

Flow

This piece was inspired by a project called Reef Song. A healthy coral reef is a symphony of sound: crackles, crunches, booms, chirps and whistles of fish and mammals, eating, mating, fighting and communicating. The Reef Song project is led by marine scientists from the Australian Institute for Marine Sciences and several universities, and it uses this soundscape of a healthy reef to help restore damaged reefs. Using underwater speakers, they project a healthy reef song out from the damaged reef, to entice floating baby coral larvae to settle there. Eventually, hopefully, the corals grow enough to support their own new reef song.

But of course, we all know that reefs are in danger of extinction – oceans are heating as we burn fossil fuels, extreme storms are getting worse as we change the climate, and from chemical runoff from human industry. The question is: which song will we choose to sing? Which way will we flow?

twist flick crackle snap
dart nibble glide curve

on the ebb tide flows the song
reef song, coral song,
groupers boom and wrasses grunt
fish song, reef song

bed of coral, empty made
whitened limestone skeletons
who will come to raise their young?
who will come to make their home?

bubble nibble flutter flip
chitter chatter chirp click

on the neap tide flows the song
reef song, coral song,
larvae float to join the throng,
polyps rise and grow as one,
zooanthellae seek the sun.

fish song, reef song
parrots crunch and damsels chirp
in technicolour symphony
projected from an empty stage

gobble gabble grab munch
dig scoop roar burn

on the high tide flows the song
can we slow the rising seas?
can we calm the pounding waves?
can we cool the scorching heat?
can we all the singers save?

twist flick glide twist flick glide
twist flick
glide