

THURSDAY
OCTOBER 17 2019
10 AM & 11:30 AM

THE DESERT SYMPHONY

A DIVERSE MUSICAL WORLD



2019-2020 FIELD TRIP SERIES

BROADEN THE HORIZONS OF YOUR CLASSROOM.
EXPERIENCE THE VIBRANT WORLD OF THE ARTS
AT THE McCALLUM!



EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY

What is a "text"? We invite you to consider the performances on McCallum's Field Trip Series as non-print texts available for study and investigation by your students. Anyone who has shown a filmed version of a play in their classroom, used a website as companion to a textbook, or asked students to do online research already knows that "texts" don't begin and end with textbooks, novels, and reading packets. They extend to videos, websites, games, plays, concerts, dances, radio programs, and a number of other non-print texts that students and teachers engage with on a regular basis.

We know that when we expand our definition of texts to the variety of media that we use in our everyday lives, we broaden the materials and concepts we have at our disposal in the classroom, increase student engagement, and enrich learning experiences.

Please consider how utilizing your McCallum performance as a text might align to standards established for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

How do we help students to use these texts as a way of shaping ideas and understanding the world?

Please use this material to help you on this journey.

NON-PRINT TEXT > any medium/text that creates meaning through sound or images or both, such as symbols, words, songs, speeches, pictures, and illustrations not in traditional print form including those seen on computers, films, and in the environment.

THE WORK OF ART

WHAT IS IT MADE OF?
HOW CAN IT SERVE AS A "TEXT"
FOR STUDENT STUDY IN
THE CLASSROOM?



The Symphony's dynamic 2019 concert program, thoughtfully curated by Maestro **Gary Berkson**, brings attention to a diverse musical world with room for everyone. The Program opens excitedly with Tchaikovsky's *Russian Dance* from *The Nutcracker Suite*, followed by *The American Scene Suite #5: A Mountain, A Memorial, A Song* by the African-American composer William Grant Still. *blue cathedral* by Pulitzer Prize and two-time Grammy winner, Jennifer Higdon is next. Higdon, born in 1962, taught herself to play flute at the age of 15, began formal musical studies at 18, and started composing at 21. She is a major figure in contemporary classical music. *blue cathedral* is one of the most performed contemporary orchestral works since its premiere in 2000. For the last piece on the program – the soaring and triumphant *Finale* from Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird Suite* – Maestro Berkson passes the baton to **Shira Samuels-Shragg**. Currently a senior at Swarthmore College, majoring in music with a focus in conducting, she was one of two inaugural conducting apprentices with Carnegie Hall's National Youth Orchestra of the USA in 2015.



THE ARTISTS

WHO HAS PRODUCED
THIS WORK?

Edwin Benachowski, founder and former music director of Desert Symphony, played clarinet under the baton of conductor Percy Grainger. As bandmaster, he toured during WWII with Gene Autry and Danny Kaye. He studied at Juilliard School of Music, and in 1989 he founded The Desert Symphony with his wife Marilyn. Current Music Director Gary Berkson was resident conductor of the Royal Swedish Ballet and Opera. A Juilliard graduate, he

has concentrated on ballet and opera – and conducted for royalty, including Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain, King Carl XVI Gustav of Sweden and Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

When asked what musical genres the orchestra focuses on, Maestro Berkson offered the following: "Mostly classical music when it began. About 10 years ago, when it moved into the McCallum Theatre and needed to find a broader audience, the shift was made toward popular music – from jazz to big band to country-western to Broadway. That seems to be the niche that the audience wants, and of course the orchestra is there...for the audience."

The Desert Symphony is made up of 65 musicians, ages 30 to 80, who come in from all parts of Southern California. How many play a specific concert varies according to program needs. The symphony, in an educational project with the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Coachella Valley, sends members of the orchestra into classrooms to perform pieces for students and engage them in conversation about music. They also give free concerts for schoolchildren where youngsters can get that live symphony orchestra experience. The symphony mission includes a commitment to “enhancing and enriching the cultural life of the people in the Desert Cities.”



CONTEXTS

WHAT INFORMATION SURROUNDS
THIS WORK OF ART AND COULD HELP
MAKE STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT
WITH IT MORE POWERFUL?

The symphony orchestra, as such, can trace its roots back to ancient Egyptian times, but it took on a look we would recognize today during the Baroque era (the 1600s). The style of music of that time asked for greater virtuosity from players than in earlier periods. This meant grouping instruments into ‘families’ — percussion, strings, brass, and woodwinds, a feature of symphony orchestras still very much with us today. Some of the premiere symphony orchestras include the London Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, New York Phil,

Chicago Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In addition to *blue cathedral* by **Jennifer Higdon** (see information on previous page), works by these three composers are featured:

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893), best known for his ballet scores, had a talent for music early on, but his parents urged him to work in the civil service. Read more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyotr_Ilyich_Tchaikovsky

William Grant Still (1895 – 1978), often referred to as the Dean of African-American composers, was an American composer of more than 150 works. Read more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Grant_Still

Igor Stravinsky (1882 – 1971) was a Russian-born composer and a musical revolutionary who pushed the boundaries of musical design. Read more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igor_Stravinsky

“Beauty and fullness of tone can be achieved by having the whole orchestra play with high clarinets and a carefully selected number of piccolos.”

> **GUSTAV MAHLER**
COMPOSER

TEACHER-LED CLASSROOM LESSONS

HOW CAN YOUR STUDENTS EXPLORE THIS WORK OF ART IN YOUR CLASSROOM THROUGH ART MAKING, RESEARCH, QUESTIONING AND REFLECTION? TRY TEACHING THESE LESSONS.

LESSON 1 BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

LINE OF INQUIRY

How do the composers of the works played by **The Desert Symphony** – for example Stravinsky in *Firebird Finale* – use the unique qualities of each instrument for maximum effectiveness?

QUESTION

What are some instruments of the orchestra? (Of those named...) how is each one played? (By blowing? Using a bow? Striking? Plucking?)

RESEARCH

Play examples of...

the French Horn: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hmsm0DUDz1Q

the strings: www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxFNHeXKmrY

the winds: www.youtube.com/watch?v=70jqey0vC1c

the brass: www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EvGk0_bwQA

As students listen to each example, ask...

- > What do we notice about this sound?
- > What are some other ways we could describe the sound the instrument makes?
- > If this instrumental sound were a color, what color do you think it would be?

ART MAKING

Have students fold pieces of unlined paper into four quadrants. Play each of the four examples of instrumental sound again. Have students...

"Select a color or colors from the selection of markers/colored pencils/crayons that would be a good color for that particular sound – and in one quadrant of your paper show what that sound would *look* like if we could actually *see* it."

NOTICING

Students look at each other's sheets.

ASK

What are we noticing about color choices? What else?

Guide student noticing by selecting an example or two and asking questions of the group about color choice, how it fills the available space, lines and/or shapes (if present), and so on. How could we read these? What is this image telling us about the sound of the instrument(s)?

LISTEN

www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-OBzD5Es4c

Let's listen to the *Finale* from Stravinsky's *The Firebird*. As we do, let's see if we can hear when these things happen...

1. a single French horn plays a special tune
2. the strings as a group come in stronger
3. the winds add in
4. then the brass
5. then the whole orchestra

QUESTIONING afterward:

- > What effect did that sequence of sounds make?
- > How would you describe the piece?
- > What might the piece be trying to tell us? What possible story?

REFLECTION

Why does it matter, do you think, that we listen closely for differences in the sounds of the instruments?

LESSON 2 AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

QUESTION

What did you notice? (see questions above) What were some surprising moments in the music? What new things did you notice in *Firebird Finale*?

RESEARCH

Here's the story of The Firebird – plus some interesting facts about the ballet: https://kids.kiddle.co/The_Firebird

ART MAKING

On one side of a piece of paper, draw one part of the story. On the other side, describe the performance you experienced in words.

GUIDED NOTICING of some examples led by your questions: What do we see? Figures? Colors? Clues to story line? What do we hear? Word choices? Descriptions of the instruments, the players and the playing?

REFLECTION

What part of this experience has meant the most to you – and why?

QUESTIONS

PUT THESE QUESTIONS TO GOOD USE HELPING STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE.

- > How were the different instruments arranged – in the space and in relationship to each other? To the conductor?
- > How did the instrumentalists collaborate? What did the conductor do to help bring that about?
- > What else did you sense the conductor contributing to the performance?
- > How did the instrumental sounds interact with the acoustics of the room?
- > What did you observe about the soloist instrumentalists?
- > What kinds of stories did these pieces tell – and how?
- > What about mood? Sense of location? Events depicted?
- > Which moments were climactic – and what made them so?
- > How was the idea of contrast employed in this performance?

- > What did you observe about the structure of the concert? What about the sequence of pieces?
- > How did you respond? What contributed to that, do you think?



EXPLORE & DISCOVER

ACTIVITY PAGES FOR
THE STUDENT AND FAMILY.

“When you hear
a large symphony orchestra
in a concert hall, there’s a big,
sweeping sound that just doesn’t
get on to a record.”

> TEDDY WILSON
JAZZ GREAT

The following two pages can be sent home with students as a homework assignment. It has been designed to serve two purposes:

- 1 To inform the people at home about the experience their student is about to have, and give them enough information to dialogue about it.
- 2 To allow the student to become a bit familiar with some of the aspects of the performance before they attend it at the McCallum.

Really young students will need an adult or older sibling/friend to guide them through the pages, and help them with writing, whereas older students can do this on their own. More mature students (middle or high school) might need your help to understand which activities they can go deep with based on their frame of reference. Ideally there’s a little bit of follow up in the classroom on students’ experiences with these pages prior to going to the show. If not utilized as homework, these pages can also be distributed and completed in class.

EXPLORE & DISCOVER

ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS, FAMILY MEMBERS AND/OR FRIENDS.

You will be going with your class to a performance by **The Desert Symphony** at the McCallum Theatre in the near future. The Desert Symphony, a professional orchestra based in the Coachella Valley, performs as part of the **McCallum Theatre Education Field Trip Series**. If you want to know more about **The Field Trip Series**, visit this website: www.mccallumtheatre.com/index.php/education/field-trips

IN THIS PERFORMANCE you will experience exciting pieces of music – by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, William Grant Still, Igor Stravinsky and Jennifer Higdon – played by a full orchestra.

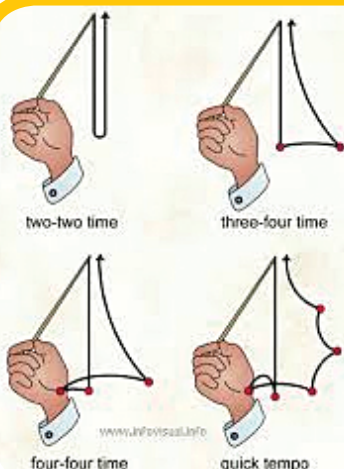


WHAT IS CLASSICAL MUSIC ANYWAY? Here's a site for you and a friend or family member to visit and research! https://kids.kiddle.co/Classical_music Write here three things you learned:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____



THE CONDUCTOR

Maestro Gary Berkson is The Desert Symphony's resident conductor. **Shira Samuels-Shragg**, a college student majoring in music, has been invited to conduct a selection from Stravinsky's *The Firebird*.

Some people think the conductor is



just up there waving his or her hands around.

But what are those hand movements telling the players? Sometimes they're keeping the players together time-wise. For example, if the piece has **two** beats to the measure, or **three** or **four**, you might see the hands make these motions:

Try doing each of them yourself! Can you keep repeating them?

Sometimes the hands say: go faster or go slower! Try the picture-moves fast. Try them slow. Imagine you are guiding an entire orchestra. Should the moves be small or big? Try each size.

Sometimes the hands say: get soft. How would you show that? What about: get loud? Show that too.



ORCHESTRA SEATING usually looks something like this. Of course, each concert requires slightly different arrangements based on what's being played. Notice where the string players sit. How about the brass? Look where the drums are and the woodwinds. What ideas do you have about why the different families of instruments are placed as they are in relation to the front of the stage and the audience?

Write your idea here:

EXPLORE & DISCOVER



5 FUN FACTS

She taught herself to play flute at the age of 15.

She began formal musical studies at 18.

She started composing at 21.

She is a major figure in contemporary classical music.

Her composition ***blue cathedral***, premiered in 2000, is one of the most performed contemporary orchestral works.

FOR CENTURIES, MANY CLASSICAL COMPOSERS — PRACTICALLY ALL — WERE MEN.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, William Grant Still, and Igor Stravinsky are three examples. **Jennifer Higdon** is part of a relatively recent wave of young female composers.

Looking at this picture, what are three other things can you infer about Jennifer?

1 _____

2 _____

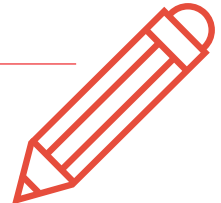
3 _____

What's something you wonder about her?

Listen to *blue cathedral*: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWP0106tstg

Try moving your hands to the music like a conductor.

Listen a second time: **Draw what you hear below. Add color.**



FIRSTS



A composer of many firsts, **William Grant Still** was the **first** African American to conduct a major American symphony orchestra, the **first** to have a symphony performed by a leading orchestra, the **first** to have an opera performed by a major opera company, and the **first** to have an opera performed on national television.

Imagine you were the very first person your age to do something special. What would that special thing be? How would you have to prepare to do that? How would you put your fame and success to good use? Write your answers here:
