



# ***Trailblazers:*** ***A Celebration of the*** ***American Spirit***

2025.26  
**Concerts**  
**for**  
**Schools**

**M****S****O** MILWAUKEE  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

KEN-DAVID MASUR / MUSIC DIRECTOR



# Welcome!

On behalf of the musicians and staff of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, we are so excited to welcome you and your students to Allen-Bradley Hall at the Bradley Symphony Center for *Trailblazers: A Celebration of the American Spirit*. We can't wait to have you here for a fun, educational, and engaging musical experience.

To prepare your students to get the most out of this concert, this guide contains key background information and activities. It is our hope that you will find this resource to be a valuable tool in helping your students to enjoy *Trailblazers: A Celebration of the American Spirit*. We will be using the National Association for Music Education lesson plan format as well as listing the corresponding national standards for both music and core subject areas as applicable. 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.

Special thanks to our MSO volunteers for their support of MSO Education initiatives. We thank the docents and ushers who generously give their time and talents every season.

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

Nathan Hickox-Young, MSO Concerts for Schools & Education Manager, content author  
Courtney Buvid, MSO ACE & Education Manager, curriculum contributor  
Laura Huebner, Dotted Design, graphic design

Again, we are so excited to welcome you and your students to the Bradley Symphony Center for this concert!

Sincerely,

**Rebecca Whitney**

Director of Education, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra

# 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 musical piece.

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

Click [Trailblazers: A Celebration of the American Spirit\\*](#)

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](mailto: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!

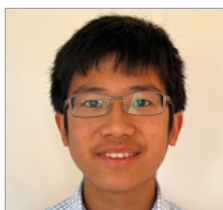
### MSO Education Department

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



### About Ryan Tani

» Learn more about our conductor for this concert!



### About Paul He

» Learn more about our guest artist for this concert!



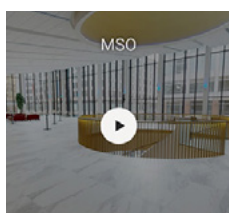
### About the Orchestra

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



### About Caitlyn Nettesheim

» Learn more about our guest artist for this concert!



### Bradley Symphony Center

» Discover the home of the MSO by taking a virtual tour!

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## Concert Preparation

We can't wait to welcome your class to the Bradley Symphony Center to hear the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra! Whether it's your first symphonic concert or you're a seasoned audience member, here are some suggestions on how to get the most out of the performance. There is always something new to learn and experience!

### Before You Go

#### Listen to the pieces

- ◇ Have you heard any of these pieces before?
- ◇ Do you have a favorite?
- ◇ Is there a piece you are excited to hear live?
- ◇ Make thoughtful observations as you listen to the pieces. What instrument families do you hear? Changes in dynamics? Tempos?

#### Go deeper

- ◇ Read the biographies and program notes.
- ◇ Were there any composers you had never heard of before?
- ◇ Did you learn anything new or interesting that you didn't know before?
- ◇ Have fun in the [MSO's Bitmoji Classroom](#)! Full of interactive elements, including a virtual tour of the Bradley Symphony Center, rooms focused on the four families of the orchestra, and more!

## **On Stage**

### **Look around**

- ◇ Have you been to the Bradley Symphony Center before?
- ◇ Are there any instruments you haven't seen before?
- ◇ What observations do you make about the orchestra and the conductor?
- ◇ Watch the conductor. Can you figure out which instruments will play by where they are pointing or looking?

### **Listen closely**

- ◇ Can you name which instruments are playing based on how they sound?
- ◇ How do the different pieces make you feel?
- ◇ What instruments are used to create different sound effects?
- ◇ Listen for the melodies and try to remember one you'll be able to hum later.

## **Homeward Bound**

### **Reflect**

- ◇ Was there anything that surprised you during the concert?
- ◇ Did you have a favorite moment you'd like to tell your family about later?
- ◇ Was your experience different from your classmates?
- ◇ Do you have questions for the musicians? Or want to say "Thank You"? Send us a letter!

Mail: Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra  
Attn. Education Department  
212 W Wisconsin Ave  
Milwaukee, WI, 53203

Email: [edu@mso.org](mailto:edu@mso.org)

### **Rules and Reminders**

- ◇ No outside food or drink (except water) allowed in Allen-Bradley Hall.
- ◇ No flash photography or recordings.
- ◇ Visit the bathroom before the concert so you don't miss a moment of the action!
- ◇ Show your appreciation by clapping! When the conductor lowers their hands or baton, the piece is over. The orchestra appreciates your energy and support.
- ◇ If you get separated from your group, ask an usher for help.

### **Accessibility Resources**

**Social Narratives:** Visit our KultureCity Venue page [here](#) to access the Bradley Symphony Center social story. A *Trailblazers: A Celebration of the American Spirit*-specific social narrative will be available on our website prior to the concert.



- ◇ **Sensory Bags, Weighted Lap Pads, & Noise Canceling Headphones:** Sensory bags containing special KultureCity VIP badges, fidget tools, noise canceling headphones, and other resources are available for checkout, at no cost, on concert days. Noise canceling headphones and weighted lap pads can also be checked out individually. Find an usher or staff member on the concert day or make a request ahead of time by emailing Nathan Hickox-Young at [hickoxn@mso.org](mailto:hickoxn@mso.org). A photo ID will be requested as security.
- ◇ **Quiet Areas:** The Bradley Symphony Center has a Quiet Room located in the pre-theater lobby on the first floor. The Quiet Room, equipped with a sink, comfortable seating, and warm lighting, is available for anyone who needs a private space to escape for a few minutes. Additional Quiet Areas are located in the Historic Exhibit on the lower level and in the Phone Booth Area on the second level. These spaces can be an escape for those feeling overwhelmed for as little or as long as they need. If you need assistance finding any of these Quiet Areas, please find an usher or Front of House staff member.
- ◇ **Hearing Loop & Infrared Listening System:** Allen-Bradley Hall is equipped with a tele-coil or T-coil Loop system. No additional assistive listening devices are required for patrons with compatible hearing aids or cochlear implants. Allen-Bradley Hall is also equipped with an infrared listening system. Assistive listening devices are offered free of charge and can be requested from an usher or staff member on the concert day or by making a request ahead of time with Nathan Hickox-Young at [hickoxn@mso.org](mailto:hickoxn@mso.org). A photo ID will be requested as security.

**Teachers** – we value your feedback! Be sure to review these materials and let us know how your concert experience was following the performance. We want to know what you think! Preview the concert survey [here](#).



The Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra has partnered with KultureCity to make the Bradley Symphony Center and all of the programs and events that the venue hosts sensory inclusive.



# Trailblazers: A Celebration of the American Spirit

**Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra** | **Ryan Tani**, conductor  
**Caitlyn Nettesheim**, First Stage actor  
**Paul He**, piano

**SCOTT JOPLIN** arr. Delisle/Schuller  
*The Entertainer*

**GEORGE GERSHWIN**  
*An American in Paris*

**AARON COPLAND**  
*John Henry, A Railroad Ballad for Orchestra*

**JOHN WILLIAMS**  
*Olympic Fanfare and Theme*

**CARLOS SIMON**  
*Four Black American Dances*  
 I. Ring Shout: Soulfully

**FLORENCE PRICE**  
*Symphony No. 1 in E minor*  
 III. Juba Dance

**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH**  
*Concerto No. 1 in D minor for Clavier and String Orchestra, BWV 1052*  
 I. Allegro  
**Paul He, Piano**



Herzfeld  
Foundation



The MSO thanks the following funders for their generous annual support that makes Concerts for Schools programming possible: United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF), Herzfeld Foundation, Hearst Foundations, Townsend Foundation, Educators Credit Union, and the de Hartog Family, Eleanor N. Wilson, and Irene Edelstein Memorial Funds as administered by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation.

Concerts for Schools is supported in part by grants from the Milwaukee Arts Board and the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin. Additional support provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and Milwaukee County Arts Fund (CAMPAC).

# PROGRAM NOTES

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





## SCOTT JOPLIN (1867-1917)

The **composer**-pianist Scott Joplin is known as "The King of Ragtime." He is considered the most famous Black composer of his time, whose work opened the doors of the jazz era. Joplin was originally self-taught, using the piano that was present at the house where his mother was a cleaner. Eventually Joplin did receive more formal lessons in the classical style, learning to play violin and cornet. He also reportedly had an excellent voice and would often lead bands as a singer in addition to his other duties on stage. Joplin was a victim of **plagiarism** several times in his career, which led to many works that were composed by Joplin but published under another name. Although his contributions to the musical world were not fully appreciated during Joplin's lifetime, he still was able to earn a living composing, teaching, and performing. Joplin wasn't afraid to be political with his works, often writing about racial

injustice and political unrest. His works fell out of popularity around 1940 but were brought back into the limelight with a new recording by pianist-musicologist Joshua Rifkin. In 1976, Joplin was awarded one of the greatest honors a composer can receive: a Pulitzer Prize for his contributions to American music.

Joplin wrote in many styles, including opera and even symphonic works, but his most popular pieces were his rags. In 1912, Joplin composed a series of **orchestrated** rags titled "Fifteen Standard High Class Rags" but popularly known as "The Red Back Book." These works were later re-orchestrated by American composer Gunther Schuller and are still played by orchestras around the world.

"The Entertainer" and "Maple Leaf Rag" are two of Joplin's best-known rags.

### Ragtime and "The Entertainer" Spotify

When Europeans immigrated to America, the "land of opportunity," in the late 1800s, they brought the traditions of their homelands: French quadrilles, Irish jigs, German waltzes, Spanish flamenco, and more. The combination of these compositional styles drawn from these traditions along with the Afro-Cuban rhythms and melodies rooted in the Black community led to a type of music known as "ragtime." Another root of ragtime as a dance is called the "Cakewalk." Couples would dress in fancy clothes and promenade, and the best walkers would "take the cake."

Around the height of its popularity in 1910, the term "ragtime" came to refer more to the style of piano playing than the dance itself. The key to ragtime music is **syncopation**, where accents fall in unexpected places: to "rag" a song meant to change the accent structure by dragging out certain notes in order to make the music livelier. This isn't to say the music isn't precise; Joplin once said, "Syncopations are no indication of light or trashy music ... ragtime is destroyed by careless or imperfect rendering, and very often players lost the effect entirely by playing too fast."

## Activity Idea

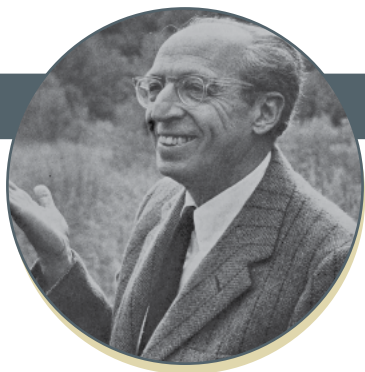
Have your students heard this piece before in a movie or TV show? Try to make a list of all the different places where your students may have heard this music!

## Digital Resources

<https://www.scottjoplin.org/joplin-biography>

The Entertainer





## AARON COPLAND (1900-1990)

One of the most important composers of the 20th century, Aaron Copland was nicknamed the “Dean of American Composers.” But he preferred to call himself simply “a good citizen of the Republic of Music.” Some people even say that he invented American classical music.

Born in Brooklyn at the turn of the century, Copland first learned to play the piano from his older sister. By age 15, he decided to become a composer and began taking music classes. But becoming a composer wasn’t easy – in fact, his first teacher thought his modern-sounding chords were sour notes!

By 1936, he began concentrating on American folk themes that were much simpler than the popular jazz sounds of the day. Copland believed that simple tunes could be beautiful and began to

mix modern composing methods with traditional American **folk tunes** to create musical pictures of his homeland. During the Great Depression, many musicians returned to the basics and wrote music based on common hymns, cowboy songs, and folk tunes. This became the signature sound Copland was searching for – a truly American style of composing.

Throughout his long career, Copland wrote a wide variety of musical works, including **ballet** scores, orchestral works, choral music, and movie music. He was also a great teacher of music, often giving lectures and working with young musicians. Like his good friend Leonard Bernstein, Copland was dedicated to teaching others what he had learned and worked to create appreciation for modern classical music.

### *John Henry, A Railroad Ballad for Orchestra* Spotify

Composed in 1940, this piece is based on the African-American folk ballad “John Henry” (found on [page 28](#)). The form is theme and variation. First, the tune is introduced by solo clarinet, then the same theme is presented five more times, changing a little bit each time. You can think of this piece as a train ride – it starts slowly, picks up speed, then slows as it reaches its destination. Copland called this piece a “railroad ballet” or “descriptive fantasy” for orchestra because it tells the story of the folk legend of John Henry. Listen for how he uses instruments to create special effects and represent parts of the story – the anvil becomes John Henry’s famous hammer! Other percussion instruments featured in this piece include the triangle, sandpaper blocks, and train whistle. Listen for train sounds, whistles, steam drills, and hammer blows!

### Activity Idea

John Henry is a great example of a folk hero, whom songs were written about. Can your students think of any other folk hero and the songs that were written about them?

### Digital Resources

<https://www.americanfolklore.net/john-henry-the-steel-driving-man/>

John Henry - Disney Animated Short

Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestra - John Henry by Copland



## CARLOS SIMON (b. 1986)

"My dad, he always gets on me. He wants me to be a preacher, but I always tell him, 'Music is my pulpit. That's where I preach.'" Carlos Simon reflected for *The Washington Post*. Having grown up in Atlanta, with a long lineage of preachers and connections to gospel music to inspire him, GRAMMY-nominated Simon proves that a well-composed song can indeed be a sermon. His music ranges from concert music for large and small ensembles to film scores with influences of jazz, gospel, and neo-romanticism.

Simon is the current composer-in-residence for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and frequently writes for the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera. Simon also holds the position of inaugural composer chair of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the first in the institution's 143-year history.

Simon has been commissioned by the likes of the LA Philharmonic, San Diego Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Opera (in collaboration with Mo Willems), New York Philharmonic, and Bravo! Vail, Minnesota Orchestra, American Ballet Theatre, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, Carnegie Hall for the National Youth Orchestra of the USA, and BBC Symphony Orchestra for the Last Night of the Proms.

As well as his composition work, Simon frequently curates concert programs, which often highlight his own music as well as that of close collaborators. Curation concerts

have recently been programmed by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Boston Chamber Players, Tanglewood Festival for Contemporary Music, and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Simon was nominated for a 2023 GRAMMY Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition for his previous album, *Requiem for the Enslaved*. The requiem is a multi-genre musical tribute to commemorate the stories of the 272 enslaved men, women, and children sold in 1838 by Georgetown University, released by Decca in June 2022. This work sees Simon infuse his original compositions with African American spirituals and familiar Catholic liturgical melodies, performed by Hub New Music Ensemble, Marco Pavé, and MK Zulu.

Simon earned his doctorate degree at the University of Michigan, where he studied with Michael Daugherty and Evan Chambers. He has also received degrees from Georgia State University and Morehouse College. He has served as a member of the music faculty at Spelman College and Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, and now serves as associate professor at Georgetown University. Simon was also a recipient of the 2021 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, the highest honor bestowed by the Sphinx Organization to recognize extraordinary classical Black and Latinx musicians and was named a Sundance/Time Warner Composer Fellow for his work for film and moving image.

## Four Black American Dances Spotify

Dance has always been a part of any culture. Particularly in Black American communities, dance is and has been the fabric of social gatherings. There have been hundreds, perhaps thousands, of dances created over the span of American history that have originated from the social climate of American slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow. These dances are but a mere representation of the wide range of cultural and social differences within the Black American communities.

### I. Ring Shout

A ring shout is an ecstatic, transcendent religious ritual, first practiced by enslaved Africans in the West Indies and the United States, in which worshipers move in a circle while shuffling and stomping their feet and clapping their hands. To evoke the celebratory nature of this dance, the percussionist is asked to use a large stick on a wooden floorboard paired with fast-moving passages in the strings and woodwinds.

### Activity Idea

This piece uses lots of different percussion instruments. Watch or listen to the following video and see if you can name all the different percussion instruments used!

(If your students need assistance: crash cymbal, suspended cymbal, tambourine, tamtam, xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, chimes, woodblock, hand claps, shaker, wood stick on wooden board, splash cymbal, 2 snare drums, 2 whips, 3 tomtoms. )

### Digital Resources

#### Ring Shout Live Performance

<https://www.carlossimonmusic.com/works/four-black-american-dances>







## FLORENCE BEATRICE PRICE (1887-1953)

Florence Beatrice Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1887. Her mother began teaching her music when she was only four years old, and she composed her first piece by age 11. Originally, Price wanted to study to be a doctor but was denied admittance because of her race. Upon this rejection, she decided to pursue a career in music instead. She was accepted to the New England Conservatory of Music, where she studied piano, organ, and composition. After graduation, Price returned to Little Rock to teach music education in schools and had a private studio as well. She taught for only a few years before the racial tensions in Little Rock forced her to leave and move to Chicago in 1927. It was in Chicago where she focused her career on composition and wrote a number of **orchestral**, vocal, instrumental, and **chamber** works.

In 1932, Price won the Wanamaker Prize for her Symphony No. 1 in E minor, and at the 1933 Chicago World Fair, the piece premiered with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. This was the first time that a major American orchestra had performed a piece by an African American woman. She was the first African American woman to receive international recognition for her compositions. Price is praised for her compositional technique of combining European classical music with the melody and rhythms of African American culture and spirituality. Price's style had influences from Dvořák and Coleridge-Taylor, who both called upon folk songs and spirituals from their heritage to create their compositions.

### Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Mvt. III "Juba Dance" Spotify

Most often, the typical structure of a symphony is for the third movement to be a dance of some kind. Traditionally symphonies have a minuet, a scherzo, or a waltz. Florence Price took the opportunity to draw upon her heritage and made the third movement of her Symphony No. 1 in E minor a "Juba Dance." Juba Dance is an African American style of dance that has roots in the Kongo region of modern-day Angola and was brought to the United States by enslaved people. The dance form is a combination of stomping and slapping/patting your arms, legs, chest, and cheeks using intricate rhythms to keep time. Some of the steps have names like "Yaller Cat," "Pigeon Wing," and "Blow That Candle Out." Juba originated as a form of communication among enslaved people. Originally, they used drums and had drum circles, but when slave owners discovered how drums were being used as a form of communication, they banned them. Enslaved people instead adopted "Juba" for their rhythmic dancing. It is believed that Juba may have influenced traditional tap dance. Even today, African American Greek organizations use Juba for step shows.

## Activity Idea

Teach your students the very basic forms of Juba dance using this instruction video:  
[Pattin' Juba Instructional Video](#)

## Digital Resources

[Juba Dance Live Performance](#)





## JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Johann Sebastian Bach was a German composer, organist, harpsichordist, violinist, and violist of the **Baroque Era**. Born into a musical family, Bach received his early musical training from his father, a string player. By 1695, both of his parents had passed away, and Bach moved to the care of his brother Johann Christoph, who gave him his first keyboard lessons. He began his professional career at the age of 18 after landing his first job as a musician for the court of Duke Johann Ernst in Weimar. Bach held this position only for a short while before becoming the organist at the new church in Arnstadt, where a beautiful new organ had just been built. He would go on to hold positions at the Church of St. Blaise in Mühlhausen, the court of Duke Wilhelm Ernst in Weimar, with Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, and finally St. Thomas Church in Leipzig.

Bach married his first wife, Maria Barbara Bach, in 1707, with whom he had seven children. After her untimely death in 1720, he remarried in 1721 to Anna Magdalena Wilcken, with whom he had 13 children. Sadly, only 10 of Bach's children survived into adulthood, but four of them became famous composers in their own right. Bach was an extremely prolific composer, writing over 1,100 known works. Some of his most celebrated include the *Brandenburg Concertos*, *Mass in B minor*, the famous *Tocatta and Fugue* in D minor for organ, and the *St. Matthew Passion*. Bach's compositions were largely forgotten after his death in 1750, but a performance of his *St. Matthew Passion* by Felix Mendelssohn in 1829 spurred a rediscovery and interest in Bach's music. Today, J.S. Bach is regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time.

### Concerto No. 1 in D minor Spotify

While the beginnings of the modern instrument called the piano had begun to be invented during Bach's lifetime, the prevailing keyboard instrument of the time was still the harpsichord. This instrument is similar to the modern piano, but rather than the strings being struck with small hammers as they are in the modern piano, they were plucked with a hook-like mechanism. Bach was able to try out a precursor to the modern piano, but he found that the top notes of the instrument lacked power.

Bach spent time studying with another Baroque composer, Antonio Vivaldi, and this is clear in this concerto. The piece begins with a single melody rather than richly harmonized chords, which is very indicative of Vivaldi's style. Another trademark compositional tool of the Baroque period is the use of fugues, and this piece is no exception. Listen for when the music contains one theme or motif, and then it comes in again, sort of interrupting itself – that may be a fugue!

## Activity Idea

Read more about Paul He, the soloist for the concert. How old was he when he began playing piano? How many hours do you think he practiced this piece?

## Digital Resources

[Concerto in D minor Live Performance](#)





## GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898-1937)

George Gershwin was born in Brooklyn, New York, to parents who were originally from Russia. After the family got a piano in 1910, Gershwin began learning to play. At age 15, Gershwin dropped out of school to become a “song plugger,” a pianist who worked in music shops playing the latest popular songs for Tin Pan Alley. When he was 18, Gershwin’s first song was published, and quickly Gershwin began establishing himself as a leading voice in classical music. Gershwin used popular tunes and styles like jazz, combined with more classical music techniques. While this

fusion had begun happening on a smaller scale through some other compositions, Gershwin was one of the first composers to be recognized for this. Outside of the classical style, he teamed up with his older brother, Ira, who wrote lyrics, for the first time in 1924 for the musical *Lady, Be Good*. The brothers became very successful over the next few years. Gershwin moved to Hollywood in 1937 to begin working in musical films. After only two films, Gershwin became sick and died from a brain tumor.

### *An American in Paris* Spotify

Wanting to become a better composer of classical music, Gershwin traveled to Paris in 1928. At the advice of French composer Maurice Ravel, Gershwin went to study with the famous teacher Nadia Boulanger. However, Ms. Boulanger refused to teach him because she thought he was already an accomplished composer that did not need lessons. That same year, the New York Philharmonic **commissioned** a new work from Gershwin. He decided to draw on his experience in Paris for the piece.

Gershwin was quoted saying, “My purpose here is to portray the impression of an American visitor in Paris as he strolls about the city, listens to various street noises, and absorbs the French atmosphere.”

*An American in Paris* is called a symphonic poem, meaning the music has a story without words. However, Gershwin always referred to the work as a ballet. There are a few different versions of ballets to Gershwin’s music, the most recent created in 2005. But the work remains popular as an orchestral piece.

## Activity Idea

Have your students think about a time that they have traveled somewhere far away. Have they been to a different country? Lead a discussion with your students about what was different and what was the same and how we can learn from different cultures.

## Digital Resources

**American in Paris Live Performance (full piece)**

<https://gershwin.com/publications/an-american-in-paris-concert-work/>





## JOHN WILLIAMS (b. 1932)

John Williams grew up around music and film. As a child he learned to play piano, clarinet, trombone, and trumpet, and his father played drums for many of the famous Warner Brothers cartoons. After serving in the Air Force in the early 1950s, Williams attended The Juilliard School, where he studied piano and composition. Soon after, he moved to Los Angeles, beginning what is widely regarded as one of the most successful careers in Hollywood history.

Williams is best known for his movie music. He has composed music for more than 100 movies, including the *Harry Potter* films, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*, *Jaws*, the *Indiana Jones* movies, and all the *Star Wars* films. Like all skilled composers, Williams has developed his own special style, including a natural ability to write musical themes or motifs that immediately bring to mind a specific character.

### Olympic Fanfare and Theme

In 1984, when the Los Angeles Olympic Committee commissioned *Olympic Fanfare and Theme* for the Games of the XXIII Olympiad, they chose John Williams for this commission. The piece now has regular use in television coverage of the international athletic competitions, and it has made it the most renowned of the composer's four works commissioned for the Olympics.

As the composer wrote in 1984: "The Olympic Games continue to fascinate and inspire us. With every presentation of the Games, we experience that complete dedication and unshakable will to persevere that typifies the goal of each competitor. The human spirit soars, and we strive for the best within us." —J.W.

### Activity Idea

The piece of music has become so closely associated with the Olympics despite the fact that there are no words. Are there any other pieces of music that you can think of that make you think of something else even though the music doesn't directly mention it?

### Digital Resources

Olympic Fanfare Live Performance

<https://www.johnwilliams.org/compositions/concert/olympic-fanfare-and-theme>



## Lesson 1 – Context of Ragtime

Subject	Level	Duration	Materials
General Music/ELA	5-8	25-30 minutes	Technology to play the pieces of music – no visual is required  Optional paper and pencils for written responses

### Lesson Objectives/NAfME Standards

MU:Re7.1.5a Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.

MU:Re7.2.7b Identify and compare the context of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.

L.4.2 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple meaning words and phrases in grade-level reading and content; use context clues, analyze meaningful word parts, consult general and specialized reference materials, and apply word solving strategies (for meaning) as appropriate. a. Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. b. Consult print and digital reference materials for meaning and pronunciation.

### Summary of Tasks

1. Read the following quote from Scott Joplin. There may be some words that you are unfamiliar with so encourage your students to use their resources to find these definitions.

"What is scurrilously called ragtime is an invention that is here to stay. That is now conceded by all classes of musicians... All publications masquerading under the name of ragtime are not the genuine article... That real ragtime of the higher class is rather difficult to play is a painful truth which most pianists have discovered. Syncopations are no indication of light or trashy music... Joplin ragtime is destroyed by careless or imperfect rendering, and very often players lost the effect entirely by playing too fast."

2. Define the term syncopation with your students. Play "The Entertainer" using the [Spotify playlist](#) and see if your students can hear the syncopation.
3. After your students have a basic understanding of syncopation, lead a discussion using the following questions:
  - After reading the quote, how did Joplin feel about "ragtime?"
  - Can you guess what events or discussions might have led to these comments? Do you think people who create new art sometimes face resistance?
  - How much can performers change the way the audience understands the music?
  - Is music an invention? How does it compare to other inventions?
4. Listen to the following piece that was published in the same year as "The Entertainer," *Jeux d'eau* by Maurice Ravel: <https://open.spotify.com/track/0Gef573AJfARbMuQSoCy2r?si=2d2a152c1d8e4754>
  - How do they compare and contrast?
  - Which do you think was more popular at the time?

---

### Assessment

If you had students write down what they thought this piece might be about, and their reflections, they could hand this in for a formal assessment. If you instead opted for class discussion, informal assessment in the form of class discussion would be appropriate.

---

### Take Home/Extension Tasks

Encourage students to find syncopation in other works, possibly a piece that you have been working on in your classroom. What other pieces on this program have syncopation?



## Lesson 2 – Defining Form through Florence Price’s “Juba Dance”

### Subject

General  
Music

### Level

3-8

### Duration

25 minutes

### Materials

White/Smart Board  
Speaker System

### Lesson Objectives/NAfME Standards

MG3.R.9.m: Define and demonstrate understanding of foundational musical elements in discussion and written reflections.

MG3.R.13.m: Reflect upon and critique performances using grade appropriate music vocabulary.

MG4.Cn.10.m: Explain how music relates to self, others, and the world using grade appropriate music vocabulary.

### Summary of Tasks/Actions:

1. Teach students about form and how composers use it to organize their musical ideas in their pieces.
2. Teach students about the specific form, rondo. It is an Italian word meaning round.
  - a. Rondo is an instrumental compositional technique where the main theme returns multiple times throughout the piece.
    - i. The main theme, also known as the “episode,” “couplet,” or “digression,” is referred to as the “A” theme.
    - ii. The A theme is contrasted with at least two different sections. The A theme returns between any of the contrasting sections.
    - iii. The returning A theme creates the rondo pattern. Common rondo patterns are the Five Part Rondo – ABACA, or the Sonata Rondo Form – ABACABA.
    - iv. As long as the A theme continues returning, the rondo form can have as many contrasting sections as the composer needs.
3. Have your students listen to different examples of rondos. Below are a few samples you can use:
  - a. **Horn Concerto No. 4 in Eb major – Rondo, Allegro by Mozart**
  - b. **Violin Concerto in E major, 3rd mvt. by Bach**
  - c. **“Rondo e capriccio” by Beethoven**
    - i. As students listen to the pieces, have them identify each time the A theme returns by raising their hand. What type of rondo are they?
4. Compose a rondo with students.
  - a. Split students into three (or more) groups. One group will be the A theme, another will be the B theme, and the last group will be the C theme. If you have more groups, continue labeling them with more letters.
    - i. Instruct each group to develop their own simple four bar rhythmic pattern. Make sure everyone in the group can “play” the rhythm by clapping, patting, or stomping.
      1. If you are short on time, you may create three contrasting rhythms and assign each group one of these rhythms to play.

b. Have students compile their rhythms to form a rondo as a class; the A group performing first, then the B group, then the A group again, then the C group, followed by the A group to end the piece.

i. After a successful performance, relabel the groups so that the A group is now the B group, the B group is now the C group, and the C group is the new A group. Perform the rondo again, this time with the new group performing their rhythm as the A section.

1. Continue switching group labels until all groups have led the rondo as the A theme.

5. Listen to Movement 3, "Juba Dance" from Price's Symphony No. 1 in E minor.

a. Have students listen to the piece and use their listening skills to determine the form of the piece.

b. Guide students as necessary to help them discover that the rondo form is ABACA.

c. Listen to the piece multiple times to allow students to hear the main theme returning.

d. Have students raise their hand every time they think they hear the A theme return.

e. Write the rondo form of "Juba Dance" on the board and listen to the piece having students raise their hands each time they hear the A theme return.

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### Assessment

An extension assessment would include having the student compose their own piece in Rondo form.  
(MG.1.Cr.11.m)

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### Take Home/Extension Tasks

Find Rondo form in pieces that they hear at home!





## Lesson 3 – The Life of Florence Price

Subject	Level	Duration	Materials
Music/ ELA/ History	5-8	25 minutes	Smart Board/Audio Visual Viewing Device

### Lesson Objectives/NAfME Standards

MG4.Cn.9.m: Analyze the historical and cultural relationships between music and other disciplines.

MG4.Cn.10.m: Explain how music relates to self, others, and the world using grade appropriate music vocabulary.

MG4.Cn.11.m: Categorize musical connections, similarities, and differences.

### Summary of Tasks

1. Ask students to name composers. (Most likely the answers will be male composers).
2. Ask students if they know of, and can name, any female composers.
  - a. If students are having a hard time with this, discuss why they don't know any female composers?
  - b. Talk about the difficulties of being a female composer, the history of female composers, needing to use a pseudonym, gender issues, etc.
3. On this Youth Concert program, there is a composition by a woman composer.
  - a. Reference the composer and her piece found in the program notes. (Florence Price, "Juba Dance.")
4. Split students into small groups to research other female composers. Assign each group a different composer.
  - a. Examples: Judith Weir, Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn, Amy Beach, Jennifer Higdon, Lili Boulanger, etc.
  - b. Reference these links if you need a place to start and ideas of which female composers to have students research:
    - i. <https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/latest/great-women-composers/phamie-gow/>
    - ii. <http://www.classical-music.com/article/10-female-composers-you-should-know>
5. Groups will research facts about their composer, while also looking for a piece that they wrote. Ask them to pay special attention to if their composer faced any difficulties to becoming a composer.
6. Have groups create a short presentation for the class, including 3-5 facts about the composer and play a brief example of a composition they wrote.
  - a. Discuss similarities and differences between the composers.

## Assessment

Following their presentations, have students evaluate their preparation and presentation:

**We provided 3-5 important facts about our composer:**

Yes! 😄 Kind of 😐 Not really 😞

**We found a piece that our composer wrote and played a small part of it for the class:**

Yes! 😄 Kind of 😐 Not really 😞

**We stayed on task during the preparation and presentation of our project:**

Yes! 😄 Kind of 😐 Not really 😞

## Take Home/Extension Tasks

1. Introduce Price using music, video, and print resources either that you provide or that are found in this guide.
  - a. The following excerpt from the documentary, "The Caged Bird: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price," is a nice introduction to Price's life as an African American woman, composer, and musician and the struggles and triumphs she experienced. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93BYQ7Cex7M>
2. Start a discussion, asking students to share what they have learned and to describe the composer. What kind of life did she have? How did she struggle? How did she respond?
3. Teach students that Florence Price was the first African American woman to have a symphony performed by a major symphony orchestra.
  - a. Discuss with students why this is a big deal? Why were there not more accomplishments like this from other composers? How did being an African American woman affect Price's ability to study and compose music? What struggles did other women/African Americans face as composers?
  - b. Discuss the challenges and obstacles Price faced and how she overcame them.
4. Have students reflect on their own challenges in their lives. What are some times they may have to persevere? What are some of their goals in their lives? What are some obstacles they might have to overcome to achieve these goals?
5. Tell the students they are going to write a letter to Florence Price praising her and thanking her for her perseverance in becoming a composer.
  - a. Have students think about what Florence Price can be proud of, the impact she had on African American and female composers, what she might have been feeling during her struggles to get recognized, and how she paved the way for others after her.
  - b. Have students share with Florence in their letter about a time they may have had to persevere and what they did to overcome any challenges or struggles.
    - i. Students can also tell Florence about goals they have in their lives for things they want to accomplish and what they might need to do to accomplish those goals like Florence did.

Dear Florence,

---

[add paragraph structure and lines as necessary]

Sincerely,

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## Lesson 4 – *An American in Paris*

### Subject

General  
Music

### Level

3-6

### Duration

15-25 Minutes

### Materials

Technology to play music

Appropriate drawing utensils and paper

### Lesson Objectives/NAfME Standards

MU:Re7.1.5a Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.

MU:Re7.2.2a Describe how specific music concepts are used to support a specific purpose in music.

### Summary of Tasks

1. Have your students read more about Gershwin and why *An American in Paris* was written. Have a discussion about what it is like to visit someplace different. What does it feel like?
2. Pass out paper and have students divide their sheet into 6 equal sections.
3. Listen to *An American in Paris*, and have your students listen for the following sections. As they listen, they will draw a depiction of what each of these "scenes" may look like:
  - Imagine an American visiting Paris, walking down one of the main streets, swinging their arms along to the opening theme.
  - Then you hear the famous taxi theme—real French taxi horns played by the orchestra's percussionists. As though frightened by a taxi's near-hit, a xylophone adds a scampering effect.
  - Our tourist walks on. He passes the open door of a café, through which he hears a popular song played by a brass band.
  - Exhilarated, our tourist continues on his way. A clarinet plays a theme with a strong American accent. Sounds of traffic excite the visitor, and then the English horn plays a more sober theme. Our tourist continues with another walking theme.
  - He strolls into a bar and meets someone Gershwin represented with a solo violin. Our tourist becomes homesick. Gershwin's gloomy mood is a blues theme first played by the trumpet.
  - The homesick American is rescued with a melody played by two trumpets, and he breaks out into the Charleston dance.
  - A walking theme returns, mixed with the blues theme, the opening swinging theme, and taxi sounds. Then, the tourist decides he has enjoyed Paris very much in the happy finale.
4. Have your students share out their drawings as they are comfortable to see if they look the same or different.

### Assessment

Have your student turn in their drawings of each of these scenes.

### Take Home/Extension Tasks

Have your students write a story about Gershwin visiting Paris. What might he have experienced that is not included in the piece?



## Lesson 5 – The Legend of John Henry

### Subject

General  
Music

### Level

3-8

### Duration

35 Minutes

### Materials

Technology to play music

Optional sheet music for students

### Lesson Objectives/NAfME Standards

MU:Cr3.1.7a Evaluate their own work, applying teacher-provided criteria such as application of selected elements of music, and use of sound sources.

MU:Pr4.2.7c Identify how cultural and historical context inform performances and result in different music interpretations.

MU:Re7.2.7b Identify and compare the context of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.

### Summary of Tasks

1. Tell your students the legend of John Henry utilizing one of the digital resources, or using this synopsis:

#### Who was John Henry?

The legend of John Henry, the African-American worker known as the “steel-driving man,” is a classic American folk tale. Steel drivers were railroad workers who were also known as hammer men. Their job was to drive holes into solid rock using hammers to hit steel drills or spikes. Hammer men always worked with a partner, called the shaker or turner, who would rotate the drill after every blow. As the story goes, John Henry was the fastest, strongest, and most powerful man on a crew working for the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Railroad to extend the railroad line from the Chesapeake Bay to the Ohio Valley. The men were working steadily until they came to Big Bend Mountain. Ordered to tunnel through the mountain, the men struggled for three years to complete the dangerous task. One day, the railroad company brought in a steam drill to speed up the construction, saying that it was more powerful than any man. But not John Henry! A race was set—man against machine. After a long day of drilling with almost superhuman strength, John Henry and his 14-pound hammer outdrilled the machine! He died soon after, some say with the hammer still in his hand. Scholars believe that John Henry was a real man who was born a slave in the 1840s or 1850s. He loved to eat, sing, and play banjo music. He began working on the railroad following the Civil War (during Reconstruction), and his legend, they say, was based on a real story that happened in West Virginia in the early 1870s.

2. Lead a discussion with your students about the story of John Henry and folktales in general. Historians agree that John Henry was a real person, but that maybe not everything in this legend is true. What parts of the story are true and what may be embellished over the years?
3. The Legend of John Henry is also a folk song, learn the piece with your class using either call and response or by handing out this music (see next page):

## JOHN HENRY

When John Hen-ry was a lit-tle ba-by Sit-tin' on his

ma-ma's knee, he gave a long and a lone-some

cry. This ham-mer'll be the death of me, Lord, Lord. This ham-mer'll be the

death of me

- Listen to Aaron Copland's John Henry theme while looking at your music, how are they different, how are they the same? Have a discussion with your students about the tradition of passing music down aurally and how the melodies can shift and adapt with each generation.

### Assessment

This activity should be done with the entire class so an informal assessment would be appropriate.

### Take Home/Extension Tasks

After your students have mastered the original John Henry melody and lyrics, have them compose a second verse!



# General 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.

[Carnegie Weil Music Institute Lesson Plans](#) (General Music lesson plans and templates specified by grade level and concept, designed by Carnegie Hall).

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

[Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra Bitmoji Classroom](#). Interactive website.

## Composers, Pieces, and General Background

[Dallas Symphony Orchestra Kids website](#). Composer list includes pages on Strauss, Holst, Mendelssohn, Jessie Montgomery, and John Williams.

# Trailblazers: A Celebration of the American Spirit

## Worksheet

### Short Answer

1. What does the conductor do with his or her hands or baton to show the piece is over?

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2. What did Florence Price originally want to become?

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3. Was John Henry a real person?

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4. What was Scott Joplin's nickname?

---

5. What job did Gershwin get when he was 15 years old?

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6. How many composers on this program have written music for films?

---

7. What time signature do Waltzes most typically use?

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8. How is a harpsichord different than a modern piano?

---

#### Optional Word Bank:

A doctor	3/4 Time	It has a harp in it	Lowers them	Yes
Two	The Jester of Jazz	2/4 Time	An Auctioneer	No
The strings are plucked instead of struck	Four	A song player	Raises them	It only plays chords
	A Song plugger	The Duke of Ellington	The King of Ragtime	

## **Trailblazers: A Celebration of the American Spirit Worksheet Answer Key**

1. Lowers them
2. A doctor
3. Yes
4. The King of Ragtime
5. A Song Plugger
6. Four
7. 3/4 time
8. The strings are plucked instead of struck

# Glossary

**Accompaniment:** Instrumental or vocal parts that support a more important part.

**Afro-Cuban Music:** The fusion of African polyrhythms and Spanish melodies, a byproduct of the transatlantic slave trade.

**Arranging:** The process of reworking a musical work to create a new or different version of it.

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

**Baroque Era or Period:** A period of music that lasted from the early 1600s to about 1750, characterized by ornate and complex melodies and lines. Some notable composers from this time period are Bach, Vivaldi, and Handel.

**Beat:** The unit of musical rhythm.

**Cadence:** A sequence of notes or chords comprising the close of a musical phrase.

**Chamber Music:** An ensemble consisting of fewer players, often not led by a conductor.

**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.

**Commission:** A contract to pay a composer to write a new piece of music.

**Compose:** The act of writing music.

**Composer:** A person who writes music.

**Composition:** An original piece of music.

**Concertmaster:** The leader of the first violins of an orchestra and an assistant to the conductor.

**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.

**Crescendo:** A gradual increase in loudness.

**Debut:** A person's first appearance or performance in public.

**Decrescendo:** A gradual decrease in loudness.

**Duet:** A performance by two people.

**Duration:** The time that a sound or silence lasts, represented by musical notes and rests with fixed values with respect to one another and determined by tempo.

**Dynamics:** Loudness or softness of a composition. The symbols in sheet music indicating volume.

**Ensemble:** A group of two or more musicians.

**Ethnomusicology:** The study of the impact of music on society and culture.

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

**Flat:** A symbol showing that the note is to be lowered by one half-step.

**Folklore:** The traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community transmitted orally from generation to generation.

**Folk Tune/Folk Music:** Traditional pieces of music, unique to each culture, often passed down from generation to generation aurally.

**Form:** The structure of a piece of music.

**Forte:** A dynamic marking indicating to play loud.

**Fortissimo:** A dynamic marking indicating to play very loud.

**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.

**Incidental Music:** Music used in a film or played as background music to enhance a particular atmosphere.

**Instrumentation:** Arrangement of music for a specific combination of instruments.

**Key:** The system of notes or pitches based on and named after the key note.

**Key signature:** The flats and sharps at the beginning of each staff line showing the key in which the piece is to be played.

**Legato:** Indication to a musician to perform in a smooth, flowing manner, without breaks between notes.

**Leitmotif:** A recurrent theme throughout a musical or literary composition, associated with a particular person, idea, or situation. Translates from German as "leading motive."

**Major:** One of two modes of the tonal system. Music in major keys has a positive, affirming character.

**Mass:** In music, the setting of the primary text of the Roman Catholic liturgy to music.

**Melody:** A succession of pitches in a coherent line; the principal part of a composition.

**Minor:** One of two modes of the tonal system. Can be identified by a dark, melancholic mood.

**Motif/Motive:** Primary theme or subject.

**Movement:** A separate section of a larger composition.

**Natural:** A symbol showing that the note is returned to its original pitch after it has been raised or lowered.

**Notation:** The methods of transcribing music into print.

**Opera:** A drama where words are sung instead of spoken.

**Opus:** A musical work, abbreviated to Op. Often used with a number to designate a work in its chronological relationship to a composer's other works.

**Orchestra:** A large group of instrumentalists playing together.

**Orchestration (v. orchestrate):** Arranging a piece of music for an orchestra.

**Patron:** A person who financially supports a composer or artist.

**Piano:** A dynamic marking indicating to play softly.

**Pianissimo:** A dynamic marking indicating to play very softly.

**Pitch:** The frequency of a note determining how high or low it sounds.

**Pizzicato:** A technique where a stringed instrument is played by being plucked, rather than bowed.

**Plagiarism:** The practice of taking someone else's work, and passing it off as your own.

**Premiere:** The first official performance of a work.

**Prodigy:** A person, especially a young one, endowed with exceptional qualities or abilities.

**Quartet:** A set of four musicians who perform compositions written for four parts.

**Repertoire:** A collection or body of standard works performed regularly.

**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 early 1800s to early 1900s. Composers explored new realms of sound to convey originality and individuality. The music was characterized by an emotional, expressive, and imaginative style.

**Scale:** Any set of musical notes ordered by pitch.

**Scherzo:** Literally translating to the term “joke” this type of work is characterized by its playful and vigorous nature.

**Score:** The depiction, often in book or bound form, of a musical work containing all the parts stacked vertically and rhythmically aligned. (v. scored: To write or arrange for a specific instrument or instruments.)

**Sharp:** A symbol showing that the note is to be raised by one half-step.

**Solo:** Music performed by only one instrument or voice. (n. soloist: The person performing the solo line.)

**Sonata:** Music of a particular form typically consisting of four movements. Each movement differs in tempo, rhythm, and melody, but they are bound together by subject and style.

**Songwriter:** A person who composes words, music, or both, especially for popular songs.

**Staccato:** Indication to a musician to perform each sound with sharp, detached breaks between notes.

**Staff:** Five horizontal parallel lines and spaces between them on which musical notation is written.

**Symphonic Poem (tone poem):** An instrumental composition intended to portray a particular story, scene, or mood.

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

**Syncopation:** A rhythm technique composers use where certain notes are emphasized on beats that you wouldn’t expect them to be.

**Tempo:** Indicating speed.

**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.

**Time Signature:** Numeric symbol in sheet music determining number of beats per measure.

**Tone:** A note or pitch. Also, the quality and character of sound.

**Waltz:** A dance or piece of music typically using the 3/4 time signature.