An Exploration of Twentieth-Century American Flute Music

An Honors Project (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

This project focuses on twentieth-century American flute music by examining the following four works: *Poem for Flute and Orchestra* (1918) by Charles Griffes, *Serenade No. 10 for Flute and Harp, Op. 79* (1957) by Vincent Persichetti, *Sonata for Flute and Piano, Op. 14* (1961) by Robert Muczynski, and *Piccolo Sonata* (1995, rev. 2000) by Robert Baksa. The project consists of three different parts, or methods of exploration: 1) a senior flute recital of the repertoire above, 2) an analytical paper of twentieth-century American compositional style as demonstrated by this repertoire, and 3) lesson plans for various music classes to teach students about twentieth-century American music. It is my hope that these works will continue to be studied and performed by musicians around the world for years to come.

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I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Julia Mattern, who constantly urged me to challenge myself and supported my learning endeavors. I am appreciative of all of the time she spent helping me to create a vision for this project and seeing it through to its completion.

I would also like to thank the Ball State University School of Music. I have been privileged to study with a variety of caring and knowledgeable professors, who have provided me with a comprehensive music education. I have also learned a lot about life in the process of completing my degree.

Matt Vice deserves my appreciation for producing a high-quality recording of the recital. His enthusiasm and passion are to be commended.

Finally, many thanks go to the Honors College. I have loved having the opportunity to learn about a variety of intriguing subjects from enthusiastic professors. I am thankful for the opportunity to complete this project, which synthesized all of my undergraduate studies.
Part I: The Recital

A compact disc recording of the recital can be found in the front pocket of the binder, along with the official program, which was printed by the School of Music. To prepare for the performance, I spent many hours studying the music in lessons with my advisor, rehearsing with accompanying musicians, and practicing the music independently. I chose to perform works by twentieth-century American composers because I believe that this music has great value and deserves to be studied and performed. The pieces that I chose present various technical and musical challenges. The works by Griffes and Muczynski are standards in the flute repertoire, and it is my hope that the works by Persichetti and Baksa will be studied and performed more frequently in the future. I selected pieces that would provide sufficient variety for the performers and audience, and I also wanted to have a theme that would help unify the project and repertoire.

Before performing the recital, I researched the composers and pieces to write program notes. This was not required, but I felt that providing program notes would give the audience a greater understanding of the repertoire. The program notes are printed on the following pages.
Senior Honors Recital Program Notes

My Honors Project
In place of a traditional thesis, I have chosen to do a three-part project to complete the requirements for my Honors Diploma. The first part of the project is this recital, which consists of twentieth-century American flute and piccolo music. I chose to use music from this style and time period because while there are some similarities between the pieces, there are also vast differences. The second part of the project is writing a stylistic analysis of the recital repertoire. This involves a great deal of research, as well as using my own theoretical and historical knowledge to further analyze and compare the pieces. Hopefully, through writing this analysis, I will discover what makes twentieth-century American style unique. As the third part of the project, I will devise lesson plans to teach students in a variety of music classes from kindergarten to grade twelve about twentieth-century American music. This project combines the major areas of my studies at Ball State University: flute and piccolo performance, music history, music theory, and music education. After completing this project, I hope to teach all of my future music students using a comprehensive approach that incorporates various aspects of musical study and also addresses the National Standards for Music Education.

Poem for Flute and Orchestra by Charles Tomlinson Griffes
Although the average American has not heard of Griffes, he is regarded by many scholars as a highly influential American composer. “Charles T. Griffes wrote some of the most beautiful music ever created by an American,” Winthrop Sargeant declared in 1978. Griffes was born in Elmira, New York, in 1884. At a young age, he learned to play the piano from his sister. Griffes continued his piano training at Elmira College with Mary Selena Broughton, who financed his musical studies in Berlin. When Griffes left for Germany in 1903, his goal was to become a concert pianist. Although he was a talented performer, Griffes soon became more interested in composition. He left his piano studies at the Stern Conservatory to take composition lessons with Engelbert Humperdinck, a former student of Richard Wagner. Griffes returned to the United States in 1907 and became director of music at the Hackley School in Tarrytown, New York. Griffes led a busy life, and he spent nearly every moment of his free time composing and promoting his works. In 1919, at the height of his career, Griffes became quite ill with pneumonia. He continued to compose until he reached a coma-like state. Sadly, medical treatments at the time were not advanced enough to save Griffes; in fact, one experimental treatment actually left a piece of metal lodged in his chest for several months, worsening his condition. Griffes died at the age of thirty-five on April 8, 1920, in New York.

Near the end of his short career, Griffes wrote Poem for Flute and Orchestra in 1918. Although Griffes is best known for his piano works, Poem has become a standard piece in the flute repertoire, since it demands precise technique as well as great expression from the performer. Although Griffes returned to the U.S. in 1907, he remained keenly aware of the international scene at the time, which included composers such as Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, Schönberg, and Milhaud. Griffes admitted, “One cannot possibly play the new composers much without being influenced by them in one’s own compositions. But I do have a deathly fear of becoming one of the dull imitators of the innovators. There are already enough of those.” Fortunately for Griffes, scholars tend to view his musical style as unique, since it combines elements of his German compositional training and the French Impressionistic style. Aaron Copland commented about Griffes, “What he gave to those of us who came after him was a sense of the adventurous in composition, of being thoroughly alive to the new trends in world music and to the stimulus that might be derived from such contact.”
Serenade No. 10 for Flute and Harp, Op. 79 by Vincent Persichetti

Persichetti was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1915. At the age of five, he enrolled in the Combs Conservatory and studied piano, organ, double bass, music theory, and composition. While in high school, Persichetti performed on the radio, in churches, and in recitals. He graduated from Combs in 1935 with a Bachelor of Music, and then he served as the head of its theory and composition departments. He continued to study piano and composition at the Philadelphia Conservatory in order to earn his Masters and Doctoral degrees. Persichetti also studied conducting at the Curtis Institute. In 1941, he became the head of the theory and composition departments at the Philadelphia Conservatory. In 1947, he joined the faculty of the Juilliard School. Persichetti was appointed the head of the composition department in 1963, and the head of the literature and materials department in 1970. He died in 1987 in Philadelphia.

Persichetti wrote a great deal of piano works and is well known for his contributions to the wind band literature. Persichetti also contributed to the academic world. He wrote Twentieth-Century Harmony: Creative Aspects and Practice in 1961, a text that is often used in music theory and composition courses.

Serenade No. 10 was written in 1957, when historians believe Persichetti had finally achieved his own distinctive style after years of being criticized for writing in the style of his contemporaries. The piece consists of eight short movements, which are each highly contrasting in tempo, mood, and style. The work is challenging for both the harpist and the flutist. In addition to changing pedals quickly, the harpist uses several special performance techniques, such as harmonics, striking the strings with nails, glissandos, and playing notes near the sounding board. Meanwhile, the flutist covers the entire range of the instrument with various articulations and dynamic levels. Breath control is a great challenge in many of the movements, and flutter-tonguing is briefly used at the end of the last movement.

Piccolo Sonata by Robert Baksa

Unlike the first two composers, Robert Baksa is unknown even to most musicians and scholars. Baksa was born in New York City in 1938 and grew up in Tuscon, Arizona. He received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Arizona in musical composition and returned to New York in the 1960s. Early in his career, Baksa wrote a great deal of piano and choral works, as well as a few operas. In the past thirty years, he has focused on writing chamber works. He has written sonatas for most of the major instruments. His Flute Sonata No. 1 won the Newly Published Music Competition of the National Flute Association in 1994. Baksa currently lives near Albany, New York and serves as New Music Coordinator and Composer in Residence for the Pleshakov Music Center. More information about Baksa, including his e-mail address, can be found at www.robertbaksa.com.

Baksa originally wrote Piccolo Sonata in 1995 and revised it in 2000. It appears that his revisions were an attempt to make his music accessible to more musicians, although I have not yet been able to confirm this with the composer. The revisions changed some complex passages from sextuplets to sixteenth-notes. Baksa also changed a few measures to keep the piccolo in a more comfortable range. The piece is written in a neo-classical style. The first movement is in sonata-allegro form. Throughout the piece, the piano and piccolo imitate each other. The piece is tonal, although it does not always use harmonic progressions that the listener might expect. Because of its memorable melodies, technical challenges, and utilization of the low and middle registers of the instrument, Piccolo Sonata has become one of my favorite works for piccolo. It is my hope that it will soon become a more standard piece in the piccolo repertoire. I have not been able to find a recording of the piece, but after today, we can be certain that one does exist!

Sonata for Flute and Piano, Op. 14 by Robert Muczynski

Robert Muczynski was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1929. He studied piano and composition at DePaul University, receiving a Bachelor of Music in 1950 and a Master of Music in piano performance in 1953. Muczynski taught at DePaul University from 1955 to 1958 and was chairman of the piano department at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, from 1956 to 1959. He taught piano, composition, music
history, and music theory. Muczynski debuted in New York City in 1958 by performing a recital of his own piano compositions in Carnegie Recital Hall. Muczynski participated in the Young Composers Project in 1959, which placed him in a public school in Oakland, California. The purpose of the project was to improve the literature of secondary school music in America. In 1961, Muczynski received a grant from the French government to study at the Academie de Musique in Nice, France. When he returned to America, he was again chosen to participate in the Young Composers Project, this time in Tuscon, Arizona. In 1965, he joined the faculty at the University of Arizona. He taught piano performance and was the head of the composition department. In 1988, Muczynski retired as Professor Emeritus. Since then, he has continued to compose; however, unlike Baksa, Muczynski does not have an available website or e-mail address.

*Sonata, Op. 14* has become a standard piece in the flute repertoire. In 1961, Muczynski received the Concours Internationale Prize in Nice, France, for this piece. Muczynski’s piano works have been the most widely performed and studied of any of his compositions. He has also written several challenging pieces for woodwind instruments, which have been the subject of two relatively recent doctoral dissertations. One includes a detailed analysis of this particular sonata and states that it is Muczynski’s most popular woodwind composition. The composer describes his style by stating that his music is “tonal, although in certain works there are moments of atonal writing. Mainly, I would characterize my style as emphasizing rhythmic and lyrical invention, formal clarity and expressive nuance.”

Rather than analyzing Muczynski’s much-debated style, I will provide you with his own analysis of the work: “In Sonata-Allegro form, the first movement begins with a syncopated four-note figure announced by the flute. It has a restless urgency about it. This motive is gradually expanded, developed and varied as the music unfolds. There is frequent reference to it as both flute and piano share the ongoing dialogue. A pulsating energy is maintained throughout.”

Muczynski described the second movement as “both humorous and headstrong.” He gave it the name of, “concentrated music,” and stated, “it goes by quickly and establishes a need for the contrasting movement which follows.”

“As a respite from the first two energetic movements, the Andante favors a kind of intimate and sustained music wherein the flute is assigned expressive, soaring lines of high intensity while the piano provides a subdued accompaniment throughout.”

The fourth movement features a dramatic build-up throughout and ends “as both instruments share in a conclusion of staggered rhythms and all-out abandon.”

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Part II: The Analytical Paper

Finding a Distinctive Voice: An Analysis of Selected Twentieth-Century American Flute Works

What is American* music? Musicologist Garry Clarke has defined it by stating, “American music is, simply, music composed by Americans . . . Not all American music is American in style, for music and musical style do not always coincide” (9). Clarke goes on to say that American composers do not necessarily have to be born in the United States. They can be people who immigrated to the United States and spent most of their careers composing there. Clarke notes that early American music was mostly European in style. It was not until the twentieth century that American composers began to find their own distinctive voice (9-10). As composers sought a unique identity, a plethora of different styles emerged. Clarke concluded, “One cannot hope for a tidy, inclusive list of elements that comprise our local or provincial expression, our American style” (16). It is not my intention to summarize the relatively short yet highly diverse history of American music. Instead, I have chosen to briefly discuss four twentieth-century American works for flute and piccolo in order to gain a glimpse of the unifying and contrasting elements of this intriguing musical style.

Charles Griffes wrote Poem for Flute and Orchestra in 1918, near the end of his short life and career. Griffes’ musical style has been debated a great deal. During his life, most composers in the United States were writing in a style heavily influenced by the Europeans (Clarke 87). Some scholars believe that Griffes continued in this tradition, as his early writings were Romantic and Germanic in style, reflecting his training in Berlin (Anderson 185). Griffes’ works from 1911 to 1916 tended to resemble the French, impressionistic music of Debussy (Anderson 187). In late 1916 and 1917, Griffes wrote several works that demonstrated an oriental influence, featuring non-Western scales (Anderson 189). Griffes’ later works, including

* In this project, the term American is used to describe music from the United States of America.
Poem, are generally viewed as an eclectic mixture of romantic, impressionistic, and oriental influences, as well as Griffes' own unique ideas. Several musicologists believe that Griffes was one of the first American composers to develop a truly unique style (Clarke 87), while others only briefly mention his name in discussions of American composers (McCue 100).

Poem was well received by American audiences at the premiere in 1919. A newspaper reviewer stated, "Compositions for the flute even when played by such a splendid musician as Georges Barrère do not as a rule give rise to wild enthusiasm, yet yesterday's audience applauded the work and the soloist for several minutes . . . If Americans can but continue to produce such works, all talk of the unrequited native composer will be speedily set at rest" (qtd. in Maisel 294). The excitement about Poem is not at all surprising to me; I was fascinated by the work the first time I heard it.

The opening melody has a tonal center of c-sharp minor. It features relatively small intervals, which span a nearly two-octave range. The first few notes of the melody are played by the celli and basses in the introduction, before the flute plays the melody in its entirety in measures 9 through 20. The main melody returns several times in the piece. It is seen briefly in a condensed form in measures 22 to 26, although it begins on a c-natural instead of a c-sharp. It is found again in the orchestra in measures 83 to 86. The opening notes of the melody are featured in measures 195 to 200, although the range and rhythm are quite different. Finally, a much-anticipated recapitulation occurs in measures 267 to 280. A solo viola plays the melody for four measures, and then it is continued by the flute. The actual notes are almost identical to the opening, but it ends by traveling upward to a high F-sharp, instead of the original movement to a low E-natural. Some scholars believe that the form of Poem could be called a modified
rondo, since the melody is repeated several times and highly contrasting sections are found between the repetitions (Clarke 90).

The work is best described as neo-tonal, with moments of surprising dissonances and chromaticism. The texture varies a great deal. Many sections feature a simple melody accompanied by sustained, open chords, while other passages feature rapid sixteenth notes and trills in the flute accompanied by thick tremolos and repeated chords in the orchestra. The work spans almost the entire range of the flute, from low C to high B. It utilizes a full range of dynamics, from pianissimo to fortissimo. The tempo changes frequently, beginning with the marking of andantino, gradually accelerating to the presto marking in measure 241, and gently returning to andantino at the end.

Griffes uses complex rhythms throughout the work. The opening melody is set in 9/8 and features rapid changes in subdivisions, as well as polyrhythms. For instance, in measures 14 and 15 (see example 1), a quartet of eighth notes in the viola is set against three eighth notes in the flute on the third beat. Then the flute plays another set of three eighth notes followed a quartet of eighth notes and quintuplet sixteenth notes, which are set against a quartet of eighth notes in the violins.

Example 1: Griffes, Poem for Flute and Orchestra, mm. 12-15
In addition to polyrhythms, Griffes uses polymeter and syncopation to disturb the listener’s expected sense of pulse. In measure 116, the flute and orchestra change to 6/8. Polymeter begins in measure 124, where the violas and celli change to 2/4, while the other instruments remain in 6/8 (refer to example 2, part 1). Griffes notes that a dotted-half note should equal a half note in the meter change, so one measure of 6/8 takes the same amount of time as one measure of 2/4, although the latter uses one less quarter note. In measure 128 (refer to example 2, part 2), the second violins change to 2/4, while the first violins continue to play in 6/8. In measure 131, the viola part changes back to 6/8, while the celli and second violins continue to play in 2/4. This metric structure persists until measure 150, when the basses change to 2/4. In measure 158, the harp changes to 2/4, and the first violins change to 2/4 in measure 162. The violas change to 2/4 in measure 165; at this point, all of the strings are playing in 2/4, while the percussion, horns, and flute are playing in 6/8. Finally, in measure 171, everyone reverts to 6/8 and rhythmic tranquility is achieved for a brief period, before polyrhythms and polymeters are explored yet again.

Example 2, Part 1: Griffes, *Poem for Flute and Orchestra*, mm. 120-124
Poem for Flute and Orchestra has become a staple in the flute repertoire and is often performed in concerto competitions because it allows the performer to demonstrate highly lyrical, expressive playing, yet it is also musically complex. Learning to play the work helped me improve my own dynamic and tonal contrasts, in addition to learning new rhythmic and technical skills.

Like Griffes, Vincent Persichetti wrote a wide variety of works in different styles. His early compositions reflected the influences of Stravinsky, Bartók, Hindemith, and Copland. However, in the 1950s, Persichetti began to find his own style. Persichetti’s music ranges from simple diatonicism to complex atonal polyphony. His works vary in mood, style, and level of difficulty, from simple hymns to complex symphonies. Persichetti named two main currents of his elusive musical style: “graceful” and “gritty” (Sadie). His Serenade No. 10 for Flute and Harp, Op. 79 seems to consist mostly of graceful music, although certain sections, such as the last movement, could be viewed as gritty.
The work consists of eight short movements, each with a unique style and mood. The first movement features a tonal center of D-flat. Doubled octaves are prominent throughout. Extremely large, slurred melodic leaps are found in both the flute and harp parts. A tempo of \textit{larghetto} is indicated for this movement, and the loudest dynamic for the flute is the \textit{piano} at the beginning. The harp has a \textit{mezzo-forte} marking in measure 12, while the flute is resting. Harmonics are used in the harp, and the low register of the flute is featured, ensuring a soft sound.

The second movement is marked \textit{allegro comodo} and features a lilting tune in 6/8. The tonal center is again D-flat, although E-flat is heavily emphasized in the middle section. The movement has contrasting dynamics ranging from \textit{pianissimo} to \textit{forte}. The flute part is mostly accented or slurred; the harp part is mostly slurred, with an unexpected \textit{sforzando} in measure 43. As in the first movement, octaves are often doubled, as well as fifths. The melodic lines feature more stepwise motion, although some large leaps do occur. The movement covers a wide range in both the flute and harp. In measures 30 through 36 and 41 through 43, a dampened glissando effect is achieved on the harp by striking the nails against the strings.

The third movement, \textit{andante grazioso}, is rhythmically intriguing. The melody features constant eighth notes, which remain at the same speed while the meter continuously changes from 4/4 to 6/8 to 4/8 and back to 4/4. The resulting effect simply changes the expected accents of the melody. Imitation occurs frequently in this movement, first in the harp, and then in the flute (see example 3). The harp tends to use a tonal center of B, while the flute plays the melody with a tonal center of A.
Example 3: Persichetti, *Serenade No. 10 for Flute and Harp*, third movement, mm. 1-7

This movement features smaller leaps and some stepwise motion. The prominent articulation is a legato slur. Dynamics have a limited range from *pianissimo* to *mezzo-piano*, but the melody itself has a natural sense of rise and fall that should be emphasized.

The fourth movement is a serene contrast to the previous two movements. It is marked *andante cantabile*, which is actually a vastly different tempo from the third movement, despite the seemingly similar names. Persichetti wrote that the third movement should be played at the rate of quarter note equals 120, while the fourth movement should be performed at the rate of quarter note equals 44. The extremely slow tempo creates challenges breathing challenges for
the flutist, as many notes and phrases have a long duration, and make it easy to sound flat at the ends of sections. Unlike the imitative second and third movements, the harp mostly accompanies the flute here with chords and arpeggios. The tonal center is E-flat and the melody is quite stepwise and legato. The mood of the movement is delicate, as the flute begins and ends in the lower register, and dynamics range from triple pianissimo to mezzo-piano. Like the first movement, the rhythms are quite simple and the meter is 4/4.

The fifth movement, allegretto, provides an immediate contrast to its tranquil predecessor. The entire movement is written in 5/8, although the subdivisions alternate between 3 plus 2 and 2 plus 3. The harp first introduces the main theme, while the flute has a contrasting counter-melody. The harp’s theme features harmonics and articulated, stepwise motion, while the flute’s counter-melody is slurred and uses wide leaps. In the middle of the movement, measures 20 through 39, the flute begins to imitate the harp’s melody in a slurred fashion, forgetting its counter-melody for a brief time. Suddenly, in measure 40, the flute remembers its jaunty melody, and a recapitulation occurs. The dynamics range from piano to forte.

The sixth movement, scherzando, changes meter frequently from 6/8 to 9/8. The harp plays arpeggiated polychords throughout. The tonal center appears to be C, although other pitches are explored. The flute part is slurred and uses a great deal of wide leaps, covering the entire range of the flute. Dynamic contrasts range from piano to forte.

The seventh movement, adagietto, alternates between staccato and slurred articulations. The harp uses harmonics when the flute plays staccato eighths. The movement is written in a slow 4/4. Leaps are extremely wide in the opening and closing phrases, and the tonal center seems ambiguous. The contrasting middle section is slurred and uses smaller leaps and stepwise motion. Dynamics range from pianissimo to mezzo-forte.
The final movement, *vivo*, provides a great contrast to all of the other movements. This movement is set in 2/4, with almost continuous sixteenth notes in at least one of the voices throughout. This movement provides the most contrast in articulation, featuring accent, marcato, staccato, slur, glissando near the sounding board in the harp, and flutter-tonguing in the flute. The movement also uses trills and quintuplet sixteenth notes in the flute part. Stepwise motion is more common, but the movement spans nearly the entire range of both instruments. The tonal center changes quickly and is again ambiguous. Persichetti seems more concerned about creating the effect of a wash of notes than finding a tonal center. This is by far the loudest movement of the work, as it is mostly *forte* or *fortissimo*, with crescendos throughout.

Even within one short chamber work, Persichetti manages to use incredibly varied techniques, so his style is indeed difficult to classify. If forced to pick a name, I would call it twentieth-century eclectic. Persichetti loathed discussing his own music, as he felt that communication, if it is effective, should be achieved through the music itself. He promoted experimentation in music composition and celebrated the diversity of approaches in the twentieth century (Persichetti 166-7).

Like Griffes’ *Poem*, Robert Muczynski’s *Sonata for Flute and Piano, Op. 14*, written in 1961, has become a standard work in the flute repertoire. Muczynski hoped to portray the flute as an instrument “that is capable of projecting music which is pungent in character rather than just serene and sweetly melodic” (qtd. in Thurmond 9). In doing so, he created an extremely difficult work for flute, in terms of technique and expression. Scholars have labeled Muczynski’s style as neo-classical, as well as neo-romantic. Most musicologists agree that his style is characterized by a vigorous rhythmic drive within a lyrical, tonal framework and clear structure (Thurmond 3-4).
The first movement of the work is marked *allegro deciso*, and it is written in sonata form, with an exposition (mm. 1-63), development (mm. 64-135), recapitulation (mm. 136-166), and coda (mm. 167 to 187). Muczynski wrote two main themes; motives from these themes are varied and fragmented throughout the work (Thurmond 18-9). Tonal centers are not always clear and frequently change throughout the movement. For example, in the beginning of the movement, the flute has a tonal center of F, while the piano has a tonal center of E-flat (Thurmond 24), as shown in example 4.

Example 4: Muczynski, *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, first movement, mm. 1-3

![Example 4: Muczynski, Sonata for Flute and Piano, first movement, mm. 1-3](image)

Muczynski uses syncopation and meter changes throughout the movement, and polyrhythms often occur, making it difficult to coordinate the flute and piano parts. Imitation is prevalent, making the piano and flute parts of equal importance. Both instruments explore the extremes of their ranges, often in unexpected leaps. Dynamics vary quickly and widely, from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*. Articulations are also of supreme importance to the driving sense of the movement. Jarring accents and staccatos are suddenly contrasted with lyrical slurs.

The second movement, *scherzo*, has a lighter feel than the first movement. It is written in a clear ternary form with a coda. The tonal center of E is most emphasized, although Muczynski does explore other centers in the middle section. The opening melody is syncopated and features lowered third and seventh scale degrees, perhaps alluding to a blues scale
(Thurmond 27-8). Like the first movement, syncopation is prominent and meter changes and polyrhythms occur frequently. Dynamic contrasts are varied and sudden, with multiple *forte-piano* markings. Articulations are lighter than the first movement, but accents are still used a great deal. The extremes of each instrument are tested once again, especially the low register of the flute in measures 71 to 74.

The third movement, *andante*, provides a more tranquil contrast to the high-energy excitement of the previous movements. The melody is written to sound almost improvisatory in nature. The flute is featured more as a solo instrument, as it is given intense expressive lines, while the piano mostly plays a subdued accompaniment. The form of the movement is not quite as clear, although a basic ternary structure is still present. Tonal centers fluctuate, beginning with B and eventually moving down to F (Thurmond 32). The movement features the low and middle registers of the flute, although some notes in the higher register appear in the middle section. Dynamics tend to be more subdued, consisting mostly of *piano* and *pianissimo*. Rhythms are more straightforward, but some syncopation and meter changes still occur.

The fourth movement, *allegro con moto*, is the most energetic movement of all. It is in a rondo form, with a flute cadenza before the final return of the A theme. Motives are repeated and varied in imitation throughout the movement and tonal centers are varied and change quickly throughout the movement (Thurmond 36-7). Like the first two movements, meter changes, syncopation, and polyrhythms occur frequently. Articulations are varied, from slurs to accents. The extremes of each instrument are explored extensively. Dynamics tend to be mostly *forte* and *fortissimo* with some softer moments.

Muczynski’s style is somewhat more uniform than Persichetti’s, but experts still debate about how it should be classified. John Barcellona suggests that *Sonata for Flute and Piano*
“combines the essence of jazz, rock, and swing in a neo-classical style” (qtd. in Thurmond 43). Barcellona also feels that performers should use freedom and rubato when playing the work to bring out these styles. Anne Thurmond, however, disagrees. She acknowledges the fact that some of Muczynski’s melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic material has elements of jazz and swing music; however, she feels that rhythmic precision is needed to correctly perform the work (Thurmond 43-4). I find that Muczynski’s music shows both American and European influences. The harmonies, melodies, and rhythms are somewhat unconventional, while the structures of the works are clearly based on classical forms.

Unlike the previous three composers, Robert Baksa’s works are still relatively new and undiscovered. Few scholarly articles have been written about his works, so it seemed more appropriate to e-mail him about his style. Baksa responded, “I think that ‘neo-classical’ is a very good label for my music. During the so-called classical era most music was largely melodic and pleasing with clear-cut forms, which made the architecture very easy to follow. It was also very ‘natural’ sounding even though much technical skill was in evidence in the best composers.”

Baksa’s *Piccolo Sonata* consists of three movements. The first movement, *allegro*, is written in 4/4 throughout. Some syncopation and polyrhythms can be found in this movement, but these rhythmic devices are far less prevalent than in the works by Griffes, Persichetti, and Muczynski. This movement is in a clear sonata form. Dynamic changes are treated gradually, as they were in the classical era. The melodies are mostly diatonic, although chromatic neighboring tones are occasionally heard; themes are imitated and varied frequently in both voices. Baksa uses some non-conventional harmonies (see example 5). Although many chords have added tones and intervals of seconds and thirds, the sonata does not sound overwhelmingly dissonant.
Example 5: Baksa, *Piccolo Sonata*, first movement, mm. 1-4

**Allegra** \( (J = 138) \)

In the second movement, *misterioso, liberamente*, the piano is more accompanimental, while the piccolo plays the melody. The melody features larger slurred intervals of thirds, fourths, and fifths, and quartal chords are used a great deal in the accompaniment (see example 6). Dynamics are more subdued and the piccolo is given a chance to feature its seldom-heard low register. This movement, like the first, is set in 4/4 throughout. However, syncopation is more common (see example 6), and subdivisions change frequently, ranging from duple to sextuple.

Example 6: Baksa, *Piccolo Sonata*, second movement, mm. 49 to 53

The third movement, *giocoso*, provides a lively change to 6/8. Although the meter does not change during this movement, moments of polymeter occur, when one or both instruments are playing in a 3/4-like pattern. The movement appears to be in a loose rondo form. The
melody is light and bouncy, with some syncopation and covers nearly the entire range of the piccolo, soaring to a climax on a high A. Harmonies are similar to those in the first movement, with some seventh and added-note chords. The melody remains relatively tonal, with several chromatic neighboring tones throughout.

Baksa’s *Piccolo Sonata* reflects the influence of twentieth-century music, especially in regards to harmonies. However, Baksa retains several elements from the classical era, such as form, diatonic melodies, and gradual dynamic changes. His style is unquestionably neo-classical.

Although Griffes’ *Poem*, Persichetti’s *Serenade No. 10*, Muczynski’s *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, and Baksa’s *Piccolo Sonata* have vast differences, they all help shed light on compositional trends amongst American composers in the twentieth century. Each composer uses devices and ideas from composers of other cultures, as well as their own creative inspirations. Forms tend to be loosely borrowed from other eras. Harmonies are generally neotonal, with moments of ambiguity and diatonicism, rather than either atonal or completely diatonic. Melodies tend to use larger intervals than works written in previous centuries. Rhythms are far more complex, with syncopations, meter changes, polyrhythms, and polymeters occurring on a regular basis. The solo instrument and the accompaniment tend to have equal roles in the works, although this varies depending on the mood of each movement. Instruments are challenged to play in the extreme limits of their ranges, and dynamic changes are often sudden and exciting. Articulations are highly varied and some experimental techniques, such as flutter-tonguing are explored.

I believe that these four works demonstrate the importance of twentieth-century American composers in modern music history. All of the pieces are crafted with care and
quality. Each piece challenges the performers to master demanding technical issues, as well as to effectively express a variety of moods and emotions to the audience. It is my hope that these works will continue to be studied and performed by musicians around the world for years to come.
Part III: The Lesson Plans

“American music is an exciting and often a profound literature despite its very difficult beginnings. Its growth lagged behind more immediate American goals of wealth and political society, and thus, while it is now achieving maturity, it is a maturity that still leaves a large part of the American population musically deficient” (Clarke, 4-5).

Although composition is included as one of the nine National Standards for Music Education, few American students are encouraged to compose in the music classroom. Before teaching any of the following lessons, I would suggest doing an age-appropriate activity (written or oral questions) to explore the students’ preconceptions about twentieth-century American music and composition. For example, young students could be asked to name an American song (typical responses might include patriotic songs). Older students could be asked to write their opinions about American music. It might also be interesting to list several names of composers, and see how many students have heard of European composers, compared to how many students have heard of American composers.

I can only speculate that most students know very little about American composers such as Charles Ives, Aaron Copland, Virgil Thompson, and John Cage, to name a few. I would imagine that most students are incredibly familiar with American vernacular music, such as rap music, jazz, hymns, and marches, but many are unaware that Americans have composed high-quality “classical,” or cultivated, music. If teachers spend time giving students opportunities to compose and learn about twentieth-century American cultivated music, then the twenty-first century could indeed be a musical renaissance in America, in terms of composition, as well as understanding and support of the general public.
Elementary General Music Lesson Plan


Objectives: While listening to the first movement, students will visually portray their reactions to the music on paper using different colors and shapes, with reasonable accuracy.

While playing rhythm sticks, students will collectively compose an obligato part to the first movement, using select notes and rhythms, with reasonable accuracy.

National Standards: 2) performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music, 4) composing and arranging music within specified guidelines, 5) reading and notating music, 6) listening to, analyzing, and describing music, 8) understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

Procedure:

- Begin the lesson by asking students questions about American music. Tell students that they will be listening to twentieth-century American music today.

- Play the recording for the students, and ask them to draw a representation of what they hear.

- Ask students to explain their artwork. Discuss musical concepts, such as dynamics (loud vs. soft), articulations (long vs. short), and tempo (slow vs. fast), that might have affected their artwork.

- Listen to the first movement again. Have students try to keep a steady beat with their feet or hands while listening.

- Ask students to collectively compose a four-measure ostinato using whole notes, half notes, and quarter notes.
• Write the collectively composed ostinato on the board. Have the entire class play the ostinato several times. Once the students can play the ostinato, have them play it along with the first part of the first movement.

• Close the lesson by telling students that Americans can be great composers, and they should keep practicing composing!
Secondary General Music Lesson Plan

Materials Needed: Recording of *Piccolo Sonata* by Robert Baksa, flute, piccolo (or at least pictures of the instruments), keyboards, staff paper, pencils

Objectives: While listening to the first movement, students will learn about the range and timbre of the piccolo, with reasonable accuracy.
While playing their keyboards, students will individually compose short melodies for the piccolo, with reasonable accuracy.

National Standards: 2) performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music, 4) composing and arranging music within specified guidelines, 5) reading and notating music, 6) listening to, analyzing, and describing music, 9) understanding music in relation to history and culture

Procedure:

Day One

- Review families of instruments (woodwind, brass, percussion, strings)
- Play the recording and ask the students to identify the two instruments that are playing
- Have students describe the piccolo range and timbre
- Teach students about how music is notated for the piccolo and show them pictures of the instrument, or the actual instrument, if possible. Compare it to the size of the flute and explain the difference in range. Discuss the history of the piccolo and materials that it can be made from.

Day Two

- Review what the students learned in the last class about the piccolo.
• Ask students to independently compose a short melody (8 to 16 measures) for the piccolo. The composition should be in 4/4. Students can use eighth notes, quarter notes, half notes, and whole notes. Students are restricted to using notes from the C major scale.

• Have students play their compositions on keyboards (they may need to be played an octave lower, depending on the range of the keyboard).

• If possible, have a piccolo player (a colleague or high school student) perform some of the melodies. Evaluate the quality of the compositions (are they within the piccolo range?) and how the timbre changed when it was played on piccolo.

• Encourage students to continue experimenting with composing.
Secondary Orchestra Lesson Plan

Materials Needed: Recording of Griffes’ *Poem for Flute and Orchestra*, impressionistic artwork, projector, staff paper, writing utensils, instruments

Objectives: After listening to the piece, students will use musical terms to compare it to impressionistic artwork, with reasonable accuracy.

While viewing impressionistic artwork, students will compose a short melody for their respective instruments, with reasonable accuracy.

National Standards: 2) performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music, 4) composing and arranging music within specified guidelines, 5) reading and notating music, 6) listening to, analyzing, and describing music, 8) understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

Procedure:

- Briefly discuss twentieth-century American music with the students. Perhaps they have recently played a piece by an American composer. If so, comparisons to this piece could be made throughout the lesson.

- Project several pieces of Impressionistic artwork (a PowerPoint presentation would work well for this), while students listen to the recording.

- Ask students to compare the artwork with the music, using musical terms. Instrumentation and timbre should also be discussed.

- Have students independently compose a short, impressionistic melody (about 8 measures) for their respective instruments. The melody should be in 6/8. Students are limited using notes, quarter notes, dotted quarter notes, and dotted half notes. Their compositions should be in D major.
• Ask several students to perform their melodies.
• Discuss each melody and how it relates to the artwork.
• Ask students if their ideas about twentieth-century American music have changed. If so, how and why? Encourage students to continue composing melodies when they are practicing their instruments.
Secondary Band Lesson Plan

Materials Needed: Recording of *Serenade No. 10 for Flute and Harp* by Vincent Persichetti, music or recording of *Symphony for Band* by Vincent Persichetti, instruments, staff paper, writing utensils

Objectives: After experiencing select movements from two works by Persichetti, students will use musical terms to compare and contrast the style, with reasonable accuracy.

Using Persichetti’s style as a model, students will compose a short melody on their respective instruments, with reasonable accuracy.

National Standards: 2) performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music, 4) composing and arranging music within specified guidelines, 5) reading and notating music, 6) listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Procedure: This lesson would work best when the band is learning to play Persichetti’s *Symphony for Band*; however, a recording of the piece can be used instead.

Day One

- Discuss twentieth-century American music. Make connections to works that the band has recently played (most wind band repertoire falls into this category).
- Ask the students to listen to the second and eighth movements of Persichetti’s *Serenade No. 10* and compare it to the fourth movement of *Symphony for Band* (if possible, have students follow along in their parts).
- Make a chart on the board with general categories (tempo, rhythm, dynamics, melody, harmony, articulations, etc.) to compare the two works and discuss Persichetti’s style.

Day Two

- Review what the students learned about Persichetti’s style.
• Ask the students to independently compose a short melody (about 8 measures) for their respective instruments. The melody should be written in B-flat major. It should be written in 4/4. Students can use sixteenth notes, eighth notes, quarter notes, half notes, whole notes, and dotted rhythms.
• Have several students perform their compositions for the class. Discuss how each composition reflects Persichetti's twentieth-century eclectic style.
• Given this new knowledge, ask students how they can enhance their performance of Persichetti's *Symphony for Band* in terms of style (dynamics, articulation, rhythmic accuracy). Rehearse a section of the piece, focusing on the style.
• Encourage students to continue composing melodies for their instruments and focusing on style when they perform band works.
Conclusion

These plans are just a few ways that lessons about twentieth-century American music and composition could easily be incorporated in the music classroom. These lesson plans could be used in conjunction with other units, such as studying correlations between artwork and music, studying the instruments, studying impressionism in art and music, studying the history of wind band repertoire, or learning to compose and improvise.

I would encourage educators to consider doing an entire unit about twentieth-century American music and composition. Students could begin by listening to and researching the music. Performance ensembles could also perform works by twentieth-century American composers. The unit could culminate with an interdisciplinary, composition project. Each student would be given the opportunity to research his or her heritage. Ideally, the social studies teachers would help the students with this aspect of the project. Once the students have identified their heritage, they would research music that relates to that culture. Each student would be expected to teach the class a short lesson (5 to 10 minutes) about the music of their culture(s). Then, students would be asked to compose a short work that reflects aspects of music from their heritage, as well as their own unique ideas about composition. Hopefully, by the end of the unit, students will understand that American music consists of elements from other cultures (because Americans have diverse heritages), as well as our own unique ideas about music and expression. Music provides a way to celebrate our differences; because music is a universal language, it can also help unify our culture.
Works Cited


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