



BandQuest™

PAPER CUT

ALEX SHAPIRO

Performance Time: 5:23

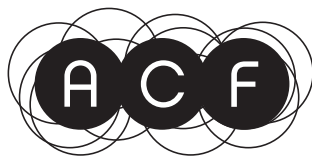
INSTRUMENTATION

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 – Conductor | 4 – F Horn |
| 1 – Piccolo | 3 – Trombone 1 |
| 6 – Flute | 3 – Trombone 2 |
| 2 – Oboe | 2 – Baritone B.C. |
| 2 – Bassoon | 2 – Baritone T.C. |
| 9 – B \flat Clarinet | 2 – Tuba |
| 1 – B \flat Bass Clarinet | 1 – Electric Bass |
| 4 – E \flat Alto Saxophone | 1 – Vibraphone |
| 2 – B \flat Tenor Saxophone | 1 – Drum Set |
| 1 – E \flat Baritone Saxophone | 1 – Crash Cymbals |
| 3 – B \flat Trumpet 1 | 1 – Snare Drum |
| 3 – B \flat Trumpet 2 | 1 – Bass Drum |
- 1 – Prerecorded Audio Accompaniment Track with click, for conductor
1 – Prerecorded Audio Accompaniment Track, without click, for performance
1 – Package of 8.5 x 11 inch printer paper, in any color.

In addition to the instruments listed above, *Paper Cut* requires an audio system capable of playing the audio track and the click track, which are available for download by emailing BandQuest@composersforum.org. Each player will need at least four sheets of 8.5 x 11 inch printer paper. Detailed instructions may be found in the score.

Prior to the start of the piece, a pre-crumpled ball of paper should be prepared by those players with “Crumpled Ball” indications. For all players, instruments may be placed in laps or on instrument stands when not in use.

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Paper Cut

Alex Shapiro

PROGRAM NOTES

What do teenagers like? Video games, TV, and movies. What do all these media have in common? Music!

I was thrilled to have a chance to add to the educational band music repertoire, thanks to the American Composers Forum's terrific BandQuest® series. In my desire to compose something relevant to younger players, I decided to create a piece that sounds somewhat like a movie soundtrack, to which the musicians can imagine their own dramatic scene. I also thought it would be fun to make the kids themselves part of the action, and so *Paper Cut* has the band doing choreographed maneuvers that look as compelling as they sound. In fact, the band members don't even play their instruments until halfway into the piece.

Music isn't just melody; it's rhythm and texture as well. The unusual element of paper and the myriad sounds that can emerge from something so simple offer a fresh view of what music-making can be and opens everyone's ears to the sonic possibilities found among everyday objects.

With a nod to environmentalism, *Paper Cut* might even remind people to avoid waste and recycle. Players can collect paper that would have otherwise ended up in the trash, and bring it to rehearsals. The piece might even be therapeutic, as students can take out their aggression by ripping up bad grades and test scores!

Although *Paper Cut* was composed with middle schoolers in mind, it's also suited to more advanced musicians, since the paper techniques and the skill of playing against a prerecorded track are interesting for all ages. I'm delighted to introduce a new approach to concert wind band repertoire, and I hope that conductors and band members have as much fun with this piece as I had creating it.

Alex Shapiro
Summer, 2010

BIOGRAPHY

Alex Shapiro (b. New York City, 1962) composes acoustic and electroacoustic pieces known for their lyricism and drama. Her music is heard daily in concerts and broadcasts across the U.S. and internationally, and can be found on over twenty commercially released CDs from record labels around the world. Educated at The Juilliard School and Manhattan School of Music as a student of Ursula Mamlok and John Corigliano, Alex spent the first fifteen years of her professional life scoring feature films, television and documentary projects in Los Angeles.

Alex advocates for other artists through her speaking appearances, published articles, and community involvement. She is the national concert music representative on the ASCAP Board of Review, is a member of ASCAP's Symphony & Concert Committee, serves on the Board of Directors of The MacDowell Colony, chairs the Media Council for New Music USA, and is the past President of the Board of Directors of the American Composers Forum Los Angeles Chapter.

Raised in Manhattan and later a longtime resident of Malibu, California, Alex now lives on Washington State's remote San Juan Island. When she's not composing she can be found communing with the sea life, as seen on her music and photo-filled blog, www.notesfromthekelp.com and her website, www.alexshapiro.org.

TECHNICAL NOTES FOR REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE

Prior to rehearsal, it will be helpful to give the band members an overview of the piece and its three distinct elements (prerecorded track, paper, and instruments), and to then have the musicians listen to the recording of the accompaniment track.

Consider beginning by rehearsing the various paper playing techniques and their rhythms, after which those can be practiced against the track.

Once the musicians are comfortable with those two elements, rehearse the instrumental section without the paper or the track. In all rehearsals, pay special attention to maintaining an unwavering ♩ = 88 tempo throughout the piece.

Finally, bring all three elements together!



The rehearsal room will need a basic PA system, with stereo speakers that can play loudly, placed facing the band. The stereo performance track which the band (and later, the audience) hears, as well as the track that has the click heard solely by the conductor, can both be played from a laptop connected via a digital audio interface to two pairs of left and right channels of an audio mixer. A simple multitrack digital audio program on the laptop can be used to align the two versions of the track. Avoid using MP3 players or converting the file to a lower quality MP3 file.

Although it's possible to conduct *Paper Cut* from the podium only hearing the speakers that face the band, it will be far easier if the conductor uses the click track as an accurate guide to keep the band and the accompaniment track in synch. To use the click track, the conductor wears headphones or earbuds connected to a headphone jack. If desired, one ear may be left uncovered, in order to clearly hear the live band against the track.

The entire piece is a steady ♩ = 88, and it's vital to keep the musicians exactly with the track from start to finish. One helpful rehearsal technique is to sometimes practice the paper playing and instrumental sections without the backing track playing, with the conductor using an electronic metronome attached via an earbud in one ear, like a click track, to ensure an exact tempo throughout.

The ideal setup for performance requires a mixing board, connected to which are a computer laptop (usually via an audio interface), one stereo pair of speaker monitors for the band, one stereo pair of speakers for the

audience (located on the right and left at the lip of the stage), headphones or earbuds playing the track with the click for the conductor, and an optional stereo pair of microphones placed over the band. Amplification of the band with microphones, or using the mics to run the band through light reverb, is helpful but not necessary. If mics are used, it's best to have an engineer with a music score riding the faders at the mixing board.

The track and the band should be at about the same volume level, so that the audience hears them as one instrument.

PAPER

Each player will need 4 pieces of 8.5 x 11 inch printer paper.

For the strongest visual effect, colored paper stock is best, using two or more colors (the premiere performance used random combinations of blue and purple).

It is also possible to use pieces of recycled paper that would otherwise have been thrown out: old homework, junk mail, etc. Choose pieces that are at least letter size. Avoid using thin newspaper, ad insert paper, or thin magazine paper; the sound is not as loud as 20 lb. or heavier paper stock. The use of recycled paper is encouraged for rehearsals.

Paper Cut is a visual piece as well as a sonic one, and it will be most effective in performance when the musicians hold the paper high above their heads when playing. Not only is it great for the audience to see, but the sound of the paper maneuvers will carry much more clearly when held well above the music stands. Lighting effects add drama as well. Creativity is encouraged!

The American Composers Forum filmed an interview with Alex Shapiro, during which she demonstrates the paper playing techniques. The text descriptions in the score are probably all that's needed, but if seeing these excerpts would be helpful, please visit the *Paper Cut* page on Ms. Shapiro's website: www.alexshapiro.org.



FOR THE BAND

- 1 stereo monitor pair facing the band, spread at a wide angle on the stage or rehearsal room floor.

(note: it might be necessary to move one monitor closer to the percussion section, thus playing from behind some of the other wind players, but ensuring that the percussion section can hear the downbeats in the track).

FOR THE CONDUCTOR

- 1 stereo pair of headphones or earbuds with the “monitor mix” (separate from the house mix which the audience hears) from the mixing console, to offer the conductor a good balance of the click track and the band, in order to hear everything at the best level.

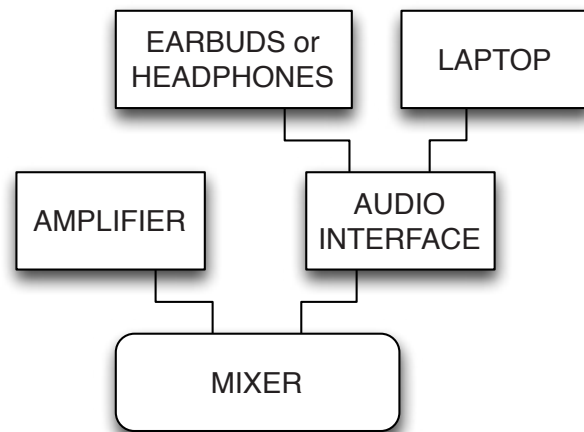
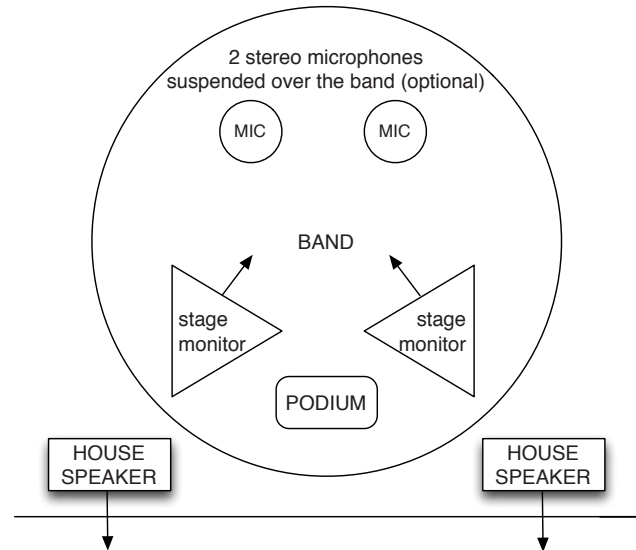
If desired:

- stereo monitor pair on either side of the podium, or 1 monitor, facing the conductor, playing the track without the click.

FOR THE AUDIENCE

- 1 stereo pair of speakers on either side of the stage, facing the house.
- If the band is mic'ed, then that amplification can be incorporated into the house mix if desired. It will be best if an engineer is at the mixing board with a music score, to ride the faders, making the overall band level slightly higher against the track during the paper playing and lower during the loud middle section with the entire band playing.

SUGGESTED STAGE SETUP



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.