

TEACHER'S GUIDE



SYMPHONIC SUPERHEROES!

CSO SCHOOL CONCERTS

Monday, November 7, 10:15 & 12:00



NEGAUNEE MUSIC INSTITUTE at the
CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



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Dear Teachers,

Welcome to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's 2016-2017 School Concert season. This year, our programs explore courage, an important skill for all people to develop and one that is often on display in orchestral music. We are so pleased that the amazing music making of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra can be a resource for the musical and the social and emotional development of your students.

We know that preparation can unlock immense joy and deep understanding during a live performance. We saw this kind of excitement and engagement after teachers used the [Surprise Party Teacher's Guide](#) to prepare their students last November for the CSO's 125th birthday party. Students were captivated during the performance, excited to hear the musicians share their favorite musical memories and eager to participate when it came time to sing "Happy Birthday." Their curiosity and love of music were uniquely on display in the hundreds of beautiful birthday cards that we received and distributed to the Orchestra, in honor of the CSO's 125th anniversary. We would like to have all of our patrons receive this kind of experience at Chicago Symphony Orchestra School Concerts!

In this guide you will find two lesson plans that can be easily executed by a classroom teacher or music teacher, plus a reflection page for you and your students to complete after you've attended the concert. It is our hope that you will find these plans an important resource as you anticipate your day at Symphony Center.

Please take some time to look through this document and consider how and when you will use the lesson plans. Some activities may require you to gather materials, so plan adequate time to prepare. Also included in this document are additional resources and historical content that will help you as you go about teaching these lessons.

For additional support preparing your students for their concert experience, please request a visit from one of our skilled [Docents](#).

Finally, we hope that you will provide feedback about these materials by completing a short [survey](#). Your response is instrumental to our work! We regularly incorporate feedback into the design of our resources.

We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you soon at Symphony Center.

Sincerely,

Staff of the Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra believes that music is an essential component to every child's education and that access to music nourishes a community and enriches the lives of its citizens. Through the education programs of the Negaunee Music Institute, we are proud to share our resources with teachers and students across the Chicagoland area.

SYMPHONIC SUPERHEROES!

ABOUT THE CONCERT:

What is courage and why do we need it? To have courage means we are brave—and we need to be brave for lots of things, like learning how to ride a bike, going to school for the first time, standing up for a friend, and sticking with something that is difficult.

What do you think courage sounds like? Do certain pieces of music need more courage to perform than others? Does it take courage to compose music?

On Monday, November 7, Members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and conductor Tania Miller will introduce you to our **Symphonic Superheroes**. This concert will explore the courageous qualities of the amazing musicians of the CSO that we see and hear onstage. The music guides us through the many courageous acts that have helped everyday musicians become superheroes of the CSO.

The program includes selections from the following:

TCHAIKOVSKY *Symphony No. 4, Mvt. 4*

McTEE *Circuits*

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV *Sheherazade, Mvt. 2*

COPLAND *Appalachian Spring*

KERNIS *Musica Celestis*

STRAVINSKY *Infernal Dance from The Firebird*

SHOSTAKOVICH *Symphony No. 10, Mvt. 2*

BEETHOVEN *Symphony No. 9, Mvt. 4 (Ode to Joy)*

Through listening to the concert's repertoire and engaging with the activities on the following pages, your students will be prepared for a fun and rewarding visit to Symphony Center.

LESSON 1 Symphonic Superheroes

Students will explore the concept of a Symphonic Superhero and the courage it takes to be a musician, a composer and an audience member, by analyzing the concert repertoire and making creative connections to core subject areas through music integration activities.

FEATURED REPERTOIRE*

-  **Tchaikovsky** [Symphony No. 4, Mvt. 4](#)
-  **McTee** [Circuits](#)
-  **Rimsky-Korsakov** [Sheherazade, Mvt. 2](#)
-  **Copland** [Appalachian Spring](#)
-  **Stravinsky** [Infernal Dance from The Firebird Suite \(1919\)](#)
-  **Kernis** [Musica Celestis](#)
-  **Shostakovich** [Symphony No. 10, Mvt. 2](#)
-  **Beethoven** [Symphony No. 9, Mvt. 4 \(Ode to Joy\)](#)



Access the entire [Spotify playlist here.](#)

*Free account required

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What kinds of actions demonstrate courage?
- How do musical elements (melody, harmony, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, etc.) convey courage?
- How do musicians and composers exemplify courage?

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Identify and analyze the characteristics and behaviors that help musicians be successful.
- Compare the courageous behavior of musicians and composers with their own courageous behavior.
- Analyze the musical elements used to convey and inspire courage.
- Analyze and respond to a piece of music.

EVALUATION

Successful achievement of all activities include students: identifying characteristics and behaviors of superheroes, fictional and non-fictional; comparing and contrasting courageous behavior; identifying courageous musical elements, and responding expressively to a piece of music through a written or visual art activity.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **Composer:** a person who writes music.
- **Composition:** an original piece of music created by a composer.
- **Conductor:** a person who leads or directs the performance of an orchestra.
- **Dynamics:** how loudly or softly music is played.
- **Excerpt:** a short sample from a piece of music.
- **Harmony:** a combination of pitches sounding together, such as a chord.
- **Lyric:** the words of a song or poem.
- **Melody:** sequence of notes that make a tune.
- **Rhythm:** a strong, regular, repeated pattern of sound.
- **Tempo:** the speed of the music's beat.

MATERIALS

- Trading card-sized **construction paper, cardstock or blank index cards**
- **Pens, pencils, colored markers or crayons**
- **Sounds of Courage Across The Curriculum** Template for Activity 3
- **Sound system** for musical excerpts of concert repertoire (e.g., laptop and speakers, iPhone® dock, Spotify®, etc.)
- **Projector or other viewing device:** Elmo, overhead, SmartBoard, projectors, whiteboard/chalkboard, etc.

Introduction

1. **Hook** the students by asking them to “Name some famous fictional superheroes.” List and display students’ answers.
2. **Ask** “What makes these characters superheroes? What does a superhero do?” List and display students’ answers.
3. **Tell** students “These characters have COURAGE, which is the ability to do something that they know is difficult or frightening. Their courage makes the world a better place. They make a positive difference.”
4. **Engage** students in a discussion: “What is courage?” Create a visual web that connects the students’ answers to the question.
5. **Invite** students to name some real, non-fictional people who are superheroes. Include people in our world, our city, our neighborhood and throughout history who are superheroes because they have demonstrated courage.
6. **Ask** students to create a list of everyday heroes in their lives, past or present, famous or non-famous, via small or large group discussion.
7. **Ask** “How did these real superheroes show courage? Are you sometimes a superhero?”

ACTIVITY 1: MEET THE SYMPHONIC SUPERHEROES OF THE CSO

Teaching Steps:

1. **Organize** students in small groups or pairs to answer the questions below.
 - What qualities and behaviors make musicians courageous?
 - What talents must they have?
 - What challenges must they face and overcome?
 - How are YOU courageous like a musician?


Play selections of the concert repertoire while students work.
2. Have students **share** their answers to the above questions. To elicit higher-level thinking, lead a discussion using the following prompts:
 - What must musicians do to become superheroes?
 - What are their strengths?
 - What are their talents?
 - What do they focus on?
 - What risks do they take?
 - Why do they keep going when difficulties arise?
 - What challenges must they face or overcome?
 - How do they maintain their superhero status?

ACTIVITY 2: CREATING YOUR SYMPHONIC SUPERHERO TRADING CARD

Teaching Steps:

1. Have students **choose** their favorite instrument from the orchestra.
2. Tell students to **imagine** a musician playing this instrument as a Symphonic Superhero.
3. **Distribute** trading card-sized construction paper or a blank index card to students and have them draw the Symphonic Superhero they just imagined.
4. When students have finished drawing, ask students to **identify** the courageous characteristics of their Symphonic Superhero and write them on the back of their trading card. Students can refer to the questions they answered in Activity 1.
5. When students have finished their trading card, **play** the selections from the concert. Ask students to **raise** their card whenever they hear their Symphonic Superhero in the music.

FEATURED REPERTOIRE*

-  **Tchaikovsky** [Symphony No. 4, Mvt. 4](#)
-  **McTee** [Circuits](#)
-  **Rimsky-Korsakov** [Sheherazade, Mvt. 2](#)
-  **Copland** [Appalachian Spring](#)
-  **Stravinsky** [Infernal Dance from The Firebird Suite \(1919\)](#)
-  **Kernis** [Musica Celestis](#)
-  **Shostakovich** [Symphony No. 10, Mvt. 2](#)
-  **Beethoven** [Symphony No. 9, Mvt. 4 \(Ode to Joy\)](#)



**Access the entire
Spotify playlist here.**

*Free account required

ACTIVITY 3: SOUNDS OF COURAGE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Teaching Steps:

1. **Choose** one of the excerpts from the chart on the following page. Describe the activity to your students.
2. **Ask** students to listen silently to the excerpt and then work alone or in groups to complete the activity. **Repeat** the excerpt as many times as is needed for the students to finish their task.
3. **Share** answers in small groups or in a whole group setting.
4. **Display** work on boards, classroom walls and school hallways, making a Symphonic Superhero display for the entire school to see and experience.

SOUNDS OF COURAGE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 4, Mvt. 4*

Tchaikovsky challenges the SYMPHONIC SUPERHEROES to have the courage to do some very difficult performing! Focus on the **MUSICAL ELEMENTS**. What do you hear in the music? What is the tempo? Which instruments must be played with power and strength? How do the musicians show courage?



McTee *Circuits*

McTee challenges some SYMPHONIC SUPERHEROES to have the courage to stand out from the pack with solos. Focus on **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (Speech-Making)**. Volunteer to stand in front of the classroom and give a speech about why everyone should go to a CSO concert! Show your courage to stand out from the pack and convince your audience to believe in the power of music.

Rimsky-Korsakov *Sheherazade, Mvt. 2*

Rimsky-Korsakov challenges the SYMPHONIC SUPERHEROES to have the courage to stick with it and never give up! Focus on **MATH**. If a musician practices 3 hours per day, how many hours do the Symphonic Superheroes practice in a week? A month? A year? 5 years? 10 years? If you play an instrument, how many hours do you practice each week to become a Symphonic Superhero?



Copland *Appalachian Spring*

Copland challenges the SYMPHONIC SUPERHEROES to have courage to work together as a team. Focus on **P.E.** How are sports teams and an orchestra similar? What must a superhero athlete do to achieve success and show courage? What must a Symphonic Superhero do to achieve success and show courage? List the similarities and differences. How does each "team" succeed? How do you succeed at being a great team player?

Stravinsky *Infernal Dance from The Firebird Suite*

Stravinsky challenges the AWESOME AUDIENCE to have courage to listen, imagine and create stories and characters in our minds. Focus on **VISUAL ART**. Draw the scary Infernal Monster you see in your mind, using your listening ears! Draw yourself as a courageous character, standing strong against it! Have courage to display your Infernal Monster artwork for all to see.

Kernis *Musica Celestis*

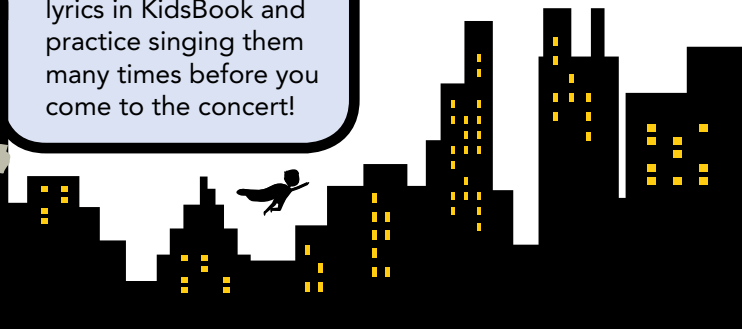
Kernis challenges the AWESOME AUDIENCE to have courage to listen to unfamiliar music as it activates questions, emotions or messages. Focus on **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**. Write a letter to Maestra Tania Miller. Tell her about your emotions, feelings and imaginations in response to this piece of music. Send your letter to: Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 220 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60604

Beethoven *Symphony No. 9 (Ode to Joy)*

Beethoven challenges every SUPERHERO to believe in oneself and to be strong in the face of difficulties. Focus on **POETRY IN MUSIC**. Lyrics are poetry set to music. Create your own lyrics to Beethoven's melody. Write a verse about having courage and being a superhero kid. When you're done, find the courage to perform it in your class!



Find the *Ode to Joy* lyrics in KidsBook and practice singing them many times before you come to the concert!



Assessment:

Observe whether students identify and analyze characteristics and behaviors that help musicians be courageous.

Observe whether students make connections and comparisons between the courageous musicians and their courageous behavior.

Observe whether students analyze the musical elements used to convey and inspire courage.

Observe whether and how students analyze and respond to a piece of music.

Common Core Anchor Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1](#) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1](#) Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2](#) Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively and orally.

Illinois Arts Learning Standards:

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

[MU:Re7.1.3](#)

- a. Demonstrate and describe how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences or purposes.
- b. Demonstrate and describe how a response to music can be informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music and context (for example, personal, social).

Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

[MU: Re9.1.2](#) Apply personal and expressive preferences in the evaluation of music for specific purposes.

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

[MU:Cn10.1.2a](#) Demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing and responding to music as developmentally appropriate.

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

[MU:Cn11.1.2](#) Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts and daily life as developmentally appropriate.

LESSON 2 The Superhero Musician in Me

Students will create and perform their own music or story inspired by the courageous composers and performers featured in the concert.

FEATURED REPERTOIRE*

 **Shostakovich** [Symphony No. 10, Mvt. 2](#)



[Access the entire Spotify playlist here.](#)

*Free account required

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do musical elements convey courage?
- How do musicians and composers exemplify courage?
- What does courage mean to you? How are you courageous?

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Explore the process of composing and editing original music or stories.
- Perform original music or story in a small group.
- Reflect on the process of composing or writing.

EVALUATION

Successful achievement of all activities would include students performing and describing their compositions or writing.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **Articulation:** The style in which musical notes are played
- **Composer:** a person who writes music
- **Composition:** an original piece of music created by a composer
- **Dynamics:** how loudly or softly music is played
- **Ensemble:** a group of musicians playing together
- **Tempo:** the speed of the music's beat

MATERIALS

- **The Superhero Inside Me** worksheet
- **Composer's Guide** worksheet
- **My Superhero Story** writing response worksheet
- **Melodic instruments*** for composition activity (e.g., xylophones, recorders, keyboards, guitars)
- **Sound System** for musical excerpts of concert repertoire (e.g., laptop and speakers, iPhone® dock, Spotify®, etc.)

COMPOSITION ACTIVITY: Create an original piece of music inspired by the music of Shostakovich. Have students perform the work and reflect on the courage it takes to be a composer and/or performer.

Introduction

1. **Hook** the students by sharing the following: "Musicians and composers do brave things every day by creating music from inside their hearts and souls and sharing it with the world. Let's listen to a piece of music composed by a man named Dmitri Shostakovich." **Play** Symphony No. 10, Mvt. 2.
2. **Ask:** "What do you hear in this music that reminds you of the idea of courage?" (*Students may comment about how fast or loud it is. Whatever they say is correct.*)
3. **Transfer** the ideas generated by the students' focused listening to a writing activity. "Let's listen to that piece of music again and, as you listen, brainstorm the actions of a new superhero: YOU! What are you doing? What powers do you have? What actions are taking place in your imagination?"

Teaching Steps:

1. **Instruct** students to complete the **The Superhero Inside Me** worksheet as they **listen** to Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10, Mvt. 2.
2. Drawing from their completed worksheets, students will **create** a short "Superhero Theme Song" that reflects the components on their organizer.
**Have students use melodic instruments like a xylophone or recorder to create their compositions. If students have never composed before, don't worry about the quality of the musical ideas, instrumental technique or notation. Give students freedom to create any musical ideas they think best represent their superpower. If you don't have access to melodic instruments, feel free to skip the composition activity and use the alternate activity instead.*
3. **Tell** students, "Superheroes have theme music that reflects their courage and the danger they face. What is your superpower and how would your theme song sound?"
4. **Guide** students through the **Composer's Guide** worksheet. Students can brainstorm how they want their theme song to sound courageous. **Provide** students time to create their theme songs. If your students are older, you may wish to skip the "Composer's Guide" worksheet in step 4 and instead discuss more complex compositional ideas like melody, rhythm, meter, form, harmony, unity and variety, etc., before the students compose.
5. **Allow** students to present their music to each other in partners or small groups. Listeners will provide feedback about the music.
Instruct students to ask themselves the following questions when giving feedback:
 1. Are superpowers expressed in the music?
 2. Does the music sound courageous?
 3. Does the music have a beginning, middle and end?"
6. **Ask** for volunteers to present their music to the class, emphasizing that performing an original piece of music is courageous because it comes from your imagination but is brought to life using your skills as a musician and performer.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY: Write a superhero story based on the music of Shostakovich. Write about how this music is providing a soundtrack to students' courageous superhero actions.

1. **Instruct** students to complete **The Superhero Inside Me** worksheet as they listen to Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10, Mvt. 2.
2. **Ask** students to write or draw a short story describing their superhero and their courageous acts inspired by Shostakovich's music.
3. **Prompt** student writing with the following discussion: "What is your superpower and what courageous actions are you imagining as this music plays? It can be as simple as defending someone from a bully, performing a piece of music alone or stating your true opinion that people may disagree with. **Provide** students time to write or draw their ideas.
4. **Allow** students to present their stories to each other in partners or small groups. Listeners will provide feedback about the stories.

Instruct students to ask themselves the following questions when giving feedback:

1. Are superpowers expressed in the story?
 2. How is courage shown in the story?
 3. Does my story have a beginning, middle and end?
5. **Ask** students to present their stories to the class, emphasizing that presenting an original story is like presenting a new work of music because it comes from your imagination but is brought to life using your skills as a writer, as well as an expressive reader.

Assessment:

Observe whether the students are connecting their stories to the musical excerpt.

Observe whether students are creating original music that reflects the characteristics they wrote about.

Observe whether students can describe their work and processes, as well as the courage it took to present it.

Common Core Anchor Standards:

[CCSS.ELA.LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1](#) Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

[CCSS.ELA.LITERACY.CCRA.L.2](#) Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation and spelling when writing.

[CCSS.ELA.LITERACY.CCRA.W.6](#) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Illinois Arts Learning Standards:

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

[MU:Cr1.1.2](#) Improvise rhythmic and melodic ideas and describe connection to specific purpose and context (for example, personal, social).

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

[MU:Cr2.1.2](#) Demonstrate and explain personal reasons for selecting patterns and ideas for music that represent expressive intent and describe connection to a specific purpose and context.

Anchor Standard 3: Revise, refine and complete artistic work.

[MU:Cr3.1.2](#)

- a. Interpret and apply personal, peer and teacher feedback to revise personal music.
- b. Present a final version of personal musical ideas to peers or informal audience.

Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation.

[MU:Pr4.1.2](#) Demonstrate understanding of expressive qualities (for example, dynamics, tempo) and how performers use them to convey expressive intent.

Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

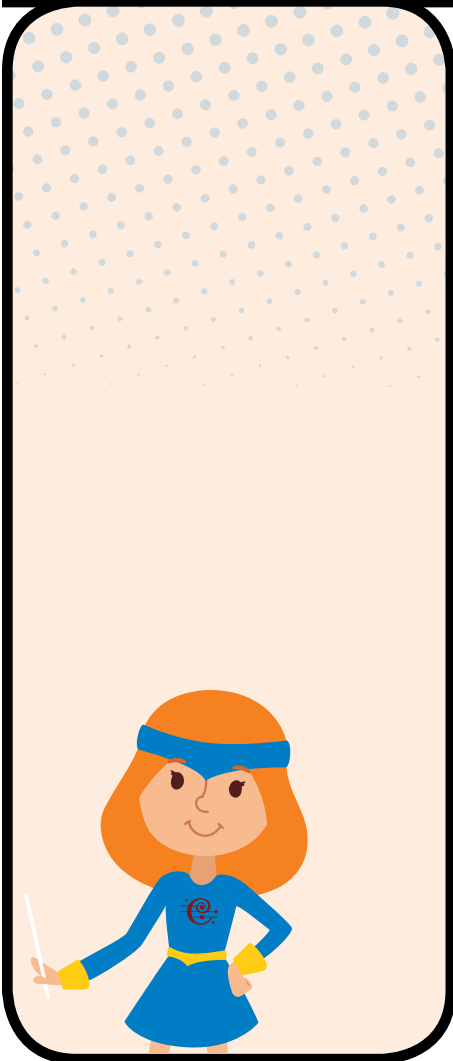
[MU:Pr6.1.1.a](#) With limited guidance, perform music for a specific purpose with expression. Perform appropriately for the audience and purpose.

Name: _____

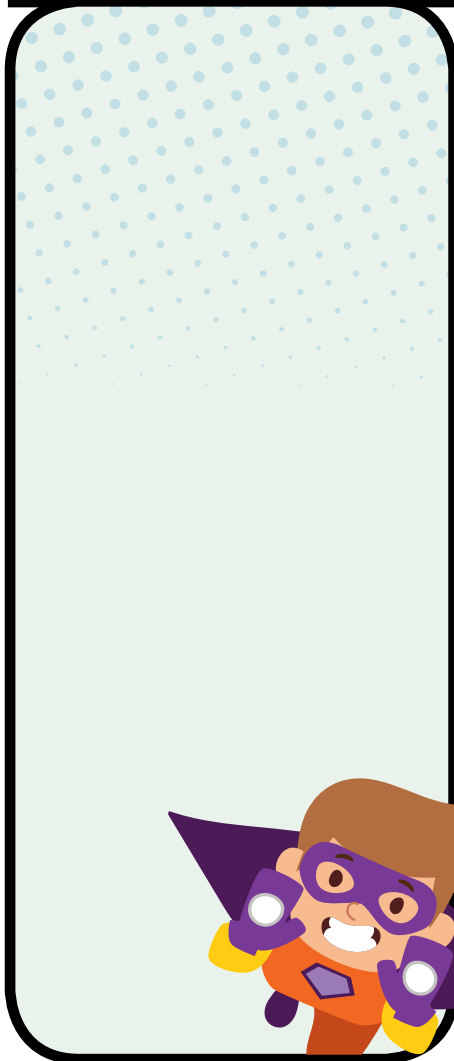
THE SUPERHERO INSIDE ME

As you listen to the music, think about your own life. What do you do that is courageous? What can you do that might be heroic? As the music plays, imagine yourself as a superhero and answer these questions.

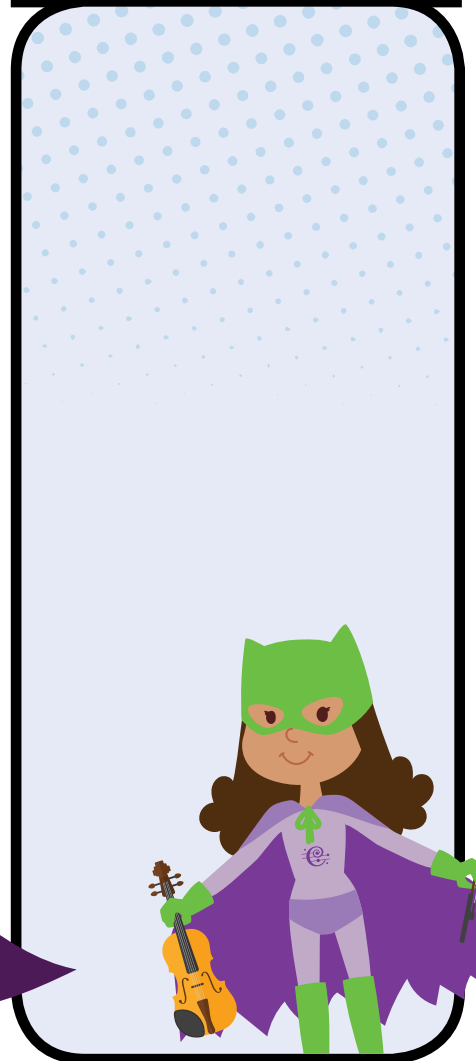
WHAT ARE MY SUPERPOWERS?



WHAT DO I LOOK LIKE? WHAT AM I WEARING?



WHAT AM I DOING WHILE THIS MUSIC IS PLAYING?



Composer's Name: _____

COMPOSER'S GUIDE

How will you use the musical elements to make your superhero theme song? What choices will you make in the music to make it sound courageous?

Put an X on the line to show the tempo, dynamics and articulation of your music.

Tempo – How fast or slow the music is.

Slow-----Fast

Dynamics – How loud or soft the music is.

Soft-----Loud

Articulation – The style in which notes are played.

Smooth ----- Dull ----- Accented ----- Choppy

What else did you do in the music to make it sound courageous?

How did you feel when you presented your music?





Name: _____

MY **SUPERHERO** STORY



Lined writing area for the story.



Name: _____

Date: _____

SYMPHONIC SUPERHEROES!

POSTCONCERT REFLECTION

My class went to the concert and heard some of the Symphonic Superheroes from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra perform.

I remember hearing or seeing these three things:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

This is something I learned at the concert that I didn't know before:

I would like to know more about:

If I could ask a member of the CSO one thing, I would ask:

Write or draw something special that you heard or saw at **Symphonic Superheroes.**



Composer History

PYTOR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY [say: chy-KAWF-ski] was born in 1840 in a Russian town called Votkinsk. When he was just 8 years old, he moved to St. Petersburg with his family. At a young age, Tchaikovsky already showed signs of being a talented musician, but his parents encouraged him to study law instead, which was considered a more respectable career at the time.

Tchaikovsky worked as a lawyer once he finished school, but when the St. Petersburg Conservatory opened in 1862, he decided to leave his legal job to study music, his true passion. After he graduated, he accepted a teaching position at the Moscow Conservatory, which is now named after him! Despite the low pay, Tchaikovsky found freedom in his new job. For years, Tchaikovsky had a patroness, a wealthy widow named Nadezhda von Meck. Though they never met face to face, they exchanged letters for over 14 years, and Tchaikovsky even dedicated his Fourth Symphony to her.

When it premiered, the Fourth Symphony was not well-liked by the public. Even Tchaikovsky's friends refused to critique the music, only commenting on the talent of the musicians. It was hard for Tchaikovsky to hear such harsh words about his new piece, but instead of quitting, he went on to write two more symphonies among the many other works he composed over his career, including concertos, operas and ballets.

CINDY McTEE [say: MICK-tea] was born in Tacoma, Washington, in 1953. She first discovered her love of composing through a piano teacher who encouraged improvisation. During her junior year of college, she met a composer named Krzysztof Penderecki, and she spent a year in Poland teaching his children English in exchange for composition lessons. Afterward, she received two more degrees from universities in the United States and has since taught at numerous schools.

While teaching, McTee has continued to write music that has been premiered by orchestras such as the Detroit Symphony, Houston Symphony and Dallas Symphony Orchestra. *Circuits* premiered in 1991 and is known for its high energy and jazz influences.

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV [say: RIM-ski CORE-suh-kahv] was born in Tikhvin, Russia, during March of 1844. Growing up, he enjoyed listening to Russian folk music, church hymns and opera. This carried over into his career as a composer, because he believed in creating music with a very "Russian" sound.

When he was just 12 years old, Rimsky-Korsakov joined the Russian Navy. He wrote his first symphony on a ship! After a few years, Rimsky-Korsakov returned to study at the School for Mathematical and Navigational Sciences in St. Petersburg, graduating when he turned 18. During his time in school, he befriended composers César Cui and Modest Mussorgsky, who inspired him to write music again. Once Rimsky-Korsakov became widely known as a composer, the St. Petersburg Conservatory hired him to teach in 1871.

Rimsky-Korsakov became so famous that he is now part of a group called the "Mighty Handful," which is made up of five famous Russian composers. One of his most well-known pieces is *Sheherazade*, which tells the tale of a princess held captive by a king. To stay alive, the princess tells the king one story every night to keep his attention. After 1,000 nights, the princess says she has no more tales to tell. During this time, the king has fallen in love with her and he spares her life so they can marry.

AARON COPLAND [say: COPE-lund] was born in Brooklyn, New York, during November of 1900. Though he studied in France, Copland later became famous for creating music with an “American” sound.

After the United States joined World War II, arts patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge and dancer and choreographer Martha Graham asked Copland to write a piece with an “American” theme. He composed a short ballet about pioneers celebrating the arrival of warm weather, calling it “Appalachian Spring.” It premiered at the Library of Congress in 1944, and Copland was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his amazing work.

Even though Copland focused on conducting later in his career, he continued to compose many works, including *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo* and *Fanfare for the Common Man*. He received many awards for his work with music, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964. By the time Copland passed away in 1990, he had successfully created a worldwide audience for American classical music.

IGOR STRAVINSKY [say: STRUH-vin-ski] was one of the most famous composers in modern music. Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1882, he grew up surrounded by the arts. His father was a professional singer and would often bring Stravinsky along to watch him perform at the opera house. At the age of 9, Stravinsky started taking piano lessons, though he studied law in school.

While in school, Stravinsky met the son of famous composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who started teaching him how to compose. Law became much less important once Stravinsky found fame with a piece called *The Firebird*, which he wrote for Serge Diaghilev, head of the Ballets Russes. It premiered in Paris during June of 1910, telling the story of a magical, glowing bird that was both a blessing and a curse to its master. Due to this huge success, Stravinsky wrote other ballets for Diaghilev, including *Petrushka*, *Pulcinella* and *The Rite of Spring*.

Stravinsky moved around a lot, living in France and Switzerland before settling in America during World War II. As it turns out, Stravinsky’s compositions were just as restless. Instead of sticking to one style, he would write music that sounded Russian, modern, older or religious. Despite the criticism he received for this, Stravinsky remains an important figure in how we view music today.

AARON JAY KERNIS [say: J CURN-iss] is an American composer who currently teaches at Yale University. Born in Bensalem Township, Pennsylvania, he started his music career with violin and piano lessons. Kernis began writing music at the age of 13 and received numerous student awards for his excellent work.

He studied composition at the San Francisco Conservatory, the Manhattan School of Music and Yale University. Due to the many teachers he worked with, his style is a mixture of several musical types. With his unique style, Kernis has been given awards by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation and the New York Foundation of Arts. At the age of 38, he became one of the youngest recipients of the Pulitzer Prize for Music.

Musica Celestis is one of Kernis’ most famous orchestral works. It is written for string orchestra and its first recording with the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra was nominated for a Grammy Award. The piece’s title comes from a sixth century writer named Boethius, who said that “musica celestis” should be considered the “music of the gods.”

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH [say: shaw-sta-KO-vitch] was born in 1906 and lived as a composer and pianist in the Soviet Union from the time of its founding until his death in 1975. He began composing at an early age, finishing his first symphony when he was only 19 years old.

Shostakovich wrote music that was well-received by audiences. However, in 1936, he got into trouble when Josef Stalin saw Shostakovich's opera, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, and it did not match Stalin's ideas of how music should sound. Stalin's ideas of "appropriate" compositions reached other Soviet composers as well, and fearing that they would be imprisoned, they began to write "safe" music that was bland and had a socialist theme.

Despite all of this, Shostakovich would sometimes speak out against this wrongdoing, and when he could not, he left secret codes in his music for audiences to hear. Only months after the death of Josef Stalin, Shostakovich premiered his Tenth Symphony, which is considered by many to be a commentary on Stalin's rule. Shostakovich continued to compose to the end of his life, though he became bitter knowing that his work would have been much different if he had been free to write what he wanted.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN [say: BAY-toe-vun] was born in Bonn, Germany, in 1770. Despite his young age, Beethoven's talent allowed him to travel for performances and soon he was supporting his entire family.

Beethoven moved to Vienna, Austria, in his early twenties to study with a famous composer named Franz Joseph Haydn. While living there, he also became a very well-known concert pianist. But as he grew older, he began to have trouble hearing and eventually Beethoven was forced to stop playing the piano in public. The loss of his hearing was very difficult for Beethoven, but despite this struggle, he continued to write music.

Beethoven was completely deaf by the time he finished his Ninth Symphony. He conducted the premiere of the piece in 1824, and after it had ended, Beethoven was still moving because he could not hear the applause behind him. One of the singers turned him around, allowing him to see the happy response to his music.

Today, Beethoven is viewed as one of the greatest musical geniuses to ever live. Even though he is most famous for his nine symphonies, Beethoven also wrote chamber and choral music, piano pieces, string quartets and one opera.



Additional Resources for *Symphonic Superheroes*

Books:

Beethoven Lives Upstairs

By Barbara Nichol

The 39 Apartments of Ludwig van Beethoven

By Jonah Winter

Web Resources:

Creative Kids Educational Foundation – Interactive Story of Sheherazade

Videos:

Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, Mvt 4

Cindy McTee, Circuits

Rimsky Korsakov, Sheherazade Mvt. 2, **Part 1** & **Part 2**

Copland, Appalachian Spring

Stravinsky, Infernal Dance from The Firebird

Kernis, Musica Celestis

Beethoven, Symphony No. 9

Resources from the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO:

In addition to creating this Teacher's Guide, the CSO has also created a Parent Guide! Send **[this link](#)** to your students' families so they can continue their preparation for the concert at home.



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