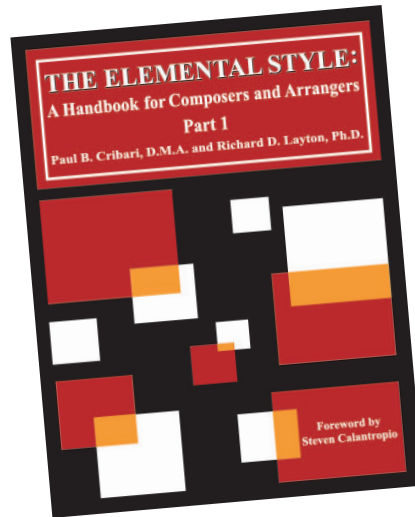


Reviewed by Josh Southard

The Elemental Style: A Handbook for Composers and Arrangers, Part 1

Written by Paul B. Cribari, DMA and
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Whether you have recently completed Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education Level I or consider yourself an experienced Schulwerk teacher, Paul Cribari and Rick Layton's *The Elemental Style: A Handbook for Composers and Arrangers*, Part I is a resource all students of elemental composition will find useful. From those just beginning to those who are in the process of completing their levels education, this text is a valuable resource to use alongside the required materials for all three levels.

The Elemental Style contains seven chapters. The first introduces rhythmic cells (rhythmic building bricks) and elemental form, discussing how these cells can be reinterpreted into different meters through augmentation and diminution. The authors then address the use of elemental forms by presenting several examples and possibilities. They are also mindful to illustrate how a piece can be labeled with one particular form while a different form may apply to the same piece with both assertions being correct. The information comprising the first chapter lays a foundation for the remainder of the book, just as form and rhythm lay a foundation for elemental composition.

Chapter 2, "Do Pentatonic," follows the approach that Orff and Keetman presented in *Music for Children*, Volume I. First, the rhyme

"Rain, Rain, Go Away" is arranged as both a two-note and a three-note melody before the do-pentatonic scale is introduced. Once again, the authors are conscientious to remind readers that, though there are several forms of the pentatonic scale, the anhemitonic form (no half steps) is used as the foundation for melodic development in *Music for Children*, Volume I.

The Elemental Style compiles the many skills and idiosyncrasies of composing in each mode developed over the span of three levels of Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education into one useful book.

While Chapter 1 establishes the importance of rhythm and form, Chapter 2 explains the importance of composing the best accompaniments for do-pentatonic melodies. Cribari and Layton present definitions of the simple drone, the single-moving drone, and the double-moving drone, along with full explanations and a discussion regarding how each is used in the *Music for Children* volumes. There are also musical examples illustrating each variation of the simple drone (broken, level, arpeggiated, and inverted), as well as suggestions for how and when to consider each when composing. Every example discusses not only each drone variation and the many factors that go into choosing it, but also melodic considerations such as the use of passing tones, accented or unaccented Re, and melodic contour, to name just a few. Additionally,

they discuss the use of rhythmic and melodic ostinati and color parts. The book presents original compositions throughout to model each concept.

Chapter 3 not only offers original compositions representing the other four anhemitonic pentatonic modes (Re, Mi, Sol, La), but also guides readers to more examples of each in the original Orff Schulwerk materials. Cribari and Layton lay out detailed guidelines to follow when composing with the pentatonic modes, such as establishing a tonic, ensuring that all five pitches are used, and emphasizing the third scale degree whenever available. With each pentatonic mode, the authors follow the same general sequence:

- an introduction to the scale and its drone pitches,
- characteristics of each scale along with tips to consider when composing with that mode,
- two original compositions (typically one with text and one solely instrumental), and
- a comprehensive analysis of the compositions that highlights some of their finer details.

The remaining chapters of *The Elemental Style* introduce a series of paired scales: major hexatonic and Ionian mode, minor hexatonic and Aeolian mode, Dorian and Phrygian modes, and Lydian and Mixolydian modes. Similar to the chapter on pentatonic modes, a common outline addresses each diatonic mode. The scale is presented and divided into tetrachords indicating its pattern of half steps, characteristics of the scale and which degrees to emphasize, drone accompaniment possibilities (simple, single-moving with upper voice moving, single-moving with lower voice moving, and double-moving), considerations when choosing a drone, one to two original compositions and detailed analysis, and a concluding summary of the chapter.

Throughout the book, the authors refer to the *Music for Children* volumes and their

supplemental materials. Orff and Keetman intended Schulwerk publications to be used as models, and this is exactly what Cribari and Layton accomplish in each chapter. Every composition in the book is original, yet written with the ideas and guidelines set out in *Music for Children*. The book concludes with three appendices: (1) Glossary of Terms, (2) Score Order, Instrumental Ranges, and Transpositions, and (3) Diatonic Modes in Untransposed Form. *The Elemental Style* compiles the many skills and idiosyncrasies of composing in each mode developed over the span of three levels of Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education into one useful book. This resource can be used and referred to again and again, showing the reader it is indeed possible to compose beautiful elemental music for students.

As an Orff Schulwerk teacher educator, a common reflection from our teacher-students is they do not feel comfortable writing music for their children to play or sing. From teaching examples and activities to nightly assignments, our goal is to show all of our students that, yes, they are completely capable of doing this! Combining this book with levels course notes can give you all the tools you need and most, if not all, answers to the questions you may have so you can feel confident composing. Personally, I believe my compositions have improved in quality and may now serve as better examples of elemental composition than they have previously, and it is due to referring constantly to this book while writing for my students. ■

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