FROM IDEA TO STAGE



NAME _____

CLASS _____

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE NZ MUSIC COMMISSION

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TE REO REKA O AOTEAROA



WORKSHEET 1

MEET THE WHĀNAU

FOCUS QUESTION

Who are the musicians behind this series, and what can their careers tell you about a life in music?

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MEET THE WHĀNAU

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ARAHI

Arahi is a songwriter and performer whose work spans the music industry, from festival stages to soundtracks, theatre, and screen.

His debut EP ***Revelator*** (2023) was produced by **Dave Khan**, and his song '**My Baby's Like a Hurricane**' was nominated for a Top 20 APRA Silver Scroll Award. He also collaborates widely, performing as a member of Māori rock trio **Te Tokotoru**, alt-folk duo **Pony Baby**, and features as session player for acts such as **Tory Kingi**, **Triggar Happy** and **Greta van den Brink**.

RESEARCH PROMPT

Look up two of Arahi's projects — solo, Te Tokotoru, Pony Baby, or Troy Kingi. How does his sound or purpose change depending on who he's collaborating with?

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MEET THE WHĀNAU

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EDY

EDYONTHEBEAT is the production alias of **Edward Liu**, an Auckland-based producer and mix engineer whose work blends pop, R&B/soul, reggae, and hip hop for local and international artists.

Before working in music full-time, EDY spent three years as a secondary school music teacher. He has since built a large following through livestreamed production sessions, amassing **170M+ streams** and close to **500 production credits**. His upcoming album ***i'm just a producer*** brings an impressive roster of collaborators from ex-**Fifth Harmony** member **Dinah Jane** to **Jaedyn Randell**.

RESEARCH PROMPT

Find a track EDY has produced or mixed. What genres can you hear blended together, and what role do you think the producer played in shaping the final song?

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MEET THE WHĀNAU



NICOLA

Nicola Mitchell is a country musician and 2025 Country Music Honour winner. With her twin sister Maegan, she performs as **The Mitchell Twins**, an APRA Best Country Song-nominated duo, and she also tours with her sister **Jenny Mitchell**.

Nicola is learning te reo Māori through rumaki reo (language immersion) at Te Wānanga o Raukawa, and released ***Te Ngahere*** — a bilingual debut album for tamariki, written together with **THEIA** (Te Kaahu, TŪĪ/AMA Nominee), **KOMMI** (Mātanga Reo/translator for **Marlon Williams**) & **Byllie-Jean** (Tate Music Prize winner 2025) and children from across Aotearoa — under the alias **Niccolo Piccolo**.

RESEARCH PROMPT

Listen to a song by The Mitchell Twins or from Niccolo Piccolo. How does Nicola blend country music traditions with her own culture and community?

MEET THE WHĀNAU



REBEL

Rebel Reid is a guitarist, songwriter, and producer known for her work with the band **Valkyrie** and for her solo music. She weaves her Māori heritage into her songwriting, and became the first Māori artist to record at **Elvis Presley**'s studio in Memphis.

Rebel started out as a finalist in the **Play It Strange** songwriting competition, and now judges the National Secondary School Songwriting Competition herself. Rebel is also a guitarist in **Atomic**: the ultimate femme rock supergroup of Aotearoa.

RESEARCH PROMPT

Research Rebel Reid's band Valkyrie or her solo work. In what ways does she bring her own identity and heritage into her music?

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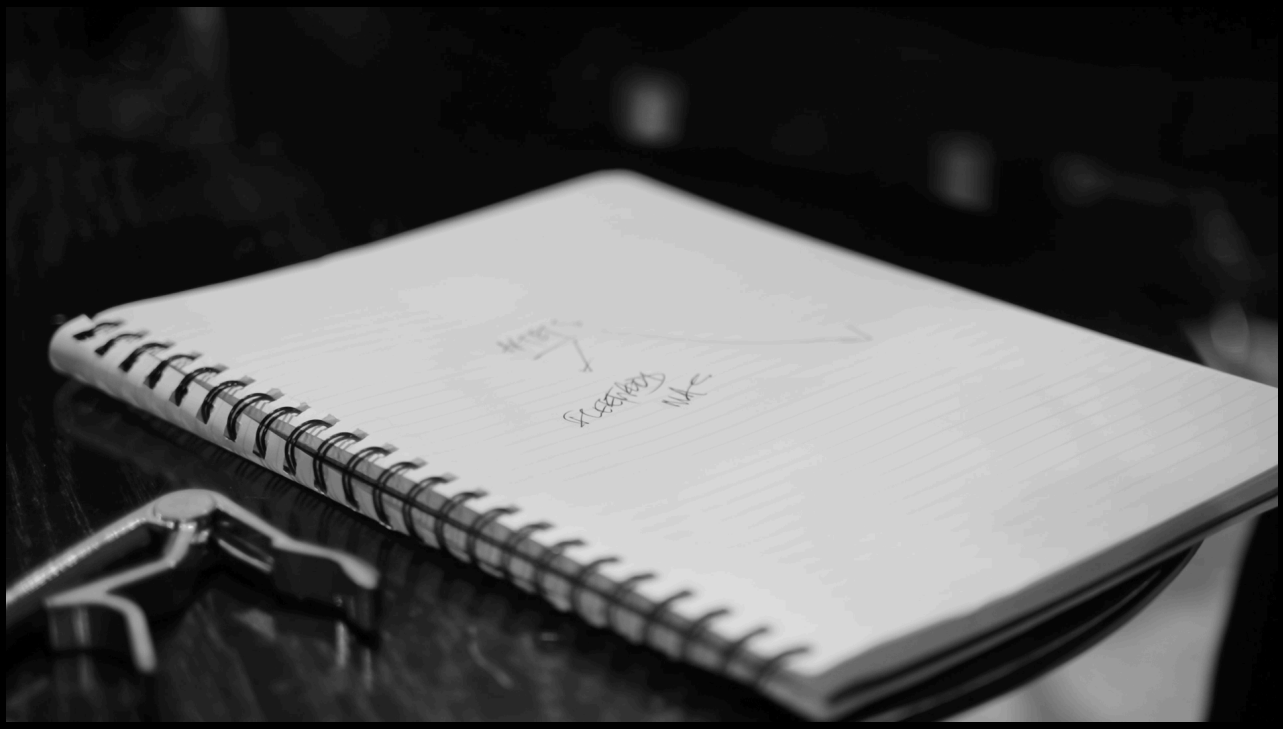
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THINK AND DISCUSS

These four musicians work across different genres and roles — songwriter, performer, producer, engineer. Why might a song benefit from people with different skills and backgrounds working on it together?

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WORKSHEET 2

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FOCUS QUESTION

Where does an idea for a song actually come from?

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WATCH AND NOTE

In this module, the artists talk about finding a “vibe” for a new song. They discuss artists they're using as reference points, and use that reference to choose the feel of the song before they start writing.

DISCUSS INSPIRATION

List three songs or artists that inspire you. For each one, note what you like about them: the mood, the tone, the lyrics, the instrumentation, or something else.

SONG / ARTIST	WHAT ABOUT THEM INSPIRES YOU?

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LISTEN LIKE A SONGWRITER

Choose two songs from your list. Listen to each song at least twice, and complete the table below:

PROMPTS	SONG 1	SONG 2
Tempo *adagio, andante, moderato, allegro or presto*		
Dynamics *soft, loud, or changing*		
Instruments and voices you can hear		
Texture *one line on its own or a melody supported by chords*		
Mood in 3 words		
What makes it sound like its style or genre?		

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WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Pick one of your songs. How do you think the time, place or culture it came from shaped how it sounds?

CHOOSE YOUR REFERENCE ARTIST / SONG

Choose one reference artist or song for a song idea of your own, and describe the vibe you're aiming for.

SONG/ARTIST CHOICE

We will borrow _____ from it.
We will change _____ so it sounds like us!

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CRACK INTO AN IDEA

Brainstorm: jot down any words, phrases, feelings or images that come to mind when you think of your song idea. Don't filter yourself yet - this is a first draft of a vibe, not a finished idea.

DISCUSS

Referencing another artist's sound isn't the same as copying it. What's the difference between being inspired by a reference and copying it directly?

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CHOOSE YOUR FEEL

	OUR CHOICE AND WHY
Tempo *adagio, andante, moderato, allegro or presto*	
Dynamics *soft, loud, or changing*	
Major *often described as brighter* **Minor** *often described as darker*	
Mood in 3 words	
Instruments we imagine	
Notes	

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WORKSHEET 3

BUILDING A FOUNDATION

FOCUS QUESTION

What makes a song idea strong enough to build on?

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BUILDING A FOUNDATION

WATCH AND NOTE

The artists discuss getting everyone on board with a shared concept, and spending time understanding what the song is actually about before writing begins. One artist compares sharing the first idea to being the first person to eat at a function — it feels risky to put your idea forward, even though (as they point out) nobody actually shoots it down.

PICK A CONCEPT

Every song needs a starting concept to build from. Choose ONE of the following as your song's foundation and explain your choice:

- A groove (a rhythmic feel)
- A chord progression
- A melody

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BUILDING A FOUNDATION

In 1-2 sentences, describe what your song is about, or the feeling it should give your listeners.

FOUR WAYS IN

Songs can start from different places. Write one sentence on how each point could start your song.

STARTING POINT	HOW IT COULD WORK FOR OUR SONG
Theme or Story	
Title or Phrase	
Melody or Riff	
Groove or Chord Progression	

FROM IDEA TO STAGE | WORKSHEET 3

BUILDING A FOUNDATION

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DISCUSS

Why might it feel “risky” to share the first idea in a group songwriting session? How can a group make it feel safer for people to contribute early/rough ideas?

REFLECT

Why is agreeing on a shared concept before writing lyrics or music important? What might go wrong if a group skips this step?

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WORKSHEET 4

WRITING THE LYRICS

FOCUS QUESTION

How do songwriters turn an idea into lyrics that fit the music?

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WRITING THE LYRICS

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WATCH AND NOTE

The writers say that picking an idea and committing to it is one of the hardest parts. In the video, they test lines out loud, hunt for rhymes, and decide how an idea should end. How do they test their lines?

STORY MAP

Singer-songwriters often tell stories. Map yours:

SECTION	WHAT HAPPENS / WHAT IS SAID
Verse 1 *Who, where, what is going on?*	
Chorus *What is the main message?*	
Verse 2 *What has changed, or what is a new angle?*	
Bridge (optional) *A twist or new point of view*	
Final chorus *Does the message feel different now? How?*	

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WRITING THE LYRICS

RHYME & RHYTHM

Try write a few rhyming couplets (two lines that rhyme) connected to your theme. Don't worry if it's rough, first drafts are meant to be rewritten.

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WRITING THE LYRICS

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EDITING BAD LINES INTO GOOD LINES

In the video, the writers reject several rough lines ("this car only plays CDs") before landing on something stronger ("I've been driving for a while"). Editing out a weak idea isn't failure, it's part of the process.

Writers rarely keep their first line. Take three rough lines and improve them. Try adding a detail (a sound, place or object), cutting words, changing the rhyme word, or swapping the image. Read each aloud.

FINDING THE HOOK

A hook is a short, memorable idea that comes back again and again, in the words, the melody or both. In music, a short idea that repeats and develops through a piece is called a motif.

Start by writing a strong and simple melody. Imagine you have to sing the melody to a huge stadium; can the stadium sing it back to you? Then, make the lyrics as strong as the melody. Use simple words and repetition!

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WORKSHEET 5

ARRANGING A BAND

FOCUS QUESTION

What does each instrument do, and how do you decide what plays and when?

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ARRANGING A BAND

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WATCH AND NOTE

Arranging is the process of deciding which instruments play what, and when.

TYPICAL INSTRUMENT ROLES

You can get as creative as you like in the way you use your instruments. These popular instruments are typically used for the following purposes:

INSTRUMENT	ROLE IT PLAYS
DRUMS 	creates the feel/groove
BASS 	locks in with the drums + holds the grove
GUITAR 	creates texture and harmony
KEYS 	creates texture and harmony
LYRICS 	carries the melody and lyrics

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ARRANGING A BAND

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MAP YOUR SONG STRUCTURE

Plan your song section by section. Tick the instruments that will play in each section and choose a dynamic level (*pp*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f or ff*).

SECTION	BARS	DRUMS	BASS	GUITAR	KEYS	VOCALS
Intro						
Verse 1						
Chorus						
Verse 2						
Chorus						
Bridge (optional)						
Final chorus						
Outro						

REFLECT

Creating space means not every instrument plays all the time. Sometimes leaving gaps makes a song feel stronger. Where in your song could an instrument drop out to create space?

FROM IDEA TO STAGE | WORKSHEET 5

ARRANGING A BAND

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ARRANGEMENT DECISONS

Musicians ask themselves many questions while arranging. Change ONE thing at a time, play it, record it and record what happens. Answer these questions for your own song and create your own question:

QUESTION	WHAT WE TRIED	WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT WE DECIDED
Should the chorus come in earlier?			
Does this chord (or chord order) feel stronger?			
Is the tempo right? Try two tempos and note the BPM			

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WORKSHEET 6

REHEARSAL

FOCUS QUESTION

How do musicians prepare to perform a song live?

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REHEARSAL

WATCH AND NOTE

By this stage, the arrangement is largely finished, the band knows what instrument goes where and why. Rehearsal is where all those decisions get tested against reality: playing the song together, repeatedly, until it's ready for an audience.

LEARNING PARTS

Before a group can rehearse together, each musician needs to know their own part. What's the difference between being able to play your part on your own, and being able to play it while listening and reacting to everyone else?

GIVING FEEDBACK

Giving feedback in a band is a skill in itself, it needs to be honest enough to actually improve the song, but delivered in a way that keeps people willing to keep contributing.

Write one piece of feedback you could give a bandmate about their part, phrased in a way that is specific and constructive rather than just critical.

Use this frame: "*I noticed* _____ *(tempo, dynamics, balance, blend, tuning or articulation). It made the song feel* _____. *Next time, try* _____."

When you receive feedback, how will you show you have heard it? What will you do if you disagree?

REHEARSAL

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SOLVING MISTAKES

Mistakes are normal in rehearsal. Brainstorm strategies a band could use in the moment when someone loses their place, forgets a part, or plays something wrong.

Should a band always stop and fix a mistake immediately, or sometimes keep playing through it? What are the trade-offs?

TALK WITHOUT TALKING

Bands use non-verbal communication, such as shared breath, eye contact and nods, as well as agreed cues. Write your band's cues. These are particularly helpful in the rehearsal phase, while everyone is still learning their parts.

MOMENT	OUR CUE
Counting in	
Ending the song	
Going back to the chorus	
Getting louder or softer	

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WORKSHEET 7

THE FINAL PERFORMANCE

FOCUS QUESTION

What does it take to take a song from rehearsal onto the stage?

FROM IDEA TO STAGE | WORKSHEET 7

THE FINAL PERFORMANCE

WATCH AND NOTE

The final module brings the whole process together: an idea that started on a blank page has now been shaped, written, arranged and rehearsed, and is ready to be performed live in front of an audience.

STAGE SET UP

Sketch or describe a stage plot for your band: where would each performer and instrument be positioned, and why?

What equipment does each performer need on stage (e.g. a mic stand, a DI box for a guitar, space for a drum kit)?

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THE FINAL PERFORMANCE

SOUNDCHECK

A soundcheck is the band and sound engineer's chance to test and balance everything before an audience arrives.

List what you would want to check during a soundcheck for your song (e.g. each instrument's level, vocal clarity, balance between instruments).

THE FINAL PERFORMANCE

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MONITORING

Monitors let performers hear themselves and each other clearly on stage, which is often very different from what the audience hears.

Why might a drummer, a vocalist, and a guitarist each need something different in their monitor mix?

What could happen to a performance if a musician can't hear themselves or the rest of the band properly?

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THE FINAL PERFORMANCE

PERFORMANCE MINDSET

Performing live is different to rehearsing, there's an audience, and often nerves. What strategies could help a performer manage nerves before going on stage?

What does it take for a performer to connect with an audience during a live show, beyond just playing the song correctly?

WELL DONE

You've now followed a song all the way from idea to stage!
Keep this workbook as a record of your own songwriting process.

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THE FINAL PERFORMANCE

LYRICS FOR 'HOW MUCH LONGER?'

This road I'm on it looks like smoke
My lights been burning low
I've been feeling a little far away from home
I've been driving for a while

Gonna have to roll the windows down
But they only go halfway
Should've called back when I had the chance
But I've been driving anyway
I've been driving anyway
I've been driving anyway

Tell me how much longer till we get to where I'm going
Can we just turn back is it too late to start over again

Think I've heard this song too many times
But I don't really mind
The radio's stuck on rewind
I've been driving for a while
I've been driving for a while
I've been driving for a while

Tell me how much longer till we get to where I'm going
Can we just turn back is it too late to start over again

Tell me how much longer till we get to where I'm going
Can we just turn back is it too late to start over

Tell me how much longer till we get to where I'm going
Can we just go back is it too late to start over again