



## Multicultural Arts Victoria Allara

### RR2020\_MAV\_Allara\_03

[Music]

Welcome to the Victorian Seniors Festival, In the Groove, Radio Reimagined in 2020. This project has been produced on the lands of the Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging and welcome all First Nations people listening today.

As part of our music series, please enjoy this episode by Allara Briggs-Pattison with an interview conducted by Jessica Ankermar. This show is part of a series produced by Multicultural Arts Victoria for the Victorian Seniors Festival, Radio Reimagined in 2020.

We start the show with a song by Allara called *Wala is Life*.

[Song - *Wala is Life*]

*Wala is life  
Wala falls from sky  
Rain beginning of life  
Like our kinship tires  
In mother earth's eyes  
Riverbanks flow wide  
Fingerlings swim wild  
Making other moon smile  
Hasn't rained in a while  
Wala is blood  
Wala gives flood  
Wala is life  
Gotta get lore right  
Limitless undercurrents  
Pushing, pulling, pumping  
Riding, sliding, mulling  
Tickles from nipples of sacred springs  
Its an animal thing  
Made to give us wings  
After the rain the river flows  
And the kookaburra sings*

*And the kookaburra sings  
In the gubba-sight, in the gubba-sight  
In the gubba-sight, in the gubba-sight  
In the gubba-sight, in the gubba-sight, ARGH  
Seasons summer breeze  
Leaves south easterlies  
Frost on the toes will freeze  
Plants to make you sneeze  
Downpours, thunderstorms  
Temps above the norm  
Bees will cease to swarm  
And the ocean far too warm  
It's an animal thing  
Made to give us wings  
Made to give us wings  
Might come if we sing  
Or will we feel the sting?  
Of the gubba sight  
Endless supply in the gubba-sight  
ARGH  
After the rain the river flows  
After the rain the river flows  
After the rain the river flows  
After the rain the river flows*

Interviewer: Today, I'm joined by Allara, a Yora Yora musician, filmmaker and climate justice advocate. Allara, welcome to the show.

Allara: Hi, thank you so much for having me.

Interviewer: No worries. We're really fortunate to have you. You've had a stunning career from the get-go, debuting your talents alongside Uncle Archie Roach at the Opera House in 2016 through to directing and producing your very own documentary, *Very Beautiful Sunshine*. That's forthcoming, am I right? That's yet to be released?

Allara: Yeah, we're looking at releasing that towards the end of the year so keep an eye out. We've got a fundraiser with the Documentary Australia Foundation to finish off the last little bit, but it's been a project in the works for about 5 years. So, very excited to get it all finished and share it with the world.

Interviewer: Amazing. So, I believe people can contribute to that and we'll share the details for a link later on, but I guess if this is something that you've been working on for the last few years, how has the current climate kind of affected your ability to create?

Allara: Well, it's been a really interesting time for me creatively because I think I was getting to a point in my career when things are really starting to take off which is really exciting. So, it's been really strange to just sort of have everything cancelled, you know, in March and then I had a really exciting show coming up with a very good friend and incredible artist, Orlanka Toreshenko. So, it was really disappointing to cancel that show due to COVID.

We were looking at talking about themes of sustainability, environment, languages. So, Orlanka is Ukrainian-Canadian. So, we were both exploring our identities and how that connects to each other and the places where we've grown up and lived, and we were also going to be looking at aspects of whiteness and racism and talk about Mother Earth as well. You know, it's all stuff that both her and I do when we're in our own lane but it was really nice to come together with her and work on that show, and it was just unfortunate that we couldn't finish it but, yeah, it's been interesting.

So, during COVID we tried to work over Zoom on Logic, and I was producing the track, and then I learned the terrible mistake of not backing up my work and lost...

Interviewer: Oh, no...

Allara: Lost some of it which is really disappointing but now we're just kind of trying to figure out how we can do it, and she's - as a visitor to this country, she's trying to figure out what she's doing until she kind of has to go back home in December.

Interviewer: Right.

Allara: So, yeah, it's been a bit of like just crazy, hectic trying to work online.

Interviewer: Well, now - I mean, now you've got Zencaster. We're recording remotely now so maybe you can have some live sessions when she returns back to Canada and you're here in Aus.

Allara: Yeah, well we're hoping that - she's in Adelaide at the moment.

Interviewer: Right.

Allara: So, we're hoping that we can sneak into a studio there and do some recording on the track that we're going to be sharing, *Seed*, but we created like a mega track of one of her really epic pieces of poetry and my track, *Seed*, and we kind of jushed them together to create this like epicness that we're really excited to share. So, I think that will be out before the end of the year as well.

Interviewer: Fantastic. So, it hasn't been a complete standstill for you. You've been able to produce this wonderful music and is it *Seed* - the one that's inspired by the current I guess circumstance? You sent me a track earlier, quite beautiful. You're on the double bass and then you come into a spoken word piece and some singing yourself. Can you tell me about that?

Allara: Yeah. Well, a lot of my tracks are written like that, with I guess the foundational loop on the double bass and maybe a few other instruments, a bit of keys or a bit of ukulele or whatever, whatever I can manage to play and sound okay on. Muck around on piano because I'm not a keys player. I just play the notes until they sound okay but yeah.

I haven't really gone into the rap or like, you know, the faster kind of word delivery but I really like spoken word. I love listening to spoken word artists. So, I do a bit of that and I'm also not that confident with my singing still so...

Interviewer: Oh, you have an angelic voice. I was like oh, she sings too! I love it.

Allara: Thank you. I've been working on it. COVID has been great for working on that singing every day but, yeah. So, both of the tracks that I'm playing have that spoken word and the singing aspect to it. You know, a little bit of a hook so people don't tune out but also, yeah, because I like singing. It's just that I've never felt really that good at it.

Interviewer: I actually wondered because contrary to what you're saying, it felt so natural watching you sing and I wondered if it was something that kicked off your connection with music, just given that it seems like an inherent talent but it sounds like that's something you've had to come to learn or...? Tell me about that journey.

Allara: Yeah. Well, I started on strings. I've always been a string player. I started on guitar and then I went over to brass. My dad was a brassie, so he played tuba while I was growing up, but he also played guitar. Mum didn't play much but she loved listening to music, so we got to hear lots of amazing music growing up, but I loved guitar. So, I ended up learning guitar and then I moved over the eupho and then I moved over to the bass. So, it kind of was this all-rounder and then by the time I got to about year 8 or year 9, my teacher was like, "Why don't you play double bass?" and I was like, "Yeah, why not?"

Interviewer: Did she just hand one over?

Allara: Pretty much.

Interviewer: It's not like we all have a double bass laying around in the cupboard.

Allara: I borrowed one and then eventually saved up and bought one and, yeah, love it. I love it and my love for the bass grows more and more every time I pick it up which is - it's really fun and it's a really nice relationship to have with something that's not a human.

Interviewer: No doubt.

Allara: Yeah.

Interviewer: No doubt. So, yeah, I mean you're a woman of many talents and watching you switch from instrument to the instrument of your voice and hearing about the different things that you play is really, really intriguing. I'm wondering if in the film, the forthcoming film, *Beautiful Sunshine*, we'll hear much of your original music in the piece.

Allara: Yeah. So, actually it was a funny decision. As I said, started working on this film a long time ago and at that time, I'd never written any of my own songs and I thought oh, something that could maybe help me promote the documentary would be to write an EP and to release it at the same time and, you know, feature some of that music - you know, the looping stuff with the bass and - I love all - a little bit of a keys every now and then. I thought I'll record and write and release an EP as part of the like promotion of the documentary.

Interviewer: Yes.

Allara: So, it all just kind of organically happened eventually over, yeah, a number of years but I'll be using some of the backings for my tracks throughout the film and I'll be releasing the - my new song,

*Rekindled Systems*, which isn't really a new song but I've recorded it and I'm like loving how it's sounding.

Actually, Arik Bloom was the one who has been working on that with me as the producer. He's from Multicultural Arts Victoria and, yeah, we're loving working on that and it sounds great. So, that will be featured right at the end of the film. So, the film is really the story of how my identity and music journey kind of interact with one another and how that's come about and looked and what I've learnt through playing with so many different people and also, yeah, that - like having that connection there with my grandfather and heading out to Shep and seeing him more often and starting to get to know him and, yeah, I guess it's like a really kind of celebratory at the end but it's also like through the film, it's quite dark as well. There was a lot of anxiety, there was a lot of stress and of course it's been going for such a long time so there's also like the sense of resilience and like, yeah, we're doing it. We're getting there slowly.

Interviewer: Yeah, and you did speak about your parents or your dad playing brass and your mum having an ear for music. Did your grandfather play an instrument as well?

Allara: I don't think my grandfather does play but I've heard him sing a couple of ditties and it's quite hilarious, but I don't know if he sung but his mother, Nanny Sophie Briggs, sang in the Kamaganja Choir as well at the mission. So, that's something that I'm really proud of. Yeah, so sometimes mum and I sing together on stage as well, *Mary Don't You Weep* which is about - it's a hymn about Pharaoh's army and Moses and water and freedom from slavery essentially. So, yeah, it's all connected.

Interviewer: I could see you even taking snippets from your film and the things that you discovered and then putting that into your music. So, in retrospect - because it just sounds like you've discovered so much. We can't wait to see the film. Can you tell our listeners where they might be able to watch the trailer or even donate to the cause to get this out for December?

Allara: Yeah, absolutely. That would be so amazing. The trailer is available on my artist Facebook and on *A Beautiful Sunshine* Facebook and Instagram pages, and through the [documentaryaustralia.com.au/project/beautiful-sunshine](http://documentaryaustralia.com.au/project/beautiful-sunshine). Yeah, if you jump on any of my socials, the link is right there or on my Instagram in my link and bio.

Interviewer: What's your Instagram handle?

Allara: It's Allara\_\_\_

Interviewer: Wonderful. Thank you so much, Allara. Let's have a listen to your music. What are we hearing today?

Allara: I'm playing *Seed* and I'm also playing *Incomplete Reflections* today.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. I can't wait to see the film.

Allara: Thank you. Thanks so much for having me on.

Interviewer: Alright, Allara.

[Song - *Seed*]

*Our mother*

*She is talking to us  
Can you hear her?  
It is by no coincidence that global indigenous sacrificed for the causes and are feeling the impacts first  
And worst  
Cultures who understand time differently to the western mind see as far back as we see forward  
We honour our ancestors like we honour our great-great grandchildren  
Time is no nine to five  
Time is a gift  
Presence gives us the ability to receive and insight  
Time hides unconditional love and ultimate forgiveness  
We go forward, she goes round and round  
We go forward, she goes round and round  
Our mother  
She is talking to us  
Can you hear her?  
She is crying a raging storms and floods strong enough to easily rip this city apart  
Her guilt festers our square grinding teeth, jaw clenched watching in disbelief  
Her eyes grow dry  
She couldn't feel the barker even if she cried a river of tears because cotton, dairy and rice  
We go forward, she goes round and round  
We go forward, she goes round and round  
Our mother  
She is talking to us  
Can you hear her?  
Indigenous uprising on the front lines  
Old white men quiver squeaking childish threats  
Then silence  
Deep down, they know we are right  
They know they went too far but trying to hold onto what's left of their power  
Maybe it's childhood trauma, hate or spite but they continue to light our mother on fire  
They pour poison down her throat, create GMOs packed in pretty plastic wrap  
Pop it in a box, sell it nice and cheap to us mob in the shops  
We go forward, she goes round and round  
We go forward, she goes round and round  
Our mother  
She is talking to us  
Can you hear her?  
Between psychotic episodes of connecting the dots  
Inspired by moments of truth and spiritual liberation  
Are moments of early onset menopause and depressive neglect  
Due to their adolescent selfishness  
Our mother  
She says to me  
The balance is off  
This will challenge you all to your core  
It is time to abolish capitalism, greed, white supremacy and war  
Wake up, she says  
Because I won't take this anymore  
Because I won't take this anymore  
With L-O-R-E to keep the balance in order  
We're out of time*

*So, I'm calling on the global indigenous to lead the revolution with qualities of love, compassion,  
empathy and unwavering resilience  
But for now, rest your head and close your eyes  
We go forward, she goes round and round  
We go forward, she goes round and round*

*[Song - Incomplete Reflections]*

*Time to ponder  
Piece the puzzle  
Unravel my golden locks  
Break apart stiff knots  
Time of silence  
No planes or flight mode  
And buzzing, flashing lights  
Scrolling, sulking late at night  
Lift the layers just as tight and breath in deep  
Let it go with all my might  
Lift the layers just as tight and breath in deep  
Let it go with all my might  
I feel the loss of what I never had  
Constant love from a lover, grandfather or dad  
I know it was there, but they had a funny way to wear their love  
Or show they cared  
A cycle of no one's fault  
Grieving the loss of my fantasy bond  
A story forming and informed by the one before it  
Of relationships hindered before they even had the chance to begin  
But now I can see the connection between these three men  
Time to ponder  
Piece the puzzle  
Unravel my golden locks  
Break apart stiff knots  
Time of silence  
No planes or flight mode  
And buzzing, flashing lights  
Scrolling, sulking late at night  
Lift the layers just as tight and breath in deep  
Let it go with all my might  
Lift the layers just as tight and breath in deep  
Let it go with all my might  
I scratch the surface  
Feel like a complicated mess  
Missing gigs my hungry ego needs  
Validating love from strangers  
I go live on the net from home to avoid the invisible threat  
Oh, how I wish I had been more prepared  
My counsellor guides me through self-care affirmations  
I'm worthy, I'm loveable, I am enough  
It means more when it comes from me  
So tonight, I hold little Allara and let her be free*

*Time to ponder  
Piece the puzzle  
Unravel my golden locks  
Break apart stiff knots  
Time of silence  
No planes or flight mode  
And buzzing, flashing lights  
Scrolling, sulking late at night  
Lift the layers just as tight and breath in deep  
Let it go with all my might  
Lift the layers just as tight and breath in deep  
Let it go with all my might  
I am a daughter who needed my dad  
A woman now distressed by the thought of calling my grandfather  
An ex-lover, an ex-friend, I take the pen  
And write my story again and again and again  
In future, I will make time to reflect to be more prepared the next time a tsunami of grief comes  
I'll let it throw me around and drown me until I find the strength to come up for air  
Next pandemic, I'll know who I am  
Time to ponder  
Piece the puzzle  
Unravel my golden locks  
Break apart stiff knots  
Time of silence  
No planes or flight mode  
And buzzing, flashing lights  
Scrolling, sulking late at night  
Lift the layers just as tight and breath in deep  
Let it go with all my might  
Lift the layers just as tight and breath in deep  
Let it go with all my might*

[Music]

You've been listening to the Victorian Seniors Festival, In the Groove, Radio Reimagined in 2020. This radio program was created by Multicultural Arts Victoria and produced by Eric Bloom with support from the Radio Reimagined 2020 production team: Producer, Rob Gebert; Creative Director, Nat Grant; Technical Director, AC Hunter; and Post-Production Director, Michele Vescio. For more information about the Seniors Festival and to hear more episodes like this one, visit [seniorsonline.vic.gov.au](http://seniorsonline.vic.gov.au)