

### Yr 3/4 Ngh2: The Language of Aliens and Aliens' movement.

If we could hear the language of Aliens, what would it sound like?

**The students of 3/4A** were conflicted about reaching a quintessential Alien language sound. Many thought that it should be an ugly and unsettling sound, while others wanted to posset the possibility that Aliens may in fact be friendly and not hostile monsters. We were unanimous about not creating a sound world that would scare the Preps!

Amongst the vast array of stuff we had been 'test driving' as potential Alien language were 'Waldteufels' literally 'woodland devils'. These instruments can be made by attaching a length of fishing line to the base of a paper cup and tying the other end, loosely, around the knob of a 'dolly peg'. The area where the fishing line contacts the dolly-peg is made tacky by rubbing double bass rosin on it. As you put tension on the line and twisted the peg, the line vibrated. The resulting sound was an impressive, eerie creaking amplified through the paper cup. It was decided that this would be the raw sound of Alien language as heard by human ears, but when this sound was processed through a translation machine, the sound was actually melodious, calming and resonant! For the translated sound, the students gently played steel tongue drums. Everyone was happy! The students paired up, one student with a waldteufel would make creaking phrases of language which their partner would imitate on the steel tongue drum by following pitch and phrasing.



*The raw Alien language performed on the Waldteufels and the melodious translation sounded on the steel tongue drums.*

**The students of 3/4D** chose to explore the sound of how Aliens move.

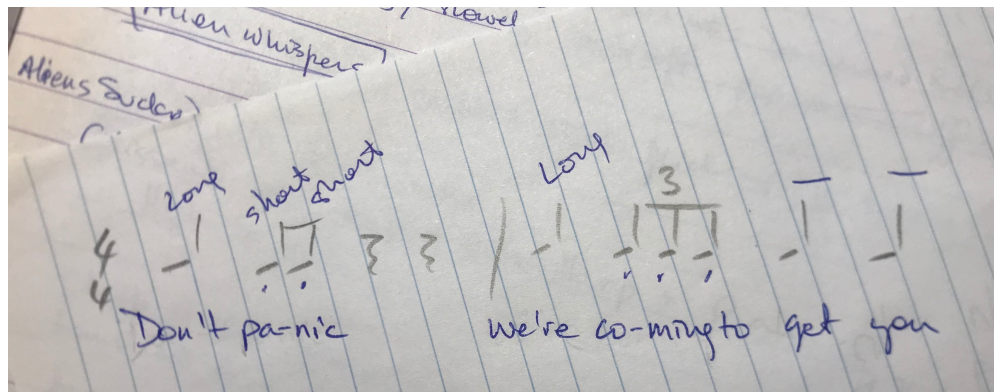
When Aliens were 'at home' in their natural habitat and unobserved by other species, they moved around freely contacting ground with a 'glumping' sound. Once again, this was an idea ascribed to a sound the students had discovered. All the students placed their bells, especially the larger heavier ones, upside down on the rubber gym floor. By levering the bell back slightly on its edge (not lifting) and letting it drop back to the floor, the resultant sound was subtle random 'glumps and glomps' of different pitches. When Aliens wanted their presence to be undetected, they could move around without contacting the ground. They were almost inaudible except for the faintest swish sound, that if heard, would make the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. Students had felt with their fingers that the Fed Bells had contrasting surface textures to explore. Whilst the outsides of the bells were smooth, in insides were finely ridged. After the bells were cast, their interiors were laser sculpted to achieve the optimum bell's side thicknesses for the purest pitch and resonance. This was achieved via a computer program, but the process was a bit like turning wood on a lathe and scraping off wood until the desired shape is achieved. Each bell has it's unique interior texture which could sound quite loud if scraped with a five cent coin, or soft and mysterious when finger nails were pulled quickly over the surface. It was this quick finger nail 'flick out of the cup' gesture that became the sneaky way that Aliens could move around undetected.

There was one other idea the 3/4s wanted to explore, and like other ideas, this also grew out of an exercise of making long and short sounds with the bell. Bells were held by their stalk horizontally to the ground and just above the student's legs. Long sounds were made by striking the bell and letting

the sound ring on, whilst the short sound was made by striking the bell while its side, and particularly its rim, is dampened against one's leg. Students observed that these patterns of sound were like Mores Code, so it quickly followed that Aliens could communicate telepathically across the universe with Morse Code like signals.

They concluded their performance segment with a rhythmic groove of communication between Ruby's Home Group, who was trapped in a Black Hole, and Warwick's HG who would rescue them. Ruby's group tapped out SOS with sounds representing the dots and dashes of Morse Code, and Warwick's replied with 'Don't worry, we're coming to get you!'

For the performance, the students sat in three groups, Warwick's Alien Movement group, in two rows facing each other directed by Peter, and most of Ruby's Alien Language group, led by Elissa, also in two rows facing each other: one row with waldteufels and the opposite row with steel tongue drums. Ruby sat with a third group of her students performing a sequence of soft mysterious timbres with the bells that related to an Alien conversation or movement. These ensembles needed to listen to each other in the performance to allow pools of sound to emerge and mingle, or solo and blossom. The gym provided a perfect conduit for sound to be lifted and let 'hang in the air' before being dispersed. Once the students became more fluent with their technique of sound making, they were able to go deeper into the experience of listening. When everyone was 'in the zone' it was other worldly.



Score for the Alien 'Morse Code' rescue response.



Levering back the bell for the 'glumping/glomping Alien movement sound. Pulling fingernails up out of the bells for the 'sneaky Alien movement sound'. Ruby leads a repertoire of Alien sounds,



*Elissa directed the Alien Language group  
and Peter conducted the Alien Movement  
group.*