

**ALEX SHAPIRO**

# **LIGHTS OUT**

For Concert Wind Band  
and Pre-recorded Soundscape

*Activist Music*

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**For Concert Wind Band and Pre-recorded Soundscape**

Performance Time: 4:30

### Instrumentation

1 – Conductor	4 – B♭ Trumpet 1	1 – Glockenspiel
1 – Piccolo	4 – B♭ Trumpet 2	1 – Xylophone
4 – Flute 1	2 – French Horn in F 1	1 – Vibraphone
4 – Flute 2	2 – French Horn in F 2	3 – Egg Shaker
2 – Oboe	3 – Trombone 1	1 – Suspended Cymbal
2 – Bassoon	3 – Trombone 2	1 – Tam tam
4 – B♭ Clarinet 1	1 – Bass Trombone	1 – Tom-Toms
4 – B♭ Clarinet 2	2 – Euphonium/Baritone B.C.	1 – Bass Drum
2 – B♭ Bass Clarinet	2 – Tuba	
2 – E♭ Alto Saxophone 1	1 – Electric Bass	
2 – B♭ Tenor Saxophone	1 - Audio Accompaniment Track with click, for conductor	
1 – E♭ Baritone Saxophone	1 - Audio Accompaniment Track for performance	

In addition to the instruments listed above, *LIGHTS OUT* requires an audio system capable of playing the audio tracks from a laptop computer via a small digital audio interface connected to an audio mixer.

***To download the necessary accompaniment track, please send a friendly email to: [download@activistmusic.com](mailto:download@activistmusic.com).***

### Acknowledgements

*LIGHTS OUT* was commissioned by Composers and Schools in Concert ([www.composersandschools.com](http://www.composersandschools.com)), with the participation of a consortium of adventurous partners:

Arrowhead High School, Hartland, WI; Stacey Zwirlein, Associate Director of Bands  
East Ascension High School, Gonzales, LA; Patti Roussel, Director of Bands  
Edina High School, Edina, MN; Paul Kile, Band Director  
Falmouth High School, Falmouth, ME; Jim Horwich, Band Director  
Kaufman High School, Kaufman, TX; John Mize, Director of Bands  
Keystone High School, LaGrange, OH; Jackie Townsend, Director of Bands  
Lafayette High School, Lafayette, LA; Scotty Walker, Director of Bands  
Monticello High School, Monticello, Iowa; Jim Davis, Director of Bands  
New London-Spicer High School, New London, MN; Brian Pearson, Music Director  
Nevada High School, Nevada, IA; Wade Presley, Director of Bands  
Olathe Northwest High School, Olathe, KS; Robert Davis, Director of Bands  
Owatonna High School, Owatonna MN; Peter Guenther, Band Director  
Peabody Preparatory, Baltimore, MD; Karen Seward, Wind Band Conductor  
Purdue University, Lafayette, IN; Jay Gephart, Director of Bands  
Rosemount High School, Rosemount, MN; Steve Olsen and Leon Sieve, Band Directors  
Rockwood Summit High School, Fenton, MO; Rebekah Long, Assistant Band Director  
Ruston High School, Ruston, LA; Walter Moss, Director of Bands  
Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA; Dr. Glen Hemberger, Director of Bands  
Twin Valley High School, Elverson, PA; Daniel Long, Music Director  
University of Memphis, Memphis, TN; Armand Hall, Associate Director of Bands

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## Technical Notes

*LIGHTS OUT* is an electroacoustic piece in which the band plays along with a pre-recorded audio track, with the goal of creating one seamless, sonic entity. The percussive track drives the piece, and should be played loudly. The downloadable audio files include the accompaniment track in its stereo performance mix, and also in a mix for the conductor that includes a click track for in-ear monitoring.

### Rehearsal:

The rehearsal room will need a basic PA system, ideally with stereo speakers that can play loudly, placed facing the band. There is a stereo performance track which the band (and later, the audience) hears, as well as the stereo track that includes the click heard solely by the conductor through headphones or earbuds. These are routed from a laptop computer connected to an audio mixer via a small audio interface.

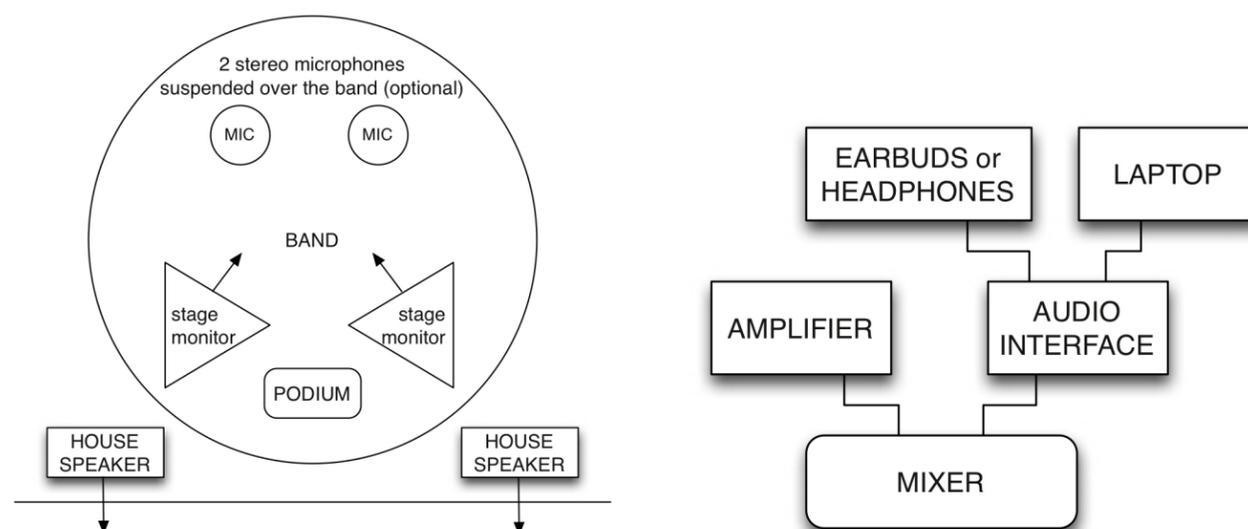
### Bonus!

Musicians can practice this piece at home by downloading the accompanying audio track, with the click. Please visit the *LIGHTS OUT* page on Ms. Shapiro's website, [www.alexshapiro.org](http://www.alexshapiro.org), to send an email requesting file access.

### Technical setup:

Connect a laptop computer to a small audio interface, which in turn connects to an audio mixer. Open a simple multitrack digital audio application, and load the accompaniment track **with** the click into one stereo channel routed **solely** to the headphones or ear bud worn by the conductor. Next, load the track **without** the click into two more stereo channels: one pair routed to the stage (and podium) monitors so that the band and conductor can hear the track, and another pair routed to the house speakers so that the audience can hear the track. The audio track uses panning effects, so be sure that it's routed to the audience in stereo.

An additional stereo channel may be used to route an optional pair of stereo microphones placed over the band. If the band is mic'ed, it's best to have an engineer reading a music score to ride the faders at the mixing board and control the balance.



Monitors, speakers, laptop, audio interface, and microphones are connected by cables to the mixer, which is usually placed in the back of the auditorium or on the side of the stage. Additional technical information and suggestions may be found on the *LIGHTS OUT* page at [www.alexshapiro.org](http://www.alexshapiro.org).

### Visual media: combining music with movement and lighting

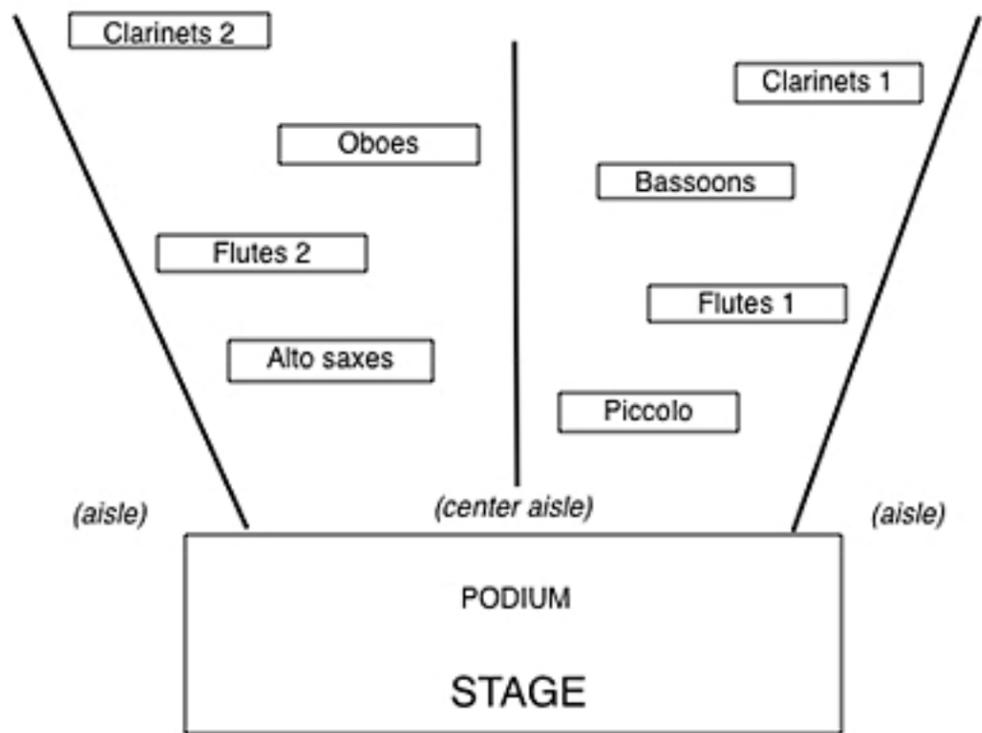
*LIGHTS OUT* can be effectively performed in a traditional concert presentation, with no additional multimedia effects. What makes the piece unique, however, is that it was conceived from the onset as a visual media piece. Ms. Shapiro composed the physical and lighting aspects of the work simultaneously with the music, and even before writing a single note of the score, she conducted Skype sessions with the majority of the bands involved in the consortium to elicit the musicians' creative ideas about what might make a performance particularly unusual and engaging. The result of these wonderful conversations resides in a remarkable log of over 250 suggestions, found on a page for *LIGHTS OUT* on Shapiro's website. Alex incorporated many of these ideas alongside her own, placing their indications on two additional staves of music devoted to movement and lighting effects, and leaving space on the score page for current and future bands to add their ideas as well. Ms. Shapiro views music as a collaborative, physical and multi-sensory experience, and she encourages all who perform *LIGHTS OUT* to consider presenting the piece in the spirit in which it was created, and to post performances on YouTube! Below are a few notes for general suggestions, and further resources will accumulate on Ms. Shapiro's website.

### Performing in the dark:

At the heart of the *LIGHTS OUT* concept is the fun of disorienting the audience by having not only the house lights, but the stage lights, be off. In their place, the creative use of finger or clip-on LED lights, glowsticks, glowing tape, or any other non-flammable lit and glowing devices will make the performance visually stunning. Placing colored LEDs inside the bells of instruments so that they glow, around the edges of the cymbals and tam tam so that they shimmer, on the mallet sticks so that they blur with movement, and around the fingers of the players, or the instruments themselves, are just a handful of ideas. No doubt, you and your band will have more! Resources for lights and props will be linked on the *LIGHTS OUT* on Shapiro's website.

### Staging: Woodwinds in the audience

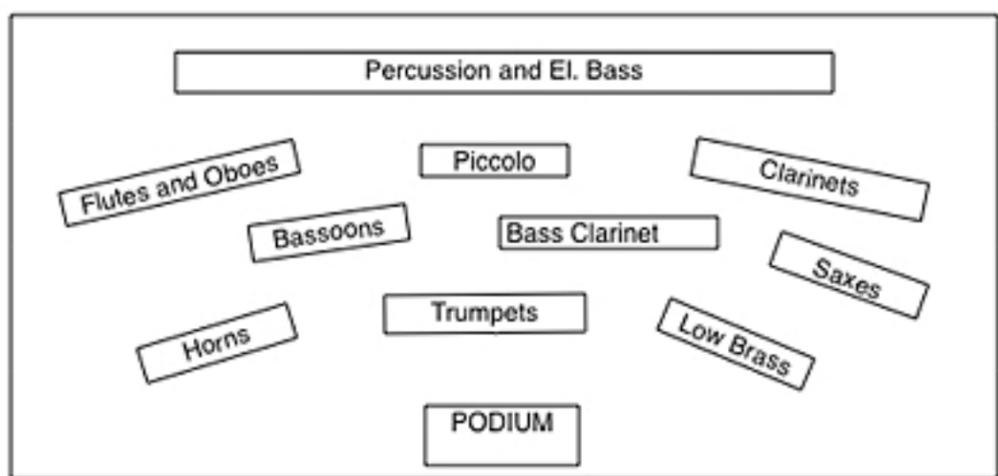
For the fullest effect, *LIGHTS OUT* begins with most of the woodwinds seated amidst members of the audience. Each entrance is staggered, and once playing, each musician must make his or her way to the stage by roughly bar 43, ready for the big theme at bar 45. Here is a helpful guide that suggests a logical placement for musicians according to how much time they will need to get from their seat to the stage within less than one minute.



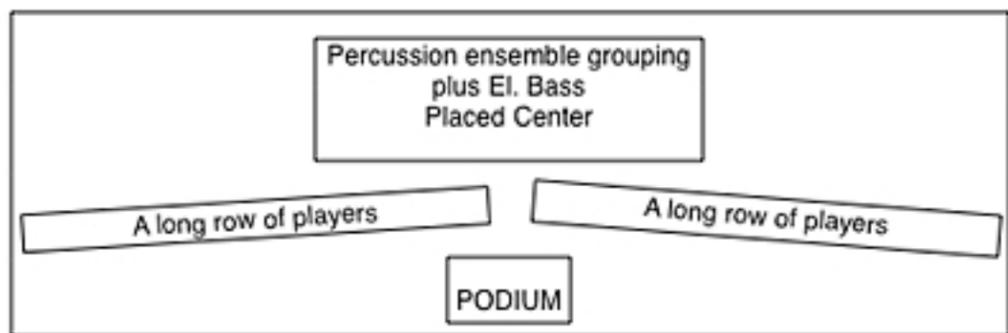
### Staging: Unusual placement on stage

There are many possibilities for the stage setup, depending on how creative a band wants to get. If using traditional seating, try to create extra room between the seats and rows if possible, to accommodate freedom of movement, starting with the need for each off-stage musician to take their seat while playing.

Given that a third or even half of the band will be starting the piece in the audience, it's easy to consider alternative staging. For instance, perhaps the players who normally sit in the back could have the chance to connect more directly with the audience in front of them? In turn, the listeners would enjoy a fresh view of those instruments, as well as a different sonic perspective. Of course, it could initially be a challenge for the conductor to remember where everyone is seated!



Another unusual staging idea is to have almost everyone standing on either side of a centrally placed percussion ensemble, with as many players in the front as possible, reaching to the wings of the stage:



### Opening dialogue:

The score includes a setup as intro to the music, for those performing in the dark. This adds roughly 30 seconds to the performance time, and requires someone to turn off all the stage lights on cue.

**Memorization:**

The entire score is in 4/4 at a never-changing quarter note = 120, and should a band wish to memorize the piece, that would allow tremendous flexibility for staging ideas. Regardless of tackling the whole four and a half minutes, two very simple, short sections in which the musicians play the same rhythmic ostinato on one note for several bars, are marked for memorization in the score and in the parts.

**Band choice:**

Each band is highly encouraged to depart from the visual and physical indications in the score, and present *LIGHTS OUT* in whatever manner they choose. There are a few places in the score that are marked, "Band choice" to indicate specific bars that would be well-suited to additional effects, choreography, and the like. There is no wrong way to perform it: email Alex Shapiro through her website to let her know what ideas your band has incorporated, and she'll add them to the list! She will also add the YouTube video of your performance to her YouTube page, and quite possibly to her website and Facebook page, as well. Visual media is a tremendous community-building resource, and Alex welcomes contact from anyone who performs her music.

**Program Note**

Coming soon!

**Personal Statement about *LIGHTS OUT***

Coming soon!

## **Ideas from the late 2014 Lights Out Skype sessions with participating consortium bands:**

### **LIGHTING:**

Get wraparound LED lights, finger-clip LEDs, glowsticks, rope lights, laser pointers, etc. from the dollar store.  
Have the conductor use a light baton.  
Have glowsticks taped to players' arms, instruments or stands.  
Give light-up drum sticks to the percussion.  
Place LED lights around the tam-tam and cymbals so when they're hit, they vibrate.  
Attach different colored LEDs to each instrument.  
Tape LED lights into the bells of all the brass, so that the entire bell glows.  
Tape an LED light inside the bell of a clarinet or flute, for a subtle effect when the keys are pressed and released.  
Put LEDs on instruments— on instruments placed in the audience, as well.  
Use glowsticks taped on the instruments.  
Use black lights.  
Use flashlights with colored tissues or gels that can be interchanged.  
Make the programs glow in the dark.  
Use strobe lights, especially behind the percussion.  
Use holiday lights, perhaps with timers.  
Light up the instruments with glow in the dark tape put all over the instrument bells.  
Use black light paint, or glow in the dark neon paint on faces and hands.  
Use mirrors to reflect light.  
Have sections who aren't playing shine their lights on those who are playing.  
Place colored lights or glowsticks on stands and/or chairs, so each section is a particular color.  
Walk through the aisles with the glow lights and throw glow sticks to audience members.  
Some of the parents could be sitting in random places and tossing up glowing items.  
The audience could light up their cell phones interactively.  
Give audience glow in the dark bracelets that charge with house lights and surprise all when the lights go out.  
Imply a lightning storm, by flashing lights on and off.  
A light switch or dimmer switch can shift the light slowly or suddenly.  
Start in the dark and have the lights gradually come on and maybe suddenly: go off!  
Create "surround visual" as well as "surround sound," by having a light in one place and a sound in another.  
Sync lighting effects with changing pitch.  
Layer on lights little by little, and once they're all together the lights go off.  
From a rope from the ceiling, hang a box that glows and swings like a pendulum and possibly emits glowing dust.  
Use hanging fabric or scarves that swing, with lights or glow in the dark items attached.  
Use big plastic balls with a light inside— or light-up super balls.  
Dress in black, have glow lights lighting arms and legs— add choreography.  
Use color!  
Use a spotlight.  
Have the stage entirely dark, except for lights on the music stands.  
Have the band in other sections of the venue blacked out, then lights come on when they play.  
Use lights to represent each band with its school colors.  
Integrate the audio and visuals along the lines of synesthesia.  
Focus a single spotlight on someone for deflection, while others walk into the audience.  
Dim lights, and have people standing in front in a way in which the audience just sees their silhouettes.  
Create silhouettes by placing people behind a lit screen in back of the band.  
Have flickering lights, and shadows on projectors with images or video.  
Project images on a screen behind the band, like lights, or fireworks, or an oscilloscope.  
Incorporate images of daily visuals: car headlights, police lights, neon signs, lightning, sun, stars, moon.  
Use videos.  
Every few measure of the piece, change the lighting color and theme.  
At the very end of the piece, everyone shouts "LIGHTS OUT," and the lights go out on command.  
Depending on the notes being played, there's a different rhythmic pattern of colored lights.  
Use MIDI to program the lights in conjunction with the music, with one triggering the other.  
Use the kind of spotlight that people shine on their homes at Christmas, to create a shifting, sparkling effect.  
Syncopate the tempo and the style — with each section being fast/bright, or slow/low level.  
Map certain notes to certain colors, and depending on the harmony, you get different color schemes.  
Use the kind of colored LED lights that are triggered by sound.  
Use strobe lights for the part of the music that has a fast tempo.  
Use foot switch spotlights in sections of the audience, having them come on at unexpected times.  
Have players paint the tips of their fingers with black light, glow in the dark, or brightly colored nail polish.  
Have people with flashlights in the audience and get them to wave the lights around at various times.

### **PROPS:**

Use fog, or dry ice, and have lights shining down into the fog.  
Create mist, and eerie lights.  
Bring in fans to create wind.  
Blow bubbles, perhaps with black light.  
Toss streamers.  
Use costumes.  
Devise costume changes for certain sections.  
Add the sense smell with incense.  
Use silly string.  
Use party poppers.  
Throw light fluffy balls into the air and have them be caught by anyone on stage.  
Put a big, lightweight ball into the audience and have people toss it around.  
Use mirrored disco balls.  
Use a stage scrim that gives alternate views, one when lit from the front, and another when lit from the back.

## **PHYSICAL MOVEMENT:**

Turn off the lights, have everyone move, and when the lights come back up the players are in a different place.

Put band members in various places in the audience, have THEM play first, from different spots.

Do something to get the percussionists noticed in the back.

Rip up the music.

Flip the seating, so the flutes are in the back and the brass and percussion are in the front.

Have the band be interlaced in an unusual seating arrangement.

Place players in the audience for a surround-sound effect.

Put different groups of instruments in different areas.

Have some people on the stage, and some in the audience.

Hear the musicians without being able to see where they're coming from.

Incorporate motion into the piece to make it come alive.

Have musicians sit in the audience, and no ones knows— until they start playing.

Have people dancing behind colored sheets, and shine lights on the sheets to see the outline of the dancers.

Have band members do dance moves— sections that aren't playing would be the dancers— techno dance.

Have players planted in the audience kick the seats in front of them to create a theme-park sort of experience.

Have the players on stage turn their backs to the audience and slowly turn forward to create a crescendo.

Have musicians swap places with the conductor.

Set up a screen that processes the band's movements.

Set up some choreography; each section can have their own moves, like a marching band.

Activated clip on lights to go on/off, or hide and show glowsicks rhythmically.

Choreography; interpretative dance.

Have the different sections do flashes and dance moves.

Get the audience involved involved with the show.

Do some kind of acting.

Walk off the stage as the pieces nears the end.

Rush back on to the stage at the very end and shout, "Lights out!"

## **ADD YOUR BAND'S IDEAS HERE:**

## Composer Biography

Alex Shapiro aligns note after note with the hope that a few of them will actually sound good next to each other. Published by Activist Music, her works for acoustic and electroacoustic ensembles are performed and broadcast daily across the U.S. and internationally, and can be found on over twenty commercially released recordings.

Long established in the professional chamber music world, Ms. Shapiro is also known for her groundbreaking electroacoustic works for wind band at the middle school, high school, and college levels. As the 2010 commissioned composer for the American Composers Forum BandQuest series, Shapiro created the repertoire's very first Grade 3 middle school electroacoustic band piece, *PAPER CUT*. The unusual addition of printer paper used as a percussion instrument rapidly turned the piece into a worldwide best seller, and sparked nearly a hundred YouTube videos of live performances, some of which include black light and other visual effects. The fun of creating fresh, contemporary music to engage students has become one of Alex's newest joys, and in 2013 Shapiro created another electroacoustic Grade 4 high school work, *TIGHT SQUEEZE*, incorporating the unlikely combination of Latin grooves and a 12-tone row. Both *PAPER CUT* and *TIGHT SQUEEZE* appear in the 2014 book and CD edition of "Teaching Music Through Performance in Band, Volume 10" edited by Eugene Migliaro Corporon and published by GIA Publications.

A familiar guest lecturer at universities around the United States, and the author of a chapter in the 2013 GIA Publications book, "Musicianship: Composing in Band and Orchestra," Ms. Shapiro has been a clinician at the 2013 Midwest Clinic in Chicago, and the 2014 Texas Music Educator's Association Conference (TMEA) in San Antonio where she presented workshops on electroacoustic band music and digital technologies in the classroom and concert venue. Shapiro wrote an extensive two-part article for the international band organization magazine, *WASBE World*, which appeared in the Summer and Fall 2014 issues and can be found on her website.

Born in New York City in 1962 and raised in Manhattan, Alex began composing as a much shorter person at age nine. Educated at The Juilliard School and Manhattan School of Music as a student of Ursula Mamlok and John Corigliano, Ms. Shapiro is an enthusiastic leader in the new music community, and advocates for other artists through speaking appearances, published articles, and volunteerism. She has served on numerous U.S. music advocacy boards, and is the elected Symphonic & Concert writer representative on the ASCAP Board of Directors.

Alex lives on Washington State's remote San Juan Island, and when she's not composing she can be found communing with sea life, as seen on her music and photo-filled blog, [www.notesfromthekelp.com](http://www.notesfromthekelp.com) and her website, [www.alexshapiro.org](http://www.alexshapiro.org).

**To contact Ms. Shapiro, please email her at:  
[alex@alexshapiro.org](mailto:alex@alexshapiro.org)**

**For more information about Ms. Shapiro's work,  
including audio excerpts and score samples,  
please visit her website at:  
<http://www.alexshapiro.org>**