

Temple block (instrument)

The **temple block** is a percussion instrument originating in China, Japan and Korea where it is used in religious ceremonies.

It is a carved hollow wooden instrument with a large slit. In its traditional form, the wooden fish, the shape is somewhat bulbous; modern instruments are also used which are rectangular in shape. Several blocks of varying sizes are often used together to give a variety of pitches. In Western music, their use can be traced back to early jazz drummers, and they are not uncommon in modern orchestral music, where they are also called **dragons' mouths**.



Modern wooden temple blocks from industrial production with beater

Its sound is similar to that of the wood block, although temple blocks have a darker, more "hollow" timbre.

It can be clearly heard in Leroy Anderson's *The Syncopated Clock* and is also used in Olivier Messiaen's only symphony, *Turangalila*, and his only opera, *Saint-François d'Assise*. Harrison Birtwistle calls for 4 temple blocks in his 2008 opera *The Minotaur*, Magnus Lindberg calls for 5 in *Seht die Sonne* and Pierre Boulez for one in *Notations I-IV*. Leonard Bernstein, George Benjamin and David Horne also used it in their compositions. Rush's songs *Xanadu* from their 1977 album *A Farewell To Kings* and *The Trees* from their 1978 album *Hemispheres* also use temple blocks - the blocks that Neil Peart is striking in these tracks can be heard very clearly.

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