Meet the Composer - Gabriela Lena Frank

Born: September 1972

Gabriela Lena Frank is a composer and pianist originally from Berkeley, California. Her father is an American of Lithuanian Jewish heritage and her mother is Peruvian of Chinese descent. Her parents met when her father was a volunteer in Peru with the Peace Corps.

Gabriela studied music at Rice University and the University of Michigan. She is a winner of a Latin Grammy and has been nominated for Grammys as both a composer and a pianist. She has a long list of residencies with universities, conservatories and orchestras in the US and has volunteered extensively in hospitals and prisons. She frequently travels in both North and South America, giving performances, lectures and lessons as well as exploring various musical traditions.

Gabriela currently resides in the small rural town of Boonville, California, with her husband Jeremy on their mountain farm. In 2017, she founded her own school in Boonville, the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music (www.glfcam.com) to allow emerging composers to work with renowned performers. One of the missions of the school is to encourage composers to think of the arts as indispensable to communities beyond the concert hall.

Gabriela explores her multicultural heritage through her compositions, incorporating poetry, mythology, and native musical styles into a western classical framework that is uniquely her own. She writes, "There's usually a story line behind my music; a scenario or character." She frequently uses native Peruvian instruments, Chinese and other non-western musical instruments in combination with the symphony orchestra, string quartet, or other traditional ensembles.
Latin American and Non-Western Instruments

Peruvian Pan Flute or Zampoña

Charango Guitar

Pipa (Chinese)

Bandolin

Arpa Andina
Listen

Gabriela Lena Frank  On the future of classical Music -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6WNYFHN36M

Sphinx Virtuosi performs Gabriela Lena Frank - Coqueteos -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LKr8bllJHk

Apu: Tone Poem for Orchestra -
https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/57377/Apu-Tone-Poem-for-Orchestra--Gabriela-Lena-Frank/
Make Your Own Pan Flute - [https://buggyandbuddy.com/homemade-straw-pan-flutes/](https://buggyandbuddy.com/homemade-straw-pan-flutes/)

In this STEM / STEAM activity, kids will make a homemade pan flute using straws! After building their own pan flutes and exploring the science of sound, children will then have the opportunity to write their own songs and record the notes for those songs on the free printable recording sheet. A fun musical instrument craft and science activity all in one!

Materials for Homemade Straw Pan Flutes

- Cardstock
- Scissors
- Double-sided tape
- Plastic Straws (We used wide straws but regular straws will also work.)
- Black Sharpie
- Ruler
- **Optional**: Model Magic or tape to close the ends of the straws
- **Optional**: Markers or crayons for decorating
- **Optional**: Free Printable Music Recording Sheet
Take five wide straws and cut them into varying lengths. (We cut ours into the following lengths: 6 inches, 5.5 inches, 5 inches, 4 inches, and 3.5 inches.) Encourage children to measure and cut their own straws.

Cut two strips of cardstock to 7 inches x 1.5 inches. Optional: Decorate your cardstock with markers, crayons, or paint.

Place a 7 inch strip of double-sided tape onto the inside of one piece of cardstock strips. Place the longest straw on the tape first, near the left edge. You’ll want one end of the straw hanging about 3/4 inch over the side. Place the shortest straw on the right hand side of the tape, with the same amount (about 3/4 inch) hanging over the edge. Next place the middle length straw right in the center. Place the remaining two straws onto the tape. All the ends of the straws should line up about 3/4 inch over one edge of the cardstock.

Place the double-sided tape onto the other black strip of cardstock and place it on top of your straws, lining it up with the first piece of cardstock. Press down firmly.
Number each straw 1-5 with a black Sharpie.

Practice making sounds with your flute by resting the tops of the straws on your lower lip and blowing across them. (You can also make noise blowing right into the straw. That’s fine too and much easier for younger children.)

Write the numbers of each note onto the printable recording sheet. You can even give your song a name.

**Ways to Extend Learning**
- Try using straws of varying widths. Does the width of the straws affect the sound they make?
- Make a pan flute with even more straws of different lengths.
- Make a pan flute with both ends of the straws open and one pan flute where the straws all have one sealed end. Compare the sounds each pan flute makes.
- Can you build a pan flute with other materials, making it easier to use or hold?
- Could you build a pan flute on a larger scale? What could you use? (Try PVC pipes or cardboard tubes.)
- Research the history behind pan flutes. Which countries and cultures use them? Compare the various pan flutes you discover.