



A new and innovative music program that supports people of all ages and abilities in **dreaming** of possibilities, **creating** beautiful soundscapes and **discovering** their inner artists.

“ The music we make... it makes me feel happy, relaxed and free.  
*Esther, AO Participant* ”

Create beautiful, soothing and inspiring soundscapes with a variety of electronic and acoustic instruments.

“ I don't really know how to play the piano but it makes me feel like I can.  
*Robyn, AO Participant* ”

Using projected film and animation, create a multi-sensory experience with and for those around you.

“ We make great music. It sounds like classical music!  
*Jay, AO Participant* ”

“ There is such an immediate feeling from playing music, it inspires creativity and pleasure, but I have also witnessed the growth in individual capacities within the Footscray Ambient Orchestra over the year.  
*Nikki Zerella, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Access Coordinator* ”

John Edgar, a musician and disability support worker, is the founder of **Ambient Orchestras** and has worked in Disability Residential services and ATSS environments for the last fourteen years. He has a Graduate Diploma in Disability Studies. John has recorded and toured extensively with a variety of acts.



## The Program

The **Ambient Orchestras** disability program is the culmination of decades of experience in the music, disability and community sectors. The first performing **Ambient Orchestras** group started out at Footscray Community Arts Centre at the beginning of 2008. Ambient Orchestras provides an artistic platform for participants to exercise their right to independence, choice, control and individuality.

Music is undeniably an effective form of communication, and **Ambient Orchestras** creates the opportunity for individuals to communicate their own voice and then weave it into the fabric of a group piece, a kind of 'musical conversation'.

**Ambient Orchestras** places the participants in the driver's seat, and is not a limiting, one-sided form of entertainment/therapy. An artistic exchange takes place within the group, whether in a recording, rehearsal or performance-based environment, promoting inclusion, empowerment and control of the creative process.

“ There has been an increase in observation and listening skills, a sense of commonality and purpose that has created a social bond between the participants. John facilitates this experience with his genuine love of music and his commitment to working with people of all abilities

*Nikki Zerella, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Access Coordinator*

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Synthesizers, electric pianos, guitars, bass guitars, percussion, wind instruments and more are set up and/or tuned in a specific way to facilitate an individual's musical expression without any prior knowledge or experience necessary.

**Ambient Orchestras** is a fun, creative, inclusive multi-sensory experience that also utilises projected imagery from a film and animation collection. Participants are supported in choosing the 'cinematic theme' for their musical creation.

**Ambient Orchestra's** objectives are:

- \*to provide a forum in which individual's are empowered to explore their own artistic voice.
- \* to promote collaboration and musical awareness between the participants.
- \* to foster artistic collaboration and social inclusion between participants and artists/musicians from the wider community.
- \* to provide a results-based opportunity for participants in working towards presenting music of enduring quality to the public.



## Community

“ Being part of a band is fun, and Ambient Orchestras has helped Cameron to co operate with other members and has bought opportunities for him to perform with them in his community.  
*Rennice, parent of AO participant* ”

Ambient Orchestras is an inclusive, empowering approach to creating music of enduring quality. In the spirit of the National Arts and Disability Strategy, Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012 and The Disability Act 2006, **Ambient Orchestras** creates an opportunity for its participants to work with other artists from the community. In a recording, rehearsal and performance capacity, this collaboration creates networks, facilitates an exciting exchange of ideas, and provides an opportunity for increased artistic development.



Footscray Ambient Orchestra at the Whitten Oval  
Melbourne International Arts Festival,  
'Go Show'. October 2008

In October 2008, the Footscray Ambient Orchestra performed over five nights at the Whitten Oval as part of the Melbourne International Arts Festival. The group collaborated with an Erhu (a two-stringed traditional Chinese instrument) virtuoso, and received a hugely positive response from the public and the media (The Age, 25/10/08). The artistic output of the participants over those five nights grew with every performance, as did their confidence and sense of teamwork.

**Ambient Orchestras** provides a real opportunity for people with an intellectual disability to participate actively in the artistic and cultural life of the community.