

The Composer

Shirl Jae Atwell earned a bachelor of music education degree from Kansas State Teachers College and master of music theory/composition degree from the University of Louisville and completed four years of post-graduate work in composition at the University of South Carolina.

In 1984 she won the Clifford Shaw Memorial Award for Kentucky Composers; was commissioned to write *Fear Not, Little Flock* for the 175th anniversary of the Little Flock Baptist Church; and saw the New York City debut of her first opera, *Sagegrass*. In 1991, another of her operas, *Esta Hargis*, was premiered at Emporia State University in Kansas, followed shortly by the 1992 debut of *Handelian*, a work for string orchestra premiered by the Jefferson County All-County Middle School Orchestra. Louisville's Southern Baptist Seminary Orchestra premiered her *Movements Four South*, an orchestral suite, in 1993. That year also saw the placement of six Shirl Jae Atwell scores in the permanent collection of the Paris Biblioteque Internationale de Musique Contemporaine at the invitation of the Contemporary Music International Information Service.

Ms. Atwell was named the 1996 winner of the National School Orchestra Association composition contest with her string orchestra piece *Modus à 4*. She is also the 1997 winner of the Texas Orchestra Directors Association contest with a string orchestra piece entitled *Driften*.

Most recently, *Lucy*, with music by Ms. Atwell and choreography by Alun Jones, was premiered by the Louisville Ballet in January 1999. *Lucy*, which was inspired by the discovery of a 3.2 million-year old skeleton, was the subject of a Kentucky Education Television documentary that was aired on Nov. 10, 1999.

In June 2000, the televised production of *Lucy* was awarded the Arts & Culture Emmy by the Ohio Valley Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. In July, a Certificate of Merit was awarded to *Lucy* by Unda-USA, the National Catholic Association for Communicators. In January 2001, *Lucy* was awarded 2nd place by the National Education Television Association for program performance. In 2002, the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra of North Carolina recorded the music to the ballet *Lucy* which is now available on Albany Records. The compact disc also includes the orchestral suite *Movements Four South*, and three string orchestra works: *Pulsar*, *Meander*, and *Driften*.

An active composer with many commissions and publications to her credit, Ms. Atwell also serves as a full-time string orchestra educator with the Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, Kentucky. She maintains active membership in ASCAP, Music Educators National Conference, ASTA with NSOA, Texas Orchestra Directors Association, and Kentucky Music Educators Association and is currently serving as President of the Kentucky Cello Club.

The Composition

Rhythm Sticks has a double meaning. The first being the more obvious wood or metal sticks that are used to play percussion instruments; the second rhythm, as the most basic of the music elements, *sticks*, in our minds, in our bodies, and in our memories. In contemporary music today, rhythm is very prominent and in popular music, when referred to as the "beat," dominant. This piece combines the harmonies of contemporary music, contrapuntal voicing, melodic development, with the rhythm (beat) of popular music. The result is a synthesis which incorporates sounds not usually performed by string orchestras. However, it works, and *Rhythm Sticks* is a rhythmically exciting piece that emphasizes not only rhythm but rather what is possible when combined in a unique way with melody, counterpoint, and jazz harmonies.

Instrumentation List (Set C)

- 8 – 1st Violin
- 8 – 2nd Violin
- 5 – Viola
- 5 – Cello
- 5 – String Bass
- 1 – Full Conductor Score

Additional scores and parts available.

Rhythm Sticks

Full Conductor Score
Approx. time - 4:00

Shirl Jae Atwell

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with five staves. The instruments are Violins (1 and 2), Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 144 beats per minute. The score begins with measures 1 through 5, where the Cello and String Bass play a rhythmic pattern. Measures 6 through 10 show the Violins and Viola joining in with a similar rhythmic pattern. Measures 11 through 15 continue the rhythmic development, with the Cello and String Bass playing a more complex pattern. Dynamic markings include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *f* (forte). Performance instructions include 'V' for accents and 'V' for bowing or breath marks. A large watermark 'SAMPLE' is overlaid on the score.

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16 17 18 19 20

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

21 22 23 V 24 25 V

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

26 27 28 29 30

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

31 32 33 34 35

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

mf

36 37 38 39 40

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

41 42 43 44 45

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

mf

mp

46 47 48 49 50

Vlns. 1 *mf*

Vlns. 2 *mf*

Vla. *mp* *mf*

Cello *mf*

Str. Bass *mf*

51 52 53 54 55

Vlns. 1 *f*

Vlns. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Cello *f*

Str. Bass *f*

56 57 58 59 60

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

61 62 63 64 65

Vlns. 1 *ff*

Vlns. 2 *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Cello *ff*

Str. Bass *ff*

66 67 68 69 70

Vlns. 1 *f*

Vlns. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Cello *f*

Str. Bass *f*

71 72 73 74 75

Vlns. 1 *f*

Vlns. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Cello *f*

Str. Bass *f*

76 77 78 79

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

80 81 82 83

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

84 85 *div.* 86 87

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

88 89 *unis.* 90 91

Vlns. 1 2

Vla. *non div.*

Cello

Str. Bass

92 93 94

Vlns. 1 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

95 96 97

Vlns. 1 2

Vla.

Cello *mf*

Str. Bass *mf*

mf

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a string ensemble, covering measures 88 to 97. The score is arranged in three systems, each with five staves: Violins 1 and 2, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The first system (measures 88-91) features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the violins and sixteenth notes in the lower strings. Measure 89 includes the instruction 'unis.' and a 'V' marking. The second system (measures 92-94) continues the pattern, with measure 93 containing a circled measure number '93'. The third system (measures 95-97) shows a change in the violin parts to sixteenth-note runs, while the lower strings continue with eighth notes. Measure 97 includes 'mf' markings for the Cello and String Bass parts.

98 99 100 101

Vlns. 1 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

mf

102 103 104 105 106

Vlns. 1 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

f

107 108 109 110 111

Vlns. 1 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

f

ff div.

mp unis.

f

mp

112 113 114 115 116

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

117 118 119 120

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

f *mf* *f* *mf*

121 122 123 124 125

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

