



## Mini-Lesson: Meet Composer Libby Larsen

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### OVERVIEW

Students will read, discuss, and share background stories and information about composer Libby Larsen.

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will learn about composer Libby Larsen's life in music through reading, writing and discussion.

### RESOURCES & MATERIALS

Student copies of:

- [Meet the Composer](#) reading
- [Read & Write a Composer Profile](#) worksheet

### PROCESS

1. Divide students into small groups and direct them to read "Meet Composer Libby Larsen." They can read silently or out loud, sharing the reader's role within their group.
2. Direct them to discuss what they've read and write responses to the questions on the Q & A worksheet. All students can complete a worksheet or one student can act as the scribe for the group.
3. Their last task is to discuss and agree upon the most interesting fact or idea they learned about Larsen.
4. Reconvene as a large group. Each small group will share the most interesting fact or idea about the composer.

## MEET THE COMPOSER OF *HAMBONE*, LIBBY LARSEN

American **composer** Libby Larsen was born in Wilmington, Delaware in 1950, but grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota where she currently lives and works.

### EARLY YEARS

When Larsen was a little girl, she watched her older sisters take piano lessons and decided that she also wanted to play the piano. Larsen took lessons and joined the school chorus.

It was in elementary school that she first learned to read and write music. Through her youth, Larsen says that composing was “very natural, as natural as drawing pictures and writing essays.” She was most interested in rhythm. By the time she was seven, Larsen would write down rhythms and words that caught her attention, then take those ideas and “manipulate them on paper.”

### COLLEGE AND BEYOND



Larsen continued her music education at the University of Minnesota where she completed her bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees in music.

In 1973, while still a student of composition at the University of Minnesota, Larsen and Stephen Paulus co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum, now called the American Composers Forum. They created the Forum as a composers' cooperative, designed to promote, inspire, and help American composers receive wider recognition.

### AN ACCOMPLISHED COMPOSER



Larsen has served as composer-in-residence with the Minnesota Orchestra, California Institute of the Arts, the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, and many other prestigious organizations.

She's also an advisor to the National Endowment for the Arts, ASCAP, and the American Symphony Orchestra League.

Larsen has composed works for solo performers, opera, orchestra, and small ensembles, as well as music for dance, chorus, and theater. Her music is played throughout the United States and Europe. She is widely honored, and received a Grammy Award in 1994 for the CD, *The Art of Arlene Auger*, a recording featuring Larsen's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*.

Her music is recorded on several labels including Angel/EMI, Loch International, Nonesuch, and Decca.

### CREATING *HAMBONE*

Larsen used three inspirations from her life to write *Hambone*. First, she was inspired by early rock 'n roll rhythms, particularly those written by Bo Diddley, from her high school days when she had her own rock band. The second inspiration is the African American tradition of **hamboning**—clapping and slapping to create fun, new rhythms, and the third is the melodies of the traditional **cakewalk** music.

The piece was commissioned by the American Composers Forum for its BandQuest® series and was premiered by the Blake School in Minneapolis, MN under the direction of Brian M. Olson.





Name \_\_\_\_\_

## READ & WRITE A COMPOSER PROFILE

Read about composer Libby Larsen, then complete this Composer Profile with what you've learned. It's okay to re-read to find the answers.

1. Dr. Larsen was born in \_\_\_\_\_

2. What was Larsen's first instrument? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How old was she when she started writing down rhythms? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Where did Dr. Larsen go to college and graduate school? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Name 1 organization for which Larsen is an advisor. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Name 3 types of works Larsen has composed (ex. opera). \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. What school premiered *Hambone*?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Name the 3 inspirations for *Hambone*.

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