

# Modern Music for the Modern Student

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Programming experimental and non-traditional music is often a challenge for the school band and orchestra conductor. Performing music that encourages composition through the use of non-traditional notation, develops individual musicianship through improvisation, or creates student engagement through the integration of technology fosters higher-order thinking in the student musician. This session will sample repertoire from a variety of levels, highlighting elements of graphic notation, aleatory music, found percussion, improvisation, electroacoustic treatments, and minimalist techniques. Suggestions of score preparation and pedagogic strategies will assist educators in maximizing their student's performance of "the music of now."

## Beginning Thoughts...

"To study music, we must learn the rules. To create music, we must break them." - Nadia Boulanger

"We [meaning "we composers"] often hear admonitions to raise the level of band music. This can't be done. We can only add to the total sum. What these advocates should be saying is that we must raise the taste of the conductor."

- W. Francis McBeth (American Composer)

## Modern Compositional Techniques

(Definitions taken from *The Oxford Companion to Music*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed October 20, 2019, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e3008>)

1. Minimalist Techniques - A term borrowed from the visual arts to describe a style of composition characterized by an intentionally simplified rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic vocabulary.
2. Found percussion - Found percussion celebrates the notion that any item could be created into a percussion instrument.
3. Electroacoustic treatments, including Visio-Acoustic as an emerging genre - Music produced or altered by electrical means (as opposed to "acoustic music," which is produced by mechanically vibrating and resonating bodies). Types of electroacoustic music may be classified according to the source of the sound material and the compositional approach. Visio-Acoustic music is the exploration between music and a visual medium, set in relation to each other for performance.
4. Aleatory Techniques - The term 'aleatory' applies to music in which the composer has made a deliberate withdrawal of control. The performer participates in various levels of indeterminacy, improvisation, and/or graphic notation.
5. Graphic notation - A system developed in the 1950s by which visual shapes or patterns are used instead of, or together with, conventional musical notation.

# WORKS FEATURING MODERN COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUES

## Minimalism

### Beginner Band

Richard Brown - *Minimalist Sketches*

### Middle School Band

Brian Balmages - *Reverberations*

Brett Dietz - *Shards of Glass*

Cait Nishimura - *Chasing Sunlight*<sup>+</sup>

Bill Thomas - *Land of the Silver Birch*<sup>+</sup>

### High School Band

Matthew Conaway - *Minimalist Dances*

Kevin Day - *Rocketship*

Cait Nishimura - *Lake Superior Suite*<sup>+</sup>

Randall Standridge - *Pulse*

### Beginner Orchestra

Eric Satie - *Gymnopedies No. 3* (arr. Philips)

### Middle School Orchestra

Bela Bartok - *Allegro Barbaro* (arr. Lipton)

### High School Orchestra

Philip Glass - *String Quartet No. 2*

Simon Jeffes - *Music for a Found Harmonium*  
(arr. Dabczynski)

Karl Jenkins - *Palladio*

Libby Larsen - *Overture for the End of A Century*

Eric Satie - *Furniture Music* (Set 1 and 3 for  
orchestra/strings)

## Found Percussion

### Beginner Band

Jodie Blackshaw - *Whirlwind*

Hilliard and D'Alicandro - *Percussion Time*

Monica Pearce - *vivid*<sup>+</sup>

### Middle School Band

Jennifer Higdon - *Rhythmstand*

John Mackey - *Foundary*

### High School Band

Viet Cuong - *Diamond Tide*

Erik Morales - *Urban Dances*

### Beginner Orchestra

Lauren Bernofsky - *Raindrop Serenade*

### Middle School Orchestra

Samuel Adler - *A Little Bit of... Space...Time*

### High School Orchestra

Benjamin Britten - *Simple Symphony*

Modest Mussorgsky - *Night on Bald Mountain*

William Grant Still - *Danzas de Panama*

## Electroacoustic

### Beginner Band

Steven Bryant - *The Machine Awakes*

Larry Clark - *ijingle*

### Middle School Band

Daniel Montoya - *Axe to Grind*

Alex Shapiro - *Moment*

Erika Svanoë - *The Haunted Carousel*

Benjamin Dean Taylor - *Techno Blade*

### High School Band

Alex Shapiro - *Lights Out!*

Alex Shapiro - *Tight Squeeze*

Andrew Staniland - *Four Horsemen*<sup>+</sup>

Mason Bates - *Mothership*

### Beginner Orchestra

Steven Bryant - *The Machine Awakes*

### Middle School Orchestra

Ellen Golden - *Cityscape*<sup>\*</sup>

### High School Orchestra

Steven Bryant - *Ecstatic Waters*

Mason Bates - *Rusty Air in Carolina*

Mason Bates - *Mothership*

Pierre Boulez - *Repons*

## **Aleatory**

### Beginner Band

Jodie Blackshaw - *Letter from Sado*  
Steven Bryant - *Interruption Overture*  
Derek Charke - *Song of the Tides*<sup>+</sup>  
Anne McGinty - *Clouds*  
Jason Nitsch - *Carnivore!*

### Middle School Band

David Biedenbender - *Ghost Apparatus*  
Ryan Nowlin - *Pressure*  
Elliot Del Borgo - *Odyssey for Percussion*  
Brant Kerrick - *Wondrous*  
Don Owens - *Nine Miniatures and an Essay for Band*

### High School Band

Allan Bell - *From Chaos to the Birth of a Dancing Star*<sup>+</sup>  
Libby Larsen - *Introduction to the Moon*  
Noah Taylor - *The Glass Prison*  
Jim Territo - *Ballad of a Muscle Car*

### Beginner Orchestra

Lauren Bernofsky - *Raindrop Serenade*  
Stephen Chin - *Twelve Curtain Raisers*

### Middle School Orchestra

Brian Balmages - *Creatures*  
Bert Ligon - *Bossa Rojo*  
Carrie Gruselle (arr.) - *All the Pretty Little Horses*  
Keiko Yamada - *Amadare (Raindrops)*

### High School Orchestra

Terry Riley - *In C*<sup>\*</sup>  
Witold Lutoslawski - *Venetian Games*  
Don Owens - *Episode I*  
Eddie Sauter - *Focus*

## **Graphic Notation**

### Beginner Band

Paul Jennings - *A Prehistoric Suite*

### Middle School Band

Jodie Blackshaw - *Earthshine*  
Michael Colgrass - *Old Churches*<sup>+</sup>  
Daniel Bukvich - *Dinosaurs*

### High School Band

Steven Bryant - *Ecstatic Waters*<sup>\*</sup>  
Thomas Duffy - *Crystals*  
Daniel Bukvich - *Symphony No.1,"In Memoriam, Dresden 1945"*  
Francis McBeth - *Of Sailors and Whales*

### Beginner Orchestra

Ira Lieberman - *Space Age String Orchestra*

\* - featured in presentation  
+ - denotes Canadian composer

## String Instrument Extended Techniques

String instrument players can use a variety of special techniques, also called “extended techniques” to create special or unique sounds on their instrument. Many composers, especially modern composers, use these special techniques to create a unique tone or atmosphere in their composition.

### Bowing Techniques

**Double Stop** - The technique of playing two notes simultaneously on a bowed stringed instrument

**Tremolo** - A trembling effect created by moving the bow from side to side rapidly using a very small amount of bow.

**Spiccato** - A bowing technique in which the bow bounces lightly upon the string.

**Ricochet** - An uncontrolled bouncing on the string occasionally called jeté.

**Ponticello** – Bowing very close to the bridge to create a harsh tone.

**Sul tasto** - Bowing over the fingerboard to create a muted tone.

**Col legno** - this technique involves striking the string with the wood of the bow.

**Scratch Tone** - produced by bowing the instrument in normal bowing position, but applying very hard pressure to the bow.

**Bowing behind the bridge** - This technique involves bowing the instrument on the short length of string behind the bridge to create a squeaking effect.

### Pizzicato Techniques

**Buzz pizzicato** - Buzz pizzicato is created by placing a left hand finger parallel to the string and plucking the string forcefully so that the plucked string buzzes against the fingernail.

**Snap pizzicato** - The technique consists of plucking the string away from the fingerboard with the right hand with sufficient force to cause it to snap back and strike the fingerboard creating a snapping sound.

**Nail Pizzicato** - The performer plucks the string with only the fingernail.

### Left Hand Techniques

**Harmonic** - High notes that are achieved on instruments of the violin family when the performer lightly places his finger exactly in the middle of the string.

**Artificial harmonics** - This must be accomplished using two fingers on the fingerboard, one to shorten the string to the desired fundamental (pressing down all the way), and the other touching the node corresponding to the appropriate harmonic (lightly touching).

**Glissando** - A glide or slide from one pitch to another.

**Harmonic glissando** - A slide from one pitch to another while lightly touching the string to create a whisper effect.

**Trill** - Rapidly alternating between two pitches either a half or whole step apart.

**Fingered Tremolo** - Rapidly alternating between 2 notes that are more than a whole step apart.

### Tapping techniques

**"Silent" fingering** - A performer can stop the strings with his left hand in an unusually forceful manner and hereby produce a percussive effect.

**Striking the Strings** - The strings can be struck with the hand or with another object to produce a loud ringing or percussive sound.

**Tapping on the instrument** - String instruments can be tapped just about anywhere.

### Other Techniques

**Scordatura tuning** - Use of alternative tunings allows the playing of otherwise impossible note sequences, double stops, chords or other note combinations, or can be used to create unusual timbres.

**Sordino (or Con Sord)** - Means “Muted” or “with mute”. String instrument players buy a special device called a mute hat they place on their bridge at moments in pieces of music where the composer calls for a mute to be used, notated using one of the terms above.

## Some Further Resources

**New Music Consortiums** N-Beam - <https://moblej.wixsite.com/nbeam/news-updates>

### **Works for Orchestra and Electronics**

[http://americancomposers.org/orchestratech/oteri\\_list.htm](http://americancomposers.org/orchestratech/oteri_list.htm)

### **American Composers Orchestra Student Composition/Improvisation Outreach Programs**

<http://www.americancomposers.org/youth/music-factory-improvise-program/>

### **Lesson Plans for using Graphic Notation**

<http://artsalive.ca/collections/nacmusicbox/chronologique-timeline/index.php/en/connexionsmusicales-musicconnections/horsdessentiersbattus-breakingtherules/la-aa-02>

[http://kodaly2012koops.wikispaces.com/file/view/michael\\_colgrass.graphic+notation+composing.pdf](http://kodaly2012koops.wikispaces.com/file/view/michael_colgrass.graphic+notation+composing.pdf)

### **Block Museum's Interactive Installation on Graphic Notation**

<http://www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu/picturesofmusic/>

### **Graphic Score Examples**

<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/latest/graphic-scores-art-music-pictures/cage-aria/>

### **Website dedicated to "Home-made" and "Found" Percussion**

<http://rhythmweb.com/homemade/>

### **Webpage with tips for using "Found Percussion"**

<http://www.musicradar.com/tuition/tech/10-found-sound-production-tips-564339>