

We want new music too!—Composing, Commissioning, & Publishing for Young Strings

NYSSMA 2024 - Lauren Spavelko & Liam Thomas

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Composing / Arranging

Many teachers begin composing / arranging to respond to a need — a **gap in the literature**, a focus on a **pedagogical skill**, a special consideration in the ensemble — because they imagine **something that didn't exist before**, and because it's fun!

This is a small selection of example works for young strings that illustrate these features. I strongly encourage you to explore these composers and discover others with the resources at the end of this packet.

Level Guides / Resources

Excelcia Grade Level Guidelines for Strings (by half level) - [link](#)

Alfred Grade Level Guidelines for Band & Strings (by half level) - [link](#)

[Instrumentation and Orchestration \(Alfred Blatter\)](#)

[Essential Dictionary of Orchestration \(pocketbook\)](#)

Example pieces for young strings

Go off! (Gr2) - **Armond Vance Wimberly** - Syncopation, Simple double stops

Dion Morales - Assorted works for grades .5 - 2.5 - [link](#)

- Assemble the Guard (Gr1) - Limited range, 8th notes, special effects
- Dragon's Revenge (Gr2) - Large ensemble sound, flex solo playable by any instrument

Caryn Wiegand Neidhold

- *Take a Bow: Progressive Fiddle & Folk Tunes for the String Ensemble*
- Renegade Showdown - Low 1 / Regular 1
- Pirates Apprentice - 3/4 time

Deborah Baker Monday - Deep-Sea Fandango - D minor

Cooper Ford - Exhilaration - Intro to 8th notes

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Multilevel Works

Lauren Spavelko - [Journey by the North Star](#) (Grades 1 - 2.5 - 4)

A rondo written for **six possible combinations**, featuring the Grade 1 material as a prominent theme (optionally reinforced by 2.5 or 4)

Katie LaBrie

[Atoms!](#) (Grades 4 - 2.5 - 1.5 - .5) - **Grade 2.5 standalone** + any other levels

[A Folk Tune Festival](#) (Grades 3 - 2 - 1 - Open String) - **Grade 3 standalone** + any

[Polar Vortex](#) (Grades 3 - 2.5 - 1.5 - .5) - **Grade 3 standalone + any other part**

Recommended Arrangers - If you would like to collaborate with someone who can adapt your pieces for this level, here are some people to reach out to.

- Josh Trentadue (joshtrentadue.com)
- Morgan Denney (morgandenney.com)
- Sarah Rimkus (sarahrimkuscomposer@gmail.com)
- Cindy Hill (chill22002@yahoo.com)
- Jason Taurins (jasontaurins.com)

Commissioning

How to find & connect with composers

- Institute for Composer Diversity (www.composerdiversity.com)
- Ask local colleges with composition programs, or colleagues who have worked with composers.
- Contact a composer you already love!

Commissioning Models

Commissions can be initiated by the composer or the director.

Individual Commission

- Director commissions exclusively for their ensemble
- Often a better fit for co-creation between composer and ensemble

Consortium

- Composer & director work together to collect a group of commissioners

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- All consortium performances are counted as premieres, and all are credited in the score.
- Often have a lead ensemble for the first performance, to record, & to invite other ensembles to join the consortium

Commissioning Considerations

Details of Work

- Duration, level, size of ensemble
- Reason for commission
- Dedication
- Special requests - Any collaboration or co-creation? Special features for the work? (Quotes, text, visual, etc.?)

Interaction with ensemble

- Will the composer attend / participate in any rehearsals (in-person or virtually) or performances?
- Will the composer chat / Q&A with the ensemble?
- Will there be any mentorship or workshops of some kind?

Timeline

- Usually want to initiate conversation about a commission at least 9-12 months in advance; occasionally shorter timelines can be accommodated.
- Discuss any check-ins or exchange of drafts (as needed)
- Set delivery date
- Will there be an exclusivity period?

Fee

- Fee varies by composer according to skill, experience, demand, etc.
- The composer usually agrees to a flat fee determined by the length of piece, size of ensemble, complexity, etc.
 - Ex: Ensemble rate of \$700-1000 per minute of music (ex: 3 minute piece = \$2100-3000)
- Fee can include creation of work + optionally calls, visits, travel, etc.
- A consortium can share the financial cost of the commissioning fee, and may sometimes even help a composer earn a higher fee and additional performances. (Ex: \$250-500 per ensemble)

Final Product

- Digital delivery, hard copy, or both?

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- Recording for composer

Publishing & Distribution

Distinction between Publisher & Distributor

- Publisher will do more work to promote, market, engrave, and produce your music as a product
 - Due to this, more royalty goes to the publisher because of the amount of work they are taking off the composer's hands
 - This also usually means that the copyright goes to them as well
 - Brand recognition as well
- Distributor sells music directly to customers *from vendors*
 - This means they sell music from publishers but like with My Score, can sell music directly from the hands of the composer
 - Less royalties are taken but the marketing, promotion, and creation of a product is all up to the composer
 - Keep your copyrights!

What is J.W. Pepper's My Score?

- My Score is a simple and cost-effective solution for composers to sell sheet music online while maintaining their copyrights.
- My Score offers its members the means of promoting to one of the world's largest music networks on jwpepper.com for a one-time fee of \$99.00. The platform offers both digital and hard copy options for scores and parts. Membership includes an intuitive user dashboard for adding new compositions, checking sales data, and managing your catalog. Once your new product is online, your music instantly becomes searchable on jwpepper.com.
- Earn More with My Score
 - Sell your compositions digitally with ePrint on J.W. Pepper or as print-on-demand products!
 - Earn 50% royalties on ePrint (digital downloads)
 - Earn up to 25% royalties on print hard copies (Print-On-Demand)
- For more information, please visit our My Score page at <https://www.jwpepper.com/myscore>. Feel free to also reach out via email to myscore@jwpepper.com if you have specific questions you would like answered!

The logo for My Score, featuring the words "MY SCORE" in a large, light gray, serif font. The letter "E" in "SCORE" is stylized with a vertical line through it, resembling a musical staff or a specific character.

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