



Lesson: Creating Sound with Paper

OVERVIEW

Alex Shapiro used paper found sounds extensively in *Paper Cut*. Students will describe her various techniques for creating contrasting paper sounds. Then they will imagine, experiment, and add more ways to produce sound from paper.

MATERIALS

- *Paper Cut* sheet music
- [Recording of Paper Cut](#) (click link for download or email bandquest@composersforum.org for a free Catalog CD)
- Recycled paper for sound-making
- Note paper or [Group Notes for Paper Music Exploration](#) worksheets
- Student copies of [Make Your Own Paper Music](#)
- One paper music track from the *Paper Sonics* website, <http://www.papersonics.com/intro.htm>, a website dedicated to making music with paper.

LEARNING GOAL

Students will develop a menu of sounds they can make from paper through imagining, experimenting, and working with a group of peers. They will combine paper sounds to improvise short ensemble pieces.

PROCESS

1. Discuss these questions:
 - How many sounds did Alex Shapiro invent for *Paper Cut*?
 - What did you have to do to perform each sound?
2. Read [Make Your Own Paper Music](#)
3. Explore and experiment with paper to determine if there are more sounds that can be made from a piece of paper.
 - Divide into groups with an ample supply of recycled paper for each group.
 - Tell students to name one person in each group to serve as moderator and one as scribe to keep notes. As they explore, encourage them to keep track of the different techniques they used to create a variety of paper sounds. They can either name or number their techniques and the scribe will describe how it was produced.
 - After they have created new sounds, each group should start combining their sounds into an improvised ensemble piece.
4. Just before reconvening the class, ask each group to select two sounds to demonstrate to the rest of the students. They can also play a short improvisation.
5. Share as a large group.

EXTENSIONS

- There is actually a website dedicated to paper music. It is called *Paper Sonics*, and was created by Paul Jackson, a visual artist from England. His interest in using paper to generate music goes back to his University days. Interesting to note that his visual art medium is paper. He is a master origami

artist. His art website is also very interesting. The site includes sound files of paper music. Listen to one of the sound files on the website, <http://www.papersonics.com/intro.htm>. Ask students to describe what they heard.

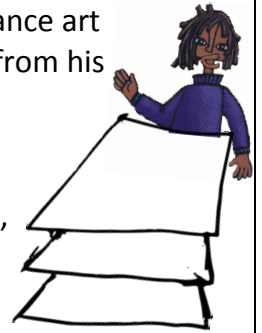
- The *Paper Sonics* website could be used by some students to do more improvising and composing as an independent project.
- Extend the sound exploration lesson by asking students to use their paper generated sounds to create a short piece based on a line of poetry, a phrase from a story, a movie title, or a place they know.
- Try other paper types as sound makers. For example, what sounds can you get from cardboard, tissue paper, corrugated cardboard, poster board, grocery bags (lots of new possibilities with grocery bags since they can also fill up with air!)? Create new piece from these additional paper sound sources.



<http://www.papersonics.com/images/sof.jpg>

Make Your Own Paper Music

British artist Paul Jackson is in love with paper. He makes his living as an origami artist, but he has also been making music from paper since his college days. At his website, Paper Music (<http://www.papersonics.com/intro.htm>), he writes that "Paper Music brought together my interests in alternative and experimental music, performance art and installation art..." Below are instructions from his site on how to get started.



SOUND SOURCES

A few origami models can be adapted to make percussive sounds, reeds, etc. However, it is better to think of ways to make *sounds* rather than ways to make *models*.

Sounds such as...

...bang, slap, rub, grate, strike, shake, rattle, whip, stroke, crumple, uncrumple, rip, shred, tear, vibrate, wobble, blow, suck, hum, spin ...

A sound made with a small piece of tissue paper will sound totally different when made with a medium-sized sheet of tracing paper or with a large sheet of drawing paper. In this way, a large repertoire of sounds can be achieved from a basic idea. Experiment widely.

It is highly recommended that you explore a wide variety of papers, cards, cardboards and carton stock for their different acoustic properties. Most materials can be purchased cheaply or can be obtained for free (packaging, flyers, old photocopies, etc). *Try papers such as...*

...tracing papers, drawing papers, newspapers, magazines, kraft papers, soft tissue papers, thin or thick cards, cardboards, gift-wrap papers, florists papers, photocopier papers ...

To further expand your range, the use of microphones will amplify and transform small sounds.

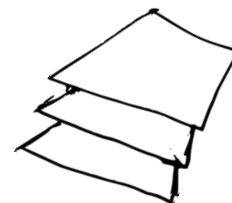
PERFORMANCE OPTIONS

There are...an infinite number of ways to perform Paper Music, as a live performance, or as an audio or visual recording. *I have performed Paper Music...*

...with children, with artists, with professional musicians, with people who have had no musical training, as a structured performance with myself as the conductor, with no conductor as a group improvisation, as a solo, with and without amplification, with dancers performing to the music, as a non-musical exercise in listening and group co-operation, (and) as a performance to be heard and not seen ...

Listen to all sorts of incredible PAPER MUSIC at Jackson's website. He also invites anyone who makes paper music to contact him. There might even be an opportunity to put your own sound file on the web. Visit the **Paper Music** site at <http://www.papersonics.com/intro.htm>. And see some of his Paper Art at his artist site, www.origami-artist.com.

GROUP NOTES FOR PAPER MUSIC EXPLORATION



Group Members:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Jot down some quick notes about each paper sound making technique you tried that you liked. Use words or illustrations to describe what you did.

#1	
#2	
#3	
#4	
#5	
#6	

