



# Where Even Shadows are Light

Alyssa Regent

Classroom Listening Module

# WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

Let's begin by defining our terms:

What comes to mind when you hear the word “contemporary?”

Can our knowledge of music help us to figure out its meaning?

*con-tempo-rary*      we know that **tempo** means “time.”

Webster's Dictionary says it can be an **adjective** meaning “happening, existing, living, or coming into being during the same period of time,” or a **noun** meaning “a person of the same or nearly the same age as another.”

# DISCUSSION



**What is YOUR definition of a contemporary composer?**

Use this space to write your ensemble's definition  
of a contemporary composer:

# WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

Where are some of the places you're likely to encounter the music of a living composer? Let's hear your ideas, then click to see examples!



# WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

A contemporary composer is someone *living* who is *writing music today*.



Can you name any contemporary composers?

# WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

One great example is **Alyssa Regent**, our featured composer. We'll be learning a piece of her music titled, *Where Even Shadows are Light*.



# THE COMPOSER of

## WHERE EVEN SHADOWS ARE LIGHT is Alyssa Regent



Alyssa Regent grew up on the picturesque Caribbean island of **Guadeloupe**.

This island is part of the French Caribbean, which means people speak French and Creole, and the culture is a vibrant mix of African, European, and Indigenous influences.

See if you can find  
Guadeloupe!



# THE COMPOSER of

## WHERE EVEN SHADOWS ARE LIGHT is Alyssa Regent



The landscape is home to many beautiful flowers and birds, so Alyssa grew up hearing a natural symphony of sounds everywhere she went. It was easy for her to imagine sounds in her head and translate them into musical ideas:

*"...birdsongs, sound of the wind, sea, a falling cascade, water against rocks in a river, etc. All sounds that can be harvested and shaped into musical sounds and rhythms as long as we know how to **embody** them."*



# HOW does ALYSSA come up with sounds?

*"In my work, I take abstract ideas – aka, ideas that are based in sensations and emotions – and transform them. What does the dawn sound like? What does the midnight sun sound like? How does a shadow move at noon versus at sunset? All those things that occur naturally around us can be sonified, and the best part... there is no right or wrong way to represent those, because it comes straight out of our imagination."*

# THE COMPOSER of

## WHERE EVEN SHADOWS ARE LIGHT is Alyssa Regent

What if you could turn anything you feel, see, or imagine into music? Alyssa Regent does exactly that. Instead of starting with a melody or a traditional instrument, she starts with sensations, emotions, and abstract ideas.

She asks questions like:

- What does the dawn sound like?
- If you could represent a flowering tree in sound, what would it sound like?
- What kind of sounds represent a river?

She transforms these ideas into sound, creating music that isn't about exact imitation, but representation. There's no "correct" way to do this—it's all about creativity!



# THE COMPOSER of

## WHERE EVEN SHADOWS ARE LIGHT is Alyssa Regent

Music can be inspired by the world around us, but composers don't always copy sounds directly. Instead, they transform them. Take a listen to the clip on the left. This a moment from another piece by Alyssa Regent titled titled "La Sérénité". This moment is inspired by a real-world natural sound. Can you guess what it is?



*Hint: Try to listen to **all** of the parts of the sound. See how much detail you can hear!*

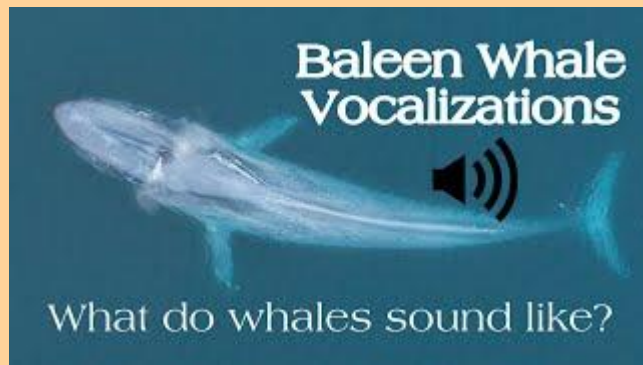
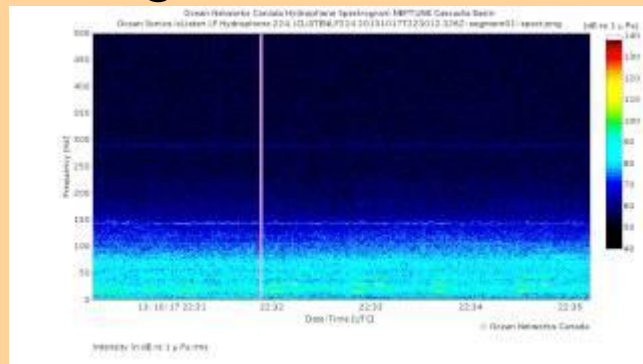
# THE COMPOSER of

## WHERE EVEN SHADOWS ARE LIGHT is Alyssa Regent

This piece is evoking the sound of whale vocalizations. But rather than *replicate* the sound of a whale, Alyssa is *interpreting* it for the string quartet.

Music can be inspired by the world around us, but composers don't always copy sounds directly. Instead, they transform them—capturing the essence of a sound rather than reproducing it exactly.

**Could you hear how the sound from her piece translated into a whale vocalization? If you were the composer of this piece, what might you do differently?**



# THE IDEA

## behind the composition of WHERE EVEN SHADOWS ARE LIGHT

Not all of Alyssa's work is based on nature. In *Where Even Shadows Are Light*, she focuses on a single very unique sound from the musical world

Alyssa was inspired by the tam tam, a large gong with a deep, resonant sound. Unlike a traditional drum, which produces a clear and immediate hit, the tam tam vibrates, hums, and lingers in the air long after it's struck.

It's one sound, made up of many different textures and tones. See if you can hear all of the tones in a tam tam hit!



**Could you imagine some way of representing this sound? What about a gesture that could represent this sound? What about a symbol or drawing?**

# THE IDEA

behind the composition of

## WHERE EVEN SHADOWS ARE LIGHT



Now listen to how the sound of the tam tam was replicated in *Where Even Shadows Are Light*.

Can you hear all of the separate tones at the same time? These are called **overtones**.

Can you think of a sound that has many parts to it?

Many sounds from our everyday life do this. Think of conventional sounds like vacuum cleaners and microwaves, or natural sounds like a thunderstorm!



# ACTIVITY

Take out a piece of paper and some colored pencils or markers. Listen to the sound again and see if you can draw all the parts of the sound.

Rather than drawing what **makes** the sound, try to draw what it feels like. For example, if you're going to draw bird song, don't draw the bird singing, draw the sound itself! Maybe it sounds like twinkling stars, or differently sized pink dots! This is all up to your imagination.





# THE IDEA

## behind the composition of WHERE EVEN SHADOWS ARE LIGHT

How can we hear multiple parts of a single sound?

Our brains are extremely powerful - like a super creative computer! When you think of your senses, which sense do you think is the most powerful? It's your **hearing**!

Most people think our **sight** is the most powerful sense, but when we see a color, we can only see one color at a time. Imagine the color pink, do you visually see the shades of colors that make up pink, or do you just see pink! When we **listen** we can actually hear the layers of sound all at once. Our brains process sound extremely deeply and is tied to memory, emotion, and imagination!



# DISCUSSION



**Can you think of a sound where you hear multiple things happening at once?**

**How might a composer use this idea to create music with depth and texture?**

# ACTIVITY

Let's train our ears to hear all the layers in a sound!

Sound #1



Sound #2



Sound #3



Sound #4



Sound #5



Sound #6



Take one minute to listen to each sound, then either draw or list all of the parts of the sound that you can hear.

If you can identify the sound, great! But make sure you're focused on the sound and the parts of that sound rather than what made it!

# ACTIVITY

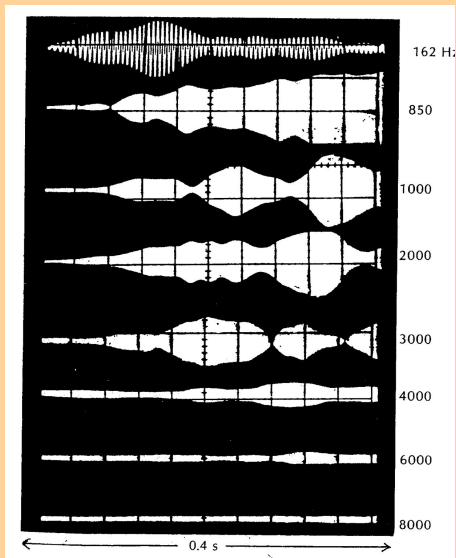


Taking it further

**If you had to replicate any of these sounds in the classroom using only your voice, body, or materials in the classroom, how would you replicate that sound?**

# Turning the **SOUND** into **MUSIC**

## Musical mosaic making



*This is a spectrogram of a tam tam! Notice all the different parts of the sound!*

In that last activity we listened carefully to layered sounds. This is the same process that Alyssa used to create her piece.

She went back to the sound of a **tam tam** and fed it through a **spectrogram** - a special scientific tool that lets you see sound—to discover all the tiny pitches and vibrations inside a single tam tam strike.

She took the sound of a **tam tam** and **broke it into pieces**, the way you might break a colorful tile into shards to make a mosaic. Each pitch and texture became one tile. Then she rearranged them—stretching, stacking, reshaping—to build a **new sound world**. A soundscape and a feeling!

# ACTIVITY



Let's see if we can put Alyssa's method of composition to practice in **our classroom** to reimagine a sound from our everyday life.

- 1) Split up into groups of 3-4 people
- 2) In each group identify one sound that you hear often. Some examples of good sounds are a microwave beep, a friend's laugh, or your school bell!
- 3) See if you can identify all the parts of this sound by drawing your own spectrogram of the sound. Are there high parts? Low parts? Loud bursts? Gentle fades?
- 4) Imagine how each part of this sound could be recreated in the classroom using your body, voice, or items in the classroom.
- 5) Assign each student a part of the sound to 'play' and try together to make the sound using all of its individual parts.
- 6) Share your performance with the rest of the class and see if they can **guess** which sound inspired the performance!

# DISCUSSION



**If you had more time, how would you turn this into a longer soundscape, like in Alyssa's piece?**

**How would the sound change over time? At different times of day?  
From closer up or further away?**



# LET'S LISTEN

How did Alyssa do it?

Now that we've practiced breaking apart a sound and reimagining it into a whole piece of music, let's listen to how Alyssa Regent did it in her piece!

*Where Even Shadows are Light*



**Did you like how she expanded the sound of a tam tam? What would you have done differently if you were the composer?**

Thank you for taking this musical  
journey with Alyssa Regent and  
*Where Even Shadows are Light!*



# CREDITS

This educational module is produced by the American Composers Orchestra on behalf of and in coordination with EarShot Publishing.

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Thank you to all participants, educators, and students who have engaged with this module. Your curiosity and creativity continue to make music meaningful and impactful.

# National Standards Supported:

CREATING	
<p><b>Imagine:</b> Generate musical ideas for various purposes and contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> The creative ideas, concepts, and feelings that influence musicians' work emerge from a variety of sources.</li><li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How do musicians generate creative ideas?</li></ul>	MU:Cr1.1.E.1a MU:Cr1.1.E.5a
<p><b>Plan and Make:</b> Select and develop musical ideas for defined purposes and contexts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> Musicians' creative choices are influenced by their expertise, context, and expressive intent.</li><li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How do musicians make creative decisions?</li></ul>	MU:Cr2.1.E.5a MU:Cr2.1.E.8a
<p><b>Evaluate and Refine:</b> Evaluate and refine selected musical ideas to create musical work that meets appropriate criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> Musicians evaluate and refine their work through openness to new ideas, persistence, and the application of appropriate criteria.</li><li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How do musicians improve the quality of their creative work?</li></ul>	MU:Cr3.1.E.5a MU:Cr3.1.E.8a MU:Cr3.1.E.1a
<p><b>Present:</b> Share creative musical work that conveys intent, demonstrates craftsmanship, and exhibits originality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> Musicians' presentation of creative work is the culmination of a process of creation and communication.</li><li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> When is creative work ready to share?</li></ul>	MU:Cr3.2.E.5a MU:Cr3.2.E.8a

# National Standards Supported:

PERFORMING	
<p><b>Analyze:</b> Analyze the structure and context of varied musical works and their implications for performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> Analyzing creators' context and how they manipulate elements of music provides insight into their intent and informs performance.</li> <li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How does understanding the structure and context of musical works inform performance?</li> </ul>	<p>MU:Pr4.2.E.5a MU:Pr4.2.E.5a MU:Pr4.2.E.1a MU:Pr4.2.E.11a MU:Pr4.2.E.111a</p>
<p><b>Interpret:</b> Develop personal interpretations that consider creators' intent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> Performers make interpretive decisions based on their understanding of context and expressive intent.</li> <li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How do performers interpret musical works?</li> </ul>	<p>MU:Pr4.3.E.5a MU:Pr4.3.E.8a MU:Pr4.3.E.1a</p>
<p><b>Rehearse, Evaluate and Refine:</b> Evaluate and refine personal and ensemble performances, individually or in collaboration with others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> To express their musical ideas, musicians analyze, evaluate, and refine their performance over time through openness to new ideas, persistence, and the application of appropriate criteria.</li> <li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How do musicians improve the quality of their performance?</li> </ul>	<p>MU:Pr5.3.E.5a MU:Pr5.3.E.8a MU:Pr5.3.E.1a MU:Pr5.3.E.11a</p>
<p><b>Present:</b> Perform expressively, with appropriate interpretation and technical accuracy, and in a manner appropriate to the audience and context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> Musicians judge performance based on criteria that vary across time, place, and cultures. The context and how a work is presented influence the audience response.</li> <li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> When is a performance judged ready to present? How do context and the manner in which musical work is presented influence audience response?</li> </ul>	<p>MU:Pr6.1.E.5a MU:Pr6.1.E.8a MU:Pr6.1.E.1a MU:Pr6.1.E.11a</p>

# National Standards Supported:

RESPONDING	
<p><b>Analyze:</b> Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> Response to music is informed by analyzing context (social cultural, and historical) and how creators and performers manipulate the elements of music.</li> <li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How does understanding the structure and context of the music influence a response?</li> </ul>	<p>MU:Re7.2.E.5a  MU:Re7.2.E.8a  MU:Re7.2.E.8a  MU:Re7.2.E.8a</p>
<p><b>Interpret:</b> Support an interpretation of a musical work that reflects the creators'/performers' expressive intent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> Through their use of elements and structures of music, creators and performers provide clues to their expressive intent.</li> <li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How do we discern the musical creators' and performers' expressive intent?</li> </ul>	<p>MU:Re8.1.E.5a  MU:Re8.1.E.8a  MU:Re8.1.E.1a  MU:Re8.1.E.11a  MU:Re8.1.E.111a</p>
<p><b>Evaluate:</b> Support personal evaluation of musical works and performance(s) based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> The personal evaluation of musical work(s) and performance(s) is informed by analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.</li> <li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How do we judge the quality of musical work(s) and performance(s)?</li> </ul>	<p>MU:Re9.1.E.5a  MU:Re9.1.E.8a  MU:Re9.1.E.1a  MU:Re9.1.E.11a  MU:Re9.1.E.111a</p>

## National Standards Supported:

CONNECTING	
<p><b>#10:</b> Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> Musicians connect their personal interests, experiences, ideas, and knowledge to creating, performing, and responding.</li><li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How do musicians make meaningful connections to creating, performing, and responding?</li></ul>	<p>MU:Cn10.0.H.5a MU:Cn10.0.H.8a MU:Cn10.0.H.1a MU:Cn10.0.H.11a MU:Cn10.0.H.11a</p>
<p><b>#11:</b> Relate musical ideas and works with varied context to deepen understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Enduring Understanding:</b> Understanding connections to varied contexts and daily life enhances musicians' creating, performing, and responding.</li><li>• <b>Essential Question:</b> How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?</li></ul>	<p>MU:Cn11.0.T.5a MU:Cn11.0.T.8a MU:Cn11.0.T.1a MU:Cn11.0.T.11a</p>