

2025/26

EDUCATION & COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERT
TEACHER'S GUIDE
GRADES 3 – 8

OREGON
SYMPHONY

SOUNDS OF HOME



GUIDE CONTENTS

Welcome!

This guide accompanies the 2025/26 Young People's Concert: Sounds of Home. We offer background information on the pieces you will hear at the concert, along with a listening guide for each piece, biographical information about the composers, and extension activities for further study. It is our hope that utilizing this guide will deepen the concert experience for your students. We encourage you to fit this material into your teaching style and specific student needs.

The Oregon Symphony believes that music is an essential part of the total school curriculum. We hope you will take full advantage of this guide so your students in turn can be knowledgeable and eager participants.

Please email us at educate@orsymphony.org if you have questions or wish to share your experiences in preparing your students for our Young People's Concert.

Enjoy!



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CONCERT PROGRAM

Sounds of Home

Su-Han Yang, Conductor

Pam Mahon, Narrator

Throughout history, music has served as a reflection of a composer's cultural background and the influences of their homeland. Join the orchestra as we discover the diversity of cultures shaping great pieces of music, with a spotlight on music of the Americas.

Overture to *West Side Story*

Leonard Bernstein

[Watch Video →](#)

“Rosewood” from *Percussion Concerto*

Soloist: Michael Roberts, Oregon Symphony Principal Percussionist
Andy Akiho

[Watch Video →](#)

Selections from *Finlandia*, op. 26

Jean Sibelius

[Watch Video →](#)

“Juba Dance” from *Symphony No. 1*

Florence Price

[Watch Video →](#)

“Final Dance (Malambo)” from Four Dances from *Estancia*

Alberto Ginastera

[Watch Video →](#)

“The Hut on Fowl’s Legs” and “The Great Gate of Kiev” from *Pictures at an Exhibition*

Modest Mussorgsky (arr. Ravel)

[Watch Video →](#)

“Hedwig’s Theme” from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone: Suite for Orchestra*

John Williams

[Watch Video →](#)

ARRIVAL & SEATING INFO

Prior to the concert date, you will receive a seat confirmation for your group by email. Bring this with you on the day of the concert, either printed or on your phone. For those coming to the Portland concerts, please note your entrance location (either **Broadway** or **Park Ave.** entrance) and the section in which you are seated. When you arrive at the hall, please proceed directly to the entrance noted on your confirmation. An usher will greet you and lead you to your section. Groups will be seated front to back on a first-come, first-seated basis. If you arrive together, your group will be seated together.

Please arrive 15-30 minutes before the concert start time.

No student backpacks, food, drink, or gum will be allowed in the concert hall. If you plan to bring lunches, please store them on your bus or in the lobby.

Flash photography and video recording is prohibited during the concert.

CONCERT EXPECTATIONS

Please take time before the concert to discuss with your students and chaperones your expectations for their concert behavior. Young People’s Concerts are designed to be informative and entertaining. We encourage kids to move to the music and show that they are having a good time by applauding and participating at appropriate times.

Please remind your students to respect fellow audience members by refraining from conversation throughout the concert, just as they would be asked in an assembly at their school. Students from all over the region will be joining for these concerts—let’s show each other kindness and respect in the concert hall! The best way to show the performers that you are enjoying the concert is by listening quietly during the performance and clapping enthusiastically after each piece!

MEET THE CONDUCTOR AND NARRATOR



SU-HAN YANG

OREGON SYMPHONY HAROLD & ARLENE SCHNITZER
ASSOCIATE CONDUCTOR

Taiwanese conductor Su-Han Yang won First Prize in the 10th International Grzegorz Fitelberg Competition for Conductors. He has previously served as the Associate Conductor of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and as Associate Conductor of the Taiwan Philharmonic. He collaborated with the Silesian Philharmonic and Chamber Orchestra, the Polish Baltic Philharmonic, the Lodz Philharmonic, the Pomeranian Philharmonic, the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Brandenburger Symphoniker, the Gliwice Chamber Orchestra, the Capella Bydgoszczensis, and many others. Since 2016, he conducts regularly the Camerata Taiwan. They went on a concert tour of Germany in 2022 and released the album "Beyond Boundaries" on major music streaming platforms in 2023.

In 2024, he conducted the opening concert with Bruckner's *Te Deum* at the Taipei International Choral Festival. In 2022, he conducted Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* at the National Taichung Theater and performed two programs of contemporary music at the Weiwuying International Music Festival. His appearances at music festivals also include the Taiwan International Festival of Arts, the Festival of Polish Music in Kraków, the Classica Nova in Gdynia, the Taipei International New Music Festival, and the Asian Composers League's Conference and Festival. He was one of the two conductors selected for the Mentoring Program of Peter Eötvös Foundation in 2018. In 2017, he was invited to study with Jun Märkl at the Pacific Music Festival. He was the chosen conductor to work with Riccardo Muti on the production of Verdi's *Falstaff* at the Italian Opera Academy in 2015. He graduated from the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin, the National Taiwan Normal University, and the Tunghai University, where he studied conducting with Prof. Christian Ehwald, Prof. Hans-Dieter Baum, Prof. Apo Hsu, and Prof. Annie Chung.



PAM MAHON
NARRATOR

Pam Mahon is delighted to be performing yet again with her favorite symphony orchestra family. Ms. Mahon is the narrator for the Oregon Symphony's Family series concerts, as well as the teaching artist for the Symphony's Kinderkonzerts and Carnegie Hall Link Up National Concerts. To Ms. Mahon, entertaining the young audiences of the Oregon Symphony is an absolute dream job! Other Portland credits include: Lureena Jones, *Adrift in Macao* (Broadway Rose); Aldonza, *Man of La Mancha*; Mother, *Ragtime*; Baker's Wife, *Into the Woods*; Claire Ganz, *Rumors*; Donna/Oolie, *City of Angels*; Carmen, *Sweet Charity*; Pam, *The Full Monty* (Lakewood Theatre Company); Mary Bland, *Eating Raoul* (Live on Stage); Madame de la Grande Bouche, *Beauty and the Beast*; Wicked Witch of the West, *The Wizard of OZ*; Brooke Wyndham, *Legally Blonde: The Musical* (Pixie Dust Productions); Mazeppa, *Gypsy* (Portland Center Stage); Susan, *[title of show]* (Triangle Productions); Young Boy, *Jenůfa*; Chocholka/Jay, *The Cunning Little Vixen*; Papagena, *The Magic Flute*; and Nurse Maid, *Street Scene* (Portland Opera).

GETTING TO KNOW THE INSTRUMENTS

It's the big day and you take your seat in the concert hall ready to hear some classical music. You look up and see almost 80 people in the orchestra. Here's a breakdown of the instruments they're playing.

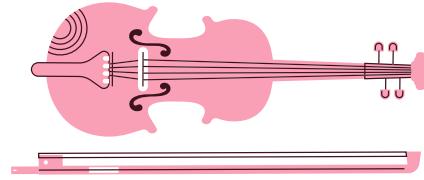
BASS OR DOUBLE BASS

An enormous, stand-up instrument that plays the lowest notes of all the strings.



VIOLIN

Made of wood with a horsehair bow played over four metal strings; the sound is sweet, singing, and divine.

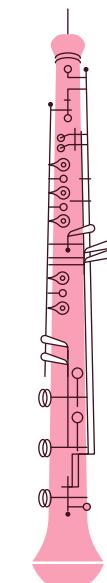


CELLO

Played sitting down, with the instrument between the legs. Makes a beautiful, rich, singing sound.

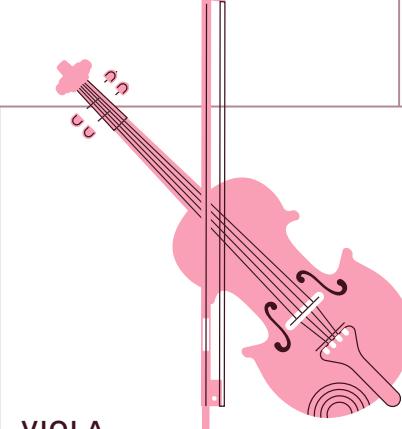
OBOE & ENGLISH HORN

Played by blowing into a reed, a whittled-down flat piece of sugar cane, these produce a sound that is full, clear, and vibrant.



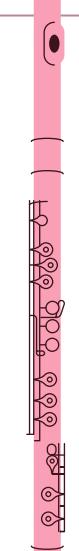
VIOLA

Slightly larger than a violin, playing slightly lower notes, with a breathier or throatier sound.



FLUTE

Blown across, just like a bottle; produces a sweet, silvery sound.



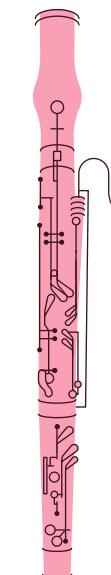
CLARINET

A tubular woodwind instrument that creates a full, round sound—very pure, without the edge of the oboe's sound.



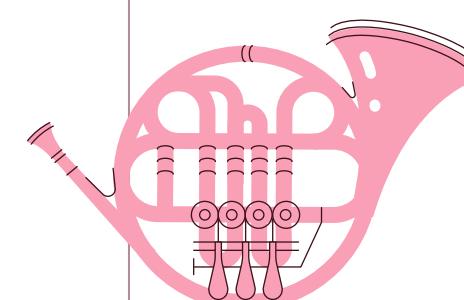
BASSOON

Looks like a plumbing pipe, sounds like a dream. High notes sound otherworldly. Middle notes sound luscious and mellow. Low notes sound deep and powerful.



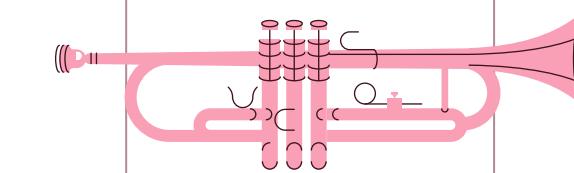
FRENCH HORN

A noble-sounding brass instrument with a full, round, majestic tone.



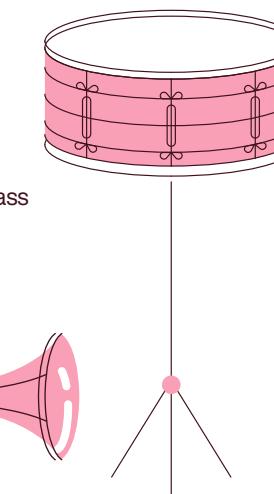
TRUMPET

The most powerful instrument in the orchestra and the highest-pitched brass instrument. Executes impressive runs and leaps in a single bound.



PERCUSSION

The player is expected to be a master of a vast range of different instruments: timpani, bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, xylophone, and other oddities.



PIANO

Played by pressing keys that cause hammers to strike strings inside its large frame. It can produce a variety of high, twinkling sounds and deep, low sounds.

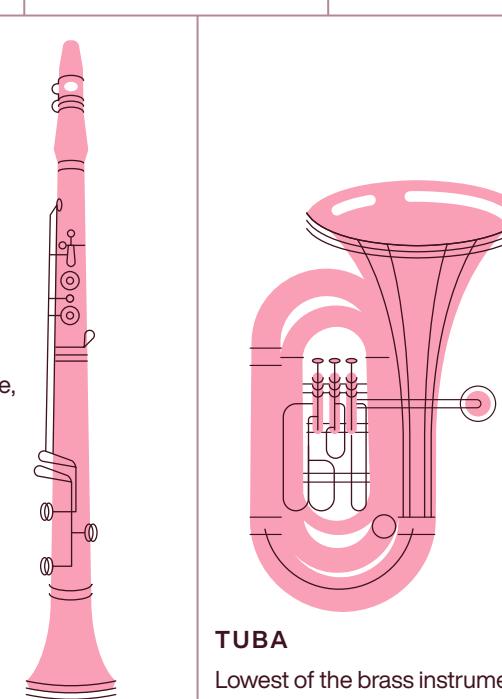


HARP

A triangular framed instrument with a curved neck. Strings stretched between a soundbox and the neck are plucked with the fingers to produce an elegant tone.

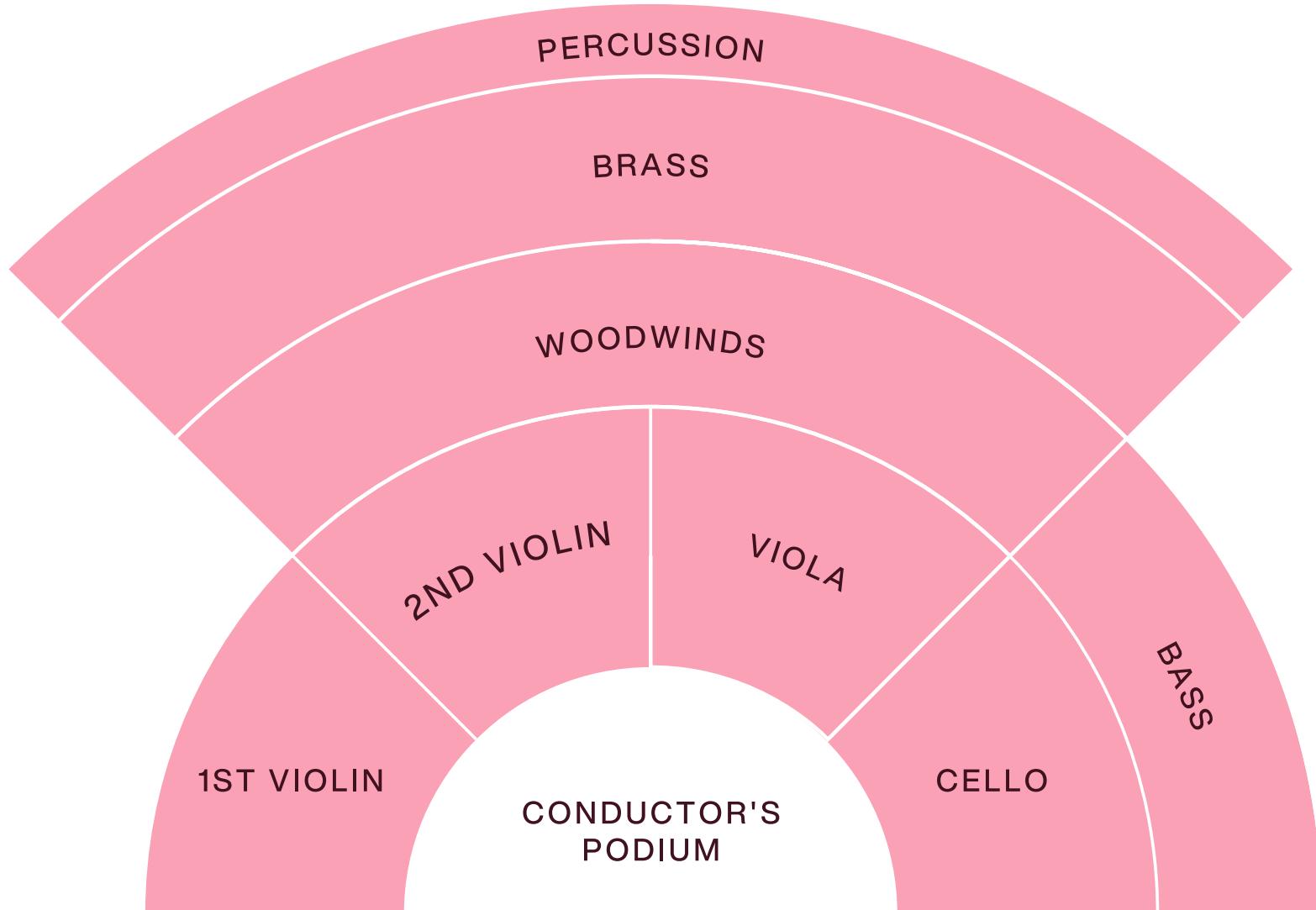
TUBA

Lowest of the brass instruments. Can produce a wall of low, blasting sound.



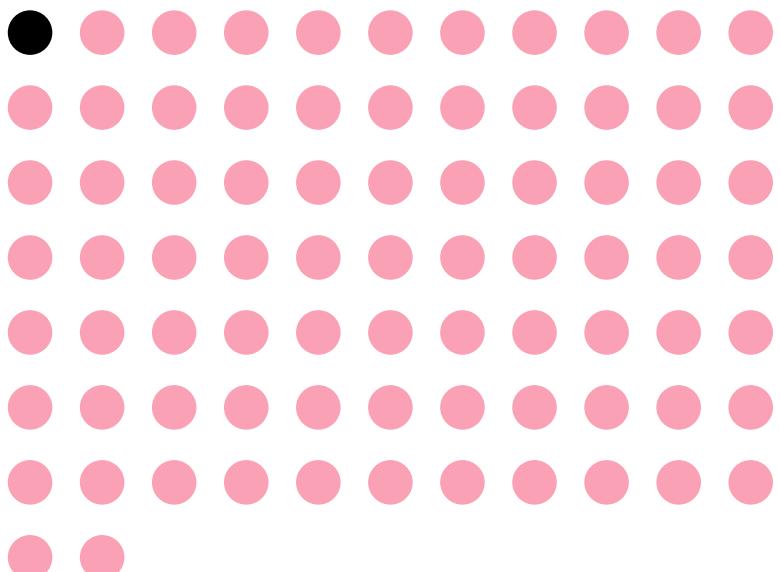
ORCHESTRA SEATING CHART

The symphony orchestra is the largest and most exciting of all musical groups, with as many as 100 players, depending on the piece. It is divided into four musical families called strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. Every instrument in the orchestra belongs to one of these families.



BY THE NUMBERS

1 Conductor
78 Musicians



49 Strings

25 Violins
9 Violas
8 Cellos
6 Basses
1 Harp

12 Brass

5 French Horns
3 Trombones
3 Trumpets
1 Tuba

5 Percussion

3 Percussion
1 Timpani
1 Keyboard

12 Woodwinds

3 Flutes
3 Bassoons
3 Oboes
Piccolo*
3 Clarinets
English Horn*

*These are additional instruments played by members of the flute or oboe section.

OUR HISTORY

THE OREGON SYMPHONY

The Oregon Symphony is Portland's largest performing arts organization today, but it has long and deep roots that go all the way back to 1896 and the founding of the Portland Symphony—the first orchestra west of the Mississippi River.

The decades that followed saw many milestones, but two of the biggest came in the mid-20th century. Firstly, in 1967, the orchestra's name was officially changed to the Oregon Symphony, reflecting the increasing number of concerts played outside Portland and a commitment to serve the larger statewide and regional community. Secondly, in 1984, under the leadership of Music Director James DePreist, the orchestra moved from the Portland Civic Auditorium (now Keller Auditorium) to its current home, the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall. The move, and DePreist's leadership, were turning points in the Oregon Symphony's history that resulted in a new level of concert and recording activity, as well as greater service in the areas of education and community engagement.

Now, the orchestra is led by Jean Vollum Music Director David Danzmayr, who joined the organization during its 125th anniversary season in 2021. The Oregon Symphony now performs for hundreds of thousands of people each year, and the Symphony's recorded works have reached millions of music lovers over the years via broadcasting on All Classical Radio and American Public Media programs. These recordings have earned the Oregon Symphony multiple GRAMMY nominations.



Portland Symphony orchestra with Bob Millard, 1957



THE ARLENE SCHNITZER CONCERT HALL

The Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall is a historic theater building and performing arts center in Portland, Oregon. It is locally nicknamed "The Schnitz" and is the last surviving theater on Broadway, which was once lined with large theater houses. The architectural firm Rapp and Rapp designed the Italian Renaissance-style building and it was considered, at its opening, to be the largest and most lavish theater for a city of Portland's size. It opened as the Portland Public Theatre, a vaudeville venue, in March 1928, then changed to the Paramount Theater in 1930, as the owners had a contract to run Paramount films locally. The building continued to show films until 1972.

The Schnitz's 65-foot high "Portland" sign above the Broadway Marquee originally contained approximately 6,000 theatrical lights. The current sign is an exact replica of the original—which read "Paramount" from 1930–1984.

The theater's original organ and statuary were sold off in an auction in March 1975. During the auction, there was a general outcry from the audience to keep a marble statue called "Surprise" (a nude girl with her hands thrown across her face) in the theater. The 1200-member audience took up a collection, and \$5,233.97 was raised to purchase and keep the statue in the theater lobby. "Surprise" once had a finger missing from a box-office robbery bullet in the 1920s, but is now restored in the hall's main foyer. The building (as the Paramount Theatre) was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

A major renovation of the hall began in September 1983 by Boora Architects, restoring the building to much of its original opulence. Portland residents Arlene and Harold Schnitzer contributed generously to the completion of the initial phase of the renovation. The one-year, \$10 million renovation involved repairing, recasting, or replacing much of the ornate interior while making it comfortable and safe for today's audiences and performers. Part of the Portland's Centers for the Performing Arts, The Schnitz is a gem in our city and we are happy to welcome you into the Oregon Symphony's home!

MUSIC EDUCATION STANDARDS

National Standards

The Oregon Symphony has an ongoing commitment to support the National Standards for Music Education as outlined below:

1. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.	4. Evaluating music and music performances.
2. Reading and notating music.	5. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
3. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.	6. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.



Oregon Content Standards

In addition, this Young People's Concert supports the following Common Core State Standards :

THE ARTS

Create, Present, Perform

Apply ideas, techniques, and processes in the arts.

Apply artistic elements and technical skills to create, present, and/or perform works of art for a variety of audiences and purposes.

Communicate verbally and in writing, using knowledge of the arts to describe and/or evaluate one's own artwork.

THE ARTS

Aesthetics and Art Criticism

Respond to and analyze works of art, based on essential elements, organizational principles, and aesthetic criteria.

Use knowledge of technical, organizational, and aesthetic elements to describe and analyze one's own art and the art of others.

Respond to works of art, giving reasons for preferences.

THE ARTS

Historical and Cultural Perspectives

Understand the relationship of works of art to their social, historical, and cultural contexts, and the influence of the arts on individuals, communities, and cultures.

Understand that the arts have an historical connection.

Explain how a work of art reflects the artist's personal experience in a society or culture.

STATE EDUCATION STANDARDS

Oregon's Arts Education Standards webpage

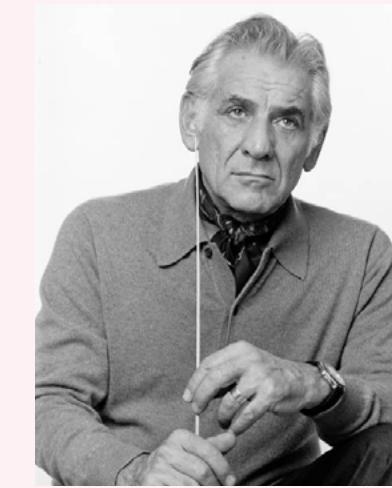
[View Here →](#)

Oregon's Music Standards (4th–8th grade)

[View Here →](#)

West Side Story: Overture, 1957

Composed by Leonard Bernstein
(USA, 1918-1990)



Leonard Bernstein Quick Facts

Countries of Residence

USA

Notable Compositions

Musicals, operas, and ballets, including *West Side Story*, *Candide*, and *Fancy Free*.

Musical Era

20th-century American music

Fun Facts

Bernstein was the first American to lead a major American orchestra, the New York Philharmonic.

Bernstein was the creator of the first *Young People's Concerts*, a series of symphonic educational televised programs that he hosted with the New York Phil from 1958-1972.

Bernstein was born in Massachusetts, and his musical talent became evident at an early age. Although his parents initially had misgivings, Bernstein convinced them that music could be a viable profession and attended Harvard and then the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied piano and conducting, before beginning his musical career.

Bernstein was an extremely versatile musician: a composer, arranger, conductor, author, lecturer, humanitarian, educator and all-round cultural icon. He was renowned around the world at the time of his death, and his work continues to be heralded and produced world-wide today. He is still recognized as one of the great composers of the modern era, his music synonymous with a uniquely "American" sound in modern composition—drawing inspiration from jazz, blues, Broadway, and mentors such as Aaron Copland.

SELECTION TO BE PERFORMED TODAY

Overture to *West Side Story*

Overtures are typically performed before any action on stage, serving as an introduction to, announcement, or prelude for what is to come. In this overture, Bernstein introduces many melodic themes featured in *West Side Story*, including those attached to the rival gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, the rumble (fight), and falling in love.

CONNECTION TO HOME

West Side Story, a musical that was later adapted for film, is a retelling of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* set in the 1950s on the upper West Side of Manhattan, New York. The sounds and themes of the musical encapsulate the spirit and feeling of the Upper West Side of Manhattan in the middle part of last century.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Melody

In this overture, Bernstein sets the melodies and themes deployed through *West Side Story* in various instruments of the orchestra, which further differentiates them from each other and enhances their recognition as the musical unfolds. Hear how each has its own distinct character, each reflecting a different aspect of the place and time in which the musical is set.

Harmony, texture, and Bernstein's use of the orchestra

Bernstein was a master orchestrator. Listen for unique, unusual, and vibrant combinations of instruments and how his use of an extremely large percussion section enhances and accentuates the active quality of the rhythms.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY
Conducting

Preparation/Materials

A device to listen to the Overture to *West Side Story*

[Watch Video →](#)

Conducting Chart worksheet

[PDF Download ↓](#)

Writing/drawing utensils

Instructions

1. Teacher plays a portion of the Overture to *West Side Story* for the class.
2. Teacher explains that the performers only have access to their individual part and asks class to imagine what it must have been like for all the performers to play together, in the correct place and at the correct time. How did it all work?
3. Teacher explains the role of the conductor to the students, explains that they will see the Conductor when they go to the Young People's Concert, and that they will get to try their hand at being a conductor today.
4. Teacher divides students into groups of 8 or so, and explains that they will take turns to instruct their group to do four things without speaking, only by making movements with their arms and hands:
Stand up, sit down, hands on head, or shake your arms.
5. Teacher demonstrates possible directions to students, e.g. for "stand up," slowly raise your hands towards the ceiling.
6. Students work in pairs or groups to think of a direction for each action. If time and willingness, students can work to add modifications to directions and to see if actions can be slowed or quickened, made larger or smaller.
7. Invite students to direct their groups—in silence! Directions can be planned out ahead of time or improvised.
8. To extend this activity, teacher or students can create a chart of actions performed by different groups at different times, and student conductors can be invited to create their own conducting chart and direct the combined group.

Conducting Chart

Keep your eyes focused on the conductor of the class, and your ears focused on the beat! Based on your assigned group, follow the actions outlined on each beat count below.

BEAT/TIME	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Group A	Stand up				Shake your arms	Shake your arms			Sit down
Group B			Hands on heads				Shake your arms	Stand up	Sit down
Group C		Stand up		Hands on heads		Stand up			Sit down

Create Your Own

Now it's your turn to become the conductor of the orchestra. Define your own set of four actions and hand gestures below and assign them to each group. Make sure your classmates can follow along!

Action 1	Conductor Signal 1
Action 2	Conductor Signal 2
Action 3	Conductor Signal 3
Action 4	Conductor Signal 4

BEAT/TIME	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Group A									
Group B									
Group C									

“Rosewood” from Percussion Concerto, 2019

**Composed by Andy Akiho
(USA, b. 1979)**

Commissioned and premiered in 2019 by the Oregon Symphony
Soloist: Michael Roberts, Marimba

Akiho was introduced to drumming when he was 8 or 9 years old by his older sister, who, at almost a decade older than him, played in rock bands and was a huge inspiration. By the time he was in middle and high school, Akiho drummed all the time, including in his school's drumline. He continued to drum in college in South Carolina, where the range of percussion styles he was exposed to expanded to include bebop and West African Drumming, as well as steel drums, the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago. Akiho spent most of his 20s playing steel pan by ear in Trinidad and New York City, and only began writing music at the age of 28. He is the only composer to be nominated for a GRAMMY® in the Best Contemporary Classical Composition category in 2022, 2023, and 2024, along with two further nominations for Best Classical Compendium and Classical Instrumental Solo in 2025. He is currently the Composer-in-Residence of the Oregon Symphony.



Andy Akiho Quick Facts

Countries of Residence

United States. Akiho divides his time between Portland, Oregon, and New York City.

Notable Compositions

Various works for orchestra and chamber ensembles, including the commissioned orchestral work *Sculptures*; a cello concerto, *Nisei*; *Seven Pillars* and other notable works for percussion ensemble; and *NO one to kNOW one*, which features steel pans and orchestra.

Musical Era

21st-century American music

Fun Facts

After graduating from college, Akiho moved to Trinidad to become immersed in the national steel drum culture. Steel drums are so important to Trinidad and Tobago that they are depicted on the national currency, and Akiho's immersion in the culture had a profound effect on his performance and compositional styles.

SELECTION TO BE PERFORMED

“Rosewood” from Percussion Concerto. The second movement of the concerto, it is scored for solo 5-octave marimba and orchestra. The entire Percussion Concerto can be heard this season performed by the Oregon Symphony on May 30 & 31, 2026, in which each member of the Oregon Symphony percussion section will perform as soloist on each movement.

CONNECTION TO HOME

Akiho wrote most of this concerto in Portland, and his life here informed this composition. Akiho is a self-avowed urbanite. He is at his most content when surrounded by the sounds of city life, the hubbub of traffic, pedestrian footfall, and sidewalk businesses, creating a complex rhythmic web around him that both serves as the impetus for and foundation of his musical style. This complexity of timbres (types of sound) and articulations (rhythm) are the driving force of his musical style, and he is unafraid to incorporate untraditional sounds into his work to achieve his desired effects. In his own words:

“A lot of people think that I’m trying...to be some kind of gimmick, but it’s really just where I feel at home.”

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Melody, Harmony, Texture and Akiho’s use of the orchestra

The solo instrument for the second movement of this concerto, played by Oregon Symphony Principal Percussionist Michael Roberts, is the 5-octave marimba. The 5-octave marimba is a relatively new instrument in the history of music—it was developed in the 1970s in a collaboration between Japanese marimbist Keiko Abe and Yamaha. Abe is credited with bringing the marimba into the spotlight as a solo concert instrument and commissioned many composers to write for the instrument. She performed on a 4.3-octave marimba, but felt its range was too limited for the repertoire she wanted to play and commission. For over 15 years, Abe and Yamaha engineers worked together to create the 5-octave marimba, finally premiering the instrument in 1984. This movement is the “slow” movement of the piece, with a plaintive marimba solo over sonorous, sometimes agitated, playing in the string section. The piece grows in intensity and speed (tempo) over the course of the movement, becoming increasingly emotive, with thickening orchestral texture. The movement grows to an epic climax featuring the full forces of the orchestra, with the glockenspiel and chimes in the percussion section playing insistently in unison with the string and brass interwoven melodies. Haunting sighs of string harmonics and a “tick-tocking” marimba line finish the movement.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Our Oregon Home Matching Game

Our Oregon Home Matching Game

Each home featured on this program is different. Whether conveying the grandeur of the Finnish mountains and valleys, the hustle and bustle of life on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, the dust and grounds of a ranch in Argentina, or the rhythmic dance of enslaved African ancestors, each has a different sound, place, and time, and each composer sought to evoke that distinctiveness in their music.

And just like every home on this program, Oregon is unique. Over the years we have settled on a wide-ranging list of officially designated symbols, measured and documented unique geological features, and have shaped the land. Match the following facts about the state of Oregon with the correct letter of the answers provided:

Preparation/Materials

Oregon Home State Matching Game worksheet

[PDF Download](#)

Writing/drawing utensils

Instructions

1. Print and distribute the Oregon Home State Matching Game worksheet to each student.
2. After students have filled out their sheets, go review the correct answers together.
3. Using some or all discussion questions below, have students draw connections between music and our home state, Oregon.

Discussion Questions

If you were to create a composition about Oregon, which of these facts or features of Oregon might you bring to life in your music?

Which facts are the most important to you or your group?

Which do you think are superfluous?

What sort of ensemble would you use? Which instruments would you use, and why?

Further Study

The History of the Five-Octave Marimba

[Read Article](#)

Brussels Philharmonic Program Notes—Akiho Percussion Concerto

[Read Article](#)

Percussion & Rhythm with Andy Akiho

[Get Tickets](#)

An Oregon Symphony concert in May 2026, featuring the Akiho Percussion Concerto

ANSWER

1. Longest River

2. State Nut

3. Tallest Mountain

4. State Fish

5. State Animal

6. Most Western Point

7. State Crustacean

8. Smallest Town

9. Most Populated County

10. State Mushroom

ANSWER

11. State Gemstone

12. Newest State Park

13. Deepest Lake

14. State Flower

15. State Motto

16. Oldest State Park

17. State Insect

18. County with the Darkest Skies

19. State Bird

20. State Tree

A. MULTNOMAH

B. SARAH HELMICK STATE PARK

C. LAKE COUNTY

D. COTTONWOOD CANYON STATE PARK

E. "SHE FLIES WITH HER OWN WINGS"

F. GREENHORN

G. DOUGLAS-FIR

H. HAZELNUT

I. OREGON GRAPE

J. COLUMBIA

K. CHINOOK SALMON

L. OREGON SWALLOWTAIL

M. DUNGENESS CRAB

N. CRATER LAKE

O. BEAVER

P. CAPE BLANCO

Q. WESTERN MEADOWLARK

R. OREGON SUNSTONE

S. MOUNT HOOD

T. PACIFIC GOLDEN CHANTERELLE

Selections from *Finlandia*, op. 26, 1899

Composed by Jean Sibelius
(Finland, 1865-1957)



Jean Sibelius Quick Facts

Countries of Residence

Finland, although he traveled to the United States, the United Kingdom, and other parts of Europe

Notable Compositions

Large output of orchestral and chamber music, including his famous violin concerto and symphonic poems, the most famous of which is *Finlandia*

Musical Era

Late 19th century, often identified with the nationalist movement of the late Romantic period

Fun Facts

Sibelius gave his name (posthumously) to the world's most used music composition and arranging software: Sibelius

After Sibelius' father died, he spent considerable time with his extended paternal and maternal families in the towns and countryside of Finland. This extended family of amateur musicians gave Sibelius his musical education, including violin and piano lessons, and nurtured his budding desire to compose. His time in the country also nurtured his love of the Finnish countryside and lands.

Sibelius is widely regarded as the most famous of all Finnish composers, whose distinctly Finnish style celebrated the culture, landscapes, and tradition of his home country. He is a national treasure. The annual Day of Finnish Music is celebrated on Sibelius' birthday, monuments and museums have been erected celebrating him, and the Helsinki Academy of Music was renamed the Sibelius Academy in 1939 to honor him.

SELECTION TO BE PERFORMED

Tone poem, *Finlandia* (excerpt)

CONNECTION TO HOME

In the fall of 1899, Sibelius composed a set of orchestral tone poems to express the Finnish people's desire for independence from Czarist Russia. He initially called the last tone poem *Finland Awakes*, but re-titled it *Finlandia* after revisions the following year. Sibelius described this work in these words:

“We fought 600 years for our freedom, and I am part of the generation which achieved it. Freedom! My *Finlandia* is the story of this fight. It is the song of our battle, our hymn of victory.”

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Melody

Our excerpt begins with the most famous part of *Finlandia*, the *Finlandia* hymn, which grows increasingly more triumphant as the piece moves toward its celebratory conclusion. While it may sound like there were originally words to this hymn, initially there were none. However, words were set to it in 1941, after which *Finlandia* became one of the most important national songs of Finland.

Harmony, texture and Sibelius's use of the orchestra

Sibelius aimed to create a distinctly Finnish sensibility in *Finlandia* that evoked the national sensibility without using traditional folksongs or melodies. Listen for the easy-to-absorb, uncomplicated rhythms, and strong contrasts between orchestral timbres and textures.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Our Oregon Home Word Search

Preparation/Materials

Our Oregon Home Word Search Worksheet

[PDF Download](#)

Writing/drawing utensils

Instructions

This is a great follow-up activity to the Matching Game on page 21, and provides the answers to the Matching Game. It can also be a standalone activity.

1. Print and distribute the Our Oregon Home Word Search to each student.
2. If students are executing this as a standalone activity, start with a discussion about the theme of “home,” using the Discussion Questions on page 20 as a starting point or by using the Discussion Guidance prompt. Use the facts about Oregon, below, to learn more about our home state.

Discussion Guidance

Each home featured on this program is different. Whether conveying the grandeur of the Finnish mountains and valleys, the hustle and bustle of life on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, the dust and grounds of a ranch in Argentina, or the rhythmic dance of enslaved African ancestors, each has a different sound, place, and time, and each composer sought to evoke that distinctiveness in their music.

Everyone attending our Young People’s Concert has a connection to Oregon—this state is a part of the fabric of our collective home. And just like every home on this program, Oregon is unique. Over the years we have settled on a wide-ranging list of officially designated symbols, measured and documented unique geological features, and have shaped the land.

State Flower	Oregon Grape	Tallest Mountain	Mount Hood
State Bird	Western Meadowlark	Deepest Lake	Crater Lake
State Tree	Douglas-fir	Smallest Town	Greenhorn
State Fish	Chinook Salmon	County with the Darkest Skies	Lake County
State Animal	Beaver	Most Populated County	Multnomah
State Insect	Oregon Swallowtail	Newest State Park	Cottonwood Canyon State Park
State Gemstone	Oregon Sunstone	Oldest State Park	Sarah Helmick State Park
State Nut	Hazelnut	Most Western Point	Cape Blanco
State Motto	“She Flies With Her Own Wings”		
State Mushroom	Pacific Golden Chanterelle		
State Crustacean	Dungeness Crab		

Our Oregon Home Word Search

Just like every home on this program, Oregon is unique. Over the years we have settled on a wide-ranging list of officially designated symbols, measured and documented unique geological features, and have shaped the land. Find the following words below in the word search puzzle:

GRAPE	SUNSTONE	GREENHORN
MEADOWLARK	HAZELNUT	LAKE
DOUGLAS	CHANTERELLE	MULTNOMAH
CHINOOK	DUNGENESS	COTTONWOOD CANYON
BEAVER	HOOD	SARAH HELMICK
SWALLOWTAIL	CRATER	BLANCO

S	S	K	S	K	K	R	K	A	D	C	S	L	O	Q	P	F	V	M	H
Y	E	F	J	W	Z	W	C	U	B	F	M	K	G	Y	W	W	W	R	M
C	N	R	T	I	A	D	C	R	A	T	E	R	O	B	T	L	Y	C	D
M	O	S	N	R	F	L	F	H	B	U	B	F	E	E	R	R	L	A	N
U	P	T	A	H	X	J	L	F	A	Y	T	O	H	A	G	F	I	P	X
L	G	K	T	R	W	J	F	O	U	Z	N	C	I	V	R	T	V	S	C
T	P	N	D	O	A	H	E	C	W	B	E	T	U	E	A	T	Y	U	N
N	V	R	O	C	N	H	L	Z	O	T	L	L	C	R	P	K	U	N	W
O	V	W	U	D	H	W	H	G	O	U	A	K	N	M	E	K	G	S	U
M	R	Y	G	P	F	A	O	E	M	I	H	I	N	U	S	I	D	T	E
A	H	L	L	H	M	F	N	O	L	Y	E	N	L	R	T	N	U	O	L
H	Y	B	A	O	C	E	Y	T	D	M	V	O	T	M	D	G	N	N	A
B	A	Y	S	O	H	K	A	S	E	C	I	T	T	G	Q	R	G	E	K
K	H	I	F	D	I	N	Q	D	H	R	A	C	S	B	I	E	E	Y	E
C	C	W	I	O	N	H	E	J	O	A	E	N	K	L	M	E	N	F	T
R	H	F	R	I	O	A	K	S	U	W	M	L	Y	L	P	N	E	D	A
I	L	R	D	F	O	X	P	Y	U	I	L	B	L	O	V	H	S	T	Q
M	J	M	U	Q	K	Y	G	V	S	S	W	A	H	E	N	O	S	T	Q
C	K	U	K	J	B	L	A	N	C	O	B	E	R	D	O	R	G	W	D
I	Y	T	U	P	N	W	U	O	R	I	F	E	N	K	F	N	P	D	T

“Juba Dance” from Symphony No. 1, 1932

Composed by Florence Price
(USA, 1887-1953)



Price was born into a prominent African American family in Little Rock, Arkansas. The daughter of one of the only African American dentists in the country and a businesswoman-schoolteacher-piano tutor, Price was guided to her first piano recital at age 4. She graduated as the valedictorian of her high school at 14, then studied at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, majoring in organ performance and piano teaching, and privately studied composition. It was then that she started experimenting with sounds of African American folk music and history in her own compositions. She returned to the South and taught at the collegiate level, continuing to compose. Her work was first published in 1928, after which she published regularly. In 1933, her first symphony was performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, making Price the first African American woman composer to have a symphony premiered by a major American orchestra, establishing her reputation as a composer and arranger. However, despite her immense talent and inventiveness, much of her later work was ignored. She wrote, “Unfortunately the work of a woman composer is preconceived by many to be light, froth, lacking in depth, logic and virility. Add to that the incident of race—I have Colored blood in my veins—and you will understand some of the difficulties that confront one in such a position.”



Florence Price Quick Facts

Countries of Residence

United States

Notable Compositions

Price composed over 300 works during the course of her career, including four symphonies, two violin concertos, piano pieces, many songs, and works written specifically for children. Under a pseudonym, she also wrote pop songs and advertising jingles.

Musical Era

Early 20th-century American music

Fun Facts

After Price's death, much of her music was forgotten – until 2009, when a family renovating their new home in St. Anne, Illinois, discovered a trove of her manuscripts. The discovery of her forgotten manuscripts led to revived interest in her work, including recordings that won Grammy awards for Best Orchestral Performance and Best Classical Solo Vocal Album in 2022 and 2025.

SELECTION TO BE PERFORMED

“Juba Dance” from Symphony No. 1, the third movement from the piece.

CONNECTION TO HOME

Her work is notable for successfully blending Western classical traditions with rhythms and melodies of African American music (blues, folk, and spirituals). In this case, instead of writing a traditional scherzo dance for the third movement of her symphony—a practice that went back more than 200 years—Price writes a *Juba* dance as the third movement of her symphony. “Patting Juba” is an African American musical tradition in which the body—instead of drums—is used to accompany the juba folk dance. Its inclusion in her symphony spotlights an African American plantation dance performed by enslaved African people.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Melody

There is no ambiguity about the melody in this work. Phrases are clearly defined by timbre—strings, winds, and brass—and cadence, and there is a pleasing back and forth between musical questions and answers, reflecting the back-and-forth nature of Juba dance. Notice how Price uses a jaunty syncopation in the second theme, inspired by the slapping of the hands, legs, and body when dancing the “patting Juba.”

Harmony, texture, and Price's use of the orchestra

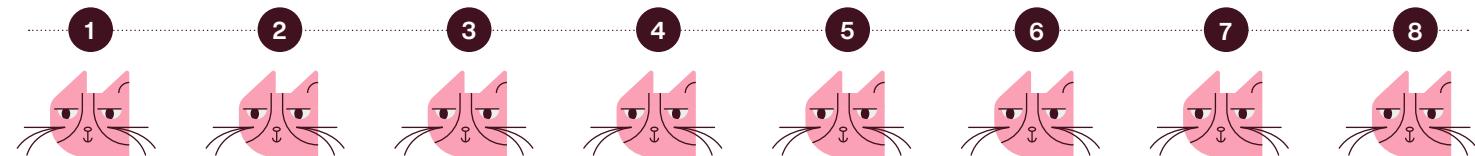
Price employs an uncomplicated harmonic profile to enhance the clear phrase structure in this piece and set off the dance. Observe how Price harnesses the accompaniment to establish a strong, unambiguous, quadruple meter, perfect for dancing.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Cat-Kitten Meter and Rhythm

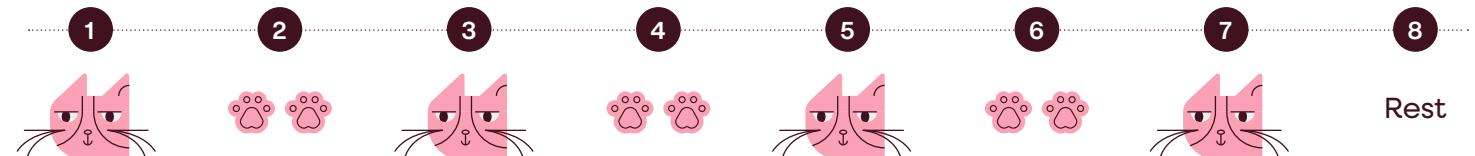
Cat-Kitten Meter and Rhythm

As a class, create a beat—by clapping, tapping, or snapping—while counting up to 8, in one-second intervals. Following that beat, create a series of 8 cats, with “cat” spoken at one-second intervals.



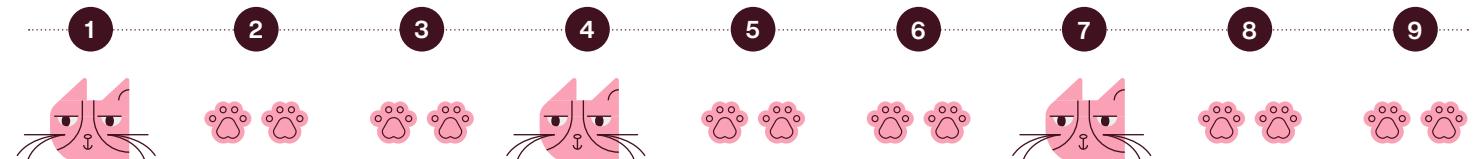
DUPLE METER (GROUPS OF 2)

Now speak a series of 8 alternating cats and kittens at one-second intervals. Students should say “Cat” for each large cat head and “Kitten” for each set of small pawprints.

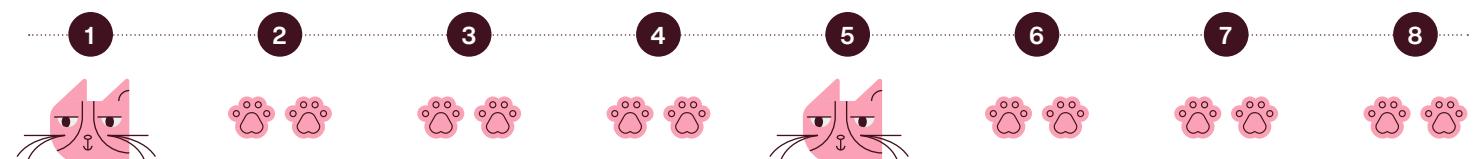


Rest

TRIPLE METER (GROUPS OF 3)



QUADRUPLE METER (GROUPS OF 4)



Create your Own

Use the space below to create your own duple, triple, and quadruple meters using words of your choosing.



Preparation/Materials

A device to listen to “Juba Dance” on Youtube

[Watch Video](#) →

Cat-Kitten Rhythm Worksheet

[PDF Download](#) ↴

Instructions

1. Teacher plays Price’s “Juba Dance” and asks students to think about dancing to this piece.
2. Teacher leads a discussion about how musical meter—the way beats are organized—is essential for group dance music like Price’s “Juba Dance”. Without a clear meter, it is almost impossible to dance together!
3. Teacher explains that musical beats are usually organized into groups of two, three, or four.
4. Teacher explains that they are going to create their own meters today, by organizing kittens and cats!

Discussion

Discuss what makes these rhythms work as **duple**, **triple**, or **quadruple** via the specific organization of kittens and cats.

If time allows, teacher allows students either alone or in small groups to create their own cat-kitten meter patterns. Ask them to share and discuss how are they successful.

Further Study

Patting Juba handout from St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

[PDF Download](#) ↴

Watch master Hambone artist, Danny “Slapjazz” Barber

[Watch Video](#) →

NPR Article about Florence Price:

“Revisiting The Pioneering Composer Florence Price”

[Read Article](#) →

“Final Dance (Malambo)” from *Four Dances from Estancia*, 1941

Composed by Alberto Ginastera
(b. Argentina 1916; d. Switzerland, 1983)

Ginastera began studying the piano when he was seven and continued his classical music studies at the (Argentinian) National Conservatory, from which he graduated and then became a member of the faculty.

Ginastera is one of the most prominent Latin American composers of the mid-20th century. He is known for insisting his music have a distinctly Argentinian sensibility, achieved through both the inclusion of Argentinian folk material as well as his own thematic and rhythmic elements composed to emulate traditionally Argentinian styles.



Alberto Ginastera Quick Facts

Countries of Residence

Argentina for the most part, with shorter stints in the United States and Europe

Notable Compositions

Operas, avant garde music including sonatas and concertos, chamber music, and the *Estancia* suite, which he adapted from music he composed for a ballet of the same name.

Musical Era

20th century, specifically within the eras of nationalism and neo-expressionism

Fun Facts

In 1973, Ginastera's music reached millions of people—a difficult feat in classical music circles at that time—when his *Toccata* was adapted into a hit song by the progressive rock group Emerson, Lake, and Palmer. However, while less successful at that time, the *Estancia* suite has enjoyed more enduring, long-term success.

SELECTION TO BE PERFORMED

“Malambo,” the fourth and final movement of Ginastera’s *Estancia* suite. The Malambo is a traditionally all-male Argentinian dance, originally performed by the *gauchos* (cowboys) on the ranches of Argentina. In this dance, performers try to outdo each other in a dance competition now known as a “dance-off.”

CONNECTION TO HOME

Ginastera adapted this suite from a ballet he composed, *Estancia*, which was commissioned to be performed in New York. *Estancia*, meaning “ranch” in Spanish, is set on an Argentinian ranch and depicts, in Ginastera’s own words “various aspects of ranch activities, from dawn to dusk.” He drew inspiration from the Argentinian countryside’s landscape, and said “Whenever I have crossed the Pampa [grassy plains of Argentina] or have lived in it for a time, my spirit felt itself inundated by changing impressions, now joyful, now melancholy, some full of euphoria and others replete with a profound tranquility, produced by its limitless immensity and by the transformation that the countryside undergoes in the course of a day.”

The first movement depicts agricultural workers in a field, the second, a wheat dance, and the third, a dance of the cattlemen. The fourth and final dance is a Malambo, described above.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Melody

Ginastera’s melodies are energetic, short, recognizable, rhythmically intense, often syncopated, and instantly recognizable. For all the complexity and furiousness of the melodies, the form of this Malambo is relatively straightforward: A A’ B. Each section has a characteristic melody that plays with meter in a contrasting way. A’ is a truncated repetition of the opening section, A, and section B presents the actual Malambo dance itself. Listen for their repetition as they are passed between various orchestral instruments.

Harmony, texture and Ginastera’s use of the orchestra

Ginastera’s score calls for a large orchestra, including strings, woodwinds, brass, and a very large percussion section. The “Malambo” movement is shaped by a driving and toe-tapping dance rhythm, which is evocative of Bernstein’s *West Side Story*, the overture of which is also featured in this program! Listen how Ginastera renders the sounds of Malambo dance moves—such as energetic stomping and the brushing or scrubbing of boots on ground—into the fabric of his composition.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Spot the Instruments

Preparation/MaterialsA device to watch and listen to Ginastera's "Malambo," from *Estancia* suite[Watch Video →](#)

Ginastera Listening Table Worksheet

[PDF Download ↓](#)

Writing/drawing utensils

Instructions

1. Teacher explains that all but one of the instruments in the Ginastera listening table are featured in the fabulous 2007 recording of Ginastera's "Malambo," played by the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra conducted by Gustavo Dudamel.
2. Teacher ensures students are familiar with both the sound and appearance of the 12 instruments in the table on page 33 by playing the video links below for each instrument in addition to reviewing the illustrations.
3. Teacher plays the recording of Ginastera's "Malambo," from *Estancia* suite from the beginning to about 3:17. As students watch and listen they will notice how the cinematographer spotlights particular instruments.
4. Check off the instruments spotlighted in the video on the worksheet until left with one instrument that is **NOT** featured in this performance (you may need to watch more than once).
5. Have students identify the missing instrument.

 **Instrument Videos**

Timpani (23-30 seconds)

[Watch Video →](#)

Snare Drum

[Watch Video →](#)

Harp

[Watch Video →](#)

Violin

[Watch Video →](#)

French Horn

[Watch Video →](#)

Trumpet

[Watch Video →](#)

Conductor

[Watch Video →](#)

Cymbals

[Watch Video →](#)

Xylophone

[Watch Video →](#)

Piano

[Watch Video →](#)

Flute

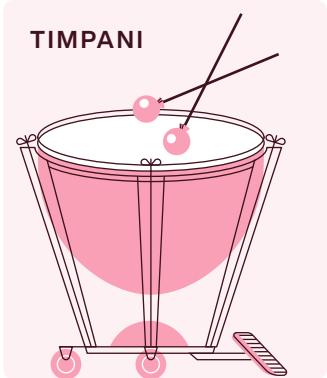
[Watch Video →](#)

Tambourine

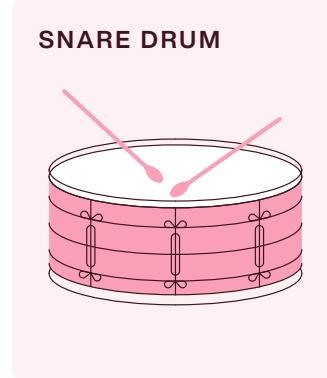
[Watch Video →](#)

Ginastera Listening Table

Watch and listen carefully to Ginastera's "Malambo" in [this video](#). One of the instruments below is not included in the piece. Can you identify which one?



TIMPANI



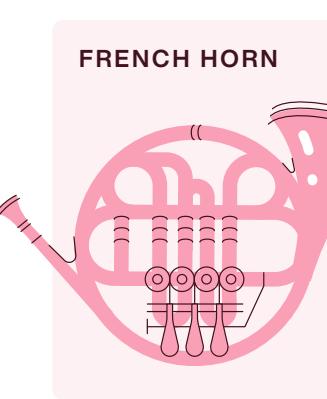
SNARE DRUM



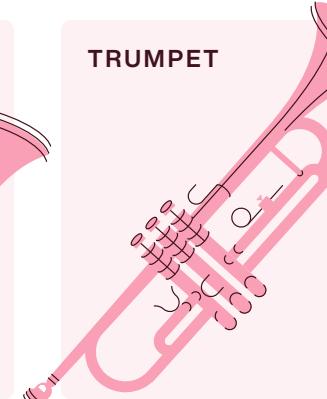
HARP



VIOLIN



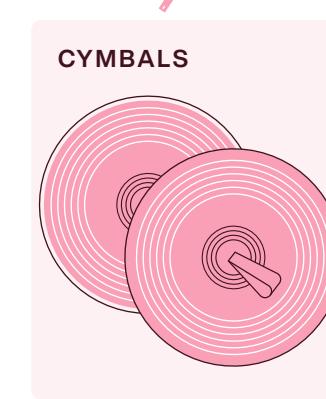
FRENCH HORN



TRUMPET



CONDUCTOR



CYMBALS



XYLOPHONE



PIANO



FLUTE



TAMBOURINE

“The Hut on Fowl’s Legs” and “The Great Gate of Kiev” from *Pictures at an Exhibition*, 1874

Composed by Modest Mussorgsky
(Russia, 1839-1881)

Arranged for orchestra by Maurice Ravel

Although Mussorgsky was born the son of a landowner, he was also descended from peasants, and this dichotomy of circumstance was evident in his equal interest in both Russian fairytales and folklore and the more “erudite” interest in learning the piano. He wrote “This early familiarity with the spirit of the people, with the way they lived, lent the first and greatest impetus to my musical improvisations” and served as the foundation of a musical style that came from and was for the people.

Mussorgsky together with his composer colleagues Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Cui, and Balakirev successfully forged a new style that blended traditional Russian elements and Western musical conventions. The group was called “The Five,” and modeled themselves as composers in opposition to the newly established music conservatories in Moscow and St. Petersburg, which they felt were too confined by German (Western classical) tradition.



Modest Mussorgsky Quick Facts

Countries of Residence

Russia

Notable Compositions

Operas, including *Boris Godunov*, as well as non-operatic works such as the symphonic fantasy *Night on Bald Mountain*, song cycles, and works for piano, including *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Musical Era

Late 19th century, often identified with the Russian nationalist movement of the late Romantic period

Fun Facts

Mussorgsky’s day job was that of a civil servant, working for the government. He was largely a self-taught composer.

SELECTION TO BE PERFORMED

“The Hut on Fowl’s Legs” and “The Great Gate of Kiev” from *Pictures at an Exhibition*, the final two movements from the ten-movement work.

CONNECTION TO HOME

In the mid-19th century, there was an effort to modernize Russia and “catch up” to Western Europe. Classical music was not exempt from this effort, and Mussorgsky and his contemporaries forged new, distinctly Russian musical styles that garnered praise and attention across Western Europe and around the world.

Mussorgsky composed a set of ten piano pieces, entitled *Pictures at an Exhibition*, in 1874. The composition was inspired by a real-life exhibition in which Mussorgsky viewed over four hundred images, artworks, and designs by his friend Viktor Hartmann (1834-1873), who was also interested in developing distinctly Russian artworks. Mussorgsky composed a set of ten pieces for piano based on ten of the works he saw at the Hartmann exposition. The entire ten-movement work was arranged for orchestra in 1922 by French composer, Maurice Ravel.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

“The Hut on Fowl’s Legs” melody, harmony, texture, and Ravel’s use of orchestra

“The Hut on Fowl’s Legs” is the home of Baba Yaga, an important figure in Slavic folk tales. Baba Yaga is an enigmatic elderly woman who is equally feared, for her horrid treatment of children, and admired, for her anti-hero tendencies to help those in need. Together, Mussorgsky’s score and Ravel’s instrumentation provide a soundtrack to the hut on the move, evoking the erratic and clunky hen-like movements of the hut’s legs as well as the generally terrifying nature of Baba Yaga. Mussorgsky’s melodies are choppy and fragmented, and Ravel accentuates this nature with frequent and sometimes unexpected changes in instrumentation. The piece does not settle until it literally runs into “The Great Gate of Kiev.”

“The Great Gate of Kiev” melody, harmony, texture, and Ravel’s use of orchestra

“The Great Gate of Kiev” arrives in triumph and fanfare at the end of “The Hut on Fowl’s Legs” with a broad and loud brass melody that is dripping in grandeur. The brass is soon joined by the woodwinds, after which the volume begins to subside, ready for a full repetition. The repetition, this time with the strings included, is even louder and broader than the opening before continuing with a movement that is not only grand in nature, but also serves as the final movement in a ten-movement work. The dynamic ranges Mussorgsky explored in this movement are extreme, from the quietest of quiet to the loudest of loud. The timbres explored by Ravel in his orchestration are dynamic and often unexpected, from phrases using only four woodwind instruments yielding to passages involving the full orchestra. Listen for tubular bells, moments of anxious waiting, and a grand pause (silence) before a triumphant return of the now slowed down, full orchestra “Great Gate of Kiev” melody.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Comparison and Creating Timbres

Preparation/Materials

A device to listen to Mussorgsky's "Great Gate of Kiev" performed on piano

[Watch Video](#) →

A device to listen to Mussorgsky's "Great Gate of Kiev" arr. Ravel performed by orchestra

[Watch Video](#) ↵

"Great Gate of Kiev" Listening Map

[PDF Download](#) ↵

Writing/drawing utensils

Instructions

1. Teacher explains how Mussorgsky composed a set of ten piano pieces based on ten pictures he saw at an exhibition, and that "Great Gate of Kiev" is the final movement of the piece.
2. Teacher hands out Listening Map and plays video of Piano version, indicating the transitions between sections, while students follow along with their Listening Maps (this may be either stop-start or repeated as necessary).
3. Teacher leads discussion of the structure of the piece based on Listening Map.
4. Teacher explains that the composer Maurice Ravel took Mussorgsky's work and orchestrated it—that is, he took Mussorgsky's piano version of the piece and rewrote it for full orchestra, and that this is the work featured on the Oregon Symphony Young People's Concert.
5. Teacher plays video of full orchestra version, indicating the transitions between sections, while students follow along with their Listening Maps (this may be either stop-start or repeated as necessary).
6. Teacher leads discussion of the structure of the piece based on Listening Map.

Listening Map: "The Great Gate of Kiev"

Listen to the piano version and full orchestra version of the "Great Gate of Kiev" while following along using the Listening Map. Consider these questions to enhance the active listening experience: How does Mussorgsky alter the "A" theme and "B" theme each time they appear? What differences in textures, volumes (dynamics), speeds (tempos), and instruments (in the orchestral version) can you hear between each treatment of the two themes? Comparing the piano version and the orchestral version, how does Mussorgsky

create big, dramatic textures with the piano versus how Ravel creates big, dramatic textures with the orchestra? What about each composer's use of quiet, intimate textures? Use this handful of questions as the starting point for discussion and further comparison and contrast of the different textures and timbres (qualities of sound) in the two versions of the piece.

Great Gate of Kiev theme A	Great Gate of Kiev theme B	Contrasting Theme B'	Great Gate of Kiev theme A''	Great Gate of Kiev theme A'''
TIMING: PIANO VERSION INSTRUMENTS	0:14 Piano	0:56 Piano	1:14 Piano	1:49 Piano

TIMING: ORCHESTRA VERSION	INSTRUMENTS	INSTRUMENTS	DYNAMICS	SPEED CHANGE	NOTES
28:25	Brass and timpani, then add woodwinds	Full orchestra	Small number of woodwinds	Full orchestra	Full orchestra
	Melody in high winds, violins and trumpets	Melody in low strings, then brass, strings and high winds	Melody in high winds, add high winds, tubular bells, muted brass, and quivering strings	Melody in high winds and violins.	Melody in trumpets, high winds, and violins.
29:03	Melody in trumpets	Quiet	Loud	A smidgen faster	This section is very suspenseful and builds to climactic rendition of Gate theme
29:20		Quiet—then building	Very Loud	Slower	Loudest of all
29:54		Very Loud	Slower	Then slower still	Slower still
30:24		Slower	Then slower still		Portion of Gate theme leads to cadences sufficient to close the entire 10-movement piece
32:08					
33:14					

“Hedwig’s Theme” from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone: Suite for Orchestra

Composed by John Williams
(USA, b. 1932)

Williams was raised in New York, the son of a percussionist in the CBS radio orchestra. He was exposed to music from a young age and began studying piano as a child. In 1951, he was drafted into the U.S. Air Force, and during his service arranged band music and began conducting. After leaving the Air Force, Williams briefly studied piano at the Juilliard School of Music and worked as a jazz pianist in New York City, later relocating to Los Angeles where he worked as a Hollywood studio pianist for such films as *Some Like It Hot* (1959) and *West Side Story* (1961). During that time, he also began composing for television, writing songs for such shows as *Gilligan’s Island*. In the late 1960s, Williams began composing for films. When aspiring director Steven Spielberg asked Williams to score his first feature film, *The Sugarland Express* (1974), a decades-long partnership was forged, with Williams scoring some of Spielberg’s best-known films. Williams remains one of America’s best known and most distinctive artistic voices.

Williams has won 26 GRAMMYs and 5 Academy Awards for his film music.



John Williams Quick Facts

Countries of Residence

USA

Notable Compositions

Williams is most famous for his film music, having composed the music for *E.T.*, *Star Wars*, *Jaws*, *Schindler’s List*, *Indiana Jones*, and *Harry Potter*. However, he has also composed orchestral music and musical fanfares for several Olympic games, as well as music for many important American cultural and commemorative events, such as the rededication of the Statue of Liberty in 1986.

Musical Era

20th and 21st centuries

Fun Facts

John Williams initially wanted to be a concert pianist; however, he changed his mind when he observed his competition, realized he might not be quite good enough, and turned his attention to composing instead. Thank goodness! We have Williams to thank for some of the most iconic film music of the modern era.

SELECTION TO BE PERFORMED

“Hedwig’s Theme” from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*: Suite for Orchestra. Williams composed the music for all seven *Harry Potter* films, including the themes that represent Voldemort, Harry’s broomstick, and Hogwarts. After the fact, Williams arranged the music into a Suite for orchestra, from which the movement featured on our program is taken.

CONNECTION TO HOME

Hedwig’s theme represents Hedwig, Harry Potter’s owl. Hedwig was Harry’s first magical gift and was a constant source of companionship during the uncertain and unsettled formative years of his childhood. Hedwig’s theme perfectly encapsulates the wonder and majesty of Harry’s magical world as his school, Hogwarts, becomes his only true home.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Melody

Williams introduces Hedwig’s waltz-like theme in an instrument called a celeste. A celeste, known colloquially as a bell piano, is a piano-like keyboard instrument in which the internal hammers strike bars as opposed to strings, hence the bell-like sound. The celeste is significantly smaller than a piano and is also not a consistent member of a conventional symphony orchestra; instead, it is brought in for those pieces where its unique and unmistakable timbre is called for (think “Sugar Plum Fairy” in the *Nutcracker*). Williams introduces a second theme, the theme for Harry’s broomstick, the Nimbus 2000, later in the piece. This theme contrasts starkly with Hedwig’s, encapsulating the finicky nature of the transportation Harry must learn to ride.

Harmony, texture, and Williams’ use of the orchestra

Williams uses the orchestra, particularly the strings, to suggest notions of wind and flight in this piece, which often accompany Hedwig’s theme. In contrast, he uses rapid staccato chords to evoke the trickiness of Harry’s broomstick and reflect the less-than-smooth ride it initially provided. The piece begins quietly, with just a few instruments, gradually building to include more instruments and more layers of sound. This gives Williams the ability to move between different dynamic levels and instrumental textures, a particular feature of this piece.

Williams Listening Map

Preparation/Materials

Williams Listening Map Worksheet (printed on tabloid-sized paper)

[PDF Download](#)

A device to listen to the series of companion videos listed on the right.

Writing/drawing utensils

Instructions

1. Teacher explains how Williams composed this work by varying repetitions of instantly recognizable themes (Hedwig's and the Nimbus 2000).
2. Teacher hands out Listening Maps.
3. Teacher plays the themes for the class.
4. Teacher explains how Williams uses different instruments and dynamics (or volumes) to differentiate each repetition.
5. Teacher plays instrument family videos for class.
6. Teacher explains dynamics to class.
7. Teacher plays Williams's Hedwig's theme, from *Harry Potter* Suite for class as students complete Listening Maps (this may be either stop-start or repeated as necessary).
8. Students pair up with a partner to share and compare their Listening Maps.
9. Teacher facilitates class sharing to help show how trajectory of dynamics, speed, instruments, and expressions are used to create the musical trajectory of this work.



Companion YouTube Videos

Video 1	Williams's Hedwig's theme, from <i>Harry Potter</i> Suite	Watch Video
Video 2	A celeste playing Hedwig's theme (first 30 seconds)	Watch Video
Video 3	Nimbus 2000 theme (first 15 seconds)	Watch Video
Video 4	<i>Harry Potter</i> main theme (first 10 seconds)	Watch Video
Video 5	The String Family	Watch Video
Video 6	The Brass Family	Watch Video
Video 7	The Woodwind Family	Watch Video
Video 8	The Percussion Family	Watch Video

Williams Listening Map

Write down information in the blank sections below as you listen to these themes from the *Harry Potter* Suite from [this video](#). What instruments do you hear? What dynamics are used in the section? Is the tempo fast or slow? What is the mood or feeling of the section? Do you notice any other interesting elements, such as how the orchestra members are playing (facial expressions, techniques, what they're paying attention to) or how it is led by the conductor? Use this Listening Map to guide and enhance your active listening experience.

ABOUT DYNAMICS

Dynamics dictate the volume at which the music should be played.

Very soft (pianissimo): *pp*

Soft (piano): *p*

Medium soft (mezzo piano): *mp*

Medium loud (mezzo forte): *mf*

Loud (forte): *f*

Very loud (*fortissimo*): *ff*

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