



## TECHNOLOGY

### A Picture is Worth a Thousand Clicks

by Levi Comstock

You have waited three years to be able to program your favorite Merle Isaac arrangement again. It's out of print; the pages are yellowed and dog-eared. It smells oddly like fish sticks. At your dress rehearsal, you go to cue your first clarinet player, and he shrugs. He's lost his priceless, irreplaceable original copy. The concert is ruined. You curse yourself for obeying copyright laws.

But wait! Do not despair. There is an app for that. With a phone or a tablet, download NotateMeNow. There is an expensive version, but the free one will be fine for now. Inside the app, select PhotoScoreNow. Take a picture of the second clarinet part and watch as the app turns that picture into a music notation file that you can open in Finale, MuseScore, or any other

music writing program. Transpose the part up a third, add the solos, and in minutes you have created a part that would have taken your TA days to enter note-by-note.

I have also used this app to quickly transcribe fiddle tunes into alto or bass clef, and sometimes there will be a tricky rhythm or chromatic pattern in our concert music that I want to use as a warmup for the whole class. Other times, I will use it to create a simplified part for mixed level ensembles. The free version will only let you scan individual parts, but the paid version will scan full scores, so that you can simply extract a part.

The NotateMeNow app is also useful for jotting down music notation on your phone or tablet. There is a staff on which

you can hand-draw notes and rhythms and watch them turn instantly into printed notes, which you can then copy, paste and transpose. I have found this takes a little practice at first, and tends to go better for me when I use a stylus instead of my finger, but it has become a useful tool for composing on the go. If you like this style of note entry, I would also try out the app Notion.

*Levi Comstock teaches orchestra at Champlin Park High School. He is a graduate of St. Olaf College ('08) and a founding member of the Lirica Chamber Orchestra. He spent three years in Boston helping to launch an El Sistema music program at Conservatory Lab Charter School, and now lives in Minneapolis with his wife and son. †*