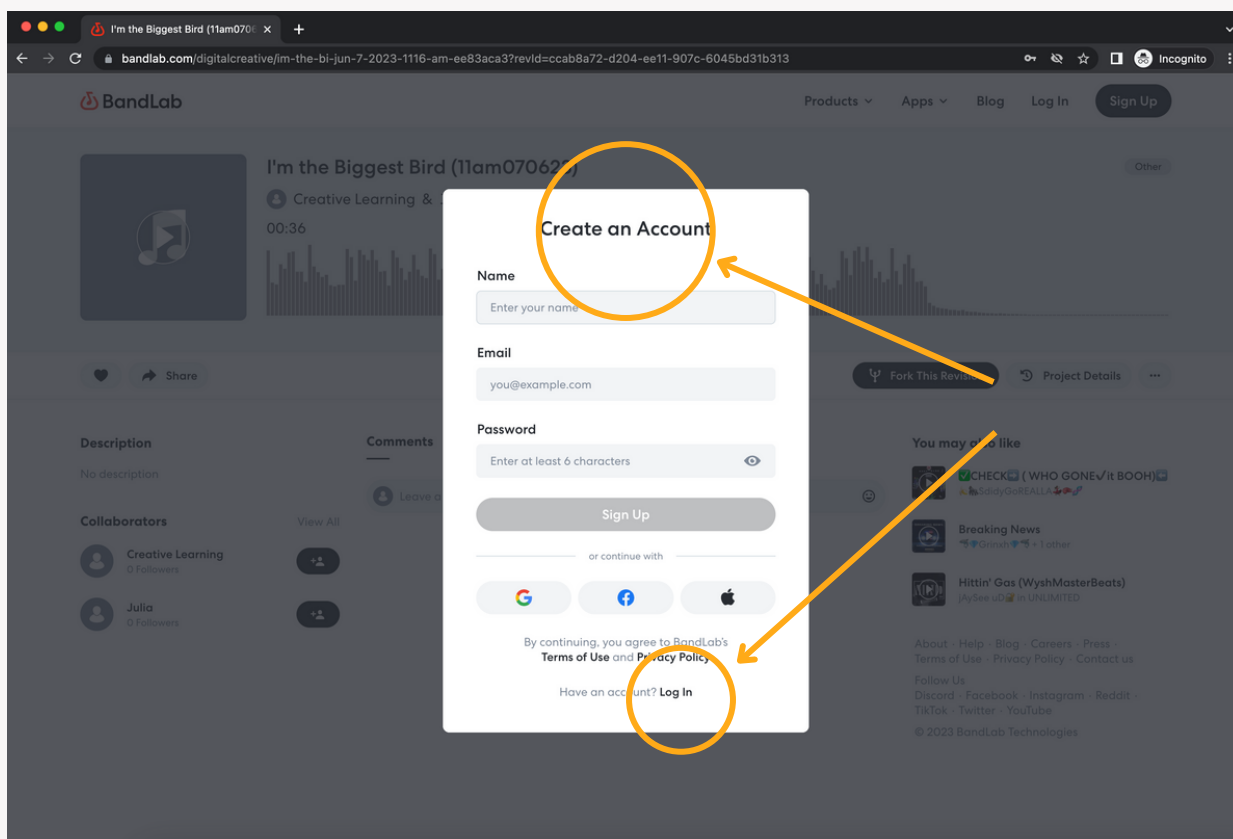
Step 1: Click the link to navigate to the Workshop Tracks:  
<https://www.bandlab.com/digitalcreative>

Step 2: Look for the track with your workshop session date & time

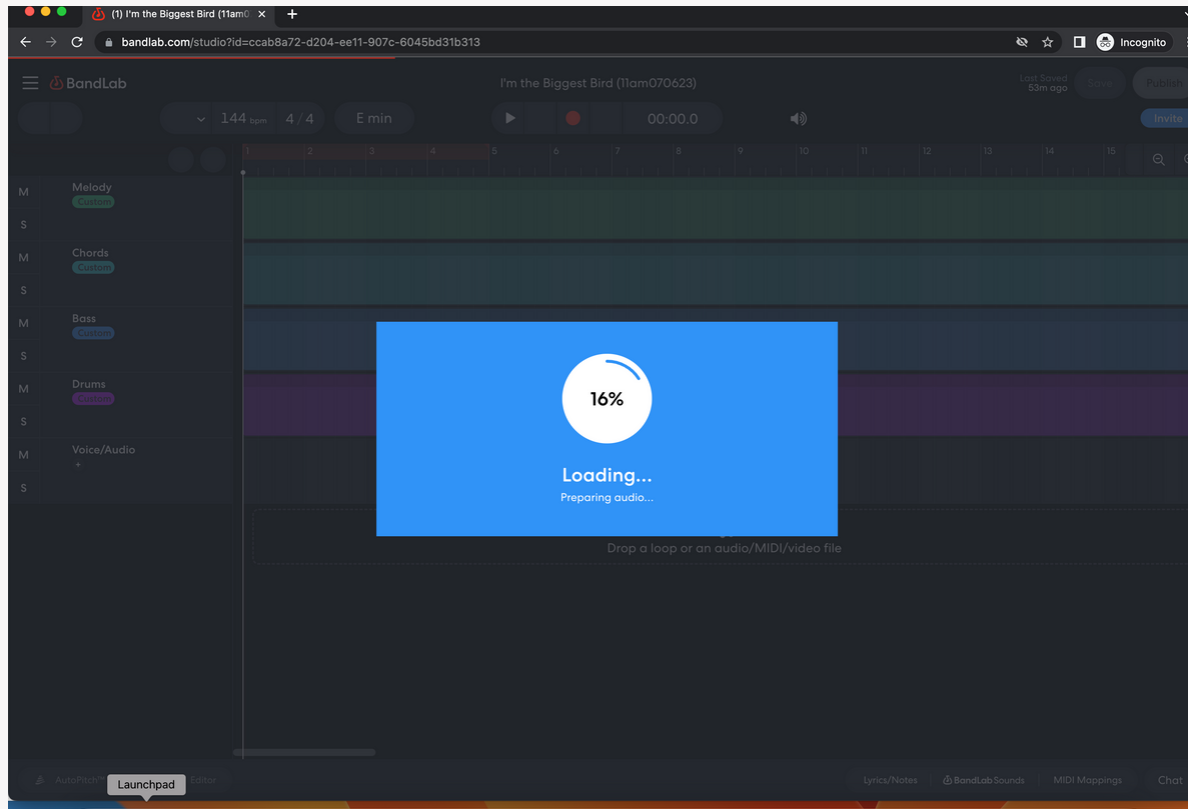
Step 3: Click on "Fork"



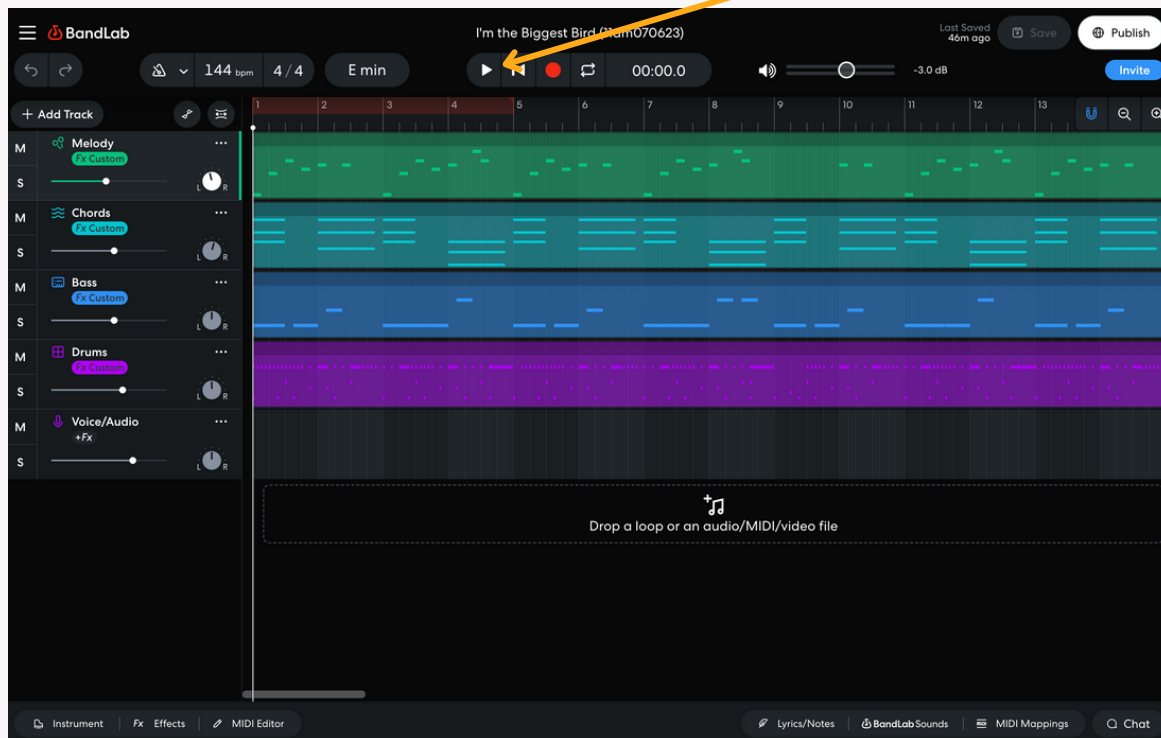
Step 4: Create an Account or Click "Login"



## Step 5: Wait for the track to load



## Step 6: Work on the track or press play to hear it again



# Curriculum Links

KLA	Stage 2	Stage 3
<b>English</b> Oral language and communication	EN2-OLC-01 communicates with familiar audiences for social and learning purposes, by interacting, understanding and presenting	EN3-OLC-01 communicates to wide audiences with social and cultural awareness, by interacting and presenting, and by analysing and evaluating for understanding
<b>English</b> Creating written texts	EN2-CWT-01 plans, creates and revises written texts for imaginative purposes, using text features, sentence-level grammar, punctuation and word-level language for a target audience	EN3-CWT-01 plans, creates and revises written texts for multiple purposes and audiences through selection of text features, sentence-level grammar, punctuation and word-level language  EN3-VOCAB-01
<b>Music</b> Performing	MUS2.1 Sings, plays and moves to a range of music, demonstrating a basic knowledge of musical concepts.	MUS3.1 Sings, plays and moves to a range of music, individually and in groups, demonstrating a knowledge of musical concepts.
<b>Music</b> Organising Sound	MUS2.2 Improvises musical phrases, organises sounds and explains reasons for choices.	MUS3.2 Improvises, experiments, selects, combines and orders sound using musical concepts.
<b>Music</b> Listening	MUS2.4 Identifies the use of musical concepts and musical symbols in a range of repertoire.	MUS3.4 Identifies the use of musical concepts and symbols in a range of musical styles.

## General capabilities and cross-curriculum

 Critical and Creative thinking

 Personal and Social Capability

# About these Resources

**These Creative Learning Resources have been prepared to help you get the most out of the Making a Music Track Digital Workshop. These resources have been collated to help prepare your students to unpack the content, think deeply about it and apply it to their continued learning.**

You should use and adapt these Resources to suit the student age and stage of your class and the curriculum foci and outcomes used in your school. These resources are written as a creative document for you to bring to life. If you have questions about exercises or provocations please feel free to make contact to talk it through. We are always open to feedback, comments and working with you to assist and learn from you. Contact details are on the back page.

Some websites may be suggested throughout this resource. It is recommended that you first review the sites and assess the suitability of the content for your particular school environment before setting the activities based on these.

Sydney Opera House has a bank of Creative Learning Resources for you to access and use. Please have a look around our website for other resources and activities that could support your classroom learning program.

## **Acknowledgements**

Grateful thanks are extended to all the artists and educators who have generously allowed their resources to be included in this document.





**Let's keep in touch**

Sydney Opera House  
Creative Learning  
Bennelong Point  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Australia

[sydneyoperahouse.com](http://sydneyoperahouse.com)  
Call us 02 9250 7770  
or email [creativelearning@sydneyoperahouse.com](mailto:creativelearning@sydneyoperahouse.com)

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Tag [#sydneyoperahouse](https://twitter.com/sydneyoperahouse)