

Road Trip USA

2025 Teacher Guide

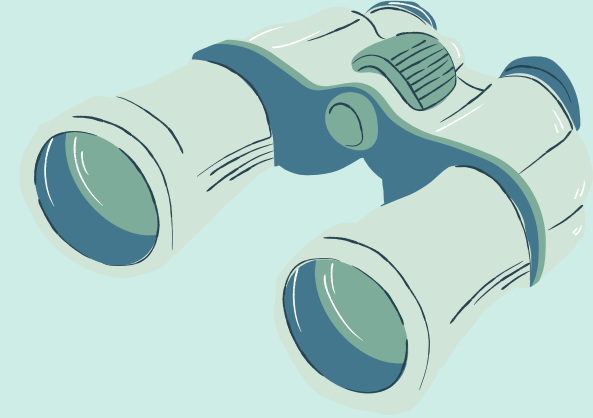
HOLLYWOOD

SHEENA MCCALL
YOUNG
PEOPLE'S
CONCERTS



kso Kids
Aram Demirjian, Music Director

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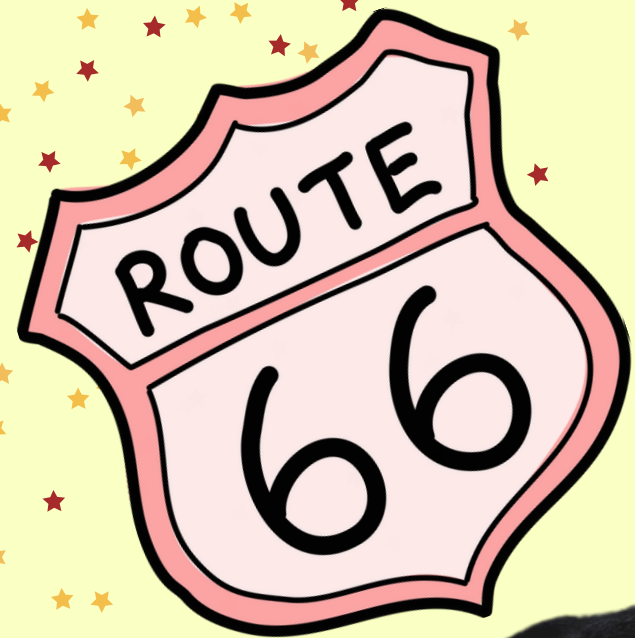
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Meet Aram Demirjian

Aram Demirjian is the Music Director of the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra (KSO). He has been conducting the KSO for 10 years! Aram has been praised for his “graceful, energetic direction” (*Sarasota Herald Tribune*) and dynamic programming for people of all ages.

He is a champion of American music and is passionate about emphasizing music by living composers and artists from underrepresented groups in his programming. In addition to his leadership in Knoxville, Aram is a frequent guest conductor with orchestras across the United States and has also appeared with ensembles internationally!

Aram holds a joint Bachelor of Arts in Music and Government from Harvard University, and a Master of Music in Orchestral Conducting from New England Conservatory. A native of the Boston area, he currently resides in Knoxville with his wife, daughter, and their goldendoodle, Kermit.



Meet The KSO

The Knoxville Symphony Orchestra (KSO) was founded in 1935.

This season marks the KSO's 90th anniversary!

The orchestra began with conductor Bertha Walburn Clark, who helped bring professional orchestral music to Knoxville.

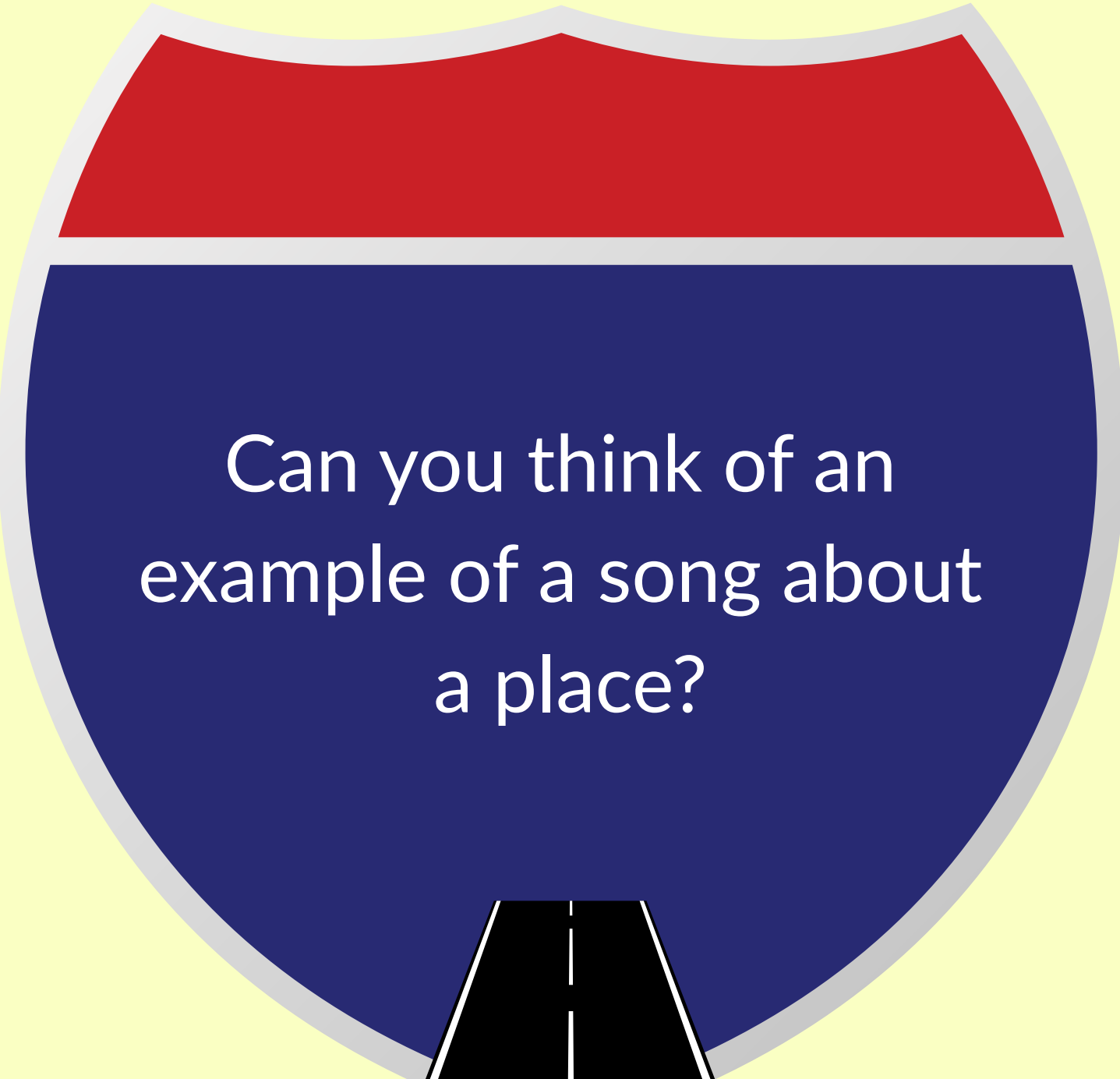
Over the years, many talented conductors and musicians have led the KSO to grow and become one of the finest regional orchestras in the United States.

Today, the KSO continues to perform a wide variety of music and share it with audiences throughout the community.



What is a composer?

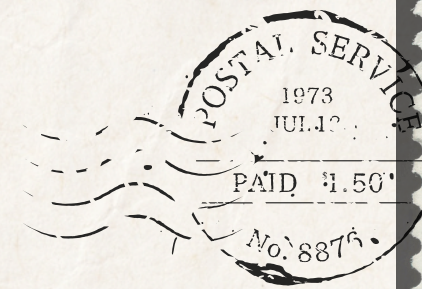
A composer is an individual who writes music. This person can write music for groups as large as a symphony or for a single instrument. Often times in orchestral works, composers use music to tell a story. Composers can write pieces of music based on many different things, such as dreams, places, people, events, or poems.



Can you think of an example of a song about a place?

SAMUEL WARD

STATUE OF LIBERTY



Lived: December 28, 1848 – September 28, 1903

From: Newark, New Jersey

Samuel A. Ward was an American organist and composer. As a child, he played accordion and taught piano lessons to help support his family. When he was 16, he began performing as a church organist in New York City.

In 1890, Ward founded and directed a male singing group in New York called The Orpheus Society. This group mainly performed Ward's arrangements. Later in his life, he returned to his hometown of Newark where he opened a music store.

He is most remembered for composing his piece "Materna," which was later combined with Katharine Lee Bates's poem "America" to create the song "America The Beautiful" in 1888.

In 1970, Ward was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.



JOHN PHILLIP SOUSA

LIBERTY BELL



Lived: November 6, 1854 – March 6, 1932

From: Washington D.C

Sousa was an American composer and conductor, known for his military marches. He began studying music at age 6, learning to play the violin and many other instruments. At age 13, his father enlisted him in the U.S. Marine Band where he served as an "apprentice" musician while continuing to study music theory and composition.

In 1880, Sousa was appointed the Director of the Marine Band and spent the next 12 years developing the band into one of the best in the world. After retiring from the Marine Band, Sousa focused on writing music. He also created his own band, The Famous Sousa Band, that toured all over the world, and helped create a new instrument similar to the tuba: the Sousaphone!

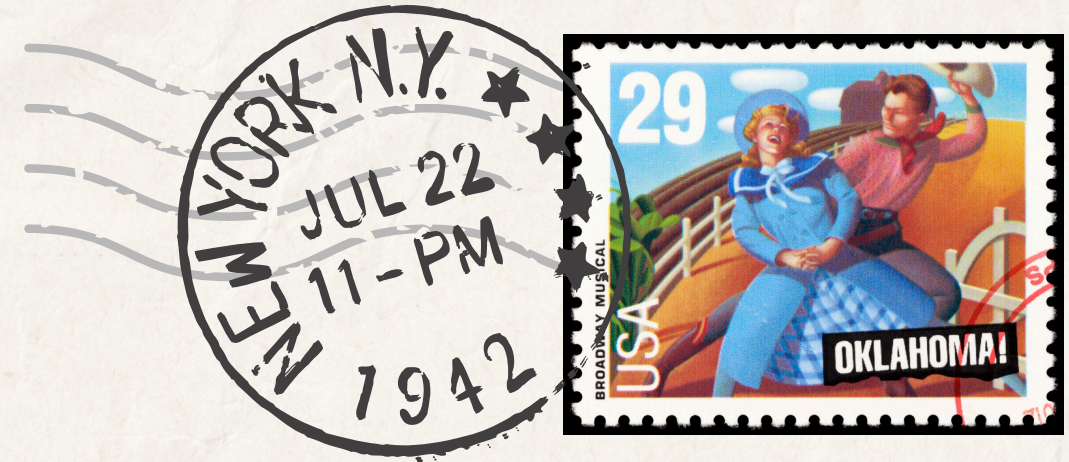
During World War I, Sousa led the Naval Reserve Band in Illinois and continued to conduct the Sousa Band until his death in Reading, Pennsylvania.

Sousa is known as "The March King." He composed 136 marches, including "The Stars and Stripes Forever," which is the official march of the United States.



GEORGE GERSHWIN

BROADWAY



Lived: September 26, 1898 – July 11, 1937

From: Brooklyn, New York

George Gershwin was an American composer and pianist who composed jazz, popular, and classical music. He loved music so much that he taught himself to play piano as a kid.

When he grew up, George and his brother, Ira, wrote songs and musicals that became big hits on Broadway, such as "Porgy and Bess" (1935). After working on Broadway, Gershwin moved to Hollywood where he wrote music for television, movies, and opera.

Gershwin was known for composing unique music that mixed jazz and classical styles, like his famous "Rhapsody in Blue" and "An American in Paris."



MICHAEL GILBERTSON

BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK



Lived: 1987–

From: Dubuque, Iowa

Michael Gilbertson is a living composer whose music has been played by orchestras, bands, and choirs all over the world. He was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Music, one of the highest honors a composer can receive.

Michael studied music at The Juilliard School in New York City and at Yale University. He also started a festival in his hometown called "ChamberFest Dubuque," which brings young musicians to perform and teach students.



MICHAEL DAUGHERTY

ALLIGATOR ALLEY



Lived: April 28, 1954 –

From: Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Michael Daugherty is an American composer, pianist, and teacher. He was born into a musical family and learned how to play piano when he was 8 years old. Michael studied music all over the world, including in Paris, Germany, and New York. He earned a PhD in composition at the Yale School of Music.

Daugherty is famous for writing music inspired by his travels, American stories, history, and pop culture. His music has been performed all over the world and has won SIX Grammy Awards.

Today, in addition to writing music, Daugherty is a Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan.



FLORENCE PRICE

MISSISSIPPI RIVER



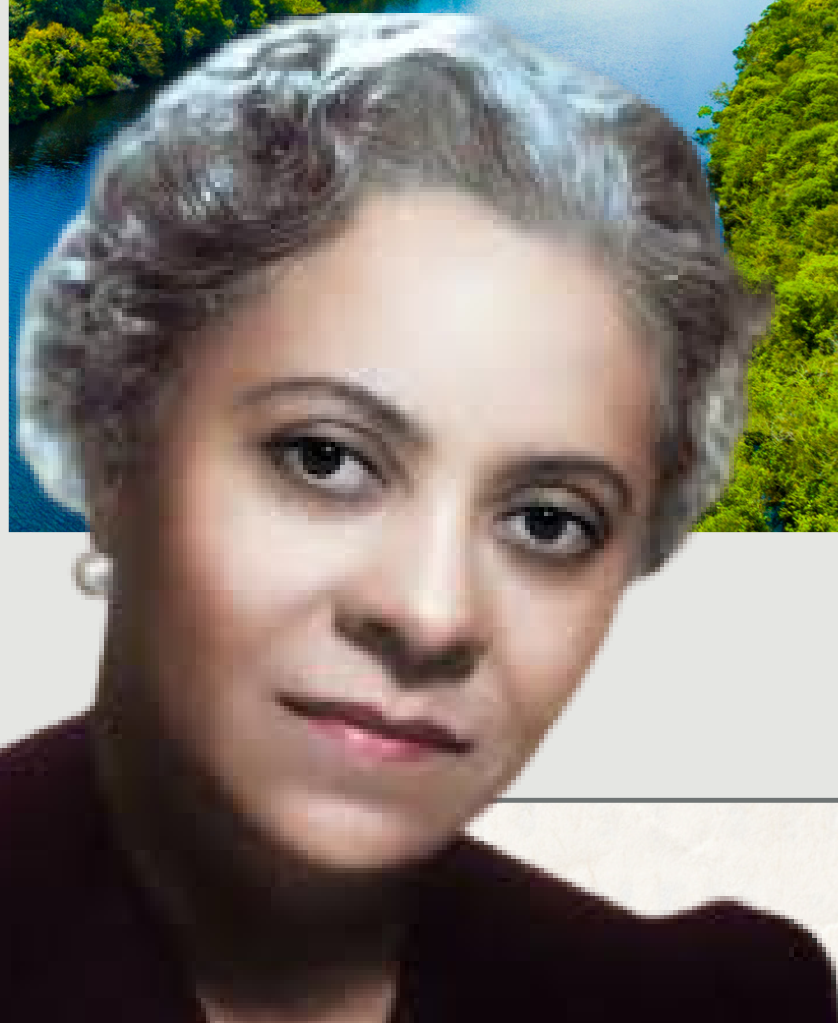
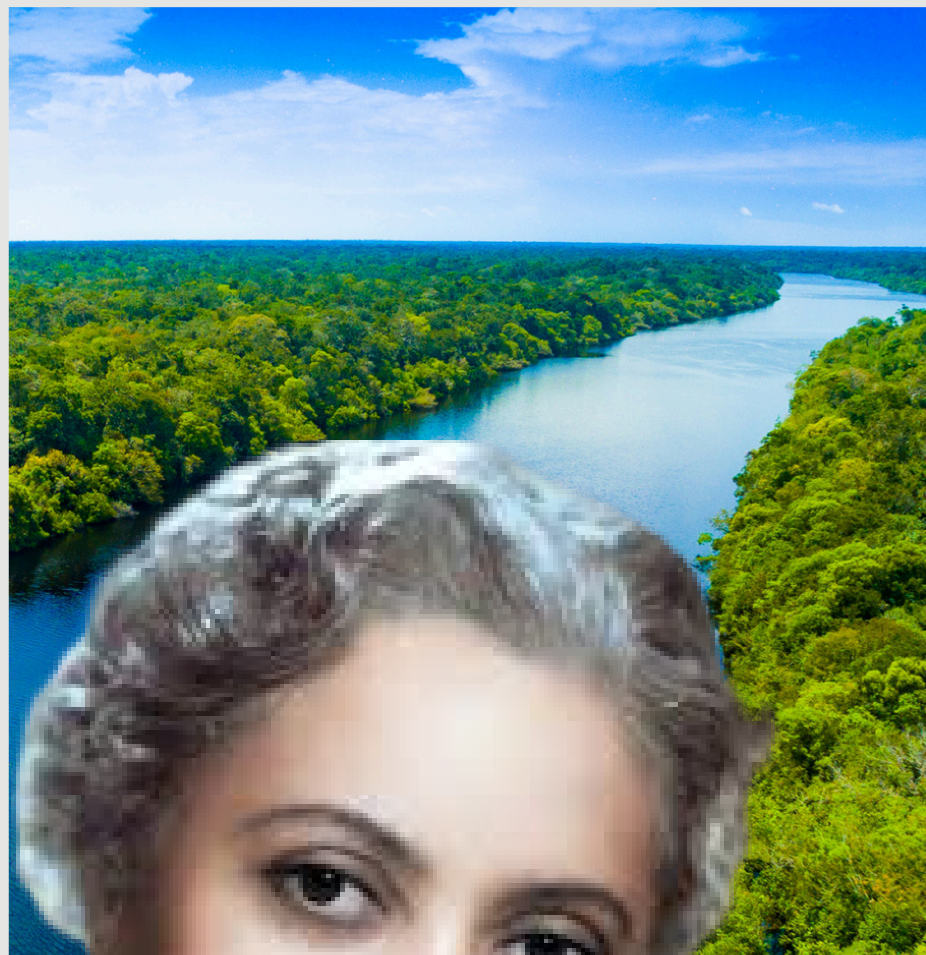
Lived: April 9, 1887 – June 3, 1953

From: Little Rock, Arkansas

Florence Beatrice Price was an American composer, pianist, organist, and music teacher. She was a talented child prodigy and went on to study at the New England Conservatory of Music.

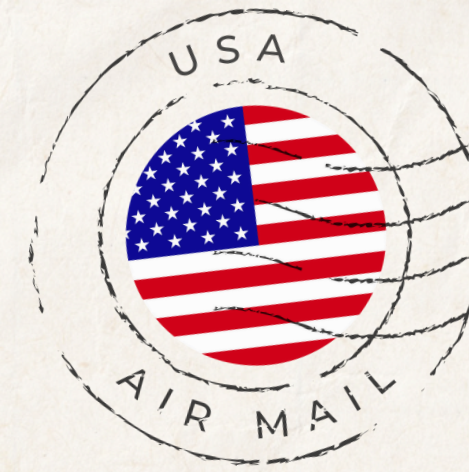
Price wrote symphonies, piano music, spiritual arrangements, and more, blending classical traditions with the rhythms and melodies of African American music. She is known as the first African American woman to have her music performed by a major orchestra.

Price wrote over 300 musical compositions! Much of her work was lost after she died and was not discovered until over 55 years later in her childhood home.



WOODY GUTHRIE

THE GREAT PLAINS



Lived: July 14, 1912 – October 3, 1967

From: Okemah, Oklahoma

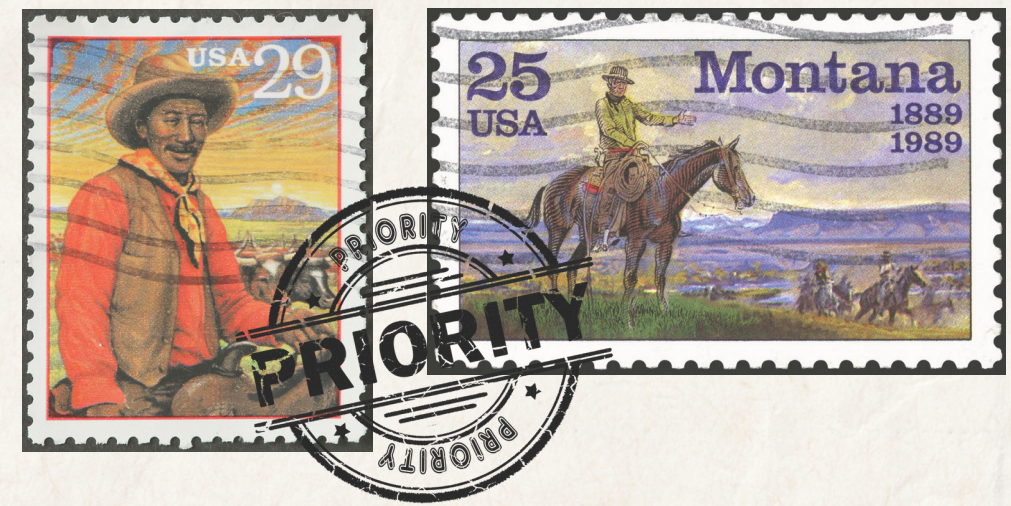
Woodrow Wilson Guthrie, "Woody," was an American folk singer and songwriter who told stories about everyday people through his music. He grew up in Oklahoma and traveled across the country during the Great Depression, singing about workers, farmers, and families trying to make a better life.

His most famous song is "This Land Is Your Land," which has become one of America's most beloved folk songs. Woody believed music could bring people together and inspire change, and his songs are still sung by people all over the world today.



AARON COPLAND

THE WEST



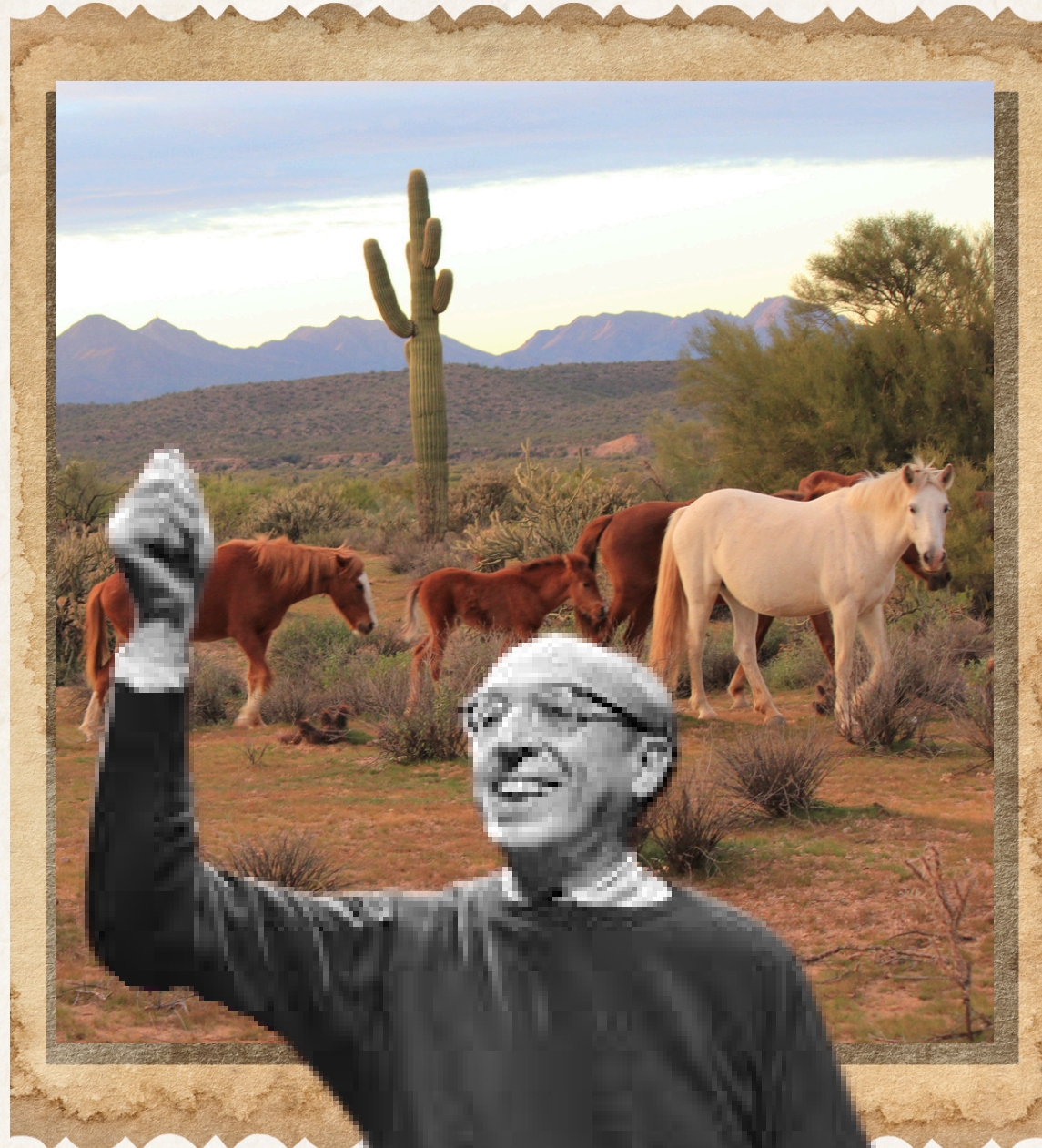
Lived: November 14, 1900 – December 2, 1990

From: Brooklyn, New York

Aaron Copland was a 20th century American composer, often referred to as the "Dean of American Music." At age 20, he studied music in Paris and then moved back to the U.S., where he worked as a composer. Copland's music was often inspired by landscapes and the American spirit.

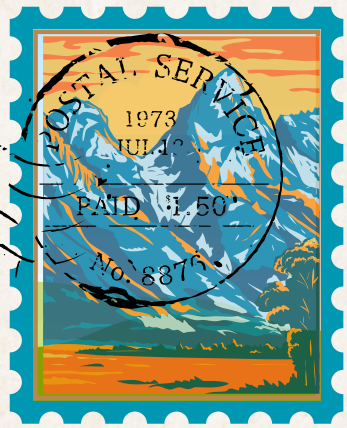
Copland is best known for the music he wrote in the 1930s and 1940s. These pieces were written in an "everyday" style, meaning they were designed to be accessible for everyone to enjoy.

In addition to composing, Copland was a teacher, conductor, writer, and critic.



WILLIAM GRANT STILL

GRAND TETON



Lived: May 11, 1895 – December 3, 1978

From: Woodville, Mississippi

William Grant Still studied composition at Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio. Before studying music, he studied medicine at Wilberforce University. His work is characterized by its blending of classical techniques with jazz, blues, and spirituals, creating a unique American sound.

William Grant Still's "Afro-American Symphony" was the first symphony by a black composer to be performed by a major orchestra. Still was also the first African American to conduct a major American symphony orchestra.



FERDE GROFÉ

GRAND CANYON



Lived: March 27, 1892– April 3, 1972

From: New York City, New York

Ferdinand Rudolph von Grofé, known as Ferde Grofé, was an American composer, arranger, pianist, and instrumentalist. While Grofé could play many instruments, his favorite was the piano.

Grofé was good friends with George Gershwin. His arrangement of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" is what helped bring the piece to fame.

His most famous composition is the "Grand Canyon Suite" (1931).



JOHN WILLIAMS

HOLLYWOOD



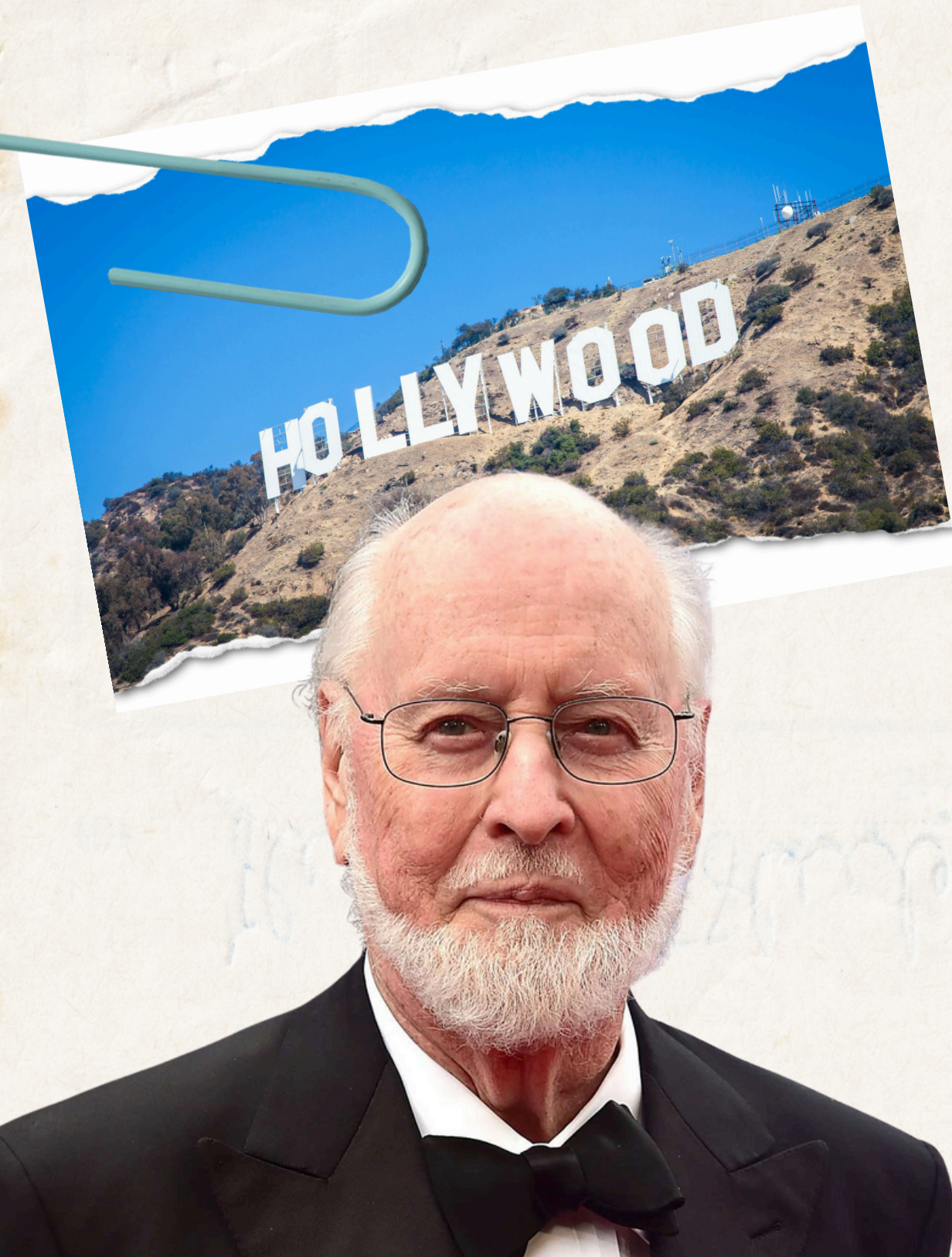
Lived: February 8, 1932 –

From: Long Island, New York

John Williams is an American composer and conductor best known for his film scores. His music can be heard in movies such as Star Wars, Harry Potter, and E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial. He has also written many pieces for orchestras, other ensembles, and solo instruments.

Williams has won 26 Grammy Awards, 5 Academy Awards, and has the second most Academy Award nominations (54 total!). He was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1998.

Williams is 93 years old today and still continues to write music for movies!



Digital Resources

Scan the QR codes or click below to access additional materials to help prepare students for their trip with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra!

KSO Home Page

Audio File Playlist

Roadtrip Map



[Click Here](#)



[Click Here](#)



[Click Here](#)



Lesson One: Compose a Song



Choose a familiar song and rewrite the lyrics to be about a place of your choosing!

Have students rewrite their song about Tennessee or let each student choose their own location for a variety of stops on your own classroom road trip!



This Land Is Your Land

Words and Music by Woody Guthrie

This land is your land, this land is my land
From California to the New York island,
From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters;
This land was made for you and me.

As I was walking that ribbon of highway
I saw above me that endless skyway;
I saw below me that golden valley;
This land was made for you and me.



[Click for full lyrics!](#)

This Land Is Your Land is a song written about the beautiful United States.

Rewrite the lyrics to describe a specific location!

Perform your new song for your class!

Check Out Our Lyrics!

Knoxville is your town, Knoxville is my town,
From KSO concerts to the UT Vols game,
From the Tennessee Theatre to the World's Fair Park Sunsphere,
Knoxville was made for you and me!

Lesson Two

Use the terms provided to create your own Bingo Card.
Bring it with you to the concert or listen in the classroom!



Use these terms to fill out your bingo card!

If there are music terms you know that you don't see here, you can use those too!

Instruments You Might See/Hear:

Violin/Viola

Cello/Bass

Flute

Clarinet

Oboe

Trumpet

French Horn

Tuba

Snare Drum

Bass Drum

Woodblock

Cymbals

Timpani

Music Terms:

Forte (loud music)

Piano (Soft music)

Allegro (fast music)

Adagio (slow music)

Crescendo (music getting louder)

Decrescendo (music getting softer)

Staccato (short, bouncy notes)

Legato (smooth, connected notes)

Tutti (the whole orchestra)

Solo (one instrument featured alone)

Music You Might Hear:

Music from a Movie

Music you have heard before

A song you can sing

A Patriotic Tune

Music you can dance to

A March

Things you might see during the concert:

"A" Tuning note

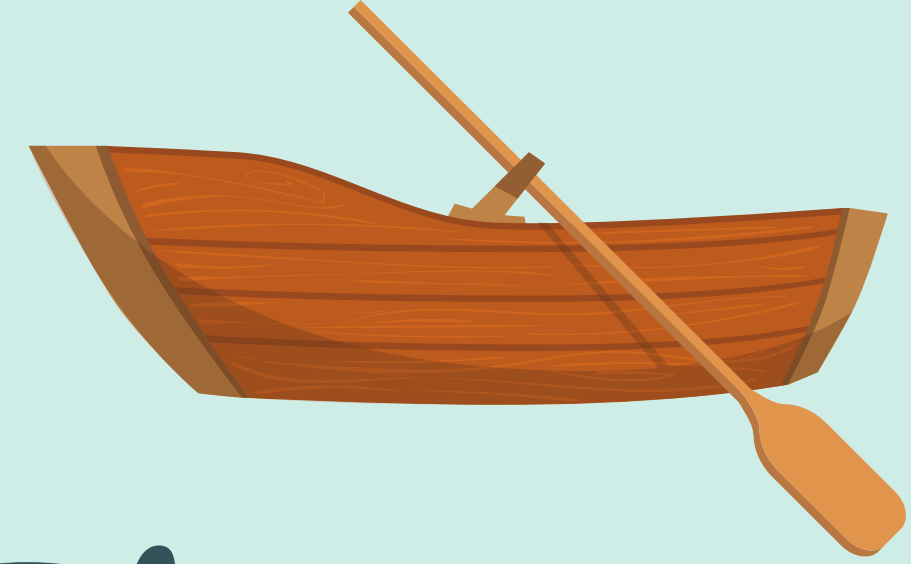
The Concertmaster

The Maestro taking a bow

The whole orchestra standing

Woodwind player swabbing their instrument

Brass player emptying their spit valve



Lesson Three

Cut and paste the instruments of the orchestra and place them on the map.

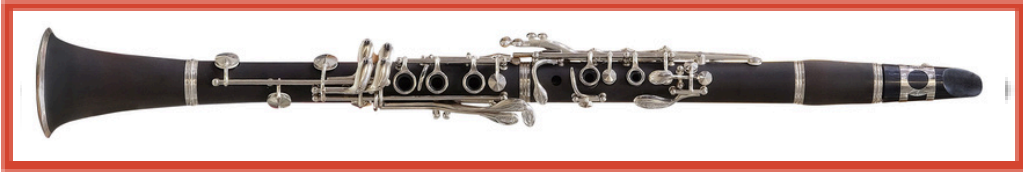
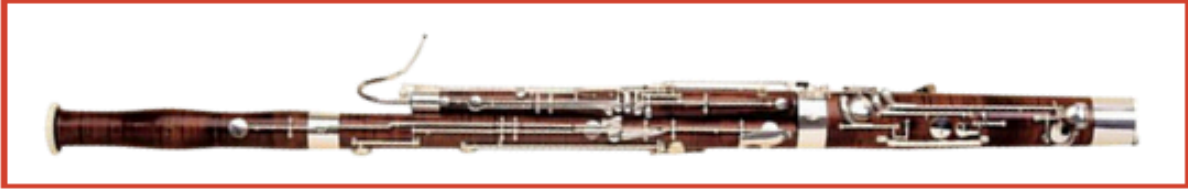


The Knoxville Symphony Orchestra

This seating chart shows how you might see the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra arranged when you come to the Young People's Concert. The players are seated in a semicircle facing the conductor.

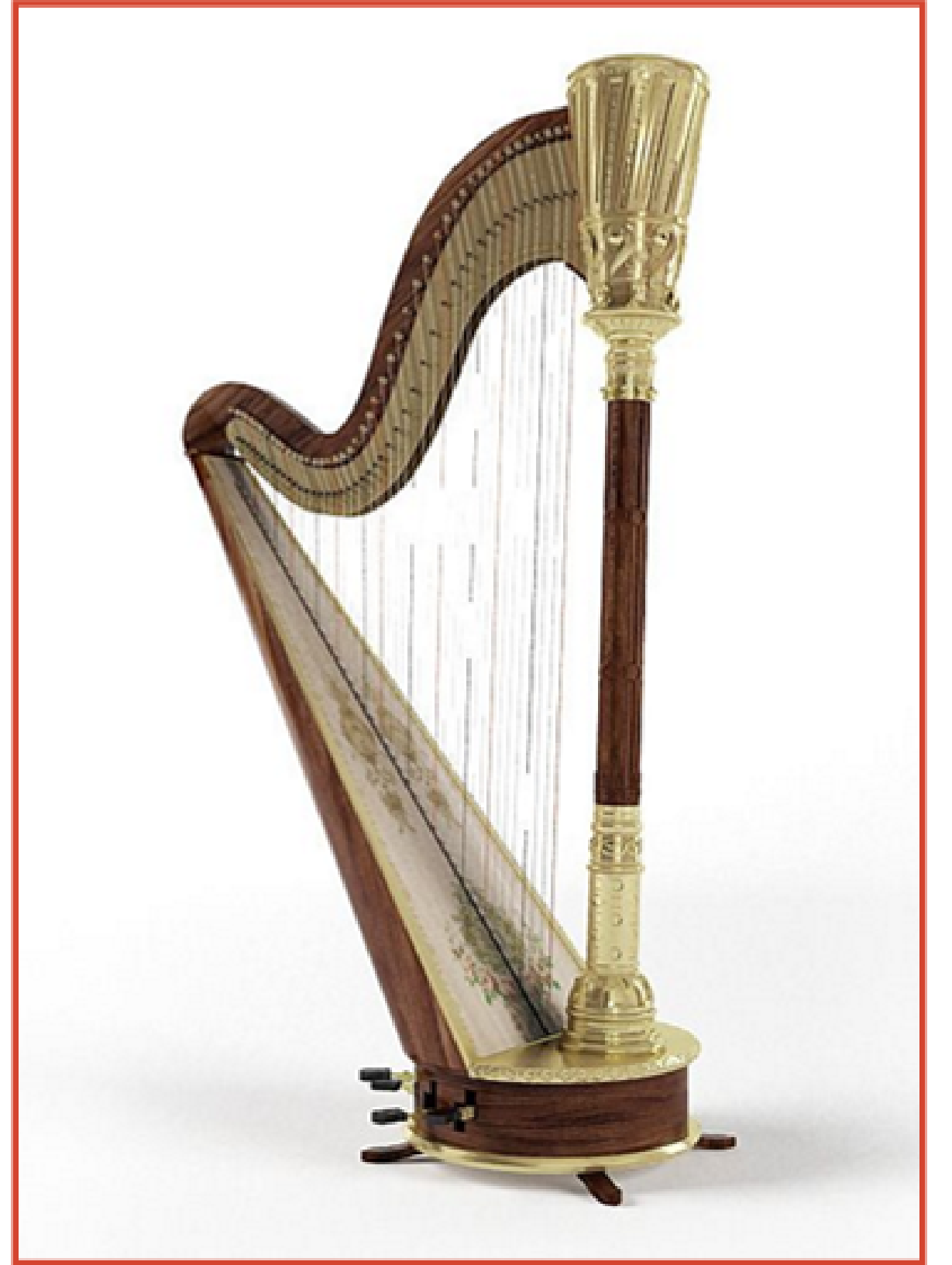
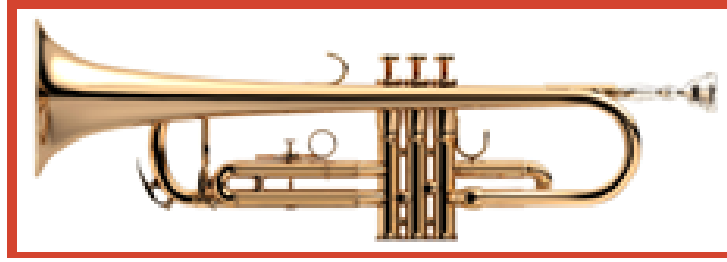
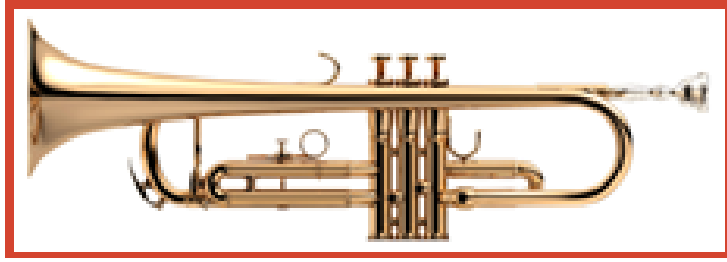
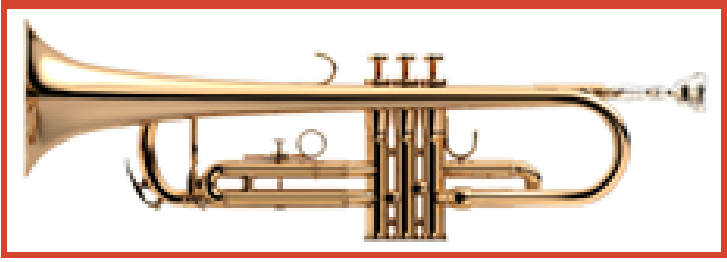
Today's symphony orchestra varies in size from one place to another but usually has about 100 players. The string section, about 60 musicians, is the largest section in the orchestra. The woodwind section usually has 12 or more players, and the brass section typically has 10. Finally, the percussion section varies greatly, depending on the number of percussion parts used in a musical work.



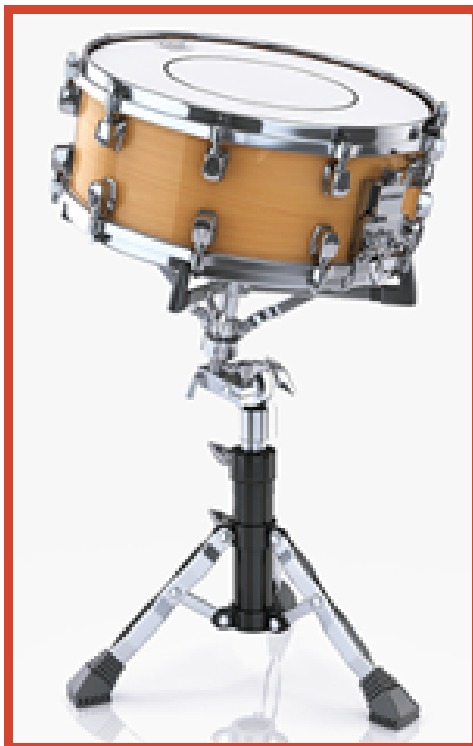
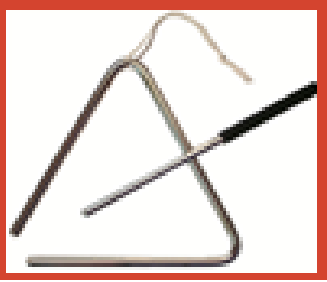


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Percussion

Woodwinds

Brass

Strings

Strings

Strings

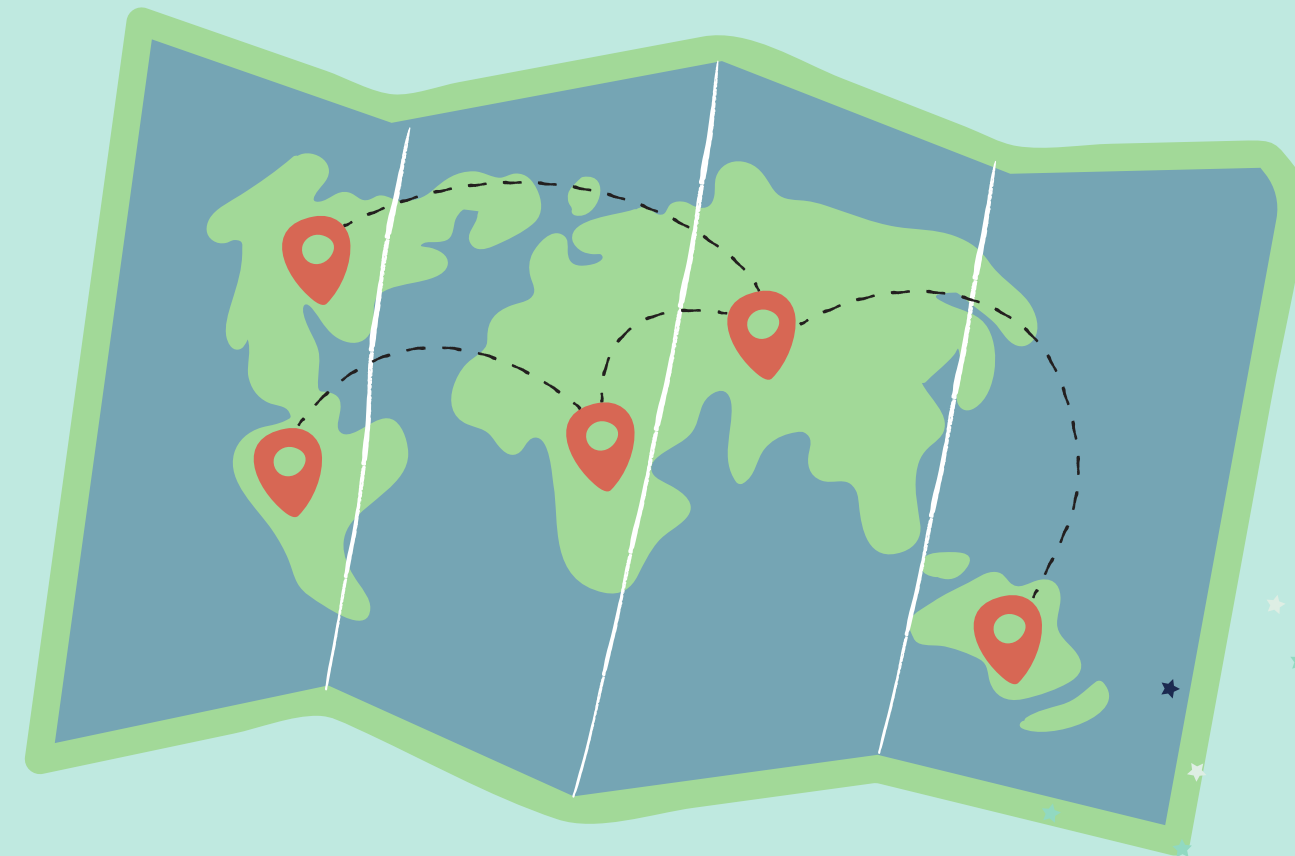
Lesson 4

CREATE YOUR OWN ROAD MAP

How many Road Trip USA landmarks can you place on a map?

Mark our Road Trip Destinations on the next page.
Connect the destinations to create your own road trip route!

Print a map for each student or do it as a class.
Landmarks are paired with composers pages 6-16.



Road Trip USA!!!

Plan your trip! Mark our road trip destinations on the map!



Standards

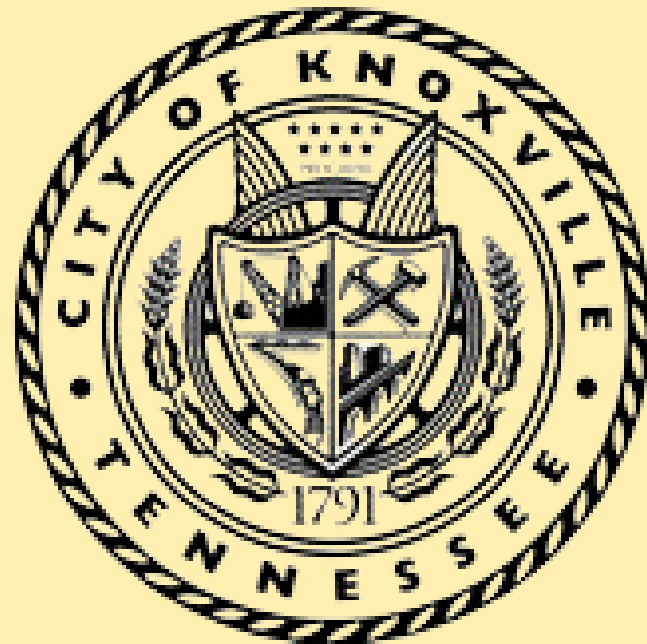
The Sheena McCall Young People's Concert aligns with the National Standards for General Music and Geography.

Click the link or scan the QR Code to access a full list of National Standards covered in this Teacher Guide and Concert.



[CLICK HERE](#)

Sponsors and Acknowledgements



Randy and Jenny Boyd



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knoxvillesymphony.com



Aram Demirjian, Music Director

Presents



Sheena McCall Young People's Concert Knoxville Fall 2025

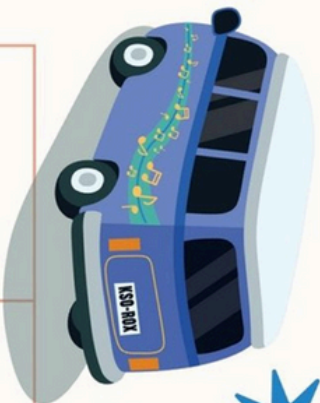


Buckle up for an unforgettable adventure with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra! With Maestro Aram Demirjian at the wheel, students will embark on a musical journey across the country visiting some of America's most iconic sights and scenes. From the Liberty Bell to National Parks to the Hollywood sign, this performance brings the spirit of the USA to life as students discover dynamic connections between music, landscapes, and landmarks. Grab your maps and pack your imagination – this is one road trip you won't want to miss!

Road Trip USA

Aram Demirjian, Conductor

America the Beautiful	Samuel Ward
The Liberty Bell	John Phillip Sousa
Gershwin in Concert	George Gershwin
Reflections on Rushmore	Michael Gilbertson
Shenandoah	Traditional, arr. Bullock
Alligator Alley	Michael Daugherty
When the Saints Go Marching In	Traditional, arr. Holcombe
Mississippi River Suite	Florence Price
On the Trail from <i>Grand Canyon Suite</i>	Ferde Grofé
Hoe-Down from <i>Rodeo</i>	Aaron Copland
This Land is Your Land	Woody Guthrie
Flying Music from <i>E.T</i>	John Williams



BINGO



Road Trip USA!!!

Plan your trip! Mark our road trip destinations on the map!



United States of America

