

TEACHER GUIDE

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27
147th Season



Education Concert Unpacked: Pictures at an Exhibition

Jan 20
Wed 10:30am

Samuel Hollister, conductor



ST. LOUIS
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA
STÉPHANE DENÈVE, MUSIC DIRECTOR

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Concert Overview

Take a guided tour through the vivid musical world of Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Through live musical examples and storytelling, we will unpack how visual art can inspire music. Students will explore the individual movements of Mussorgsky’s work, along with the paintings and stories behind them.

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand that composers find inspiration in various places, including other art forms and personal experiences.
- Analyze a composition’s musical elements to discern the stories, ideas, images, and emotions that a composer communicates.
- Connect with a composer through the emotion of their music.

Repertoire

Modest Mussorgsky / orchestrated by Maurice Ravel, *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Listen on: [YouTube](#) [Spotify](#) [Apple Music](#)

Repertoire is subject to change.

The concert is approximately one hour long.

Contact Information

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

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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 for download on the [SLSO website](#).

Arrival and Dismissal

To ensure a successful trip for everyone, it is important that all bus drivers follow the bus unloading and loading procedures. Please clearly communicate the expectations laid out in this document: [Education Concert Arrival and Dismissal Procedures](#).

Audience Expectations

Help your middle or high school students understand what to expect at an orchestral music concert with this [SLSO Concert Guide](#).

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 Guest Services in the lobby.

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

Disclaimer

The lessons in this Teacher Guide are adaptable for students in grades 6-12. Their intentional flexibility allows teachers to modify the content to best suit their students' needs.

Lesson 1: What is Program Music?

Pre-concert: Choose one, two, or three activities, each about 20 minutes.

Description: This lesson contains three activities to introduce students to Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Teachers can choose to (1) use a slide deck to teach students about program music; (2) compare Mussorgsky's music to the artwork that inspired it; and/or (3) ask students to create drawings inspired by a movement of Mussorgsky's work.

Objectives

Students will:

- Define program music.
- Become familiar with Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.
- Analyze how Mussorgsky used musical elements to communicate the stories, images, and emotions in Hartmann's artwork.

Standards

Missouri Learning Standards – Music

- MU: Re7B

Illinois Learning Standards – Music

- MU: Re7.1

Materials

- [Google slides](#), slides 1-16
- Device to play recorded music
- Whiteboard or other space for notetaking
- Paper and pencils or other drawing implements
- Exit slip (see p. 13, below)

Procedure

Activity 1: What is Program Music?

- Present the provided Google slides (#1-16) to your class or share the slides with students to review independently.
- **Assessment:** Use the provided exit slip to assess students' understanding.

Activity 2: Compare Visual and Musical Elements

- Choose one of the movements of *Pictures at an Exhibition* that has a surviving artwork connected with it. Options include: Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks (slide 13), Samuel Goldenberg and Schmüyle (slide 13), Catacombs (slide 14), The Hut on Fowl's Legs (slide 15), or The Great Gate of Kyiv (slide 15).
- Project the image for your students and ask them to describe its visual elements. Note their responses on your whiteboard. Questions could include:
 - Subject: What is Hartmann depicting in the work?
 - Line: Are the lines thin or thick, curved or jagged, clearly defined or blurred? Do they feel controlled or rushed?

- Shape: Are the shapes geometric (like squares, triangles, circles) or are they more organic (like blobs or swirls or leaves)?
- Form: Does that image look three-dimensional or is it flat?
- Space: Does the artwork feel crowded or empty? What is your eye most drawn to in the space?
- Color: Are the colors warm or cool, bright or muted? Do the colors clash?
- Value: How light or dark is the work? How much contrast is there between the light and dark parts?
- Texture: Does the work look smooth, rough, or soft?
- Emotion: Does the work evoke any emotions for you?
- Ask students to reflect on the visual elements that they have identified and predict some of the musical elements Mussorgsky might choose in the music inspired by the artwork. Questions could include:
 - Melody and Harmony: Do you think he chose high or low sounds? Major or minor harmonies?
 - Rhythm: Do you think the music will contain a lot of long notes or a lot of short notes? Steady rhythms, jagged rhythms, or syncopations?
 - Dynamics: Do you think he chose loud or quiet sounds? Contrast between dynamic levels or a steady dynamic throughout?
 - Tempo: Do you think the music will be fast, slow, or varying?
 - Style: Do you think he chose legato, staccato, or marcato sounds?
 - Timbre: What instruments might Mussorgsky feature?
- Listen to the corresponding movement (links to recordings are in the Google slides) and then return to students' predictions and reflect. Questions could include:
 - Did you correctly predict any of Mussorgsky's compositional choices?
 - Was there anything in the music that surprised you?
 - What do you think Mussorgsky communicated about the artwork through his music?
- **Assessment:** Did students participate in the conversation, identifying at least one visual element, making at least one prediction, and reflecting on Mussorgsky's compositional choices?

Activity 3: Music Inspires Drawing

- Much of Hartmann's artwork does not survive. Choose one of the movements of *Pictures at an Exhibition* that does not have a surviving artwork connected to it. Options include: Gnomus (slide 12), The Old Castle (slide 12), Tuileries (slide 12), Bydlo (slide 12), The Market at Limoges (slide 13), Cum Mortuis in Lingua Mortua (slide 14).
- Distribute paper and pencils or other drawing implements.
- Instruct students that they are going to create a drawing inspired by the chosen movement. You'll listen to the movement twice. The first time, they should make note of at least two musical elements and how they might translate those elements into their drawings. The second time they listen, they should turn their paper over and create their drawing.
- After the students have completed their drawings, ask them to share them with the class. Discuss when students' choices of visual elements are similar or different from their classmates'.

- **Assessment:** Did students identify at least two musical elements in Mussorgsky's movement and connect them to visual elements in their own artwork?

Lesson 2: Mussorgsky's Promenade

Pre-concert: 20 minutes for Part 1, 20 minutes for Part 2

Description: Students sing the Promenade theme from Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* to become familiar with the melody before the concert. Students explore the theme, recognizing how Mussorgsky varies it and discussing how knowledge of Mussorgsky's inspiration influences how they perceive the music.

Objectives

Students will:

- Recognize the Promenade theme from Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.
- Understand how a composer varies a theme to express different emotions.

Standards

Missouri Learning Standards – Music

- MU: Re7B

Illinois Learning Standards – Music

- MU: Re7.1

Materials

- [Google slides](#), slides 16-19
- Mussorgsky's Promenade Theme (optional to print one for each student, see p. 14, below)
- Device to play recorded music
- Whiteboard or other space for notetaking

Musical Selection

- Mussorgsky, *Pictures at an Exhibition*
 - [Promenade I](#)
 - [Promenade II](#)
 - [Promenade III](#)
 - [Promenade IV](#)
 - [Cum Mortuis in Lingua Mortua](#)

Procedure

Part 1: Sing the theme

- Distribute Mussorgsky's Promenade Theme to each student or project it on your classroom's smartboard (slide 17).
- Ask students to define *theme* as it is used in music. A *theme* is an important melody within a larger piece of music. It is often recognizable and memorable. During a piece of music or a movement, *themes* are introduced, changed or varied, and repeated.
- Teach your students to sing the Promenade theme.
- Discuss what students notice about the theme. What are its musical characteristics? What emotions do they perceive in the theme?

- *Optional:* Use one of the many different arrangements of the Promenade theme that are available to teach your students to play it on their instruments. Retailers like J.W. Pepper have arrangements of *Pictures at an Exhibition* for concert band, string orchestra, full orchestra, and for flexible instrumentation at various levels of difficulty.

Part 2: Deep dive into the theme and its recurrences

- After becoming familiar with the Promenade theme during Part 1 of this lesson plan, listen to the first sounding of the theme: [Promenade I](#) (slide 18).
- Ask students to describe the theme, now that they've heard it within the texture of the orchestra. What are its musical characteristics? What emotions do they perceive in the theme?
- Throughout *Pictures at an Exhibition*, the Promenade theme returns multiple times. Mussorgsky varies this theme: he changes it or adds new musical elements, while still ensuring that the theme is recognizable to the listener. Listen to a few variations on the theme. For each variation, ask students: How did Mussorgsky change or add to the original theme? How do these changes affect the emotions you hear in the theme? Take notes on the whiteboard about the musical elements and emotions perceived in each recurrence of the theme to refer to later.
- Share (or review) with students some information about the inspiration for *Pictures at an Exhibition*.
 - Modest Mussorgsky's dear friend Viktor Hartmann died suddenly in 1873 at age 39 of an aneurism. Hartmann was an artist and an architect.
 - A huge exhibit of 400 of Hartmann's works was mounted at the Imperial Academy of the Arts in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1874. The works on display included architectural sketches, whimsical drawings, and paintings and drawings from Hartmann's many travels.
 - Mussorgsky was inspired by the exhibit of his friend's work to compose *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Mussorgsky chose ten of Hartmann's works to depict through individual movements in his larger piece. Periodically, between the works that represent specific pieces of art, Mussorgsky inserted a movement titled Promenade.
 - A Promenade is a leisurely, pleasurable walk in a public space. In this case, Mussorgsky's music captures the action of walking from artwork to artwork in a museum.
- Knowing about the extramusical inspiration for the music, ask students to offer their own interpretations about what Mussorgsky attempted to communicate through the Promenade theme in *Pictures at an Exhibition*. What does the music tell us about Mussorgsky's emotion as he walks through the museum viewing his friend's artwork? Do you hear the Promenade theme differently now that you know the inspiration for the music?

Assessment

Through class discussion, the student successfully:

- Describes at least one way that Mussorgsky changes or adds to the theme in one of its variations (e.g., dynamics, instrumentation, tempo, texture).

- Contributes to the discussion about the emotions expressed in the Promenade theme and reflects on how knowledge of Mussorgsky's extramusical inspiration influences their perception of the music.

Lesson 3: Concert Reflection

Post-concert: 15+ minutes

Description: After the concert, students reflect on and analyze their concert experience through class discussion and critique, deepening their understanding of music, performance, and emotional/creative response.

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand that music is meant to be critiqued.
- Share their own interpretation of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Standards

Missouri Learning Standards – Music

- MU: Re7B
- MU: Re8A
- MU: Cn11A

Illinois Learning Standards – Music

- MU: Re7.1
- MU: Re8.1
- MU: Cn11.1

Materials

- Exit Slip (see p. 15, below)

Procedure

- After the concert, lead a discussion on any of the following questions:
 - Reflect broadly on the concert experience with the prompts: “I noticed...”, “I enjoyed...”, and “I wondered.”
 - At the concert, you were introduced to one interpretation of how Mussorgsky’s music was inspired by and depicted Hartmann’s artwork.
 - In which movement(s) did you think Mussorgsky’s music most clearly communicated Hartmann’s visual image?
 - In which movement(s) did you think the connection between the visual art and the music was not as convincing?
 - Was there anything about Mussorgsky’s story or his experiences that you could relate to?
 - What do you still want to know about Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* or program music in general?

Assessment

Use the provided exit slip to invite students’ individual critique and reflection.

About the Composers



Modest Mussorgsky

Born: March 21, 1839 | Karevo, Russia

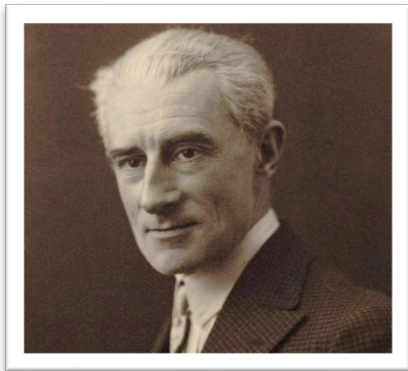
Died: March 28, 1881 | Saint Petersburg, Russia

Modest Mussorgsky was born to a wealthy family. As a young child, his mother taught him to play piano. He soon started composing, publishing a polka for piano at age 12. When he was ten years old, his family moved to the big city of Saint Petersburg so that he and his brother could attend a German-language school. Then, at age 13, he started training at a

military academy. Throughout his life, Mussorgsky had a job as a civil servant to earn a paycheck. But he also sought out opportunities to perform and compose.

Mussorgsky was one of a group of Russian composers known as “The Five” or “The Mighty Handful.” These composers were interested in writing music that sounded distinctly Russian, instead of like the music of Western Europe that was so popular. Their works were inspired by Russian history, folk stories, and other national themes. Mussorgsky’s most famous compositions are [*Night on Bald Mountain*](#) and *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Mussorgsky died at age 42, likely as a result of alcoholism. Mussorgsky wrote *Pictures at an Exhibition* as a piano solo. It was only after his death that Maurice Ravel, a French composer, arranged it for orchestra.



Maurice Ravel

Born: March 7, 1875 | Ciboure, France

Died: December 28, 1937 | Paris, France

Like Mussorgsky, Ravel began learning piano as a young child. At age 14, he enrolled in France’s most prestigious music school: The Paris Conservatory. He loved playing piano, but hated practicing scales. And he loved composing, but was not fond of the composition competitions that were a significant part of his Conservatory training. He was eventually expelled

from school because he did not want to conform to their strict musical rules.

Many of Ravel’s works are inspired by fairy tales and Spanish folk songs and he is known for his vivid orchestration. His most famous composition is [*Boléro*](#), which repeats a single melody about eighteen times, switching up the instrumentation each time. His orchestration of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* has become one of the most popular works that orchestras perform.

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 slso.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! This spooktacular concert is 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.

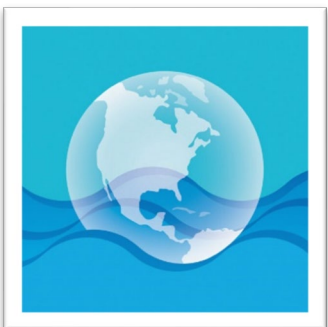


Peter and the Wolf

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.

WHAT IS PROGRAM MUSIC?

Exit Slip

Name: _____

Program music...

- (A) Has a descriptive title
- (B) Is instrumental music
- (C) Communicates something extramusical
- (D) All of the above

In your own words, what inspired Mussorgsky to compose *Pictures at an Exhibition*?

What more do you want to know about Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*?

Promenade Theme

Pictures at an Exhibition (transposed)

Mussorgsky



CONCERT REFLECTION

Exit Slip

Name: _____

By exploring a composer's life and inspiration, we can better understand what they might have been trying to express through their music. At the concert, you were introduced to one interpretation of how Mussorgsky's music was inspired by and depicted the artwork of his friend, Viktor Hartmann.

In which movement(s) did you think Mussorgsky's music most clearly communicated Hartmann's visual image? Describe.

In which movement(s) did you think the connection between the visual art and the music was not as convincing? Describe.

Was there anything about Mussorgsky's story or his experiences that you could relate to? Describe.