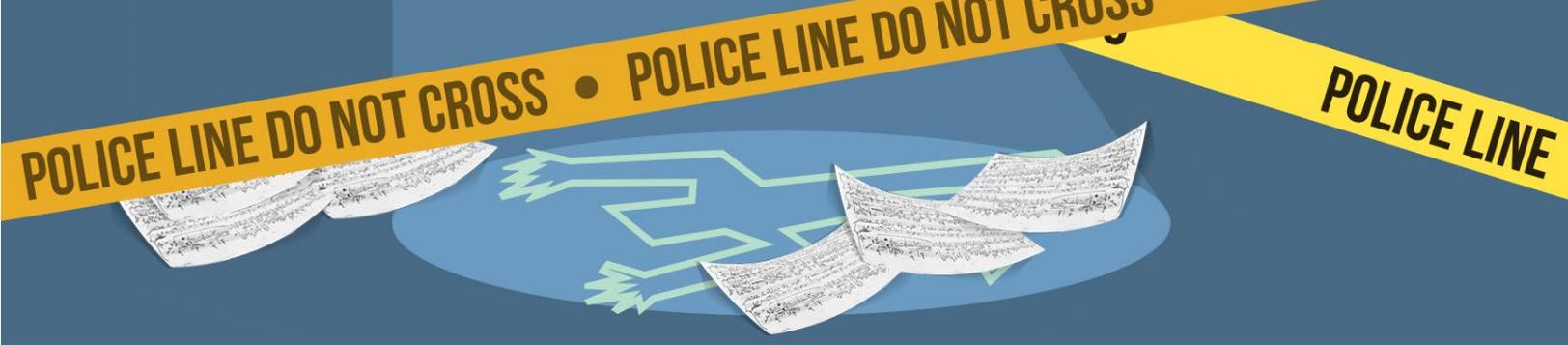




THE COMPOSER IS DEAD:

A Slightly Spooky Musical Mystery



WELCOME!

On behalf of the musicians and staff of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, I am delighted to welcome you to our fall 2021 virtual performance, *The Composer Is Dead: A Slightly Spooky Musical Mystery*. While we had originally planned to offer in-person youth performances this fall, the safety of our musicians, audiences, staff, and volunteers will always be our first priority. Due to the ongoing and evolving circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided the best option was to offer this performance as a digital experience only.

While we are very disappointed that we won't yet be performing for you live, the digital format does offer some wonderful perks! You are able to view the concert as many times as you like during the streaming window. You can stop and start as needed, replay segments to give students additional exposure and opportunities to explore the music, and even use excerpts to complement multiple lessons in your classroom.

To help prepare your students to get the most out of this virtual concert, this guide contains key background information and activities for all of the featured musical selections and their composers. It is our hope that you will find this resource to be a valuable tool in preparing your students to view and enjoy *The Composer Is Dead: A Slightly Spooky Musical Mystery*. We especially want to call your attention to a new feature, the "Digital Docent Moments." We hope these brief interactive videos will further enhance your and your students' enjoyment and understanding! As always, we invite you to review these materials and provide feedback – we want to know what you think!

You can also preview the concert repertoire by accessing the Spotify links embedded in this guide. More information about how to access the playlist is found below.

Thanks to the following people for their contributions to these concert preparation materials:

Hannah Esch, MSO Concerts for Schools & Education Manager, content author

Michelle McCormick, MSO ACE & Education Manager, curriculum contributor

Zachary Reinardy, graphic design

Again, we are excited that you are joining us for this virtual MSO Concerts for Schools performance, and we can't wait to see you in person soon!

Sincerely,

Rebecca Whitney

Director of Education, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra



welcome letter

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AUDIO GUIDE

The MSO uses Spotify as the Audio Guide to accompany this Teacher Resource Guide. A Playlist for this concert has been created for your ease of use for listening to repertoire. There are also clickable Spotify icons next to the pieces in the guide that will take you directly to the piece.

To access the Spotify Playlist for this concert, please follow these instructions:

Click ***The Composer is Dead: A Slightly Spooky Musical Mystery****

-OR-

Visit the MSO's Concerts for Schools webpage [here](#) and start listening!

If you have any issues using Spotify, please contact the MSO Education Department at edu@mso.org.

**You will need to create an account with Spotify to access this free, ad-supported service. There are no entry fees to sign-up.*

GET TO KNOW US!



About the Milwaukee Symphony

➤ Learn more about the MSO's mission and history!

MSO Education Department

➤ Learn more about our wide variety of programs and initiatives!



About Ken-David Masur

➤ Learn more about our Music Director!



About Marvin Hannah

➤ Learn more about our inspector and narrator of this concert!



About the Orchestra

➤ Learn more about all of our musicians in the orchestra!



Bradley Symphony Center

➤ Compare renderings of the new BSC to historic photos of the Warner Grand Theater!



[general information](#)

[teacher guide](#)

THE COMPOSER IS DEAD:

A SLIGHTLY SPOOKY MUSICAL MYSTERY

Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra | Ken-David Masur, *conductor*
Marvin Hannah, *inspector & narrator*

MUSSORGSKY (orch. Rimsky-Korsakov)
Night on Bald Mountain (excerpt)

JESSIE MONTGOMERY
Starburst

BRAHMS
Serenade No. 2 in A major, Opus 16
II. Scherzo: Vivace (excerpt)

TCHAIKOVSKY
Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36
I. Andante sostenuto (excerpt)

BERNSTEIN
"Mambo" from Overture to *West Side Story*

NATHANIEL STOOKEY
The Composer is Dead



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Concerts for Schools is also supported in part by grants from the Wisconsin Arts Board, with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Milwaukee Arts Board, and Milwaukee County CAMPAC. All MSO education programs are supported in part by an endowment from the Hearst Foundations.



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PROGRAM NOTES

THERE'S DREADFUL NEWS FROM THE CONCERT HALL:

the composer is dead! Who did it? Was it the sneaky strings, the tricky trombones, or maybe the conductor? We must investigate to find out! Each instrument has a unique sound and role to play in the orchestra. Pay attention to how the composers use the instruments to convey different feelings and images. The composers might be dead, but the orchestra brings their music to life over and over again!

Note: Words in **bold** indicate that the definition can be found in the glossary.

MODEST MUSSORGSKY (1839-1881)



Modest Mussorgsky began his musical studies at an early age with his mother being his first piano teacher. At 13, he entered the Guards' School to prepare for a military career, but remained very interested in music and began **composing**.

When he was 18, Mussorgsky left his post as junior officer of the Preobrazhensky Regiment to concentrate on music and became a composition student of the Russian **composer** Mily Balakirev. Unable to study composition in a thorough way, Mussorgsky made friends with several of the most important Russian composers of his time. His contact with noted composers is what helped him develop his own talents.

Mussorgsky was passionate about composing in a distinct style that portrayed Russian life vividly and realistically. This led him to become known as one of the members of "The Five," or "The Mighty Handful." The group was comprised of other composers who shared a strong interest in creating music that was uniquely Russian in nature. It included Mily Balakirev, Aleksandr Borodin, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, and César Cui. Mussorgsky wrote in many musical **genres** such as **opera**, orchestral music, and piano works even though his output of songs was small. He is best known for the popular *Night on Bald Mountain*, his opera *Boris Godunov*, and a piece written for piano in 1874 after the death of a friend, *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

DOCENT MOMENTS

DO NOT CROSS • POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

We have created short videos for each piece meant to inspire and engage your students and encourage further exploration of concepts presented throughout the guide. Use the resource page and activity ideas to engage students further and continue their learning journey.

DO NOT CROSS • POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS



Docent Moment 1

Night on Bald Mountain 

Mussorgsky began thinking about this piece as early as 1860, but it wasn't until 1867 that he finally composed the music in a flurry of inspiration. It took him less than two weeks to write all of the **orchestral** parts! Following Mussorgsky's death in 1881, his friends **arranged** and orchestrated many of his compositions for publication. In 1886, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov produced a heavily edited version of *Night on Bald Mountain*, which is the one we know best today. Mussorgsky's original composition, *St. John's Night on the Bare Mountain* (written in 1867), was not performed until the 20th century.

Based on Russian **folklore**, *Night on Bald Mountain* is a musical fantasy that tells the story of a witches' gathering, taking place on St. John's Eve on Bald Mountain (sometimes called Bare Mountain). According to legend, witches and sorcerers would gather on the mountain for a night of wild adventure and merriment. The ominous atmosphere is set by incredibly fast triplets played in the upper strings. The woodwinds respond with frantic ascending and descending lines, leading to a dramatic presentation of the main theme by the tubas and trombones.



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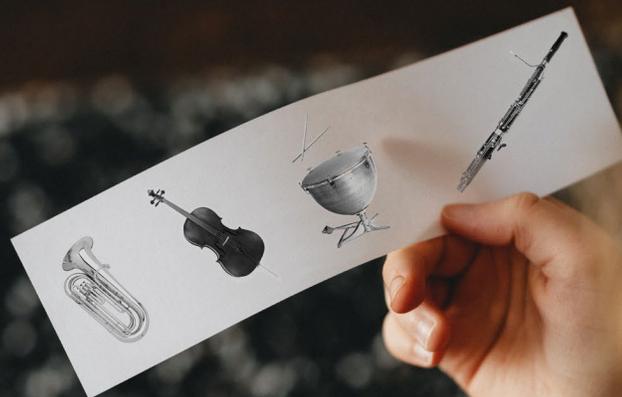
ACTIVITY IDEAS

LANGUAGE ARTS – STORYTELLING

- ◆ **MUSIC** – Composers use music to express the story they want to share, just like authors write stories with their words. Have students listen to *Night on Bald Mountain*. What musical elements contribute to the telling of the story in the music? (Dynamics, orchestral colors, tempo, timbre, etc.) What story do they think the music could be telling?
- ◆ **ART** – Students listen to *Night on Bald Mountain* and draw a picture of the story they hear in the music. Have students share their story drawings with the class or in small groups.
- ◆ **POETRY** – Have students write a poem inspired by the music or by the story they imagined while listening to the music.
- ◆ **DRAMA** – Have students tell the story of the music through movement, create a radio show, or work in groups to create and act out a scene from the music.

SOCIAL STUDIES – FOLKLORE

- ◆ Folklore is a treasured part of all cultures. Folktales are stories that have been passed from one person to the next by word of mouth or oral tradition. Share a folktale of your choosing or use this [resource](#) and discuss the defining elements of a folktale with your students.
- ◆ Have students explore a folktale they are interested in from another culture. Here are some resources to consider:
 - ◆ [The Pantheon Fairy Tale and Folklore Library](#)
 - ◆ [Folktales from Around the World – Google Earth](#)
 - ◆ [Milwaukee Public Library](#)
 - ◆ [Story Cove: Animated Stories for Kids](#)
- ◆ Have students write a folktale! Checkout this lesson plan from [The Kennedy Center](#).



JESSIE MONTGOMERY (1981-)



Jessie Montgomery is an acclaimed composer, violinist, and educator. Born and raised in Manhattan’s Lower East Side, she grew up during a time when the neighborhood was at a major turning point in its history. Her father, a musician, and her mother, a theater artist and storyteller, would regularly bring Jessie to rallies, performances, and parties where neighbors, activists, and artists gathered to celebrate and support the movements of the time. Through these experiences, Jessie has created a life that merges composing, performance, education, and advocacy. Jessie began her violin studies at the Third Street Music School Settlement, one of the oldest community organizations in the country.

Since 1999, Jessie has been affiliated with the Sphinx Organization, which supports young African-American and Latinx string players. She is the recipient of the Leonard Bernstein Award from the ASCAP Foundation, and her works are performed frequently around the world by leading musicians and **ensembles**. Her growing body of work includes solo, **chamber**, vocal, and orchestral works. Some recent highlights include *Five Slave Songs* (2018), *Records from a Vanishing City* (2016), *Caught by the Wind* (2016) and *Banner* (2014) –written to mark the 200th anniversary of The Star-Spangled Banner. She holds degrees from the Juilliard School and New York University and is currently a Graduate Fellow in Music Composition at Princeton University.



Docent Moment 2

Starburst  Spotify

Starburst was commissioned by the Sphinx Organization and **premiered** by its resident Sphinx Virtuosi in 2012. She offers the following information about the work:

The brief one-movement work for string orchestra is a play on imagery of rapidly changing musical colors. Exploding gestures are juxtaposed with gentle fleeting melodies in an attempt to create a multidimensional soundscape. A common definition of a starburst, “the rapid formation of large numbers of new stars in a galaxy at a rate high enough to alter the structure of the galaxy significantly,” lends itself almost literally to the nature of the performing ensemble that premiered the work, the Sphinx Virtuosi, and I wrote the piece with their dynamic in mind.



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ACTIVITY IDEAS

MEET THE STRING FAMILY!

Strings are plucked, strummed, or played with a bow made of wood and horse hair. They have carved wooden bodies and four strings—except the harp, which has forty-seven strings!



- ◆ Familiarize your students with the members of the string family. The following short videos are both great introductions to the String Family!
 - ◆ [Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts Trust – The String Family](#)
 - ◆ [Sydney Opera House - Karen Meets the String Family](#)

SCIENCE – SPACE

- ◆ Constellations are stars that have been grouped to suggest important cultural objects, animals, characters or people. Discuss with students the different types of constellations they might know. Check out constellations in your area using this interactive [online planetarium](#). Using grid or graph paper, have students create their own constellation and write an accompanying story. Share constellations and stories with the class.
- ◆ Explore the life cycles of stars with your students through this [interactive program](#) from the WorldWide Telescope Ambassadors Program!
- ◆ Here are some resources for students' continued exploration of stars!
 - ◆ [Stars and Galaxies – NASA](#)
 - ◆ [Space Exploration – Google Arts & Culture](#)
 - ◆ [Space for Kids – The Planetary Society](#)

SOCIAL IMPACT – REPRESENTATION

- ◆ Listen to [Women Composers of the Past](#) and/or [Contemporary Women Composers](#) from Classics for Kids with your students. Have students work alone or in pairs and further research a female composer presented in one of the programs. Plan a presentation day or two for students to share more about their researched composer for the class. Use this [template](#) or one of your own for the project.
- ◆ Female composers and female composers of color are severely underrepresented in classical music. Orchestras around the world are making the effort to diversify their programming with many underrepresented groups, but there is always more work to be done. Create a safe space environment and have students settle into a comfortable position. Lead a discussion with your students on the importance of representation, diversity, and inclusion in our world. Allow students to vulnerably share their thoughts/feelings. When a student isn't sharing, their job is to mindfully listen to the speaker. Following the discussion, have students brainstorm 1-5 positive actions that could be taken and be put into immediate action from the discussion.



JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)



Johannes Brahms was born on May 7, 1833 in Hamburg, Germany. His father, Jakob Brahms, a horn and double bass player, would be his first teacher before being sent to piano lessons at age seven. As a teen, Brahms helped support his family by playing piano in dance halls and cafés, while also composing and sometimes giving **recitals**. In 1853, violin **virtuoso** Joseph Joachim realized the talent of Brahms and, in turn, recommended Brahms to fellow composer Robert Schumann. An immediate friendship was sparked between Brahms and Schumann, resulting in a lifelong friendship between the two and Schumann’s wife Clara.

In 1863, Brahms made the move to Vienna, Austria and would remain there for the rest of his life. Over his career, Brahms composed for almost all instrumental combinations, as well as for piano, chorus and solo voice. His most popular compositions include his *German Requiem*, four **symphonies**, *Hungarian Dances* for piano duet, and his chamber music. His composition style was rooted in the Classical traditions, while also revitalizing it with the emotion and movement of the Romantic style, earning him a much deserved ranking as one of the “three great Bs” (Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms).



Docent Moment 3

Serenade No. 2 in A major, Opus 16, II. Scherzo: Vivace (excerpt)

Brahms composed his two **serenades** for orchestra before tackling his symphonies. It is thought that these serenades were a way of warming up for the serious business of writing for the symphonic **form**. Brahms composed Serenade No. 2 in A major in 1858-59 and **conducted** its first performance on February 10, 1860 in Hamburg. Cautiously dipping his toe into the orchestral world, Brahms wrote five movements instead of the standard four, to ensure the serenade was not confused for a symphony. Compared to his first serenade, this second in A major marked a turning point in his career and his self-confidence showing great promise and growth towards composing larger orchestral music. This promise is what Robert Schumann recognized in the composer. He wrote in 1853, five years before Brahms began his serenade, “Should he direct his magic wand where the powers of the masses in chorus and orchestra may lend him their forces, we can look forward to even more wondrous glimpses of the secret world of spirits.”

Written for two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, violas, cellos, and basses, the scoring excludes violins. As a result, most of the melodies and **themes** are played by the woodwinds. Movement II. Scherzo: Vivace, is a fast and folk-like dance movement. Unfortunately, Robert Schumann died in 1856, missing most of Brahms’s greatest works; however, Clara Schumann was the first person Brahms sent Serenade No. 2 in A major to and she was overjoyed that he was living up to her late husband’s expectations.



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ACTIVITY IDEAS

MEET THE WOODWIND FAMILY!

Air vibrates through woodwind instruments to make sound. Most use a reed—a strip of cane for the air to vibrate against. The flute and piccolo do not use reeds. Air is blown across the opening.



- ◆ Familiarize your students with the members of the woodwind family. The following videos are a great introduction to the Woodwind Family!
 - ◆ *House of Sound – Woodwind Instruments*
 - ◆ *New London Orchestra – The Woodwind Family*

MUSIC – SERENADES

- ◆ A 'serenade' is a type of light, romantic music. Traditionally serenades were performed in the open air. Have your students imagine they are composers writing their own serenades. Who would it be for (it doesn't have to be romantic – it could be for anyone or anything they really care about – a family member, pet, friend, even a sport or activity). What would it sound like? Using their knowledge of the instrument families, what instruments would they include, and why?



PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)



Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky is one of the most popular Russian composers of all time. Born in Votkinsk, Russia on May 7, 1840, Tchaikovsky was the second of six surviving children. He developed an interest in music at an early age from an **orchestrina** in the family home and began lessons with a local tutor around age five. With music education not being available in Russian institutions at that time, Tchaikovsky's parents hadn't even considered their son pursuing a musical career. Instead, he was led to a career in civil service. He would study at the Imperial School of Jurisprudence boarding school in St. Petersburg for nine years before becoming a clerk in the Ministry of Justice. After four years at the Ministry of Justice, Tchaikovsky quit to follow his one true passion: music. He began music classes at the recently founded Russian Musical Society before enrolling in the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1862. After graduation in 1865, Tchaikovsky moved to Moscow to teach at the Moscow **Conservatory**.

In 1876, Tchaikovsky would strike up an extraordinary relationship with Nadezhda von Meck, a widow of a wealthy railroad tycoon. She was a great admirer of Tchaikovsky's work and although they would never meet, she chose to support him financially and became a pen pal of sorts for the next 14 years. This relationship allowed Tchaikovsky to leave his teaching position and solely focus on his compositions. His works include nine operas, six symphonies, four **concertos**, three string quartets, and numerous songs, suites, and overtures. Some of Tchaikovsky's most well-known works include the **ballets** *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*, and Symphonies 4, 5, and 6. In the spring of 1891 he was invited to the inauguration of Carnegie Hall in New York City and conducted before audiences in New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia while visiting the United States. On November 2, Tchaikovsky suddenly became ill and was diagnosed with cholera. Despite all medical efforts, he died four days later on November 6, 1893 from complications from the disease.



Docent Moment 4

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36, I. Andante sostenuto (excerpt) Spotify

Tchaikovsky began writing his fourth symphony in 1877. By this time, he and Nadezhda von Meck were corresponding regularly with each other, writing to her about Symphony No. 4 he said, "Never yet has any of my orchestral works cost me so much labour, but I've never yet felt such love for any of my things...Perhaps I'm mistaken, but it seems to me that this symphony is better than anything I've done so far." He dedicated the work "to my best friend," meant for von Meck who accepted the honor, but only on the grounds of anonymity.



[program notes](#)

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Symphony No. 4 in F minor premiered in February of 1878 at the Russian Musical Society in Moscow, conducted by his mentor Nikolay Rubinstein. Similarly to Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, Tchaikovsky introduces a musical **motive** for Fate, which he uses as an inescapable force throughout the movements. The opening **fanfare** of the first movement, played by the horns and bassoons, represents fate looming over one's head like a sword. The fate theme is one of all-consuming gloom, but throughout the four movements the listener travels through gloom to melancholy to recovery to life-affirming energy. Tchaikovsky's prescription for happiness is as follows: "If you cannot find reasons for happiness in yourself, look at others. Get among the people...Oh, how gay [happy] they are!...Life is bearable after all!"

ACTIVITY IDEAS

MEET THE BRASS FAMILY!

Sound is made through the vibration of air in brass instruments. A player's lips make a buzzing noise to produce the sound. The sound travels through the curled brass tubes to create different sounds.



- ◆ Familiarize your students with the members of the brass family. The following videos are a great introduction to the Brass Family!
 - ◆ ***Brass Instruments for Kids with New England Philharmonic!***
 - ◆ ***Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts Trust – The Brass Family***

MUSIC – FANFARES!

- ◆ A fanfare is an opening, prelude, or flourish, often triumphant or celebratory, usually played by brass instruments. They are typically used to introduce or announce someone, or something, of importance. Tchaikovsky opens **Movement 1 of Symphony No. 4** with a fanfare. Learn about fanfares with your students to discover:
 - ◆ How were they used in history?
 - ◆ How are they used today?
 - ◆ Where might you hear a fanfare?
 - ◆ ***Fanfare: Introduction to Fanfares***
 - ◆ ***Fanfare***



- ◆ Listen to different fanfares by different composers. What do they have in common? Are there other fanfares your students might know based on compositions they have heard or events they have attended? You can have your students find their own fanfares to share with their classmates.
 - ◆ **Fanfare for the Common Man** by Aaron Copland
 - ◆ **20th Century Fox Fanfare** by Alfred Newman
 - ◆ **Trumpet Fanfare for the Kentucky Derby Horse Race**
 - ◆ **Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman** by Joan Tower
- ◆ You don't have to be a brass player to create your own fanfare! Have students pick an occasion to write a fanfare for. Is it a happy occasion? Is it sad and solemn? Are you celebrating someone? If so, who and why? Based on these decisions, students need to determine the musical elements of their fanfare. Will it be quiet or loud? Will it be fast or slow? Students then create a fanfare using classroom instruments, body percussion, singing, or brass instruments if they are available.
 - ◆ **Creating a Fanfare Resource** – This resource is a student guide to composing a fanfare.
- ◆ In true fanfare fashion, introduce your students as royalty while a fanfare is playing!
 - ◆ In a hat, have words written on a piece of paper that belong to a theme (foods, colors, animals, etc.). Have students pick a word and keep it a secret from their classmates.
 - ◆ Start the fanfare music playing in the background so that students can still hear you. One by one, introduce students to begin their royal promenade (in a regal and stately manner).
 - ◆ When it is their turn to be introduced, have them share their word with you. Announce them as King/Queen/Prince/Princess "name they picked" (lima bean, brown bear, mauve, etc).
 - ◆ Allow students to promenade to the music and continue introducing other students to promenade as well using their new royal names.

SUSPECTS



LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918-1990)



Leonard Bernstein was one of the world’s most outstanding composers, conductors, pianists and writers of music. He grew up in Massachusetts, where he began studying piano at age 10. Bernstein attended Harvard and later the Curtis Institute, where he studied piano, conducting, and composition. During his years at Curtis, Bernstein also studied at the Tanglewood Summer Festival, and eventually became the conducting assistant. In 1943, he became the assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic. That year he was called to fill in last minute for the principal conductor, who had become ill, and became an almost immediate, overnight success with audiences in New York City. In 1945, he became the first American music director of the New York Philharmonic.

With newfound fame and success, Bernstein began traveling and conducting many orchestras around the world. While he traveled, he composed music for theater and movies. His compositions ultimately spanned many genres including music for symphony orchestra, solo instrumentalists and singers, opera and ballet. Bernstein recorded over 300 albums and won 16 Grammy awards in his lifetime.



“Mambo” from Overture to *West Side Story*

The concept of *West Side Story* was first brought to Leonard Bernstein in 1949 by Jerome Robbins, a **director** and **choreographer** whom Bernstein had worked with before. However, due to Bernstein’s busy schedule, which kept him from working on the show, the musical wasn’t completed until 1957. In Arthur Laurent’s book, based on Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, the story takes place in New York with two opposing gangs, the Americans (“The Jets”) versus the newly-arrived Puerto Ricans (“The Sharks”). Despite the hateful rivalry, Maria and Tony fall in love. However, the gangs cannot resolve their hate for each other and in a fight between the gangs, Tony kills Maria’s brother. Although she is willing to forgive him, their relationship ends when Tony is killed by a Shark in revenge.

Bernstein prepared an orchestra **suite** using music from the show in 1960. The suite follows the main **episodes** of the drama. The “Mambo” occurs during the ‘Dance at the Gym’ scene and is the fourth movement of the suite. The dance scene features brass and Latin rhythm instruments which are used to emphasize the mambo rhythm. The mambo originated as an Afro-Cuban dance that developed in Havana in the 1940s. The word means “conversation with the gods” in the language enslaved Central Americans brought to Cuba. The **syncopated** rhythms of the dance came from African folk music. The original complicated dance was standardized by dance teachers in New York in the 1960s. The cha-cha-cha developed from the mambo.



ACTIVITY IDEAS

MEET THE PERCUSSION FAMILY!

There are hundreds of percussion instruments, such as timpani, xylophone, triangle, cymbals, gongs, drums, chimes, and more! Pianos are also percussion instruments because the strings sound when small hammers hit them every time a key is pressed.



◆ Familiarize your students with the members of the percussion family. The following videos are a great introduction to the Percussion Family!

◆ **House of Sound – Drums and Percussion**

◆ **Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts Trust – The Percussion Family**

SOCIAL STUDIES – “MAMBO”

◆ The “Mambo” is an Afro-Cuban dance that originated in Havana in the 1940’s. Other Afro-Cuban dances include the cha-cha, salsa, and rumba. Have students research the origins of these dances to discover their historical significance and the importance they hold in Latin-American culture today.

◆ Learn the basic step to the Mambo! This can be done standing in place or with a partner. Watch this **video** to learn the steps. Once you feel comfortable, try it with Bernstein’s “Mambo.”

LANGUAGE ARTS – LITERATURE

◆ Bernstein’s *West Side Story*, which includes the “Mambo” piece featured on this concert, is a modern version of Shakespeare’s *Romeo & Juliet*. The “Dance at the Gym” scene is the *West Side Story* version of the ball scene in *Romeo & Juliet* where the young couples meet for the first time. Watch these film versions of the two scenes:

◆ **“Dance at the Gym/Mambo”** scene from the original movie version of *West Side Story*

◆ **Ball scene** from 1968 version of *Romeo & Juliet*

How are the scenes similar, and how are they different? Do some further research into the two storylines and the characters to see how they compare and contrast.

NATHANIEL STOOKEY (1970-)



Nathaniel Stookey was born and raised in San Francisco, participating as a violinist and violist with the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra from 1986-1988. At 17, he was invited to write a chamber work for the San Francisco Symphony's New and Unusual Music Series, the youngest composer ever to be honored. His compositions have since been programmed and **commissioned** by many of the world's great orchestras including The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and The National Symphony to name a few. Stookey earned his Bachelor degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1993 and was awarded the first Hallé Orchestra Composition Fellowship upon graduation. He would receive his doctorate from Duke University in 2003. His musical compositions include traditional styles such as string quartets to more experimental works like *Junkestra*, a piece written for an "orchestra" of items found at the San Francisco garbage dump. In 2006, the San Francisco Symphony commissioned, premiered, and recorded *The Composer is Dead* with narration by Lemony Snicket.

LEMONY SNICKET (1970-)



Lemony Snicket is the pen name for American author Daniel Handler. Handler lives in San Francisco, California and is the author of seven novels as well as numerous books for children as Lemony Snicket. Handler began writing as Lemony Snicket in 1998 with the thirteen-volume *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. This collection has been an international bestseller, being printed in 40 different languages, adapted for film starring Jim Carrey in 2004, and most recently adapted into a Netflix series starring Neil Patrick Harris. Handler has received commissions from the San Francisco Symphony, Berkeley Repertory Theater and the Royal Shakespeare Company and has collaborated with artists and musicians. Mr. Snicket's first book for readers of all ages, *Poison for Breakfast*, will be available in August 2021. In addition to writing, Handler also plays accordion. Lemony Snicket narrated the premiere and recording of *The Composer is Dead* with the San Francisco Symphony in 2006.



Docent Moment 6

The Composer is Dead!

The Composer is Dead was commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony in 2006 with text by Lemony Snicket and music by Nathaniel Stookey. The piece premiered on July 8, 2006 and was later released as a book with CD with illustrations by Carson Ellis. The story is a musical murder mystery about the killing of a composer. The **plot** takes place in an orchestra and it is the inspector's mission to interrogate the instruments of the orchestra and uncover who killed the composer.



[program notes](#)

[teacher guide](#)

Inspired by Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and Benjamin Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, *The Composer is Dead* introduces audiences to the different instruments of the orchestra. As the inspector investigates, each instrument shares their alibis through solos. At the height of the piece is the Funeral March, where the inspector lists off a number of dead composers and, in the music, very famous excerpts of those composers' works. Excerpts include Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Brahms' *Requiem*, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, and Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*.

**The MSO is unable to provide a recording of *The Composer is Dead*. Please check your local library or purchase the book [here](#) to obtain a free recording.*

ACTIVITY IDEAS

LANGUAGE ARTS – WRITING

- ◆ An obituary is the final words about a person, describing his or her attributes, deeds, and accomplishments. Obituaries that provide answers about “who, what, where, why, and how” are helpful in sharing a person’s story. They celebrate the life of an individual and pay homage to someone who has passed away. **As a reference you can share obituaries from the obituary section of your local newspaper or online.*
 - ◆ Have students write an obituary for a composer. They can choose any of the deceased composers from this concert or another composer of their choosing. Students can use biographies, works they have done, and facts they research about their chosen composer to create an obituary celebrating the life of their composer. Have students share their obituaries with a partner.

LANGUAGE ARTS – VOCABULARY EXPLORATION

- ◆ Lemony Snicket is an author known for using colorful vocabulary to describe and enhance his stories. Using the book, “*The Composer is Dead*,” or this [YouTube video](#) that has the text and the orchestra together, have students find vocabulary words that are colorful, help enhance the story, or that they don’t know the meaning of. Students can explore these words by finding their definitions and writing a new sentence for each word. With the new words students learned, have them write a concert review of *The Composer is Dead: A Slightly Spooky Musical Mystery Youth Performance!*
 - ◆ We would love to read what your students have to say! Share your students' reviews with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra by:
 - ◆ Scanning and emailing reviews to edu@mso.org.
 - ◆ Mail reviews to:

Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
Attn. Education Department
212 W Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53203



MUSIC – INSTRUMENTS

- ◆ Now that students know all of the instrument families, have them test their instrument knowledge!
 - ◆ **Name the Musical Instrument**
 - ◆ **Guess The Instrument!**
 - ◆ Have students partner up. One student is the guesser and the other student is the quizzer. The quizzer will use the link to click on an instrument and play the sound the instrument makes. The guesser will guess which instrument makes that sound.
 - ◆ This website also allows students to take a quiz to test their knowledge in a solo setting.
 - ◆ **Sort Musical Instruments by their Families**



PRINT AND ONLINE RESOURCES

Instruments and the Orchestra

Koscielniak, Bruce. *An Introduction to Musical Instruments and the Symphony Orchestra: The Story of the Incredible Orchestra*. 2000.

Levine, Robert. *The Story of the Orchestra*. 2001. General, child-friendly guide to the orchestra, instruments, and composers. CD included.

The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, by Benjamin Britten. Game.

Interactive website that introduces and describes the instruments of an orchestra through numerous mini-games.

Utah Symphony/Utah Opera Instruments of the Orchestra Video Series (short videos profiling musicians and their instruments in the orchestra).

Composers, Pieces, and General Background

Dallas Symphony Orchestra Kids website. Composer list includes pages on Mussorgsky, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Bernstein.

Classics for Kids Podcast (short biographical episodes on Classical composers) *Available on Apple Podcasts.

Night on Bald Mountain (orch. Rimsky-Korsakov), Modest Mussorgsky

Classics for Kids – About Modest Mussorgsky

Mussorgsky/Rimsky-Korsakov, Night on Bald Mountain – Animated Graphical Score
[12:30]

Starburst, Jessie Montgomery

Unscripted with Jessie Montgomery [3:35]

Listening to Ladies: The Podcast – Jessie Montgomery [31:35]

Minnesota Orchestra, Conductor Osmo Vänskä, Starburst [3:13]

An Orchestra Adventure / Webisode 2: Sensational Strings [15:41]

Serenade No. 2 in A Major, Opus 16, II. Scherzo: Vivace, Johannes Brahms

Five Minute Mozart – Johannes Brahms [1:43]

Berliner Philharmoniker, Conductor Sir Simon Rattle, Serenade No. 2, 2nd Movement [2:41]

An Orchestra Adventure / Webisode 1: Wondrous Woodwinds [15:11]



Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36, I. Andante sostenuto, Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Carnegie Hall Icons – Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovksy

Tchaikovsky – Classics for Kids [4:04]

Svetlanov Symphony Orchestra, Conductor Terje Mikkelsen, Symphony No. 4, 1st Movement [19:32]

An Orchestra Adventure / Webisode 3: Brilliant Brass [15:40]

“Mambo” from Overture to *West Side Story*, Leonard Bernstein

Learn about Lenny: 10 Interesting Facts about Leonard Bernstein

Gustavo Dudamel & Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra – Bernstein: West Side Story: Mambo [2:43]

Official West Side Story website!

An Orchestra Adventure / Webisode 4: Playful Percussion [15:48]

***The Composer is Dead*, Nathaniel Stookey**

NPR Music Interview – Lemony Snicket’s Musical Murder Mystery

The Composer is Dead Teaching Guide



GLOSSARY

BALLET: An artistic dance performed to music using very precise, formalized steps.

CHAMBER: Instrumental music played by a small ensemble with one player to a part.

CHORD: Three or more musical notes played at the same time.

CLASSICAL ERA OR PERIOD: The time in music history from the early-1700s to early-1800s. The music emphasized the use of formal structures while offering variety and contrast within a piece. Composed works were expressive and polished, with clearer divisions between sections and lighter textures.

CODA: A musical passage that brings a piece (or movement) to an end.

COMMISSION: An original piece requested and financed by an individual, business, or organization.

COMPOSE: The act of writing music.

COMPOSER: A person who writes music.

COMPOSITION: An original piece of music.

CONCERTO: A composition written for a solo instrument and orchestra. The soloist plays the melody while the orchestra plays the accompaniment.

CONDUCTOR: One who directs a group of performers. The conductor indicates the tempo, phrasing, dynamics, and style with gestures and facial expressions.

CONSERVATORY: A college for the study of classical music or other arts.

DIRECTOR: The person who supervises the performers and directs the stage action in a theatrical production.

EPISODES: A passage that is not part of the main theme of a composition. An ornamental section.

ENSEMBLE: A group of two or more musicians.

EXCERPT: A smaller musical passage taken from a larger movement or work.

FANFARE: An opening, prelude, or flourish, often triumphant or celebratory, usually played by brass instruments.

FOLKLORE: The traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community passed on orally from generation to generation.

FORM: The structure of a piece of music.

GENRE: A category that identifies a piece of music as belonging to a certain style or tradition.

HARMONY: The pleasing combination of two or three pitches played together in the background while a melody is being played. Also refers to the study of chord progressions.

INSTRUMENTATION: Arrangement of music for a combined number of instruments.

LIBRETTO: Non-sung dialogue and storyline of a musical play. Also called a book.

MELODY: A succession of pitches in a coherent line, the principal part.



MOTIF/MOTIVE: Primary theme or subject.

MOVEMENT: A separate section of a larger composition.

OPERA: A drama where the words are sung instead of spoken.

ORCHESTRA: A large group of instrumentalists playing together.

ORCHESTRAL: Having to do with the orchestra.

ORCHESTRATION (V. ORCHESTRATE):
Arranging a piece of music for an orchestra.

ORCHESTRINA: A large mechanical musical instrument designed to imitate the sound of an orchestra.

PLOT: The main events of a play, novel, movie, or similar work.

PREMIERE: The first official performance of a work.

RECITAL: The performance of a program of music by a solo instrumentalist, singer, or small group.

RHYTHM: Pertaining to time, played as a grouping of notes into accented and unaccented beats.

ROMANTIC ERA OR PERIOD: The time in music history during the mid-1800s to early 1900s. Composers explored new realms of sounds to convey originality and individuality. The music was characterized by an emotional, expressive, and imaginative style.

SERENADE: A short suite of instrumental pieces.

SOLO: Music performed by only one instrument or voice. (N. Soloist: The person performing the solo line.)

SUITE: A loose collection of instrumental compositions.

SYMPHONY: Three to four movement orchestral piece, generally in sonata form.

SYNCOPATION: Stressing of a normally unaccented beat(s).

TEXTURE: The way in which tempo, melody and harmony are combined in a composition that determines the overall quality of the sound in a piece. Often described in relation to density as thick or thin or in relative terms such as by the number of parts or voices present.

THEME: A melodic or sometimes harmonic idea presented in a musical form.

TIMBRE: The quality that makes a particular musical sound have a different sound from another, even when they have the same pitch and loudness.

VARIATION: The repeating of a theme in an altered way.

VIRTUOSO: One who excels in musical technique and interpretation.

Concert filmed and produced by Aphorism
Productions.

