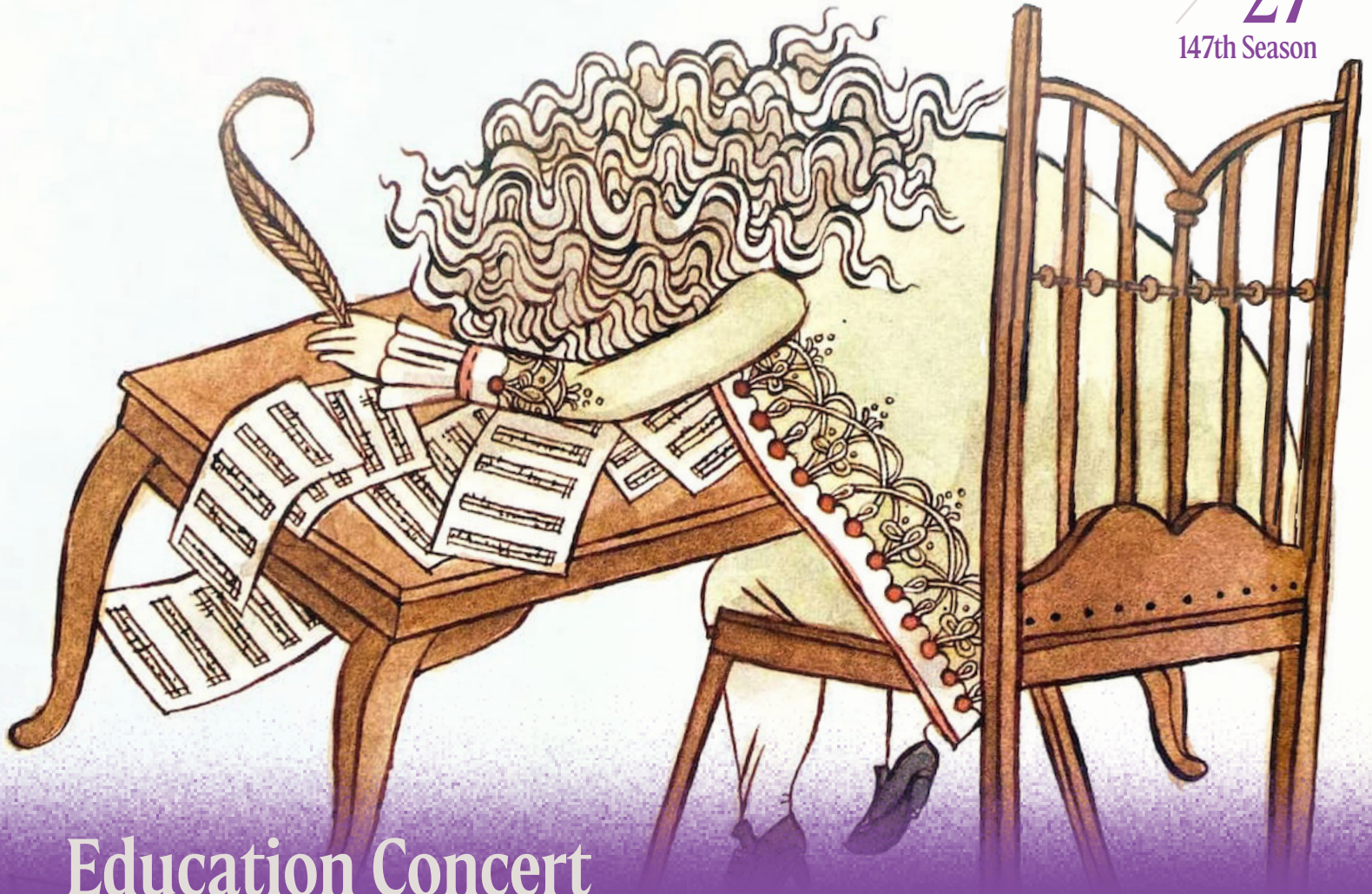


TEACHER GUIDE

26 / 27
147th Season



Education Concert THE COMPOSER IS DEAD

Oct 20–21

Tue 9:30am
Tue 11:00am
Wed 9:30am
Wed 11:00am

Samuel Hollister, conductor



ST. LOUIS
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

STÉPHANE DENÈVE, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Created in partnership with the **Metro Theater Company**.

SLSO education programs are presented by



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Concert Overview

Put your detective skills to the test as you search for musical “fingerprints!” Students will explore the musical “fingerprints” of Mozart and Tchaikovsky, using their listening skills to uncover what makes each composer’s music distinctive. Then, the mystery deepens with *The Composer Is Dead*, a symphonic whodunit featuring music by Nathaniel Stookey and text by Lemony Snicket. Together, the SLSO and Metro Theater Company bring this silly and suspenseful investigation to life as students encounter the instruments of the orchestra and discover how musicians keep music alive.

Objectives

Students will:

- Experience a live orchestra performance.
- Recognize the instruments and instrument families of the orchestra.
- Identify the responsibilities of a musician, concertmaster, conductor, and composer.
- Compare musical characteristics, or “musical fingerprints,” and distinguish between composers based on what they hear.

Repertoire

Nathaniel Stookey	<i>The Composer is Dead</i>
*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Symphony No. 40, in G minor, K. 550, I. Molto allegro [0:00-0:30] IV. Allegro assai [0:00-0:31]
*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Overture to “The Marriage of Figaro”, K. 492 [0:00-0:30]
*Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky	Suite from <i>The Sleeping Beauty</i>, Op. 66, V. Waltz [0:33-1:03]
*Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky	Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy [8:53-9:56]

**Excerpts from the following works will be performed as part of a game where the audience will guess if the excerpt is Mozart or Tchaikovsky.*

Repertoire is subject to change.

The concert is approximately 45 minutes.

Contact Information

The SLSO Education Team is available to answer questions or provide additional suggestions for learning activities.

Jessica Ingraham
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314-286-4407
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Education Programs Manager
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sarahr@slso.org

For questions about education concert ticketing or invoices, please contact the SLSO Box Office at 314-534-1700 or email educationtickets@slso.org.

Planning Your Visit

Information for planning your field trip to the SLSO is available on the [Planning Your Field Trip](#) webpage.

Arrival and Dismissal

To ensure a successful trip for everyone, it is important that all drivers follow the Education Concert Arrival and Dismissal Procedures found on the [Planning Your Field Trip](#) webpage. Please clearly communicate the expectations laid out in this document with anyone transporting children to the concert.

Accessibility

SLSO Education Concerts are inclusive of people with sensory differences. Additional resources are available to anyone who will benefit from them:

- Walk your students through their concert experience with an Education Concert Experience Guide found on the [Planning Your Field Trip](#) webpage.
- Get familiar with orchestral instruments before your Field Trip with [Instrument Playground Online](#).
- Submit an [Accommodations and Accessibility Form](#) at least two weeks before the performance to communicate any special needs your students have.
- If you need additional support for a student while at the concert, please visit the Guest Services Desk in the lobby.

For a full list of available accommodations, please see our [Planning Your Field Trip](#) webpage.

Disclaimer

The lessons in this Teacher Guide are adaptable for students in grades 1-6. Their intentional flexibility allows teachers to modify the content to best suit their students' needs.

Metro Theater Company

Since 1973, Metro Theater Company (MTC) has brought professional theater directly to young people across Missouri. Inspired by the intelligence and emotional wisdom of young people, we create professional theater, foster inclusive community, and nurture meaningful learning through the arts. As the region's only professional theatre dedicated exclusively to young audiences, MTC's touring productions engage students through storytelling, movement, music, and conversation, with post-show discussions and educator resources that extend the experience into the classroom.

2026–2027 Touring & Education Opportunities

For its 54th season, Metro Theater Company is inviting young people beyond the role of audience member and into the story itself.

THE ODYSSEY EXPERIENCE

By Christopher T. Parks. Created by Christopher Parks, Jim Murtha & Lorna Howley. Directed by Ellie Schwetye

Touring February 1–March 28, 2027 | Best for ages 10+

Step into the story! Adapted from Homer's *The Odyssey*, this immersive regional premiere places students at the center of Odysseus's journey, inviting them to become royals, merfolk, and even Poseidon!

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH DRAMA

Building Community Through Drama (BCTD) is Metro Theater Company's flagship education program, bringing professional teaching artists into elementary and middle school classrooms for an engaging, interactive experience that uses theatrical techniques to explore social and emotional learning, develop empathy, and investigate historical and current instances of bullying and oppression. Through theater games, role-playing, and reflection, students connect their own lived experiences to topics explored in social studies and literature while building skills that help them contribute to a more inclusive and supportive school community.

Five-session program | Best for 4th and 5th Grade

BCTD is currently underwritten by St. Louis County Children's Service Fund. Schools in St. Louis County may be eligible to participate at no cost.

Bring MTC to Your School!

Interested in bringing a performance or teaching residency to your school? Visit **metroplays.org/education** to learn more about touring dates, program availability, and bringing Metro Theater Company directly to your students!

metroplays.org/education

Lesson 1: Mystery Instrument

Description: Students play a game similar to Hedbanz or Heads Up where they ask questions to guess their mystery instrument. Students collaborate in small groups to define an instrument family.

Objective

Students will:

- Understand what makes each instrument unique.
- Define an instrument family by its method of sound production.

Standards

Missouri Music Learning Standards

- MU:Re7B. 1-5, MU:Re8A. 1-5
- MU:Cn11A.1-5

Missouri ELA Learning Standards

- R1A
- SL 1A, SL2A

Illinois Music Learning Standards

- MU:Re7.1.1-4, MU:Re8.1.1-4
- MU:Cn11.1. 1-4

Illinois ELA Learning Standards

- SL.1-3.2-3, SL.1-5.5

Materials

- Instrument cards (See Supplemental Materials at the end of this Teacher Guide) – Print enough instrument cards for each student to have one card.
- Masking tape
- Four instrument family signs (See Supplemental Materials at the end of this Teacher Guide.) – Place one sign in each corner of your classroom.
- Pens or pencils and paper, placed near each instrument family sign

Vocabulary

Brass Family

Tuba

Trumpet

French horn

Trombone

Percussion Family

Cymbals

Timpani

Xylophone

String Family

Violin

Viola

Cello

Bass

Harp

Woodwind Family

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet

Bassoon

Prior Knowledge

- Students should already be familiar with the instrument families and the instruments of the orchestra.
- For resources to introduce students to the instruments of the orchestra, visit [Instrument Playground Online](https://www.slso.org/education).

Procedures

- Arrange students in groups of two. If you have an uneven number of students, allow for one group of three.
- Attach an instrument card to each student's back, ensuring students do not and cannot see their own card.
- Students should quietly look at the card on their partner's back, keeping it a secret.
- In each student pair, one student should ask their partner up to three questions to try to reveal the instrument that is on their back. Students must formulate questions that can be answered only with "yes" or "no." After asking three questions, the student can then make one guess about the instrument on their back. If the guess is correct, the card is removed from their back. If the guess is incorrect, they should move on to their partner's turn and will come back to try again.
- The other student in the pair then repeats the process by asking three questions and making one guess.
- If either student does not correctly guess their instrument, the students may ask as many additional questions as they need to until they correctly identify their instrument.
- Once both partners have identified their instruments, each student should move to the corner of the room marked with the sign for their instrument family.
- After all students have joined their instrument family groups, each group will arrange their instrument cards on the floor or display them on a wall. Check to make sure students have arrived at the correct instrument family and redirect if needed.
- Using the pens or pencils and paper provided, instruct students to work with their small group to answer the following questions. Give them a time limit for discussing and recording their answers.
 - What are the similarities among the instruments in your family?
 - What are the differences between the instruments in your family?
 - How do the instruments in your family produce sound?
- Once time is up, have each group share with the class their answer to the last question: How do the instruments in your family produce sound? Ask the class as a whole to check the group's work by answering the question: Are all the members of the instrument family explained by their description of how sound is produced? If their answer is no, work together to refine their answer.

Evaluation

Use the following 3-point rubric:

- Student asked questions that allowed them to correctly identify their given instrument. (1 point)
- Student arrived at the correct instrument family sign. (1 point)
- Student presented a clear description of how instruments in their given instrument family produce sound. (1 point)

Lesson 2: *The Composer is Dead* Vocabulary Builder

Description: Students learn or deepen their understanding of vocabulary words from the book *The Composer is Dead* by creating actions to illustrate words. Students incorporate their vocabulary word actions into a reading of the story.

Objectives

Students will:

- Learn or deepen their understanding of vocabulary found in *The Composer is Dead*.
- Become familiar with the story *The Composer is Dead*.

Standards

Missouri Music Learning Standards

- MU:Re7B.4-5a
- MU:Cn11A.4-6a

Missouri ELA Learning Standards

- R1A, R1B
- SL2A

Illinois Music Learning Standards

- MU:Re7.1.4-5a
- MU:Cn11.1.4-6a

Illinois ELA Learning Standards

- RL.1-4.3
- SL.1-3.2-3

Materials

- Vocabulary cards (See Supplemental Materials at the end of this Teacher Guide) – Print one set of cards and cut along horizontal lines so that each card is a word on the left and its definition on the right.
- *The Composer is Dead* book or audio tracks with illustrations.
 - Part 1 - [The Composer is Dead video](#)
 - Part 2 - [The Composer is Dead video](#)
 - Part 3 - [The Composer is Dead video](#)

Vocabulary

- Composer
- Conductor
- See vocabulary cards for additional vocabulary words

Procedures

- As students enter your classroom, distribute vocabulary cards to half of the students.
- Instruct students who do not have a card to find someone who does to be their partner. If you have an uneven number of students, allow for one group of three.
- In their pairs, instruct students to study their word and definition and create an action to illustrate the word. Give them a time limit for coming up with their action.
- Once time is up, invite each pair of students to share with the class their word and the action they came up with. Then see if the class can guess the definition.
- Introduce the book, *The Composer is Dead*. Before reading the book:
 - Identify the author and illustrator.

- Introduce the concept of composer (someone who writes music) and conductor (someone who leads the orchestra in interpreting and performing the music the composer wrote). Draw parallels between composer and author; conductor and illustrator. Questions for student engagement may include:
 - If the composer is like the author, what does the composer create?
 - If the conductor is like the illustrator, what does the conductor help bring to life?
- Make predictions based on the book cover.
 - Where does the story take place?
 - Who might the main characters be?
 - Who do you think the suspects will be?
 - What clues on the cover make you think the story will be funny, scary, sad, or something else?
- Read the book aloud to the class or play the audio tracks and watch the illustrations.
- As the story is read, pause at each vocabulary word and have the student pairs act out their word.
- After the book has been read, discuss the following
 - Which of our predictions came true?
 - *The Composer is Dead* is a figure of speech – a word or phrase used in a non-literal sense for effect. Ask the students to brainstorm other figures of speech they may have heard or used.
 - Did the orchestra murder the composer? What does it mean when an orchestra “murders” a composer?
 - What does it mean when an orchestra “keeps a composer alive”?

Evaluation

Use the following 2-point rubric:

- Student created an action that accurately communicated the meaning of their assigned vocabulary word. (1 point)
- Student contributed to the class discussion by answering a question, making a prediction, explaining an idea, or providing an example of a figure of speech. (1 point)

Lesson 3: *The Composer is Dead* Listening Map

Description: Students explore how composer Nathaniel Stookey uses recurring musical themes to represent characters, events, and emotions in *The Composer is Dead*. Through guided listening and movement, students identify the musical characteristics of each theme and use a listening map to recognize them as they return throughout the piece.

Objectives

Students will:

- Describe how a composer uses musical elements to create themes that represent characters, events, and emotions in a story.
- Identify selected musical themes from *The Composer Is Dead* and connect them to the characters, events, and emotions they represent.
- Recognize recurring musical themes as they return throughout the composition.

Standards

Missouri Music Learning Standards

- MU:Re7B.1-5, MU:Re8A.1-5
- MU:Cn11A. 1-5
- MU:Cr1A. 1-5

Missouri ELA Learning Standards

- R1A, R4A
- SL1A, SL2A

Illinois Music Learning Standards

- MU:Re7.1.1-4, MU:Re8.1.1-4

Illinois ELA Learning Standards

- RL.1-4.3
- SL.1-3.2-3

Materials

- *The Composer is Dead* book (If available)
- Recording of Nathaniel Stookey's [The Composer is Dead](#)
- *The Composer is Dead* listening map (See Supplemental Materials at the end of this Teacher Guide.) – Print or project on a smartboard.

Vocabulary

- Musical Theme

Procedures

- After reading *The Composer Is Dead*, ask students to recall some of the important characters, events, and emotions from the story. As students respond, explain that just as an author uses words to bring a story to life, a composer can use musical ideas, or themes, to represent characters, events, and emotions.
- Remind students of the opening of the story: “The composer is dead.” Ask students to imagine how they might create music to go with this line of text:
 - Which instruments might they use?
 - Would the music be loud or quiet?
 - Would it sound bright, dark, mysterious, serious, playful, or something else?
- Listen to the [Main Theme](#) (0:04–0:15). Ask students to describe what they hear. Guide them in identifying the low brass, *forte* dynamic level, minor tonality, and heavy, deliberate

character of the music. Discuss how Nathaniel Stookey's musical choices help establish the mood or emotion of the story.

- Explain that Stookey created many different musical themes throughout *The Composer is Dead*. Each theme has its own musical characteristics and helps illustrate a different character, event, or emotion in the story.
- Listen to excerpts of the various themes in *The Composer is Dead*. After hearing each excerpt:
 - Ask students to describe what they notice about the music.
 - Ask what kind of character, event, or emotion they think the music might represent.
 - Introduce a movement for each theme and practice it together.

The themes and movements are as follows:

- [Main Theme](#) (0:04-0:15): Students stand up and make four exaggerated, slow marching or stomping movements in the same rhythm as the theme played by the low brass.
- [String Waltz Theme](#) (7:12-7:44): Students sway from side to side, moving with the 1-2-3 pattern of the waltz.
- [Sneaky Theme](#) (13:59-14:45): Students use small, quiet movements, such as tiptoeing their fingers through the air, to reflect the sneaky mood of the music.
- [Marching Brass Theme](#) (16:23-16:50): Students pretend to play a trumpet while swaying to the steady beat.
- [Tango Theme](#) (18:40-19:30): Students move to the strong rhythmic character of the tango using deliberate steps, poses, or side-to-side movements.
- Ask students to compare the themes. How did the composer change the instruments, dynamics, tempo, rhythm, or character of the music to create different musical ideas?
- Using the provided listening map, listen to *The Composer is Dead*. As each theme sounds, have students perform its corresponding movement. Encourage students to use the listening map and what they hear in the music to anticipate when a familiar theme occurs or returns.
- After listening, briefly reflect as a class:
 - Which theme was easiest to recognize? Why?
 - What musical clues helped you recognize the different themes?
 - How did the music help tell the story?

Evaluation

Use the following 3-point rubric:

- Student described at least one musical element, such as instrumentation, dynamics, tempo, rhythm, or tonality, that helped create the character or mood of a musical theme. (1 point)
- Student identified a selected theme from *The Composer Is Dead* and connected it to the character, event, or emotion it represents. (1 point)
- Student recognized a recurring musical theme during the listening map activity and responded with the corresponding movement. (1 point)

About the Composers



Nathaniel Stookey

Born: April 25, 1970, in San Francisco, California

Nathaniel Stookey is an American composer and musician who grew up in San Francisco, California. He began studying violin and composition at a young age and performed as both a violinist and violist in the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra from 1986 to 1988. At just 17 years old, he became the youngest composer ever invited to write a work for the San Francisco Symphony's New and Unusual Music Series.

Since then, Stookey has worked with leading orchestras and musicians around the world. One of his best-known works is *The Composer is Dead*, created in collaboration with author Lemony Snicket. Premiered by the San Francisco Symphony in 2006, the suspenseful musical mystery introduces audiences to the instruments of the orchestra while telling a humorous detective story. The work quickly became popular and has been performed by hundreds of orchestras around the world. Today, Nathaniel Stookey is recognized for writing imaginative and engaging music that helps audiences of all ages discover and enjoy the orchestra.



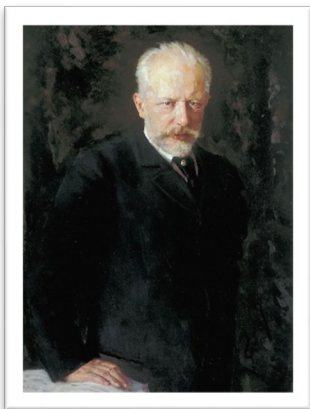
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born: January 27, 1756, in Salzburg, Austria

Died: December 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is one of the most famous composers in history. He showed incredible musical talent when he was just a toddler, and by age five, he was already writing and performing his own music. As a child, he traveled all over Europe playing the harpsichord and violin for kings, queens, and emperors.

Even though he died when he was only 35 years old, Mozart wrote an astonishing amount of music—over 600 pieces! His music is famous for being bright, cheerful, balanced, and full of energy. One of his most famous creations is the comic opera *The Marriage of Figaro*. The opera premiered in Vienna in 1786 with Mozart himself conducting. Today, it is celebrated globally as a masterpiece and remains one of the most frequently performed operas in the world.



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: May 7, 1840, in Votkinsk, Russia

Died: November 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russia

Tchaikovsky began taking piano lessons at the age of five and quickly showed a remarkable talent for music. His mother encouraged his musical interests, and he later attended the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, where he studied composition. Although Tchaikovsky initially trained for a career in law, he soon realized that music was his true calling.

Tchaikovsky composed three of the most famous ballets ever written: *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*. *Sleeping Beauty*, which premiered in 1890 at the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg, is filled with magical fairy-tale characters, royal celebrations, and enchanting dances. Its music remains some of the most beloved ballet music ever composed. Another of Tchaikovsky's most famous works is *Romeo and Juliet*, inspired by William Shakespeare's timeless story of two young people in love. First performed in 1870, the piece uses powerful musical themes to represent the characters, their feuding families, and the drama of the story. Today, Tchaikovsky's music continues to captivate audiences of all ages. His music is filled with unforgettable melodies that have inspired listeners for more than a century.

For Families: Concerts for Kids & Concerts for Teens

Concerts for Kids and Concerts for Teens offer a mix of fun thematic orchestral music to engage and entertain kids of all ages and their families. All concerts take place at Powell Hall at the Jack C. Taylor Music Center. Visit slo.org/family or call 314-534-1700 for more information.



Howl at Powell

Sun, Oct 11, 3:00pm

Most enjoyed by ages 6 and up.

Get ready for a hauntingly fun musical adventure the whole family will enjoy! Join the SLSO for a spooktacular concert filled with playful melodies, ghostly tunes, and fun surprises. This not-so-scary Halloween celebration is a magical way to enjoy the season.



Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra

Sun, Jan 31, 3:00pm

Most enjoyed by ages 12 and up.

Experience the orchestra like never before with Philharmonia Fantastique, a live symphonic concert featuring vibrant animations. Follow a magical sprite as we embark on a musical journey through the inner workings of an orchestra, revealing the energy, motion, and creativity behind the music.



Peter and the Wolf

Sun, Feb 21, 3:00pm

Most enjoyed by ages 6 and up.

Join Peter and his animal friends in Peter and the Wolf, Sergei Prokofiev's beloved musical story for orchestra. As the music unfolds, different instruments bring each character to life, from the playful bird to the sneaky wolf.



Our World of Water

Sun, Apr 25, 3:00pm

Most enjoyed by ages 6 and up.

Dive into this imaginative, immersive concert experience, created in partnership with StoneLion Puppet Theater. Through music, movement, and puppetry, water becomes both guide and storyteller as it journeys from icy glaciers to flowing rivers, vibrant oceans, and falling rain.



Tuba

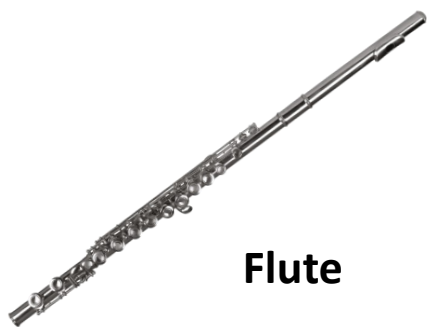


Trumpet

French Horn



Trombone



Flute



Oboe



Clarinet



Bassoon



Violin



Viola



Cello



Cymbals



Bass



Xylophone



Harp



Timpani



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STRINGS



WOODWINDS



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STÉPHANE DENÈVE, MUSIC DIRECTOR

BRASS



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PERCUSSION

Accompaniment

Part of the music that is meant
to be in the background

Admire

To have respect for something

Agitate

To upset or stir up

Arrogant

Overly proud of oneself

Contrary

The opposite

Decompose

To break down or fall apart

Distasteful

Not pleasant

Dramatic

Attracting attention by being
overly emotional

Baffled

Confused

Boisterous

Rough, noisy, in high spirits

Cadenza

A showy part of the music for
only one instrument

Conquer

To win

Ecstatic

Very happy

Enormous

Very big

Exhausted

Very tired

Flamboyant

Showy, fancy, ornate

Flattering

Making someone
look good

Imitation

A copy

Incomprehensible

Impossible to understand

Injustice

Something that is unfair

Interrogate

To ask a lot of questions

Interview

To ask a lot of questions

Lurk

To hide and try to go unnoticed

Melody

A sequence of notes that is
musically satisfying

Mourn

To feel sad about
something

Murmur

To speak softly and
continuously

Nauseous

Sick to your stomach

Nostalgic

A longing for something
in the past

Ridiculous

Absurd or laughable

Ruckus

A noisy commotion

Shenanigan

Mischief or trickery

Suspicious

Questionable

Unison

Two musical parts at
the same pitch

Various

Of different kinds

Violent

Intense in force

Waltz

A ballroom dance
in triple meter

Weary

Physically or mentally
exhausted



THE COMPOSER IS DEAD

Listening Map



ST. LOUIS
SYMPHONY
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STÉPHANE DENÈVE, MUSIC DIRECTOR



Melody
Violin I & II

Accompaniment
Cello & Bass

Counter melody
Viola

Cadenza
Concertmaster

Waltz Theme
Strings



Marching Theme
Brass

Sneaky Theme
Woodwinds

Tango Theme
Brass & Percussion

Recapitulation



The End