GENERATION NEXT EDUCATION INITIATIVE

THE ORCHESTRA SAN ANTONIO

YOUTH CONCERT SERIES:

EMERGENcE

AND

VIcTORY

EDUCATOR GUIDE



Charline & Red McCombs ARTS EDUCATION FUND The Tobin Center

Educator Guide

Created by: Dr. Kimberly Stephenson

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Title: EMERGENcE and VIcTORY

Date / Time: February 26, 2027 - NOON

Target Grade Levels / Subjects: 2-5, MS HS Band and Orchestra, General Music, Social Studies, History, Music Appreciation, GT students

Run Time: approximately one hour

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



Welcome to the Show!

Dear Students, Educators, and Families:

Welcome to the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts! I am delighted to welcome you to this beautiful space for The Orchestra San Antonio's EMERGENcE and VIcTORY. There is something special about hearing live music fill this hall, and you are part of what makes each performance unique.

Notice the little c in our title? It's a musical clue! A lowercase letter indicates a minor key, and two of today's pieces are in c minor. You'll hear music by Rossini, Rachmaninoff, and Beethoven, featuring young pianist Olivia Larco. These composers knew how to capture an audience's attention, whether through a playful melody, a dramatic piano entrance, or just four unforgettable notes.

As TOSA's chamber orchestra takes the stage, watch how the musicians communicate without speaking. Notice how the piano and orchestra exchange musical ideas, and listen for how a small beginning can grow into a powerful moment. You may recognize something familiar or discover a sound you have never noticed before.

Thank you for joining us. Get comfortable, bring your curiosity, and enjoy the show!

Sincerely:

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



About the Art Form

Historical & Cultural Background – Orchestral Music



Orchestral music began to take shape in Europe during the 1600s and 1700s, when composers started writing for groups of instruments rather than solo performers. Early orchestras were small and often connected to royal courts or churches. Over time, composers experimented with combining strings, winds, brass, and percussion to create richer and more powerful sounds. As musical forms like the symphony and concerto developed, so did the size and complexity of the orchestra.

During the Classical and Romantic periods, orchestras expanded in both number and variety of instruments. Composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, and later Dvořák explored new ways to use tone color, dynamics, and texture to express emotion and tell stories without words. The orchestra became a vehicle for cultural identity, national pride, and artistic innovation.
In the 20th and 21st centuries, orchestral music continued to evolve. Composers began blending classical traditions with jazz, folk music, film scores, and global influences. Today's orchestras may perform centuries-old masterpieces one night and contemporary works the next, often incorporating diverse musical styles and communities.

Modern orchestras typically include four main instrument families: strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. Together, these instruments create a wide range of sounds—from delicate and lyrical to bold and dramatic—allowing orchestral music to remain one of the most expressive and dynamic art forms in the world.

About the Performance



Personnel:
Leonardo Pineda, conductor & narrator
Olivia Larco – pianist
The Orchestra San Antonio

Program:

Excerpts from:

- Gioachino Rossini: Overture from The Barber of Seville
- Sergei Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 18
- Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67

Description:

Big ideas. Bold sounds. Music that makes an entrance!

What can four famous notes set in motion? How does a piano hold its own alongside an entire orchestra? Join The Orchestra San Antonio and Generation NEXT for a musical adventure filled with playful surprises, powerful emotions, and triumphant sounds. Led by conductor Leonardo Pineda, this Youth Concert Series performance features selections from Rossini's The Barber of Seville Overture, Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. Students will experience how composers use rhythm, melody, and contrast to build suspense, express big feelings, and turn a musical idea into something unforgettable.

Sixteen year old Guest Pianist Olivia Larco brings the excitement of a young artist taking the stage, inviting students to imagine where their own creativity and practice might lead.

Meet Olivia Larco





Sixteen-year-old pianist Olivia Larco has performed for audiences across the United States, Germany, and China, and you may have spotted her as a "piano prodigy" on ABC's Modern Family! She has also appeared on NPR's From the Top and performed with the YOLA National Festival Orchestra alongside conductor Gustavo Dudamel at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Olivia began attending the Aspen Summer Music Festival at just eight years old, becoming its youngest pianist ever accepted. She has studied with distinguished teachers at Aspen and the Colburn School, and her accomplishments include first prizes at the Arthur Fraser International Piano Competition and the Colburn Seminar Steinway Competition. She was the youngest competitor in both events. As a featured soloist, Olivia performs her own musical part while listening and responding to the orchestra around her. During this concert, watch how she communicates with the conductor and fellow musicians as they bring Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 to life.

Listen to Olivia's episode on "From The Top"





Did You Know?

...Young performers have a balancing act! Preparing for a concert means fitting practice and rehearsals around schoolwork, family, friends, and rest. Learning the notes is only part of the challenge. Young soloists also practice staying focused, listening to other musicians, and continuing when something unexpected happens.

...A soloist is also a teammate! Even when the spotlight is on Olivia, she is not making music alone. Playing a concerto means knowing when to lead, when to accompany, and when to listen. Watch for the musical teamwork between the pianist, conductor, and orchestra.

...Rossini recycled his own music! The overture to The Barber of Seville had already been used in two of Rossini's earlier operas. An overture is instrumental music that opens an opera. Rossini gave this one three different jobs!

...Rachmaninoff needed encouragement, too! Before writing his Piano Concerto No. 2, Rachmaninoff struggled to believe in his ability to compose. With support from Dr. Nikolai Dahl, he regained his confidence and returned to writing. He dedicated the concerto to Dahl as a thank-you. Even great artists sometimes need help finding their way forward.

...Four notes can make a BIG impression! Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 begins with a famous four-note pattern: short-short-short-LONG! That tiny musical idea helps shape the first movement. Listen for how Beethoven changes it and passes it between instruments.

...A grand piano has a hidden hammer team! Pressing a piano key sets a mechanism in motion that sends a small, felt-covered hammer toward the strings. The vibrating strings create sound. Your fingers touch the keys, but the hammers do the striking!

...Eighty-eight keys can control more than 200 strings!
A typical modern piano has 88 keys, but many notes use two or three strings sounding together. Inside the instrument, a wooden soundboard helps those vibrations become a sound big enough to fill a concert hall.

...Olivia started young! Olivia was just eight years old when she became the youngest pianist ever accepted to the Aspen Summer Music Festival. At fourteen, she won first prize at the Arthur Fraser International Piano Competition as its youngest competitor. Her musical journey shows how curiosity, practice, and dedication can open extraordinary doors.
Beethoven's Fifth had a chilly beginning!

...Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 premiered in Vienna in December 1808 during a concert in a bitterly cold theater. His Sixth Symphony premiered at the same concert! Imagine hearing both of these works for the very first time while trying to keep warm.

...The Orchestra San Antonio (TOSA) is the resident orchestra at The Tobin Center and performs right here in your city.

...TOSA works with other San Antonio arts organizations like opera and ballet to bring big performances to life.
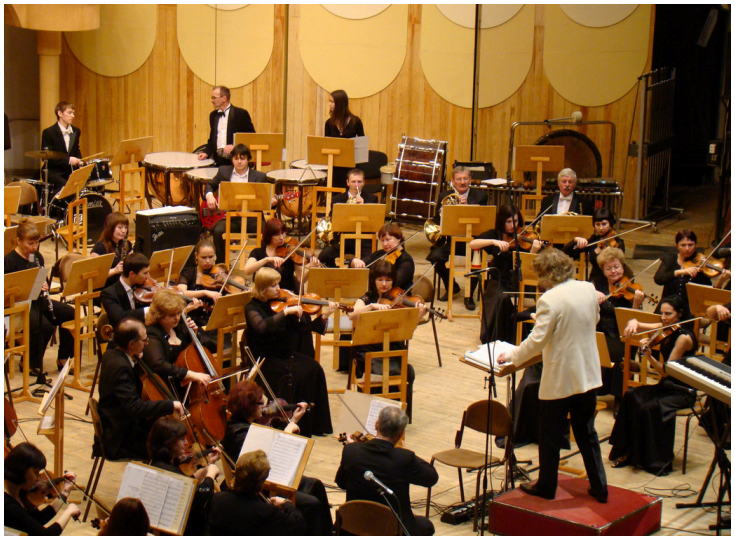
...TOSA offers programs and special opportunities to help young musicians learn, grow, and even prepare for professional music careers.



Did You Know?

Not every large group of musicians is the same!

A symphony orchestra is a large ensemble featuring strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion, sometimes with 70–100 musicians or more. A chamber orchestra uses the same instrument families but is smaller, often with about 20–40 musicians, creating a more intimate sound. A concert band has no regular string section; instead, its sound is built around woodwinds, brass, and percussion. Same idea—musicians working together—but very different combinations of instruments and sounds!





Vocabulary List

MELODY – A series of notes heard as a musical phrase or tune.

HARMONY – The combination of different notes sounding together.

RHYTHM – The pattern of sounds and silences in music.
+
COMPOSER – A person who creates music.

SYMPHONY – A large musical work written for an orchestra, usually divided into sections called movements.

CONCERTO – A musical work featuring a solo instrument, such as a piano, performing with an orchestra.

ORCHESTRA – A group of musicians who play instruments together, often including strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion.

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA – A smaller orchestra with fewer musicians than a full symphony orchestra.

PIANIST – A musician who plays the piano.

SOLOIST – A featured musician who performs an individual musical part, alone or with a group.

CONDUCTOR – A musical leader who uses gestures to guide musicians through a performance.

TEMPO – The speed of the music.

DYNAMICS – The levels of loudness and softness in music.

THEME – An important musical idea that may return or change throughout a piece.

MOTIF – A short musical idea, such as a rhythm or group of notes, used to help build a piece.

MOTIF – A short musical idea, such as a rhythm or group of notes, used to help build a piece.

OVERTURE – An instrumental piece that introduces an opera or another stage work. Overtures can also be performed on their own.

OPERA – A theatrical work in which singers tell a story through music, usually accompanied by an orchestra.

MOVEMENT – A major section of a longer musical work, often with its own tempo and character.

MINOR KEY – A way of organizing music around a home note using a particular pattern of notes. Music in a minor key can express many moods, including tenderness, mystery, tension, and excitement.

c MINOR – A minor key with "c" as its home note. Both Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 are both in c minor.

CRESCENDO A gradual increase in the loudness of music.

ROMANTIC ERA – A period in music history, roughly the 1800s, when many composers explored strong emotions, imagination, and dramatic expression.

TIMBRE – The quality or "color" of a sound that makes one instrument or voice sound different from another.

GRAND PIANO – A piano with strings stretched horizontally inside a large body, usually supported by three legs.

SOUNDBOARD – A thin wooden surface inside a piano that vibrates with the strings and helps make their sound louder.

INTERPRETATION – The choices musicians make about how to perform a piece, including its speed, volume, and expression.

Pre- and Post-Performance Questions

4th Grade

Pre-Show:

- How can music express excitement, struggle, or victory without using words?
- A pianist uses both hands and foot pedals while listening to the orchestra. What skills might help the pianist do all these things together?

Post-Show:

- Which musical moment best matched the title EMERGENcE and VIcTORY for you? What did you hear that made you choose it?
- When did the piano stand out, and when did it blend with the orchestra? How could you tell?

Middle School General Music

Pre-Show:

- How might a composer use tempo, dynamics, rhythm, or melody to build tension and then create a feeling of resolution?
- What challenges might a young soloist face when preparing to perform with an orchestra? How could practice and collaboration help?

Post-Show:

- Compare two selections from the concert. How did their tempos, dynamics, or instrumental sounds create different moods?
- Beethoven builds music from a short, recognizable motif. What repeated musical ideas did you notice during the concert, and how did they change?

High School Music Appreciation

Pre-Show:

- This program includes an overture, a concerto, and a symphony. How might the purpose of each form affect the relationship between the musicians and the audience?
- Both Rachmaninoff's concerto and Beethoven's symphony are in c minor. Why might two works in the same key still create very different listening experiences?

Post-Show:

- How did Rossini, Rachmaninoff, and Beethoven capture and sustain your attention? Compare specific uses of repetition, contrast, dynamics, or instrumental texture.
- How did the performance support or complicate your interpretation of the title EMERGENcE and VIcTORY? Support your response with musical details from at least two selections.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does "EMERGENcE and VIcTORY" mean?

The title invites us to explore how musical ideas emerge, develop, and become something powerful. "Victory" might suggest overcoming a challenge, finding confidence, or reaching an exciting conclusion. As you listen, consider how the music connects with these ideas. There is more than one way to interpret what you hear!

Why are there lowercase c's in the title?

The little c is a musical clue! In musical shorthand, a lowercase letter indicates a minor key. Both Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 are in c minor. The title connects these two works through their shared key.

Does music in a minor key always sound sad?

No! Minor keys can help create many moods, including mystery, tenderness, excitement, power, and determination. A piece's mood also depends on its tempo, rhythm, dynamics, and instrumental sounds. Listen for how many different feelings the composers create.

What is Rossini's overture to The Barber of Seville?

An overture is instrumental music that introduces an opera. Rossini's lively overture prepares audiences for a comic story, but it is also frequently performed without the opera. Listen for playful musical exchanges, contrasts between quiet and loud passages, and growing excitement. You do not need to know the opera's story to enjoy the music.

What is Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2?

A concerto features a solo instrument performing with an orchestra. In this work, the piano and orchestra share melodies, respond to each other, and combine their sounds. The pianist's role includes both dazzling passages and quieter, expressive moments. Watch how Olivia Larco listens and communicates with conductor Leonardo Pineda and the orchestra.

Why is Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 so recognizable?

Its opening uses a striking four-note idea: short-short-short-LONG! This short musical idea, called a motif, becomes a building block for the first movement. Beethoven repeats and changes it, showing how a small beginning can generate tremendous musical energy.

How are an overture, a concerto, and a symphony different?

An overture introduces an opera or another stage work, although it can also stand alone. A concerto highlights a solo instrument in partnership with an orchestra. A symphony is a large work for orchestra, usually organized into several sections called movements. This concert presents selections from these three musical forms.

What is a chamber orchestra?

A chamber orchestra has fewer musicians than a full symphony orchestra. Its smaller size can make individual instrumental sounds and musical exchanges easier to notice. A smaller ensemble can still create dramatic contrasts, rich textures, and powerful moments!

What should I watch for during the performance?

Watch the conductor's gestures and how the musicians respond. Notice when Olivia's hands move together or play different patterns, and when she pauses while the orchestra continues. Look for the ways musicians coordinate their entrances, listen to one another, and shape the music as a team.

From Small Beginnings to Powerful Music

How does a small idea become something extraordinary? A story can begin with one question. An invention can begin with a sketch. In music, just a few notes can become the beginning of a powerful experience.
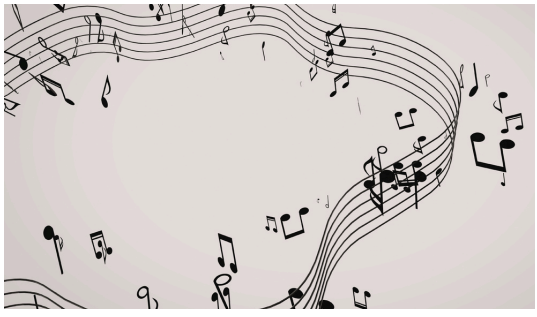
Gioachino Rossini knew how to get an audience's attention. His overture to The Barber of Seville uses playful melodies, sudden contrasts, and growing excitement to draw listeners in. An overture introduces an opera, helping prepare the audience for the story ahead. But even without singers, costumes, or scenery, this music gives us plenty to imagine. Instruments exchange musical ideas, and quiet passages make louder moments feel even more exciting.

Sergei Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 creates a different kind of musical adventure. A concerto features a solo instrument performing with an orchestra. Sometimes the piano leads with a melody. At other times, it supports the orchestra or joins in a powerful burst of sound. Performing this music takes more than fast fingers. The pianist must listen carefully, respond to other musicians, and help shape the music's changing moods.

Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 shows how much can grow from a tiny beginning. Its famous opening uses just four notes: short-short-short-LONG! This brief musical idea, called a motif, helps build the first movement. As it returns in different ways, listeners hear how repetition and change can work together to create surprise, tension, and excitement.

Rachmaninoff's concerto and Beethoven's symphony share something else: both are in c minor. That is why our concert title, EMERGENcE and VIcTORY, includes two little c's! Sharing a key does not make the pieces sound alike. Each composer uses rhythm, melody, instruments, and dynamics to create a distinct musical world.

Together, these works remind us that creativity begins with possibilities. A playful tune, a conversation between piano and orchestra, or four bold notes can grow into something remarkable. As you listen, notice what emerges, what changes, and what stays with you after the music ends.



ELAR TEKS Alignment (Grade 2-5)
2.6, 2.7, 2.8
3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9
4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9
5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9

Grade 2

How can a few notes grow into exciting music? Write a short paragraph explaining what you learned. Use a detail from the reading to support your answer.

TEKS:

2.6(H) – Synthesize information to create new understanding
2.7(C) – Use text evidence to support an appropriate response
2.11(B) – Write brief compositions about topics of interest

Grade 3

Choose one composer from the reading. Explain how that composer makes music interesting or exciting. Use details from the text to support your answer.

TEKS:

3.6(G) – Evaluate details read to determine key ideas
3.7(C) – Use text evidence to support a response
3.11(A) – Plan and draft informational writing

Grade 4

What is the central idea of "From Small Beginnings to Powerful Music"? Explain how details about at least two composers help develop that idea. Use evidence from the reading to support your response.

TEKS:

4.6(G) – Evaluate details to determine theme or central idea
4.7(C) – Use text evidence to support an appropriate response
4.11(A) – Plan and draft informational texts

Grade 5

Compare how two composers develop musical ideas to capture an audience's attention. How are their approaches alike and different? Write an organized response using evidence from the reading. You may also include observations from the concert.

TEKS:

5.6(G) – Evaluate details to determine theme or central idea
5.7(C) – Use text evidence to support an appropriate response
5.11(A) – Plan and draft informational texts

Activity: "Small Ideas, Lasting Impact" (Social Studies + ELAR)

Rossini, Rachmaninoff, and Beethoven developed musical ideas that audiences still enjoy today. Students investigate how a creative person's work can make a lasting contribution to cultural life.

Using the educator guide and teacher-selected sources, students research one concert composer, then connect their discoveries to an artist or musician from their own community. They will:

- Identify one creative contribution made by the composer, such as transforming a short motif, bringing piano and orchestra together, or creating an exciting overture.
- Gather details about how the composer developed their work, including a challenge, opportunity, or source of support.
- Investigate a local artist or musician and explain how that person contributes to the community's cultural life.
- Present their findings in a short informational paragraph or visual poster, using evidence from their sources.
- Share their work with a partner and discuss: How can one person's creative ideas have an impact on others?

Grade-Level Adaptations

- Grade 2: Use teacher-provided readings and images. Create a labeled illustration with two or three sentences about a local musician's contribution.
- Grade 3: Explain how a composer and a local artist contribute to the cultural life of their communities.
- Grade 4: Research a Texas artist or musician and compare that person's creative contribution with a concert composer's.
- Grade 5: Choose an American musical work and investigate its creator, historical setting, and cultural significance. Connect its lasting impact to an example from the concert.

Social Studies TEKS Alignment	ELAR TEKS Alignment
2.15(C); 2.16(E–F)	2–5.7(C)
3.12; 3.15(D–E)	2–5.11(A–C)
4.17(B); 4.21(B–D)	2–5.12(B)
5.25(B–D)	2–5.13(A–D)

Lesson Objective

Students will research a concert composer and a local artist or musician, explain how their creative work contributes to cultural life, and present findings in written and visual form using evidence from sources.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- EMERGENcE and VIcTORY educator guide
- Teacher-selected research materials about concert composers and local, Texas, or American artists and musicians
- Devices for research, if available
- Poster paper or digital slide templates
- Writing paper or a graphic organizer for recording contributions, supporting details, and sources
- Sentence stems to support discussion and writing

Suggested Timeline

Day 1: Introduction & Model

Day 2: Research

Day 3: Writing Draft

Day 4: Revise & Create Poster

Day 5: Presentations

(Condense to 2–3 days if needed.)

STEP 1: Launch the Lesson

Begin with discussion:

- "How can a small idea grow into something that gets people's attention?" List examples from music, art, inventions, or everyday life.
- "In our concert reading, how did Rossini, Rachmaninoff, or Beethoven turn musical ideas into something memorable?"
- "Who creates music or art in our community? How does their work contribute to life in San Antonio?" List students' examples.

Record responses under two headings: Creative Ideas and Contributions to Community. Encourage students to explain their thinking using details from the reading or their own experiences.

Introduce the project:

“You will become music historians and community researchers. You will investigate a composer from our concert and an artist or musician connected to our community. Using evidence from your sources, you will explain what they created and how their work has an impact on others.”

This project is about:

Identifying cultural roots

Explaining how the community shaped the music

Presenting findings in writing and visual form

STEP 2: Model the Thinking (Teacher Demonstration,

Model with Beethoven and the musicians of The Orchestra San Antonio.

Think aloud:

- Creative idea: Beethoven used a short, four-note motif to help build the first movement of his Fifth Symphony.
- Development: He repeated and changed that idea to create excitement and tension.
- Contribution: His composition gives musicians something to interpret and audiences something to experience.
- Community connection: TOSA’s musicians bring orchestral works to audiences in San Antonio through live performance.

Show students where the supporting information appears in the concert reading and program information. Explain that historical facts come from sources, while personal reactions should be identified as observations.

STEP 3: Research Phase (Small Groups or Individual,

Assign or allow students to choose one concert composer and one community artist or musician. A musical ensemble may also be selected.

Provide teacher-selected sources and a research organizer with two columns: Concert Composer and Community Artist or Musician.

Students investigate:

- Who is this person or group? When and where do they work or perform?
- What is one example of their creative work?
- How do they develop or share their ideas?
- What challenge, opportunity, or source of support helped shape their work?
- How does their work contribute to cultural life?
- What source supports each finding?

Students should record what their sources establish and identify questions they cannot yet answer.

Grade-level focus:

- Grade 2: Use teacher-supported research, drawings, and brief notes, emphasizing the local musician.
- Grade 3: Investigate contributions to communities' cultural heritage.
- Grade 4: Select a Texas artist or musician for the community comparison.
- Grade 5: Select an American musical work and investigate its creator, historical setting, and cultural significance.

STEP 4: Writing Draft

Students write a short informational paragraph or brief report, with length adjusted by grade level. Their writing should explain each creative contribution and make a clear connection between the two examples.

Sentence Stems

- "A creative idea can have a lasting impact when _____."
- "_____ created _____."
- "According to _____, _____."
- "This musical idea develops through _____."
- "In our community, _____ contributes by _____."
- "Both examples show _____."
- "One difference between their contributions is _____."

STEP 5: Revise and Create a Visual
Students revise their writing with a partner, then create a poster or digital slide.

Required components:
A title expressing the project's main idea

- Names of the composer and community artist, musician, or ensemble
- An explanation of each creative contribution
- A connection or comparison between the examples
- At least one relevant image or drawing with a caption
- The revised paragraph or brief report

STEP 6: Present and Discuss
Students present briefly, approximately 1–2 minutes each.

After each presentation, ask:

- "What creative contribution did you learn about?"
- "How does this work have an impact on others?"
- "What connection did the presenter explain?"
- "Which detail best supported the presenter's main idea?"

Encourage discussion language:

- "I noticed _____."
- "This connects to _____."
- "I wonder _____."

Assessment Options

- Discussion participation and use of evidence
- Research organizer: relevant facts, source identification, and clear connections
- Writing rubric: main idea, organization, evidence, and explanation
- Visual rubric: accuracy, relevant images, and readable presentation

Extensions

- Invite a local musician to discuss how an idea becomes a performance.
- Compare two interpretations of the same musical selection.
- Create a timeline connecting the concert composers with the community artists studied.
- Create a class "Small Ideas, Lasting Impact" gallery featuring student research.

Lesson: Seeing the Sound: Small Ideas, Powerful Expression

Grade Levels: 4th Grade–High School

Artists and composers use repetition, contrast, movement, and structure to turn individual ideas into complete works. Students explore how these choices guide our attention and create powerful experiences.

Featured Pairings:

- Rossini's The Barber of Seville Overture + Paul Klee's Twittering Machine
- Explore playful possibilities, repeated forms, and imagined movement or sound.
- Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 + Vincent van Gogh's The Starry Night
- Compare flowing musical passages with swirling lines, contrasting colors, and visual movement.
- Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 + Vasily Kandinsky's Composition 8
- Investigate how small elements, repetition, and contrast help organize a complex work.

Teacher Note: These are suggested comparisons for exploring artistic choices. The artworks were not created to illustrate these musical selections.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze visual art using vocabulary such as line, shape, color, contrast, repetition, and emphasis.
- Listen for musical choices involving motif, melody, rhythm, dynamics, and structure.
- Compare how artists and composers develop ideas and create expressive effects.
- Write a critical response supported by specific visual and musical evidence.
- Distinguish observable details from personal interpretations.

PART 1: VIEW THE ART (Silent Looking, 5–7 minutes)

Project one artwork at a time. Allow students to look independently before sharing interpretations or introducing the musical pairing.

Silent Viewing Prompts:

- What do you notice first? What makes that detail stand out?
- Where does your eye travel? Which lines, shapes, or colors guide it?
- What elements repeat? How are they changed?
- Where do you notice contrast, movement, balance, or tension?
- What mood or sense of energy does the artwork suggest? Which details support your interpretation?
- If this artwork made a sound, what might you hear? What visual evidence inspired your answer?

Students jot notes independently using two columns: **What I Observe** and **What I Interpret**.

Adjusting the Depth:

- Grade 4: Identify specific details and explain how they suggest a mood or movement.
- Middle School: Explain relationships among repetition, contrast, emphasis, and the overall composition.
- High School: Develop an interpretation of how formal choices create meaning, and consider an alternative interpretation supported by the same artwork.

PART 2: LISTEN TO THE MUSIC

Play a selected excerpt from each piece, approximately 3–5 minutes. For Beethoven, include the opening of the first movement so students can hear the four-note motif. Listen once without the paired artwork displayed, allowing students to form their own impressions. Display the artwork during a second listening to invite comparison.

Listening Prompts:

- What instruments or musical sounds stand out?
- What short musical ideas repeat? How do they change?
- Where do you hear contrasts in volume, speed, or instrumental sound?
- Does the music suggest movement, stillness, tension, or release? What do you hear that supports your answer?
- When does one musical part stand out, and when do several parts work together?
- How does the excerpt develop from its beginning to its end?

Students add notes under What I Hear and What I Interpret, recording specific musical details alongside their responses.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT VISUAL ART

The V.E.R.B. Method

This framework works like BEST for dance — but for visual art.

- **V — View Carefully**
  - Describe only what you see. No interpretation yet.
  - What colors dominate?
  - What shapes, lines, textures?
  - Who or what is shown?

- **E — Examine Elements**
  - Analyze how the artist used elements of art.
  - Color (bright/dark/warm/cool)
  - Line (curved/sharp/directional)
  - Space (crowded/open)
  - Light (dramatic/soft)

- **R — Reflect on Meaning**
  - What might the artist be saying?
  - What mood is created?
  - What story is suggested?
  - What does this reveal about culture or community?

- **B — Bridge to Music**
  - Make connections.
  - If this painting had a soundtrack, what would it sound like?
  - What instruments match this image?
  - What tempo or rhythm fits?

PART 3: DISCUSSION

Whole-Class Discussion Questions

- How does each work develop a small idea into a larger composition?
- Where do you notice repetition and variation in the artwork and the music?
- How do the artist and composer use contrast to guide your attention?
- Which visual and musical choices suggest similar moods or movement? Where do the works differ?
- Did viewing the artwork change how you heard the music? Did listening change how you viewed the artwork?
- How might another viewer or listener interpret these works differently?
- How do these pairings connect to the concert title, EMERGENcE and VIcTORY? Which connections are supported by details, and which are personal associations?

Pairing-Specific Prompts

- Rossini + Klee: What details could suggest playfulness or uneasiness? Does the music strengthen or challenge your interpretation of the image?
- Rachmaninoff + van Gogh: How do musical phrases and visual lines create a sense of movement? Where do you notice contrasting energy?
- Beethoven + Kandinsky: How do repeated musical or visual elements help organize each work? What happens when those elements change?

Sentence Stems

- "The artist directs my attention to _____ through _____."
- "The composer develops the musical idea by _____."
- "I interpret this moment as _____ because I hear _____."
- "Both works use _____, but they create different effects because _____."
- "The pairing changed my interpretation by _____."
- "Another possible interpretation is _____, supported by _____."

PART 4: CRITICAL WRITING

Grade 4–5 Prompt

Choose one artwork and one musical selection. Explain how the artist and composer use repetition, contrast, or movement to make their work interesting and expressive.

Use at least two specific details from the artwork and two from the music to support your explanation.

Middle School Prompt

Compare how a visual artist and composer develop small ideas into larger works. Analyze how choices such as repeated shapes, contrasting colors, musical motifs, dynamics, or instrumentation guide your attention and create expressive effects. Develop a clear main idea supported by specific evidence from both works. Explain one meaningful similarity and one difference.

High School Prompt

Evaluate the effectiveness of one suggested art-and-music pairing. How do the artist and composer develop, repeat, and transform ideas to create structure and expressive impact? Where does the comparison reveal meaningful connections, and where does it become less convincing?

Develop a defensible thesis supported by specific visual and musical evidence. Distinguish your interpretation from documented artistic intent. If you discuss historical context, use reliable sources to support your claims.

Coaching Students to Be Specific and Evidence-Based

Before discussion begins, model and remind students: Strong analysis is specific. Vague answers don't help us see what you see.

Instead of saying: "It's colorful." "It sounds busy." "It's about a city."

We say: "I see five people wearing bright red and yellow clothing."
"I hear fast brass instruments playing short, repeated rhythms."
"The crowded buildings and overlapping figures suggest a busy city."

Be Specific Strategy

Encourage students to say:

- "I see..."
  - How many?
  - What color?
  - What shape?
  - What instrument?
  - What exact detail?

Teacher Coaching Moves

If students respond vaguely, prompt with:

"What do you see that makes you say that?"
"Which instrument?" "Which color?"
"How many?" "Where in the image?"
"What moment in the music?"

Why This Matters This practice builds:
Visual literacy Musical literacy
Evidence-based speaking
Academic language Critical thinking

Examples:
"I see a sculpture of a figure with wings in a large space."
"I hear quick trumpet notes and loud percussion."

Sentence Frames
Teach and post these frames:

"I think / wonder _____, because I see _____."
"Because I see _____, I think / wonder _____."

(Music + Art Connection)
"The artist shows _____ through _____ and the composer uses _____ to show _____."

Example:
"The artist shows energy through bright colors and crowded space and the composer uses fast tempo and strong rhythms to show movement."

Fine Arts Music

Grade 4–5

- 4.1(C), 5.1(C) - Musical vocabulary
- 4.5(D), 5.5(D) - Interdisciplinary connections
- 4.6(B–C), 5.6(B–C) - Listening analysis

Middle School General Music, Level 1

- §117.208(c)(1)(B) - Musical elements
- §117.208(c)(4)(C) - Interdisciplinary connections

High School Music Appreciation

- §117.314(c)(5)(D) - Interdisciplinary connections
- §117.314(c)(6)(B) - Performance evaluation

Visual Art TEKS

Grade 4–5

- 4.1(B–C), 5.1(B–C) - Elements and design
- 4.3(D), 5.3(D) - Interdisciplinary connections

Middle School Art, Level 1

- §117.202(c)(1)(D) - Expressive qualities
- §117.202(c)(4)(A–B) - Art criticism

High School Art, Level I

- §117.302(c)(1)(D) - Expressive interpretation
- §117.302(c)(4)(A–B) - Critical evaluation

ELAR TEKS

Grade 4–5

- 4.11(B–C), 5.11(B–C) - Developing and revising
- 4.12(B), 5.12(B) - Informational writing

Middle School

- 6.10(B–C), 7.10(B–C), 8.10(B–C) - Developing and revising
- 6.11(B), 7.11(B), 8.11(B) - Informational writing

High School: English I–IV

- §110.36–§110.39(c)(9)(B–C) - Developing and revising
- §110.36–§110.39(c)(10)(B) - Informational writing
- §110.36–§110.39(c)(10)(C) - Argumentative writing

ART CONNECTIONS

Gioachino Rossini: Overture to *The Barber of Seville*

Visual Theme: Playfulness, repetition, and imagined sound.

Twittering Machine — Paul Klee

Why it connects: Klee's unusual birdlike figures and winding lines invite viewers to imagine movement and sound. Paired with Rossini's overture, the artwork offers opportunities to compare repeated shapes with recurring melodies and visual surprise with musical contrasts.



Students may find the image playful, strange, or even unsettling. These different interpretations create a useful question: Does Rossini's music reinforce the mood they see, or change it?

Artist: Paul Klee (1879–1940)
Year: 1922
Medium: Oil transfer drawing, watercolor, and ink on paper with gouache and ink borders on board
Held by: The Museum of Modern Art, New York City
View online: Twittering Machine — The Museum of Modern Art

Reference:
Klee, P. (1922). Twittering machine [Oil transfer drawing, watercolor, and ink on paper with gouache and ink borders on board]. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, United States. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/37347

Sergei Rachmaninoff: *Piano Concerto No. 2* in c Minor, Op. 18

Visual Theme: Flowing movement, contrast, and expressive energy.

The Starry Night — Vincent van Gogh

Why it connects: Van Gogh's swirling sky, repeated brushstrokes, and contrasting colors create a landscape that seems full of movement. Students can compare this visual energy with the flowing piano passages, expressive melodies, and changing dynamics of Rachmaninoff's concerto.

The contrast between the active sky and quieter village also invites comparison with moments when the piano stands out against the orchestra or becomes part of its larger sound. Students should identify specific visual and musical details that support their connections.



Artist: Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890)
Year: 1889
Medium: Oil on canvas
Held by: The Museum of Modern Art, New York City
View online: The Starry Night — The Museum of Modern Art

Reference:
Van Gogh, V. (1889). The starry night [Oil on canvas]. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, United States. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79802

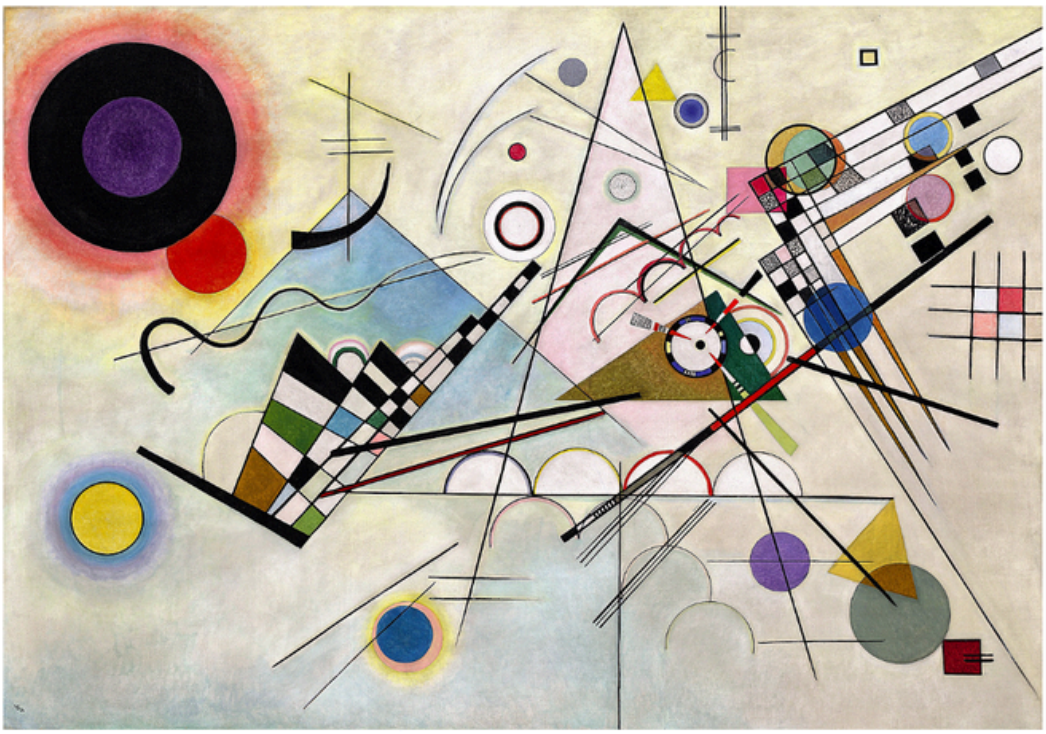
Ludwig van Beethoven: *Symphony No. 5* in c Minor, Op. 67

Visual Theme: Small elements, bold contrasts, and powerful structure.

Composition VIII — Vasily Kandinsky

Why it connects: Kandinsky organizes circles, triangles, and lines into a complex composition. Students can investigate how these simple elements gain importance through repetition, variation, placement, and contrast.

“Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposely, to cause vibrations in the soul." Vasily Kandinsky, *The Effect of Color*, 1911



Beethoven likewise demonstrates how a small musical idea can organize a larger work. His four-note opening motif helps shape the first movement of Symphony No. 5. Comparing the two works encourages students to consider how individual shapes or sounds become meaningful through their relationships with everything around them.

Artist: Vasily Kandinsky (1866–1944)
Year: 1923
Medium: Oil on canvas
Held by: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City
View online: Composition 8 — Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
Reference:
Kandinsky, V. (1923). Composition 8 [Oil on canvas]. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, United States. https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/1924

Bonus Suggestion Bonus Suggestion: Emergence and Victory

Winged Victory of Samothrace — Unknown Ancient Greek Sculptor

Visual Theme: Arrival, movement, and triumph.



Why it connects: With wings outstretched and clothing appearing to rush in the wind, this marble sculpture captures Nike, the Greek goddess of victory, arriving. The figure seems to move forward even though the stone stands still.

For EMERGENcE and VIcTORY, the sculpture offers a visual interpretation of something powerful coming into view. Students can compare its sweeping movement and commanding presence with moments when a melody emerges, the orchestra gathers strength, or a musical passage reaches a dramatic arrival.

The sculpture also invites a compelling question: How can an artist make us feel the force of something we cannot see? Here, carved fabric suggests invisible wind. In the concert, patterns of sound can suggest struggle, determination, or triumph without a single spoken word.

Discussion Question:
“Where do you see emergence, and where do you see victory? Which moment from the concert would you choose as this sculpture’s soundtrack, and why?”

Artist: Unknown ancient Greek sculptor
Year: Approximately 190 BCE
Medium: Marble sculpture
Held by: Musée du Louvre, Paris, France
View online: Winged Victory of Samothrace — Musée du Louvre
Reference:
Winged victory of Samothrace. (c. 190 BCE). [Marble sculpture]. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France. https://www.louvre.fr/en/explore/the-palace/a-stairway-to-victory

Biographies

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)

Gioachino Rossini was an Italian composer with a gift for creating memorable melodies and exciting musical theatre. Raised by musical parents, he learned to sing and play several instruments while still young. Over approximately twenty years, he composed thirty-nine operas, including The Barber of Seville and William Tell. His music often builds excitement by repeating musical ideas while gradually increasing their intensity, earning him the nickname “Signor Crescendo.” In The Barber of Seville overture, listen for the playful exchanges and growing energy that helped make Rossini’s music famous.



Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Sergei Rachmaninoff was a Russian composer, pianist, and conductor whose music combines expressive melodies with demanding instrumental passages. An extraordinary pianist himself, he understood how the piano could produce both delicate sounds and tremendous power. His music continued the Romantic tradition of rich harmonies and emotional expression even as other composers explored very different styles. Before completing his Piano Concerto No. 2, Rachmaninoff experienced a difficult period of self-doubt. With support, he returned to composing and created one of his best-loved works. The concerto invites listeners to hear the piano and orchestra as partners in a changing musical conversation.



Kubey Rembrandt. (1921). Sergei Wassilievitch Rachmaninoff, 1873–1943 [Photograph]. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2005685132/

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Ludwig van Beethoven was a German composer and pianist born in Bonn who spent much of his adult life in Vienna, Austria. His music explored bold contrasts, dramatic development, and new expressive possibilities. Before turning thirty, he began experiencing hearing loss, which increased over time. He continued composing as his hearing declined, drawing on his musical knowledge and imagination. His Symphony No. 5 demonstrates how a small idea can become the foundation for something remarkable. Its four-note opening motif helps organize the first movement, returning in changing forms that create tension, surprise, and momentum.



HOW TO TALK ABOUT MUSIC: LISTEN LIKE A MUSIC CRITIC

"I liked it" tells someone your opinion. Describing what you heard helps them understand it. Music critics listen closely, notice details, and explain how musical choices shape their experience. You can do the same by asking:

What did you hear?

Describe a specific musical moment. Perhaps the piano played alone, a melody moved between instruments, or the orchestra suddenly became quiet.

How did the music create that effect?

Consider the musical choices involved:
Tempo: Speed and changes in speed

- Dynamics: Loudness, softness, and changes in volume
- Rhythm: Patterns of sounds and silences
- Melody: A tune or musical phrase
- Timbre: The distinctive sound of an instrument
- Texture: How musical parts combine or stand apart
- Repetition and contrast: What returns, changes, or surprises you

Why did that moment matter to you?

Explain how those details affected your attention, expectations, or interpretation. Did they create tension, suggest movement, surprise you, or make a familiar idea sound new?

MOVE FROM OPINION TO OBSERVATION
"The music was exciting." Becomes: "The repeated rhythm made the music feel urgent. As more instruments joined and the sound grew louder, I kept wondering how big it would become."

"I liked the piano." Becomes: "The piano stood out when its quick, flowing notes contrasted with the orchestra's longer sounds. I enjoyed hearing those different layers together."

TRY THESE CONVERSATION STARTERS

- “One moment that caught my attention was…”
- “I noticed a change in…”
- “When _____ happened, it made me expect…”

Your response does not have to match anyone else’s. Make it specific enough that another listener can understand what you heard and why it mattered.



Literature Suggestions

Orchestras, Composers, and the Piano

The Story of the Orchestra

by Robert Levine, illustrated by Meredith Hamilton

4–8

An illustrated introduction to orchestral instruments, composers, and musical history. Use selected sections to help students recognize instrument families and understand their roles in a performance.

The Music of Life: Bartolomeo Cristofori & the Invention of the Piano

by Elizabeth Rusch, illustrated by Marjorie Priceman

4–6

This picture-book biography explores how Cristofori developed the piano. Connect his experiments with sound to the expressive possibilities students hear in Rachmaninoff's concerto.

Why Beethoven Threw the Stew

by Steven Isserlis

4–8

Lively introductions to the lives and music of several composers, including Beethoven. Selected readings can help students see composers as people with personalities, challenges, and creative ambitions.

Symphony for the City of the Dead: Dmitri Shostakovich and the Siege of Leningrad

by M. T. Anderson

9–12

An extended connection to music, endurance, and the meaning of victory. Although Shostakovich is not on this concert program, his story invites students to examine how orchestral music can become a source of strength during crisis. Includes difficult wartime material.

Visual Art and Musical Expression

The Noisy Paint Box: The Colors and Sounds of Kandinsky's Abstract Art
by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Mary GrandPré
4–8, shared reading
A picture-book introduction to Kandinsky's connections between color and sound. Pair with Composition 8 and Beethoven's Fifth to explore how shapes, colors, rhythms, and motifs create expressive effects.

Vincent and Theo: The Van Gogh Brothers
by Deborah Heiligman
8–12
Drawing on Vincent's letters, this biography explores the brothers' relationship and Theo's support of Vincent's artistic life. Connect with The Starry Night and discuss how encouragement, relationships, and sustained work support creative development.

Concerning the Spiritual in Art
by Wassily Kandinsky
10–12, selected excerpts
Kandinsky's own writing offers an advanced connection between music, color, form, and expression. Use short, teacher-selected passages to investigate his ideas, then ask students whether the artwork supports their understanding of his claims.

Short Online Readings

These selections offer focused alternatives to a full book.

"Serge Rachmaninoff" — London Symphony Orchestra
Grades 6–12: Explore Rachmaninoff's life as a composer, pianist, and conductor. Connect his experiences with the relationship between technical skill and musical expression.
Serge Rachmaninoff — London Symphony Orchestra

London Symphony Orchestra. (n.d.). Serge Rachmaninoff. https://www.lso.co.uk/news-and-stories/composer-guide/serge-rachmaninoff/

"Gioachino Rossini" — Lyric Opera of Chicago
Grades 6–12: Learn about Rossini's musical upbringing, opera career, and talent for building excitement. Use the reading to prepare students to recognize his use of crescendo.
Gioachino Rossini — Lyric Opera of Chicago
Lyric Opera of Chicago. (n.d.). Gioachino Antonio Rossini. https://www.lyricopera.org/about/company/artists-musicians/composers-librettists/gioachino-rossini/

"Composition 8" — Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
Grades 7–12: This museum resource connects Kandinsky's life, abstract painting, and musical interests. Its discussion questions support the "Seeing the Sound" lesson.
Composition 8 — Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. (n.d.). Composition 8. https://www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus/en/learn/schools/teachers-guides/composition-8

About the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts

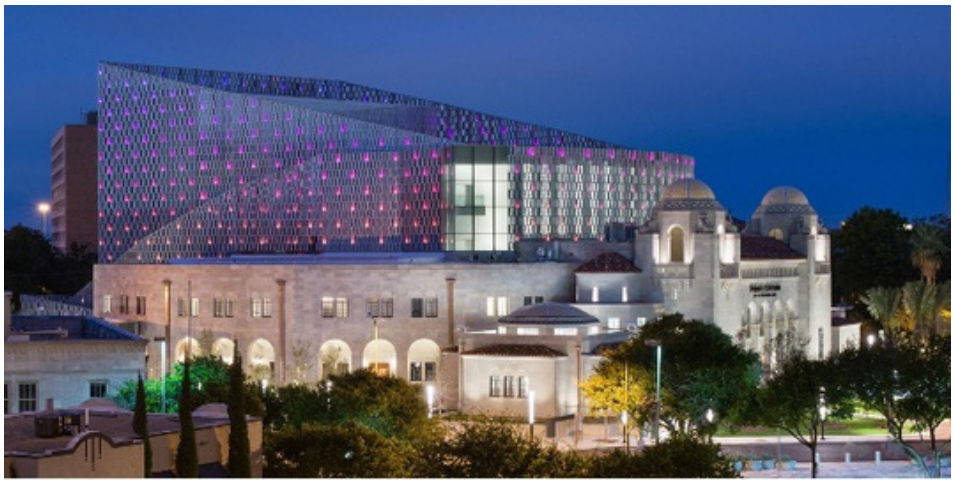


Photo credit: Marmon Mok Architecture

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