

“Redefining the Boundaries of Middle Level Band Technique”

Composer Michael Colgrass, Clinician

Featuring Dr. Janet Barrett, Northwestern University 2004 Midwest Clinic 58th
Annual Conference

Hilton Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

2:30 - 3:30 pm

December 15, 2004

Sponsored by the American Composers Forum 

Michael Colgrass' work with a middle-level band through *BandQuest* reflects the notion that composing is a sure way to promote music literacy and in-depth musical understanding and to get students comfortable with the composing process. By starting with musical works of high quality for use as centerpieces for curriculum development, the *BandQuest* curriculum is founded on the premise that music teachers can develop and use a comprehensive curriculum to teach middle-level band. Composer Michael Colgrass contributed a unique work to the *BandQuest Series* that both challenges and inspires us. As a centerpiece, his work complements multiple musical traditions and links to ideas outside of music, which provides the elements for in-depth study, toward for greater understanding and a richer performance of the work. This approach holds particular promise for accommodating diverse learning styles and appealing to the eclectic interests of middle school students.

Old Churches by Michael Colgrass

Gregorian chant is one of the earliest forms of notated music using free flowing rhythms and simple melodies. When Michael Colgrass worked on this piece in his residency, he explored graphic notation with students. He asked individuals to create their own unique notations on a blackboard and then invited the whole class to play what they thought it should sound like. In *Old Churches*, Colgrass uses the elements of Gregorian chant and graphic notation to create an aura of voices echoing in a monastery. This piece is a great introduction to graphic notation, and performers have a fun and creative way to explore sound production along with the compositional process.

Suggested Graphic Notation Training For Music Teachers: Brief Synopsis

By Michael Colgrass © 2000

Michael Colgrass created a series of experiences that will help students become familiar and comfortable with creating and interpreting graphic notation. The experiences are organized in stages.

Benefits of Training in Graphic Notation

Students learn how to:

- Invent their own system of music making
- Play their instruments without fear of making “mistakes” since there are no “right or wrong” notes in graphics
- Create music, understand and experience the overall creative process
- Read conventionally written music with a new perspective, understanding the reasons behind notation
- Improvise on their instruments
- Gain greater control on their instruments
- Sing and see the benefits of singing the music they play
- Develop leadership and communication skills

STAGE I: Creating Soundscapes

Michael Colgrass and band teacher Louis Papachristos share the benefits of teaching music literacy and composition through training students in graphic notation.

STAGE II: Composition Team

Interact with students to guide them through a group process of composing and performing using graphic notation.

An important part of the process of group composing is the time at which the students reflect on their work and the elements they contributed to the composition. Here is an excerpt of that the conversation and lessons learned by the students--lessons they requested be shared with teachers and students.

STAGE III: Final Performances of Pieces

Ask the “Composition Team” to share their graphic compositions with the class and leads them through performances of the pieces.

The Curriculum: Comprehensive Education

Imagine a new work for your-middle level band written by one of today's leading composers. Then imagine a multimedia curriculum created specifically for that new work to help teach the music and promote learning across the full range of the National Standards. BandQuest is a new approach to middle level instrumental music education that integrates newly composed band music for students with approaches to interdisciplinary teaching for comprehensive band education.

The curriculum for the works in the BandQuest repertoire

The format of the curriculum for each work is a CDROM that can be used by students and teachers in flexible and varied ways. The components of the curriculum provide:

- *An introduction to the work itself . . .*
including a full videotaped performance of the work, and guided listening maps that describe the form and features of the work;
- *An introduction to the composer . . .*
including an interview with the composer, excerpts of the composer's interaction with the middle school band students, and a composer's biography;
- *A teacher's guide . . .*
that features an analysis of the work, teaching strategies, and exercises that will help students master the musical challenges presented by the work;
- *A "skill builders" section designed for students . . .*
that can be used for individual and small group practice;
- *A "create" section . . .*
that encourages students to explore some of the compositional techniques used by the composer and also to invent their own;
- *Interdisciplinary connections and related musical styles and genres . . .*
that broaden students' understanding through the study of closely related musical styles and through connections to history, cultural traditions, art, literature, and other complementary disciplines.

Other works in the BandQuest repertoire *CDROMs* available or coming*

- **Grandmother's Song* by Brent Michael Davids
- **Old Churches* by Michael Colgrass
- *Smash the Windows* by Robert Rodriguez
- *Alegré* by Tania León
- *City Rain* by Judith Zaimont
- *New Wade 'n Water* by Adolphus Hailstork
- *Alligator Alley* by Michael Daugherty
- *Ridgeview Centrum* by Alvin Singleton
- *Mosaics* by Stephen Paulus
- **A+: A "Precise" Prelude and an "Excellent" March* by Tom Duffy
- **Hambone* by Libby Larsen
- **Spring Festival* by Chen Yi

Curriculum teams used the Facets Model as a tool for examining the structure, form, expressive meaning, and context in which a work is created (Barrett, McCoy, & Veblen, 1997, p. 77) More information about this model can be found at www.bandquest.org

- Who created it?
- When and where was it created?
- Why and for whom was it created?
- What is its subject?
- What is being expressed?
- What techniques did its creator use to help us understand what is being expressed?
- What kind of structure or form does it have?
- What does it sound or look like?



Resulting CDROM Curricula and Web-based Interactive Educational Activities

- Web-based student interactive educational activities (2003)
- Grandmother Song (2004)
- Old Churches (2005)
- Combined disc or website host (2006)

Clinicians



Composer Michael Colgrass

colgrass@interlog.com

Michael Colgrass is a composer, writer, lecturer and NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) trainer. Michael Colgrass started his musical career at age 12 with his own jazz band.

Only when he went to the University of Illinois in 1954 did he enter the world of symphonic music, first as a percussionist and then as composer. After composition studies with Lukas Foss and Darius Milhaud at the Berkshire Music Festival and the Aspen School, Colgrass went to New York and free-lanced with a wide range of groups, including the New York Philharmonic, Dizzy Gillespie, the original West Side Story orchestra on Broadway, the Columbia Recording Orchestra's Stravinsky Conducts Stravinsky series, and numerous ballet, opera and jazz ensembles. During this time he continued to study composition with Wallingford Rigger (1958) and Ben Weber (1958-60). He gives personal development workshops around the world for performers, students and others. He is a graduate of the University of Illinois, a Tanglewood scholar, twice Guggenheim Fellow, and winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his work *Déjà vu*. He won an Emmy for the PBS documentary "Soundings: The Music of Michael Colgrass," which features his unique teaching methods. The Rockefeller Foundation created a special program for Colgrass called "Artist in the Theater at Large," which led to studies in mime, acting, dance and directing in New York, commedia dell' arte in Milan and avant garde theater with Jerzy Grotowski's Polish Theater Laboratory in Wroclaw, Poland. Colgrass originated Deep Listening, a technique for hypnotizing audiences to heighten concentration, which is featured in the book *Leaves Before The Wind* (Grinder DeLozier & Associates, 1991). His articles on creativity and life skills have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and *Music Magazine*. His first book, *My Lessons With Kumi - How I Learned To Perform With Confidence In Life And Work*, is the summation of his methods and philosophy. Upcoming premiere: **1 March 2005:** Orchestre de Symphonique de Montreal will give the Montreal premiere of Colgrass' *Crossworlds* for flute, piano and orchestra. Flutist Marina Piccinini and pianist Andreas Heafliker will join conductor Emmanuel Villaume



Janet R. Barrett

Associate Professor, Music Education, Northwestern University School of Music

j-barrett3@northwestern.edu • 847-467-1258

PhD, University of Wisconsin-Madison

General music specialist and researcher. Research interests in teacher education, curriculum, and interdisciplinary studies. Co-author of *Looking In On Music Teaching* (McGraw-Hill/Primis, 2000) and *Sound Ways of Knowing: Music in the Interdisciplinary Curriculum* (Schirmer, 1997). Contributor to the *New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, *Music Educators Journal*, *Bulletin of the Council of Research in Music Education*, *Update*, and *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning*. President-elect of the North Central Division of the Music Educators National Conference. Editor, *General Music Today*, and editorial board member of the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* and the *Mountain Lake Reader*. Taught elementary general and middle school choral music in Iowa and Wisconsin. Former professor of music education and music department chair at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Janet has been a long-time BandQuest curriculum designer and consultant

Related References

- American Composers Forum (Producer). (2000). *Hambone* [(CDROM)]. *BandQuest*. Saint Paul, MN: American Composers Forum Publications. (Distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation, 7777 W. Bluemound Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53213, www.halleonard.com)
- Barrett, J. R., McCoy, C. W., & Veblen, K. K. (1997). *Sound ways of knowing: Music in the interdisciplinary curriculum*. New York: Schirmer Books/Wadsworth/Thomson Learning).
- Barrett, Janet R. (2001). Interdisciplinary work and musical integrity. *Music Educators Journal*, 87 (5), 27-31.
- Battisti, F., & Garofalo, R. (2000). *Guide to score study for the wind band conductor*. Galesville, MD: Meredith Music.
- Colgrass, M. (2000). *My Lessons With Kumi: How I Learned to Perform With Confidence in Life and Work*. Moab, UT: Real People Press.
- Colgrass, M. (2000). *Journal Notes from composer Michael Colgrass*. [Read about the residency and commission of Michael Colgrass' *Old Churches* in a journal written by the composer.]. www.bandquest.org

Middle-level Band Works by Michael Colgrass:

- **Apache Lullaby** (2003) 4'45" Level 1-2 (Middle school band)(CF)
- **The Beethoven Machine** (2003) 6' Level 2-3 (Middle to High School Band)(CF)
- **Got to Make Noise** (2003) 3'30"-45' Level 2 (Middle school band)(CF)
- **Old Churches** (2000) 5'30" Level 2 (Middle school band)(HL)

McCoy, Claire W. (2000). The excitement of collaboration. *Music Educators Journal*, 87 (1), 37-44.