Meet the Composer - Joan Tower

Born: September 6, 1938

Joan Tower is often considered one of the most successful female composers of all time and one of the most important living American composers. She was born in New Rochelle, New York, and moved to Bolivia with her family when she was nine. Her father, a mineralogist, encouraged her musical study and she soon demonstrated talent in her piano lessons. She credits growing up in South America with her love of percussion instruments, rhythm and dance music. As a young woman she returned to the US to study music at Bennington College in Vermont, and then at Columbia University in New York.

In 1969 she was one of the founders of the Da Capo Chamber Players, and performed as the group’s pianist. She wrote a number of successful works for the group prior to leaving them in 1984. In 1972 Tower accepted a faculty position, teaching composition at Bard College, where she continues to teach today. She wrote her first piece for orchestra, *Sequoia*, in 1981. From 1981 - 1988 Tower was composer-in-residence at the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. She wrote ballet music, several piano concertos as well as concertos for flute, clarinet and violin, as well as other works including her well-known *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman*.

In 2005, Tower became the first composer commissioned for the "Ford Made in America" program, the only project of its kind to involve smaller-budget orchestras as commissioning agents of new works by major composers. Her 15-minute *Made in America* was performed in every state of the union during the 2005-2007 season. In 2008, the work, recorded by the Nashville Symphony, won three Grammy Awards in the categories Best Orchestral Performance, Best Classical Album and Best Classical Contemporary Composition.
ACTIVITIES

Listen

Interview with Joan Tower - https://nmbx.newmusicusa.org/joan-tower-made-in-america/

“How I composed Made in America” - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aV_v41-9WIY

Performance of Made in America - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8WLdNJBBco

Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman No. 1 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aa7yiLOp4DA

How To Make The Easiest Maracas For Kids
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzE8aUDm_KA

(Uses 2 plastic spoons, plastic egg, beans, rocks or rice, tape, glue and twine. Decorate with beads.)
ACTIVITIES

Identify these instruments from the percussion family.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

9. 

10.
Let’s see how well you did!

1. snare drum
2. maracas
3. tambourine
4. Gong or tam-tam
5. cabasa
6. xylophone
7. cymbals
8. glockenspiel or orchestra bells
9. bass drum
10. chimes