



SOUTH TEXAS SYMPHONIC ORCHESTRA EDUCATOR GUIDE



Charline & Red McCombs
ARTS EDUCATION FUND
The Tobin Center

Educator Guide
Created by: Dr. Kimberly Stephenson

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Title: South Texas Symphonic Orchestra "For the Love of Music"

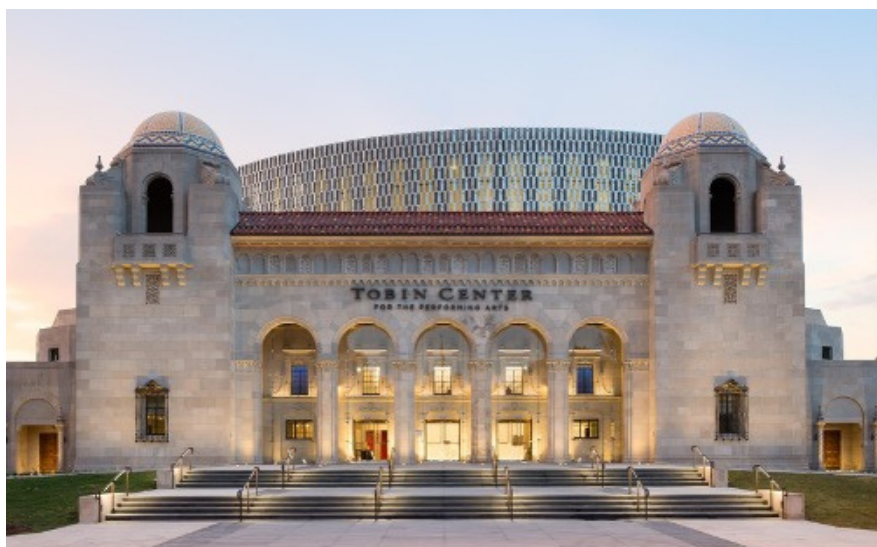
Date / Time: 10.6.26 / 10 am and Noon

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Tobin Center for the Performing Arts
100 Auditorium Circle
San Antonio, TX 78205
www.tobincenter.org



GENERATION
NEXT
EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Welcome to the Show!



Dear Audience:

Welcome to the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts! We are so glad you are here at The Tobin Center. It is truly a joy to share this beautiful space and this special experience with you. The Tobin Center is a place where stories come to life through music, movement, and creativity. Today, you are not just visitors; you are part of that story. As you take your seat and look around, you are joining a long tradition of audiences who have gathered here to listen, learn, and be inspired.

In just a few moments, the South Texas Symphonic Orchestra will take the stage, and you'll experience something powerful: a full orchestra performing live. There is nothing quite like it. You may feel the music in your chest, notice how the sounds fill the entire room, and see how musicians communicate without speaking a word.

This is your time to listen closely, wonder, and enjoy. You might discover a favorite instrument, recognize a melody, or simply be surprised by something new. However you experience it, we are so glad you are here to share it with us.

Thank you for being our guests today. We hope this visit to The Tobin Center is memorable, meaningful, and maybe even the beginning of a lifelong love of live music.

Enjoy the performance!

Dr. Kimberly Stephenson
Director of Education
Tobin Center for the Performing Arts



About the Performance

Why Attend a Live Symphony Performance?

Attending a live orchestral performance helps students:

- Experience music in a powerful form
- Observe how musicians collaborate and communicate
- Recognize the unique sound and role of each instrument
- Explore how music reflects cultures, traditions, and history
- Develop listening, critical thinking, and emotional awareness

Live performances also reinforce classroom learning by connecting directly to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards in:

- Fine Arts (Music)
- English Language Arts and Reading
- Social Studies
- Cultural and historical literacy



About South Texas Symphonic Orchestra



The South Texas Symphonic Orchestra (STXSO) is made up of musicians from many different backgrounds, all united by a shared love of music and a commitment to their community.

Through high-quality performances, free educational concerts, and meaningful partnerships across the region, STXSO works to make symphonic music accessible to everyone, especially students and communities who may not otherwise experience it. At its core, the orchestra believes music has the power to inspire, teach, and bring people together.

For many students, hearing a live orchestra for the first time is unforgettable. It's the moment when instruments come alive, when musicians breathe and move as one, and when music is not just heard, it is felt.

And sometimes, that moment is where a lifelong love of music begins!

South Texas Symphonic Orchestra. (n.d.). [Photograph of orchestra]. <https://www.stxso.org/>

Meet the Conductor: Dr. Ronnie Sanders



Dr. Ronnie Sanders is the conductor (that means he leads the musicians) of the South Texas Symphonic Orchestra. He has even won two Grammy Awards for being an amazing music teacher!

He has conducted concerts all over, including a very special performance at Carnegie Hall, one of the most famous concert halls in the world!

Dr. Sanders studied music at one of the most famous schools in the world: the Juilliard School in New York City. He also earned advanced degrees in conducting, which means he trained for many years to learn how to lead musicians.

A music critic once called him a “Renaissance man,” which means he is talented in many different areas. Dr. Sanders doesn’t just conduct orchestra music—he has also led opera (musical storytelling on stage) , Ballet (storytelling through dance), choirs, musicals (plays and music combined), and more!

Dr. Sanders believes everyone should have the chance to hear and enjoy great music. That’s why the South Texas Symphonic Orchestra performs for many different communities. In fact, many of the musicians volunteer their time to share music with people who might not otherwise get to hear a live orchestra.

Thanks to leaders like Dr. Sanders, music can bring people together and inspire audiences of all ages!

South Texas Symphonic Orchestra. (n.d.). Dr. Ronnie Sanders, conductor [Photograph]. <https://www.stxso.org/>

Did You Know?

- A full symphony orchestra can have over 70 musicians playing together at the same time!
- The violin is the smallest and highest-sounding string instrument, while the double bass is the largest and lowest.
- The percussion section includes not just drums, but also instruments like triangles, cymbals, and even bells!
- The conductor doesn't make any sound—but they help everyone stay together and play the music the same way.
- Orchestras are divided into four families: strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion.
- Woodwind instruments were originally made of wood—even shiny metal ones like the flute!
- Some percussion instruments can play exact pitches (like the xylophone or timpani), while others make sounds without a specific pitch (like the snare drum or the tambourine).
- Some pieces of orchestra music tell stories without using any words at all.
- Before a concert begins, you might hear musicians warming up. When the oboe plays a note called “A,” the whole orchestra tunes to match it.
- The orchestra doesn't all tune at once! The oboe gives an “A,” and then each section tunes one at a time, so you'll hear the sound shift and grow as different instruments join in.
- Brass instruments make sound when players buzz their lips into the mouthpiece.
- Some orchestra pieces are over 200 years old and people still love hearing them today!
- At the beginning of a concert, the concertmaster (the first violinist) often shakes hands with the conductor as a sign of respect and teamwork.
- Sometimes the music might suddenly stop—but the piece isn't over yet! You can tell because the conductor's hands are still raised. When their hands come down, that's when it's truly the end.
- Some people debate whether the piano belongs in the percussion family! When you press a key, a tiny hammer hits the strings—but it also plays melodies. So... is it percussion or something else? Musicians still love to debate it!

Vocabulary List

Orchestra Vocabulary

- Orchestra – A large group of musicians playing different instruments together.
- Conductor – The leader of the orchestra who uses hand movements to guide the musicians.
- Concertmaster – The lead violinist who helps the orchestra and works closely with the conductor.
- Symphony – A long piece of music written for an orchestra.
- Composer – A person who writes music.
- Musician – A person who plays an instrument.

Instrument Families

- Strings – Instruments that make sound from vibrating strings (violin, viola, cello, bass).
- Woodwinds – Instruments you blow into, often with keys (flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon).
- Brass – Instruments that make sound by buzzing lips (trumpet, trombone, French horn, tuba).
- Percussion – Instruments you strike, shake, or scrape (drums, cymbals, triangle, xylophone).

Music Terms

- Melody – The main tune of a piece of music.
- Rhythm – The pattern of beats in music.
- Tempo – How fast or slow the music is.
- Dynamics – How loud or soft the music is.
- Pitch – How high or low a sound is.
- Harmony – Different notes played together to support the melody.

Vocabulary List

How Musicians Make Sound

- Pluck – To pull and release a string with your fingers (like a violin or cello).
- Bow – To move a bow across a string to make it vibrate.
- Strike – To hit an instrument (like a drum or cymbal).
- Roll – To play many fast beats in a row on a percussion instrument.
- Buzz – To vibrate your lips to create sound on a brass instrument.
- Blow – To send air through an instrument to make sound (woodwinds and brass).
- Tap – To lightly hit an instrument for a softer sound.
- Shake – To move an instrument back and forth to create sound (like a shaker).

Concert Experience

- Audience – The people who come to watch and listen to a performance.
- Performance – When musicians play music for an audience.
- Applause – Clapping to show appreciation at the end of a piece.
- Program – A list of the music that will be performed.



Pre-Performance Questions

- What makes an orchestra different from a band, a rock group, or a solo performer?
- Which instruments do you think you will see and hear in an orchestra? Why do you think they are included?
- What do you think a conductor actually does during a performance? How might the music change without one?
- Why is it important for musicians to practice and rehearse together before a concert?
- How can music tell us something about a culture, a place, or a time in history? Can you think of an example?

Post-Performance Discussion or Journal Questions

- What was your favorite moment in the concert, and why did it stand out to you?
- Which instrument or instrument family caught your attention the most? What did you notice about its sound?
- How did the conductor help the orchestra during the performance? What did you see them doing?
- How did the music make you feel at different times? Can you describe a moment that changed your mood?
- What did you notice about how the musicians worked together as a group?
- Did any part of the music surprise you? What happened?
- How was watching a live orchestra different from listening to music on a device or in a movie?
- What is one new thing you learned about orchestras or instruments today?
- If you could ask one of the musicians a question, what would you ask?
- After this experience, would you want to learn to play an instrument? Why or why not? Which one?

Creative Extensions:

Students may draw the orchestra on stage, write a short review, create a poem inspired by the music, or research an instrument they heard.

ORCHESTRA SEATING CHART



Who Goes Where?

Conductor - The conductor stands at the front and leads the orchestra. They help musicians stay together and show how the music should sound.

Strings (Front of the Orchestra)

Violins Violas Cellos Double Basses

These instruments use bows and strings to make sound.

Woodwinds (Middle Section)

Flutes Oboes Clarinets Bassoons

These instruments make sound when musicians blow air through them.

Brass (Behind the Woodwinds)

Trumpets French Horns Trombones Tuba

Brass instruments are played by buzzing lips into a mouthpiece.

Percussion (Back of the Orchestra)

Timpani Drums Cymbals Other instruments that are struck or shaken.

Orchestra Seating Chart Worksheet

South Texas Symphonic Orchestra

Name: _____ Date: _____

When you attend a symphony concert, musicians sit in different sections of the orchestra. Each section has instruments that make sound in different ways.

Use the orchestra seating chart to help answer the questions below.

Part 1 — Orchestra Sections

Write the correct section name next to each description.

Choices: Strings Woodwinds Brass Percussion

These instruments make sound when air is blown through them.

Examples: flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon.

These instruments are played by buzzing lips into a mouthpiece.

Examples: trumpet, trombone, horn, tuba.

These instruments make sound when strings are bowed or plucked.

Examples: violin, viola, cello, bass.

These instruments are struck, shaken, or hit to make sound.

Examples: drums, cymbals, timpani.

Part 2 — Where Do They Sit?

Who stands at the front of the orchestra and leads the musicians?

Which section usually sits closest to the conductor?

Which section usually sits behind the woodwinds?

Which section usually sits at the very back of the orchestra?

Part 3 — Instrument Match

Draw a line to match the instrument with its orchestra section.

Violin

Woodwind

Flute

Brass

Trumpet

String

Timpani

Percussion

Cello

Clarinet

Bass

Part 4 — Observation Challenge

When you attend the concert, look carefully at the orchestra.

Which instrument did you notice most often?

How did the conductor help the musicians play together?

Which section of the orchestra sounded the loudest?

Bonus Challenge

Draw a picture of the orchestra on stage.

Label all four sections of the orchestra.

Meet the Instrument Families of the Orchestra

Strings

How they make sound: Strings vibrate when they are bowed or plucked.

Instruments in the string family:

VIOLIN



VIOLA



CELLO



DOUBLE BASS

Fun Fact:

The violin is the smallest string instrument and usually plays the highest notes.

Strings usually sit closest to the conductor at the front of the orchestra. Because they play softer sounds than other instruments, there are more of them to make a louder sound.

The String Family: Instruments that need numbers for volume

The string family is the largest group in the orchestra. String instruments make sound when their strings vibrate. Strings usually sit in the front of the orchestra.

Musicians can make the strings vibrate in two main ways:

- Bowing – using a bow to pull across the strings
- Plucking – using fingers to pull the strings

Violin

- Smallest string instrument
- Plays the highest notes in the orchestra

Viola

- Slightly larger than a violin
- Sounds lower and warmer

Cello

- Played sitting down
- The instrument rests on the floor

Double Bass

- The largest string instrument
- Played standing up OR seated on a tall stool
- Plays the lowest notes

Look and Listen

While watching the concert, see if you can:

- ☐ Find the cello and string bass sections
- ☐ Watch musicians use their bows
- ☐ Notice how many string players are on stage

Quick Question

Which string instrument can be played from a tall stool?

Woodwinds

How they make sound: Woodwind instruments make sounds when musicians blow air through a mouthpiece. Some instruments use a reed, a small piece of wood that vibrates to make sound.

Instruments in the woodwind family:

FLUTE



OBOE



CLARINET



BASSON



Fun Fact:

The flute does not use a reed, but it is still part of the woodwind family because it used to be made of wood!

Woodwinds usually sit behind the strings in the middle of the orchestra.

The Woodwind Family: Instruments You Blow Air Into

Woodwind instruments make sound when musicians blow air through them. Some woodwind instruments use a reed. A reed is a small piece of wood that vibrates to make sound. Woodwinds usually sit in the middle of the orchestra. Woodwinds usually sit in the middle of the orchestra.

Instruments in the Woodwind Family

Flute

- Played by blowing across a hole
- Does not use a reed
- not made of wood

Oboe

- Uses a double reed (two reeds placed against each other)
- Has a bright, clear sound
- The base looks like a rounded balloon

Clarinet

- Uses a single reed
- Can play many different types of music
- The base looks like a bell

Bassoon

The largest woodwind instrument

Plays very low notes

Has a mouthpiece that starts at the center of the instrument and curves up to reach the musician's mouth

Look and Listen

During the concert:

- ☐ See if you can spot the bassoons
- ☐ Listen for a woodwind playing a melody
- ☐ Notice the shiny keys on the instruments

Quick Question

Which woodwind instrument is the largest?

Brass

How they make sound:

Brass players make sound by buzzing their lips into a mouthpiece.

Instruments in the brass family:

TRUMPET



FRENCH HORN



TROMBONE



TUBE



SAXOPHONE



Fun Fact:

The trombone is the only brass instrument with a slide, a tube that slides in and out of the instrument to raise and lower the pitch.

Brass instruments usually sit behind the woodwinds.

The Brass Family: Instruments Made of Metal

Brass instruments are made of shiny metal. Musicians make sound by buzzing their lips into a mouthpiece. The buzzing travels through the long tubes of the instrument and creates sound. The musician presses buttons that open and close valves to change the pitches. Brass instruments often play powerful and exciting music. They usually sit behind the woodwinds.

Instruments in the Brass Family

- Trumpet
- Small but very loud and bright
- Is sometimes played with a “mute,” a tool that goes into the bell and blocks some of the sound

French Horn

- Has a long tube that is wrapped in circles
- Sometimes, the musician puts their hand into the bell at the end of the horn

Trombone

- Uses a slide instead of valves

Tuba

- The largest brass instrument
- Plays the lowest brass notes

Look and Listen

During the concert:

- ☐ Watch the trombone slide move
- ☐ Listen for loud brass sounds
- ☐ Try to find the large tuba

Quick Question

Which brass instrument uses a mute?

Percussion

How they make sound:

Percussion instruments make sound when they are hit, shaken, clapped together, or scraped.

Instruments in the percussion family:

Timpani



Snare Drum



Cymbals



Bass Drum



Triangle



Xylophone



Fun Fact:

Percussion players often perform on many different instruments in one concert!

Percussion usually sits at the back of the orchestra.

The Percussion Family: Instruments You Strike or Shake

Percussion instruments make sound when they are hit, shaken, scraped, or clapped together. Some have hammers, mallets, or strikers. Percussion instruments add rhythm, excitement, and special sounds to the orchestra. Percussion players often perform on many different instruments in one concert! Percussion instruments sit at the back of the orchestra.

Instruments in the Percussion Family

Timpani

- Large drums that can be tuned to different notes.

Snare Drum

- Makes a sharp, marching sound.
- Has tight springs across the bottom of the drum that bounce and strike the drum again, giving it the very loud, sharp sound.

Bass Drum

- A very large drum with deep sounds.
- So big, it must be played tipped or on its side.

Cymbals

- Metal plates that crash together.

Triangle

- A small metal instrument with a bright ringing sound.

Xylophone

- Wooden bars that are struck with mallets.

Look and Listen

During the concert:

- ☐ Watch a percussionist switch instruments
- ☐ Listen for a cymbal crash
- ☐ Try to find the timpani drums

Quick Question

What percussion instrument has a set of springs on the bottom?

The Conductor

The conductor is the one part of the orchestra that doesn't make any sounds! The conductor stands at the front of the orchestra and keeps the musicians playing together. With their hands, they use gestures to show when to start, stop, and control how fast, slow, loud, or soft the music should be. Conductors often use a baton, a small stick that helps musicians see their movements and stand with their backs turned to the audience on a small box called a podium.

BATON



CONDUCTOR



GESTURES



PODIUM



Meet the Conductor

At the front of the orchestra stands the conductor. The conductor helps the orchestra perform together. Even though many musicians are playing at the same time, the conductor helps everyone stay together, balanced, and expressive. Conductors often use a baton, a small white stick that helps musicians see their movements clearly. Everyone in the orchestra pays close attention to the conductor! When the music is over, the conductor will turn and bow to the audience.

What the Conductor Does:

- Starts and stops the music
- Keeps the orchestra playing at the same speed (tempo)
- Shows when music should be louder or softer (dynamics)
- Helps different sections enter the music at the right time
- Guides the feeling and energy of the music

Conductors spend many hours studying the music before rehearsals. During rehearsals, they help musicians shape the sound of the orchestra.

Watch the Conductor!

During the concert, see if you notice:

- ☐ When the conductor raises the baton to start the music
- ☐ Large arm movements for loud music
- ☐ Smaller motions for softer music
- ☐ Eye contact with different musicians

Quick Question

What is the name of the small stick conductors use?

Think Like a Musician: Big Questions About the Orchestra

Students often ask questions about how instruments work and why orchestras are organized the way they are. Discuss these questions with your class.

- Why do you think there are so many violins and violas on stage? (Hint: String instruments often carry the main melodies and need many players to balance the sound of the orchestra.)
- Why is the flute called a “woodwind” when it is made of metal? (Hint: The flute was originally made of wood and is grouped with instruments that use air to create sound.)
- Why is the lip motion used to make brass instruments sound called a “buzz”? (Hint: Try making the sound with your lips. Remember: the lips are much tighter for a “buzz” and for a “raspberry”!)
- Sometimes words sound like the sounds they describe. Which part of the word “percussion” reminds you of the sound percussion instruments make?
- Why does a conductor use a baton, their hands, and eye contact to keep the orchestra together?



How to Talk About Orchestral Music: Listening Like a Music Critic

When people talk about music, they often say, “It was good” or “I liked it.” Those are a good start, but musicians and listeners try to explain how the music sounded: what they hear and how the music moves and feels. Instead of just saying “I liked it,” try saying:

- I liked it because...
- The music was exciting when...
- The music changed when...
- The (name the instrument playing) made the music feel...

Good listeners offer more than their opinion, they describe what they hear. Here are some helpful words you can use!

Tempo (Speed of the Music)

Tempo tells us how fast or slow the music moves.

Examples: fast • slow • steady • rushing • calm

Listening Question:

Describe how the speed of the music changed during the performance. Talk about which moments felt fast or slow and how that affected the way the music felt.



Dynamics tell us how loud or quiet the music is.

Examples: loud • soft • very loud • gentle • powerful

Listening Question:

Explain how the orchestra used loud and soft sounds in the music and how did those changes affect the energy or mood of the piece.

Instrument Families - different instruments can create different colors of sound.

Examples: strings • woodwinds • brass • percussion

Listening Question

Describe a moment when you noticed a specific instrument or instrument family. What did that sound like and how did it add to the music?

Mood (The Feeling of the Music)

Music can create many emotions, sometimes even in the same piece of music!

Examples: exciting • peaceful • mysterious • sad • joyful • dramatic

Listening Question:

Describe the feeling or mood the music created for you. What sounds or instruments helped create that feeling?



Movement (How the Music Changes)

Music is always moving and changing.

It might:

- grow louder or softer
- speed up or slow down
- move from one instrument group to another

Listening Question

Explain how the music moved or changed during the performance.

What did you notice about how different sections of the orchestra shared the melody or rhythm?

Concert Reflection

Write 2–3 sentences describing the concert.

Use specific details about what you heard.

Instead of saying “It was good,” explain why.

What to Watch for During the Concert

Becoming an Orchestra Detective

When you attend a live orchestra performance, there is a lot happening on stage at the same time. Musicians are listening, watching, and working together to create the music. The conductor is leading everyone. The instruments are all being played in different ways. A story is being told through the music.

During the concert, watch carefully and see what you notice.

Watch the Conductor

The conductor leads the orchestra using their arms, hands, and (maybe) a baton. Look for:

- How the conductor starts the music
- When the conductor uses large movements for louder music or small movements for quieter music
- When the conductor uses slow movements to relax the music or fast movements to signal the musicians to play with more speed
- Moments when the conductor signals a section of the orchestra to begin playing or to stop and be silent
- Times when the conductor gestures for one section to do one thing and another section to do something different at the same time

Think About It:

Describe something the conductor did that helped the orchestra stay together.

Watch the String Players

String players use bows or their fingers to make their instruments sound. Look for:

- Bows moving in the same direction in an entire section of instruments
- Fast bow movements for exciting music or slow bow movements for gentle music
- Musicians not using bows at all and using their fingers to pluck the strings.
- Musicians turning pages in their music

Think About It

Describe how the bow movements matched the sound of the music.

Watch the Wind and Brass Players

Woodwind and brass players use breath and air to create sound. Look for:

- Musicians taking deep breaths before playing
- Fingers moving on keys or valves
- Trombone slides moving forward and back
- Musicians waiting quietly until it is their turn to play

Think About It

Describe a moment when you noticed a wind or brass instrument playing. What sounds did they add to the music?

Watch the Percussion Section

Percussion players often perform on many different instruments during a concert. Look for:

- Musicians moving between instruments
- Mallets, sticks, or hands striking instruments
- A cymbal crash or drum roll
- How percussion adds excitement to the music

Think About It

Explain how percussion instruments added energy or drama to the music you heard.

Watch How the Music Moves Through the Orchestra

Sometimes the melody travels from one section of the orchestra to another. This helps create variety and excitement in the music. For example:

Strings - Woodwinds - Brass - Percussion

Think About It

Describe a moment when the music moved from one group of instruments to another and how that changed the music.

Your Orchestra Discovery

What was one interesting thing you noticed during the performance? Explain what you saw or heard and why it stood out to you.

Try Conducting the Orchestra

Conductors help musicians stay together by showing the beat of the music with their hands or baton. Different types of music use different beat patterns.

Let's try conducting!

Step 1: Find the Beat

First, tap a steady beat on your desk or pat your legs with the class.

Example:

1 - 2 - 3 - 4

1 - 2 - 3 - 4

This steady beat helps musicians stay together.

Step 2: Conduct a 4-Beat Pattern

Most orchestral music uses four beats in each measure. Conductors show this pattern with their hand.

Move your hand in this shape:

Beat 1 - Start in the center and drop down

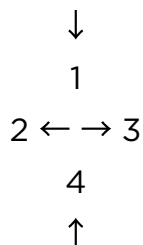
Beat 2 - Up a little and to the left

Beat 3 - Across to the right

Beat 4 - Back up and to the center

Try moving your hand while counting!

Pattern shape:



Step 3: Show Loud and Soft Music

Conductors also show how loud or soft the music should be. Try this:

- For loud music, use large arm movements
- For quiet music, use small arm movements
- Practice conducting both ways

REMEMBER: “loud” and “fast” - AND - “soft” and “slow” are different things. Music can be fast and soft or slow and loud!

Step 4: Change the Speed

Conductors control how fast or slow the orchestra plays. Try conducting:

- Slow tempo: 1... 2... 3... 4...
- Fast tempo: 1-2-3-4!

Step 5: Conduct Your Class

Choose someone to be the conductor! The class will tap the beat on their legs or count out loud, “1,2,3,4. 1,2,3,4.” The conductor will:

- Show the beat
- Make the music faster or slower
- Make the class clap louder or softer
- The class must follow the conductor!

Reflection

- What was challenging about conducting?
- How did the conductor help the group stay together?
- Why do you think orchestras need conductors?

Grade 4 117.106

- (b)(1)(A) — Read, write, and perform rhythmic patterns including whole, half, quarter, and eighth notes/rests
- (b)(1)(B) — Read, write, and perform melodic patterns
- (b)(2)(A) — Sing or play classroom instruments independently or in groups
- (b)(2)(B) — Perform using appropriate posture, phrasing, and dynamics

Grade 5 117.107

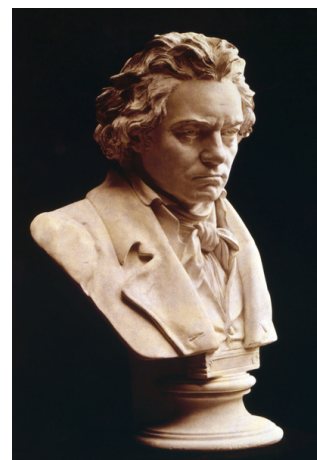
- (b)(1)(A) — Read, write, and perform more complex rhythmic patterns
- (b)(1)(B) — Read, write, and perform melodic notation
- (b)(2)(A) — Perform music in groups with accurate intonation and rhythm
- (b)(2)(B) — Demonstrate appropriate ensemble skills

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Egmont Overture

About the Composer

Ludwig van Beethoven was a German composer who changed music forever. He lived during a time when music was becoming more emotional and dramatic. Beethoven continued to compose even after he began losing his hearing, which makes his accomplishments even more remarkable. Today he is considered one of the greatest composers in music history.



About the Music

The Egmont Overture was written as the opening music for a play about a hero named Count Egmont. The story takes place in the Netherlands, where Egmont fights for freedom against a powerful ruler. The music tells this dramatic story without using words.

Why It's a Masterwork

This piece is considered a masterwork because Beethoven uses the orchestra to create strong emotions and powerful musical storytelling.

The music moves from dark and serious sounds to a triumphant and hopeful ending, showing how music can tell a story of courage and victory.

Listen For:

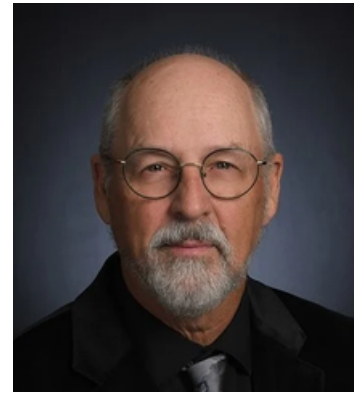
- ☐ Strong, powerful brass sounds
- ☐ Dramatic changes from soft to loud
- ☐ A triumphant ending that feels heroic



Leon Steward (1959- present)

About the Composer

Leon Steward is from Baytown, Texas. He studied music in college and became both a composer (someone who writes music) and a music teacher. He taught band for 38 years in Texas schools!



Mr. Steward has written more than 400 pieces of music. He is also a horn player and has performed with many music groups and orchestras across Texas. Today, he still plays with the South Texas Symphonic Orchestra—and he is still living and continuing to share his music!

Did You Know?

- A “composer” is someone who writes music, just like an author writes books, poems, or stories.
- An “overture” is a piece of music that often starts a concert or tells a musical story.
- “Syncopation” means playing rhythms that are off the main beat, which can make music sound surprising and exciting. (Another piece in this concert will use a lot of syncopation!)
- A “theme” is the main musical idea in a piece, and composers can repeat it, change it, or pass it between different instruments.
- Many composers, like Leon Steward, are alive today and still creating music!

Steward, L. (n.d.). [Leon Steward profile page]. J.W. Pepper.
<https://www.jwpepper.com/myscore/LeonSteward>



About the Music

“Tear the Sky Apart” begins with a strong and confident opening that immediately grabs the listener’s attention. As the piece continues, the music moves through fast, energetic sections that contrast with a slower, more lyrical (smooth and expressive) middle section.

One exciting part of this piece is how the main theme (melody) travels through the orchestra. You will hear it copied by each of the instrument families (strings, brass, and woodwinds) and sometimes it is played in new styles or with small changes. This keeps the music interesting and fresh each time it returns.

“Tear the Sky Apart” also uses off-beat (syncopated) rhythms, which make the music feel lively and surprising. From beginning to end, the music keeps pushing forward with energy. It has a strong sense of momentum, meaning it feels like it is always moving ahead and never slowing down for long.

Listen For:

- Fast vs. slow sections — how the music changes mood and speed while never losing “momentum” - the sense of forward motion
- Syncopated (off-beat) rhythms that make the music feel exciting
- Different instrument groups taking turns playing the main theme
- The main theme as it comes back in new styles and other different ways

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

1812 Overture

About the Composer

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was a Russian composer famous for writing music that is emotional, colorful, and exciting. He wrote many well-known works including “The Nutcracker,” “Swan Lake,” and “The Sleeping Beauty.” His music often tells stories and creates vivid musical pictures.



About the Music

The 1812 Overture was written to celebrate Russia’s victory over Napoleon’s army in 1812. The music represents the struggle between two nations. Tchaikovsky used powerful sounds, including church bells and cannons, to make the music feel grand and dramatic.

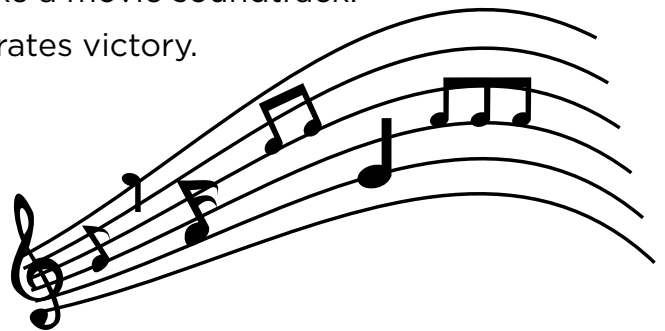


Why It’s a Masterwork

This piece is a masterwork because it shows how an orchestra can create huge, exciting musical moments that feel almost like a movie soundtrack. It is famous for its huge ending, which celebrates victory.

Listen For

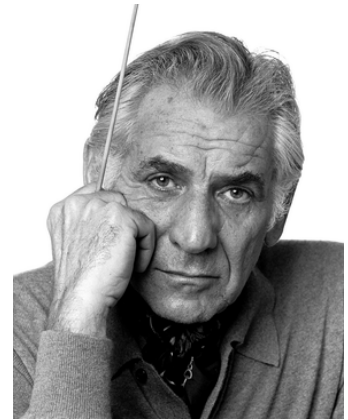
- ☐ Quiet, peaceful opening music
- ☐ Powerful brass sections
- ☐ Big, dramatic ending music



Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) “Mambo” from West Side Story

About the Composer

Leonard Bernstein was an American composer, conductor, and teacher. He believed music should connect people and tell powerful stories. Bernstein helped bring classical music to new audiences and blended classical music, jazz, and Latin rhythms in many of his works.



About the Music

“Mambo” comes from the famous musical West Side Story, which premiered in 1957. The music is energetic and inspired by Latin dance rhythms. The story is inspired by Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet but is set in New York City and tells the story of two rival teenage groups. The scene where “Mambo” appears takes place at a school gym dance. Both groups attend the dance and the band begins playing a fast Latin dance called a mambo. The music creates excitement and competition on the dance floor. It is during this dance that the two main characters, Tony and Maria, first see each other.

What Is a Mambo?

The mambo is a style of dance music that developed in Cuba and became very popular in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. It is made for dancing!

Mambo music is known for:

- strong rhythmic patterns
- energetic percussion
- exciting brass sounds

In Bernstein’s piece, the orchestra plays these rhythms with great energy while the dancers move across the stage.



Mitchell, J. (Photographer). (n.d.). Leonard Bernstein [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard_Bernstein#/media/File:Leonard_Bernstein_by_Jack_Mitchell_\(high_quality\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard_Bernstein#/media/File:Leonard_Bernstein_by_Jack_Mitchell_(high_quality).jpg)

Why This Piece Is Famous

Bernstein's "Mambo" became one of the most famous moments in West Side Story because of its explosive energy and exciting rhythms. It is considered a masterwork of orchestral writing because Bernstein successfully blended classical orchestral music, jazz, Latin dance rhythms, and Broadway musical theater. This combination helped bring new sounds and cultures into the orchestra.

A Fun Moment in the Music

During the piece, the musicians suddenly shout: "Mambo!" This surprising moment adds excitement and helps capture the feeling of a lively dance party.

Why It's a Masterwork

This piece is considered a masterwork because it shows how orchestral music can blend different musical cultures and styles. The fast rhythms, bold brass sounds, and exciting percussion create music that feels like a celebration.

Listen For

- Bright, powerful brass instruments
- Fast Latin percussion rhythms
- Syncopated rhythms that feel like dancing
- The orchestra shouting "Mambo!"



The music is fast, joyful, and full of energy—just like the dance it celebrates.



Aaron Copland (1900–1990)

“Hoe-Down” from Rodeo

About the Composer

Aaron Copland was an American composer known for writing music that captures the spirit of the American West. His music often sounds wide, open, and energetic, like the landscapes of the United States.



About the Music

Hoe-Down is part of the ballet Rodeo, which tells the story of life on a ranch. The name “Hoe-Down” comes from an old American term for a lively country dance, especially one held in rural farming communities. The music is based on folk tunes and sounds like a lively country dance.



Long ago, people working on farms used a tool called a hoe to work the soil. After a long day of work, communities would sometimes gather for music and dancing. These gatherings were often casual celebrations where people relaxed, played fiddle music, and danced together. People would put their “hoe down” and gather to relax. Over time, the phrase “hoe-down” became a nickname for these energetic country dances.



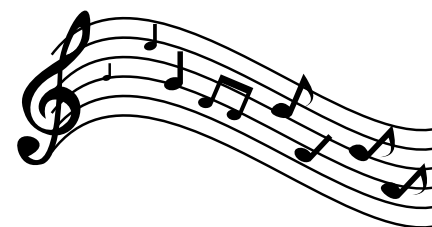
Why It’s a Masterwork

This piece is a masterwork because Copland created a sound that many people think of as capturing the “American Spirit.” The music is exciting, rhythmic, and full of energy.

Listen For

- ☐ Quick, bouncy rhythms
- ☐ Strong string playing
- ☐ Music that feels like a lively dance with a short space for rest (and mischief) and a return to dancing.

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. (n.d.). Aaron Copland.
<https://www.aso.org/artists/detail/aaron-copland>



Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924)

“Nessun Dorma” from Turandot

About the Composer

Giacomo Puccini was an Italian composer famous for writing beautiful operas filled with emotion and powerful melodies. His operas include “La Bohème,” “Turandot,” and “Madam Butterfly.”



About the Music

“Nessun Dorma” is an aria (a powerful solo song) from the opera (a story told through singing) Turandot. The opera is sung in Italian but the story is set in China! “Nessun Dorma” means “No One Shall Sleep.”



In this story, Prince Calaf must solve three riddles to marry Princess Turandot. He succeeds and then gives her a way out: if she can discover his name before dawn, she can escape the marriage. The princess orders that no one in the city may sleep until his name is discovered. Calaf sings this aria confidently, believing she will fail.

The Meaning of the Song

The prince sings that no one will sleep tonight because the princess is searching for his name. He secretly tells the stars that he will win and claim his victory by dawn. The music builds with growing confidence and excitement as he declares that love and courage will triumph.

Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). Giacomo Puccini. Encyclopaedia Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Giacomo-Puccini>

Famous Final Line

The most famous line of the aria is: “Vincerò! Vincerò! Vincerò!”

This means: “I will win! I will win! I will win!”

The music grows stronger and stronger and the Prince sings higher and higher until the piece ends with a soaring finale. This powerful ending is one reason why the aria has become one of the most famous moments in all of opera.

Did you know... When something really exciting or special happens on stage, the audience will stand up when they applaud (clap their hands).

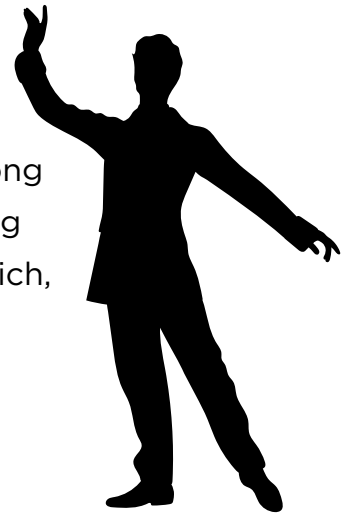
It is a tradition for the audience to give a “standing ovation,” to stand and clap, when the Prince sings his high note at the end of *Nessun Dorma*.

Why It's a Masterwork

This aria is one of the most famous melodies in opera. The song builds slowly and powerfully until the singer reaches a thrilling high note at the end. The orchestra supports the voice with rich, emotional music, making the moment unforgettable.

Listen For

- ☐ A strong solo singer
- ☐ Music that gradually grows louder and more powerful
- ☐ A dramatic and triumphant final note



Writing About the Music

Music can tell stories, show emotions, and create exciting moments without using words. After learning about the composers and pieces in this concert, think about what you might hear during the performance. Use the questions below to help you describe the music and explain your ideas clearly.

Part 1: Musical Storytelling

Some orchestral music tells a story. For example:

- Egmont Overture tells a story of courage and freedom.
- 1812 Overture celebrates victory in a historic battle.

Choose one of these pieces and explain what kind of story the music might tell. What musical sounds help tell that story?

Part 2: Music and Movement

Some pieces in this concert were written for dancing or movement, such as:

- Mambo from West Side Story
- Hoe-Down from Rodeo

Imagine you are watching dancers perform to this music. Describe how the music might make people move in their dance. Think about the speed of the music, the kinds of rhythms played, and the energy of the dance.

Part 3: Powerful Musical Moments

Some music becomes exciting by growing louder, faster, or more dramatic.

For example:

- The powerful ending of 1812 Overture
- The dramatic high note at the end of Nessun Dorma
-

Describe what you think makes these moments powerful for listeners. Explain how the orchestra or singer might create that excitement.

Part 4: Your Musical Prediction

Which piece from the concert are you most curious to hear? Explain why you think it will be interesting. Use ideas from the reading to support your answer.

Challenge Question

Imagine you are writing a concert review for your school newspaper.

Write 3–4 sentences explaining what you expect the concert to be like and what you hope to hear. Try to describe the music using specific details about instruments, rhythm, or emotion.

Grade 4

ELAR 110.6

- (b)(6) Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using multiple texts
- (b)(7) Author's purpose and craft
- (b)(8) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using multiple texts
- (b)(9) Composition: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using multiple texts

General Music 117.107

- (b)(1) Foundations: music literacy
- (b)(3) Historical and cultural relevance
- (b)(4) Critical evaluation and response
- (b)(3) Historical and cultural relevance
- (b)(4) Critical evaluation and response

Grade 5

ELAR 110.7

- (b)(6) Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using multiple texts
- (b)(7) Author's purpose and craft
- (b)(8) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using multiple texts
- (b)(9) Composition: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using multiple texts

Grade 5

General Music 117.108

- (b)(1) Foundations: music literacy
- (b)(3) Historical and cultural relevance
- (b)(4) Critical evaluation and response

Literature Connections

The Story of the Orchestra by Robert Levine & Meredith Hamilton

The Philharmonic Gets Dressed by Karla Kuskin

The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra by Anita Ganeri

A Child's Introduction to the Orchestra by Robert Levine

Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin by Lloyd Moss

Before the Music Starts: A Story About the Conductor by Kristen L. Depken

The Music in George's Head by Suzanne Slade

Ada's Violin by Susan Hood

Digital Resources

New York Philharmonic Kidzone <https://nyphil.org/kidzone>

San Francisco Symphony : Meet the Instruments <https://www.keepingsscore.org>

Dallas Symphony Orchestra Kids (DSOKids) <https://www.dsokids.com>

Chrome Music Lab – Orchestra Experiments <https://musiclab.chromeexperiments.com>

London Symphony Orchestra: Always Playing <https://www.lso.co.uk/alwaysplaying>

Classics for Kids: Be the Conductor Game <https://www.classicsforkids.com>

Carnegie Hall: Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra <https://listeningadventures.carnegiehall.org>

Try Conducting an Orchestra

Play the Orchestra: BBC Ten Pieces <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/ten-pieces>

Classics for Kids: Conducting Game <https://www.classicsforkids.com/games/conducting/>

Dallas Symphony Orchestra Kids: Conducting Activity <https://www.dsokids.com>

About the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts



Photo credit: Marmon Mok Architecture

An Incredibly Powerful Vision

Situated along the banks of the San Antonio River in the city’s heart, the historic Municipal Auditorium, with its original facade preserved, has been transformed into a world-class venue. This theatrical icon is once again the pride of the river and a shining beacon of creativity, fine art, and downtown development. There is no better place — anywhere — to see and hear a live performance.

The remarkable flexibility of the 1,738-seat H-E-B Performance Hall, with its distinctive “flat floor” capability, opens the door for performances and events of almost any sort. The acoustics in the Hall can be “tuned” to fit the performance and physical set-up of the hall. The sound insulation throughout The Tobin Center enables simultaneous use of the Performance Hall, the Studio Theater, and the 600-seat River Walk Plaza. Audiences can see and hear performers and hear performers and performances of every description at the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts, WHERE THE ARTS LIVE.

www.tobincenter.org

[Tobin Center Floor Flip Video](#)



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