The Composer is Dead  
March 3-5, 2015

Dear teachers, parents and guardians,

Welcome to the Minnesota Orchestra’s 2014-2015 season of Young People’s Concerts!

In March, the orchestra will present the fourth Young People’s Concert of the season titled, The Composer is Dead!

The Composer is Dead is a musical “Who Done It” adventure with narration written by popular children’s author Lemony Snicket and music by Nathaniel Stookey. Students will learn about the orchestra’s instruments while unraveling the mystery surrounding the composer’s untimely death. Our friend Jake Endres will provide the storyline as the eccentric, sometimes exasperated, Inspector.

In keeping with this theme of “mysteries,” the orchestra will present two additional pieces of repertoire that will have your students on the edge of their seats—Schubert’s Symphony No. 8 “Unfinished” (first movement only), and Stravinsky’s Circus Polka. Why didn’t Schubert finish his symphony? What circus animals could possibly be dancing the polka?

As you prepare your students for this concert, consider focusing on the four families of instruments, and doing as all of the wonderful music teachers in this state do—encouraging curiosity, questioning, and the unraveling of musical mysteries.

I hope you and your students enjoy our concert, The Composer is Dead!

Jessica Leibfried  
Director of Education and Community Engagement  
Minnesota Orchestra
CONCERT PROGRAM

SCHUBERT  Symphony No. 8 “Unfinished” (Allegro moderato)
STOOKEY  The Composer is Dead
STRAVINSKY  Circus Polka

LINK UP!

Here are a series of videos to help you prepare your students for their upcoming concert experience at Orchestra Hall.

Disclaimer: Many of these links below are from You Tube. Although the content of the actual video has been carefully reviewed for age appropriateness, please be aware that advertisements will often precede these videos and may have adult content. Prior to playing the video for students, click the link and let any advertisements play out. Click “pause” as the actual video is about to begin and you’re all set!

GENERAL INFORMATION

CONCERT ETIQUETTE  (MPR video)
http://youtu.be/re_SypFujRk?list=PLUIsACiefIboVqES9tKnj_lz-kY9cKVsi

INSTRUMENTS OF THE ORCHESTRA
www.dsokids.com  - Dallas Symphony Orchestra
www.nyphilkids.org  - New York Philharmonic
www.sfskids.org  - San Francisco Symphony

MUSIC ON THIS CONCERT

Schubert’s Symphony No. 8 “Unfinished”
http://youtu.be/LJomaLclhHk  *Conducted by our own previous Associate Conductor Courtney Lewis
http://youtu.be/LcLlyGvAY38  *If you prefer audio only

Stookey’s The Composer is Dead
http://youtu.be/OuABdROntEQ

Stravinsky’s Circus Polka
http://youtu.be/BnMkb9sWrfO
PERFORMERS

THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Now in its second century and led by Music Director Osmo Vänskä, The Minnesota Orchestra ranks among America’s top symphonic ensembles, with a distinguished history of acclaimed performances in its home state and around the world; award-winning recordings, radio broadcasts and community engagement programs; and a visionary commitment to building the orchestral repertoire of tomorrow.

Founded as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, the ensemble gave its inaugural performance on November 5, 1903, shortly after baseball’s first World Series and six weeks before the Wright brothers made their unprecedented airplane flight. The Orchestra played its first regional tour in 1907 and made its New York City debut in 1912 at Carnegie Hall, where it has performed regularly ever since. Outside the United States, the Orchestra has played concerts in Australia, Canada, Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Since 1968 it has been known as the Minnesota Orchestra. Today the ensemble presents nearly 175 programs each year, primarily at its home venue of Orchestra Hall in downtown Minneapolis, and its concerts are heard by live audiences of 350,000 annually.

The Orchestra’s international tours have reaped significant praise, most recently in August 2010. During a critically lauded tour of European festivals, the Orchestra performed at the Edinburgh International Festival, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw and the BBC Proms in London–before stomping crowds totaling 12,000 for two concerts at Royal Albert Hall, one of which culminated in a performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Critic John Allison subsequently wrote in The Sunday Telegraph: “The Minnesotans are among the world’s most cultivated bands. And under Vänskä..their Beethoven Ninth was everything one hopes for but seldom hears in this towering masterpiece.”
PERFORMERS

SEAN NEWHOUSE, CONDUCTOR

British-American conductor Sean Newhouse made an acclaimed last-minute debut with the Boston Symphony in 2011, conducting Mahler’s Ninth Symphony on two hours’ notice in place of James Levine. No stranger to eleventh-hour substitutions, he also stepped in for Mario Venzago on short notice to open the Indianapolis Symphony season in 2008. 2014-2015 highlights include his debuts with the Minnesota Orchestra and Tucson Symphony, a residency with the Florentine Opera, and his Jordan Hall debut in Boston conducting a world premiere song cycle by Patricia Leonard based on the letters of John & Abigail Adams. Recent engagements include his Canadian debut with the Vancouver Symphony, subscription weeks with the Charleston, Knoxville, and California symphonies, Hansel & Gretel with Metrowest Opera, and his French debut with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Nice. Other highlights of recent seasons include a subscription week with the Boston Symphony, his German debut with the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, and concerts with the Phoenix Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony, and Silesian Philharmonic, among others. A devoted opera conductor, he has served on the music staff of Boston Lyric Opera and Glimmerglass Opera, and assisted James Levine in performances of Bartok’s Bluebeard’s Castle and Stravinsky’s Oedipus Rex.

Winner of the Aspen Conducting Prize and major prizes at the Fitelberg and Malko competitions, as well as a Career Assistance Award from the Solti Foundation U.S., Mr. Newhouse began his career by winning the highly coveted position of Music Director of the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra in Los Angeles. He studied at Tanglewood, the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen, the Cleveland Institute of Music, and the Eastman School, among others. His conducting mentors have included James Levine, David Zinman, Carl Topilow, and Neil Varon. Originally trained as a violinist, his teachers included Devy Erlih at the Alfred Cortot School in Paris and Joanna Owen at the Eastman School. Mr. Newhouse can be found on the web at www.seannewhouse.com, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/seannewhouseconductor, and on Twitter at @Sean_Newhouse.
PERFORMERS

NATHANIEL STOOKEY, COMPOSER

Nathaniel Stookey (b. 1970) is an American classical music composer. He is the youngest composer ever commissioned for the San Francisco Symphony’s New and Unusual Music Series. He collaborated with children’s book author Lemony Snicket on the work *The Composer Is Dead*, a musical introduction to the orchestra for children. In 2007 as an artist in residence with Norcal Waste Systems (San Francisco’s garbage company), he composed *Junkestra*, a classical composition for thirty instruments made out of trash found at the San Francisco dump. Among the instruments are a plastic trash can lid, bicycle wheels, a car bumper, pots, pans, mixing bowls, serving trays, sewer pipes, deck railing, a saw, a bird cage, a shopping cart, glass bottles, and an oil drum.

JAKE ENDRES, NARRATOR

Jake Endres is delighted to return to the Minnesota Orchestra, having appeared in Mozart’s The Magic Flute, Bernstein’s Mass, Puccini’s Tosca, as well as with The Rose Ensemble this past December. Mr. Endres lives in St. Paul and freelances as a singer, actor, music director, and composer. He has appeared with many regional organizations, including The Flying Foot Forum/Guthrie Theater (Alice in Wonderland; Heaven), The Children’s Theatre Company (The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins), History Theatre (Baby Case, Coco’s Diary and The St. Paul Gangster Musical), G.R.E.A.T. Theatre (Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof), Ten Thousand Things (The Music Man), Skylark Opera (including On the Town and The Merry Widow), Park Square Theatre (Oliver Twist and Oh, Coward!), Sapphire Chamber Consort (The Soldier’s Tale), Frank Theatre (Puntila and Mother Courage), and Paul Bunyan Playhouse (including Georg in She Loves Me and music directing The Who’s TOMMY). Upcoming: Argento’s The Andrée Expedition with The Schubert Club.
MINNESOTA ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN MUSIC

This curriculum is designed to support the four cornerstones found in the state music standards: foundations, create, perform and respond. You’ll find the standards for each cornerstone listed below.

To access the full document and find grade-level specific benchmarks, click here: http://perpich.mn.gov/files/MNArtsStandards.pdf

OF INTEREST

Public Elementary Schools in MN must offer 3 and require 2 of the following: dance, music, theater, visual arts.

Districts may use state standards or locally developed standards.

SUMMARY OF STANDARDS

Notice: Standards stay the same for grades K-12 but BENCHMARKS are specific to each grade band (K-2), (3-5), (6-8), (9-12).
INTRODUCING THE MUSIC

There are many different ways to investigate music with a group of learners. One way to approach an introductory lesson is through the RESPOND cornerstone of the standards. To help your learners RESPOND to the music in a meaningful way, try using this Artful Tool called Descriptive Review!

DESCRIPTIVE REVIEW: A TOOL FOR COLLABORATIVE INVESTIGATION

Descriptive Review is a reflective protocol that can help a group of learners make meaning out of a new piece of music. Important: collaborative inquiry about the music should be based in pure description without judgment. By leaving assumptions and judgments at the wayside, learners uncover new perspectives and information, ultimately developing a deeper understanding of the music. Learners use critical listening and thinking skills to describe what they hear, ask questions, and then make speculations on what’s going on in the music.

Teachers act as facilitators; Learners act as investigators. Three questions are asked of the learners:

1. (Describe) What do you notice? (“I notice…”)
2. (Question) What questions do you have about the music? (“I wonder…”)
3. (Speculate) What is the music about? What is the composer trying to tell us?

PROCESS:

• Do not reveal the title of the music, composer, or any context. Remember this is the introductory session for learners to inquire and uncover as much as they can!

• Show learners the three questions. Read through each one and make sure they understand what their job is as the listener. Have them focus on the first question and encourage each learner to remember and share one thing they noticed after they listen. (If you have time and materials, learners could record multiple ideas.)

• Play the music.

• Ask the first question. You may want to record learner responses.

• As learners respond, it’s important for the facilitator to encourage pure description. If a student adds a judgment such as “I heard the violin play slowly and it was boring” ask “What did you hear that makes you say that?” to dig deeper.

• Try not to teach. Simply facilitate conversation.

• Ask subsequent questions and continue facilitating conversation void of judgment.

• After the DESCRIPTIVE REVIEW session, reveal title, composer and context and build off of learner responses!

OF INTEREST

Descriptive Review allows artists, teachers, or students to assess their own work as well—and in a nonjudgmental way. Use this tool in your classroom when students are sharing individual compositions! Ask audience members to listen to their classmate’s performance carefully and then ask them to describe, question and speculate. Focusing their attention in this way and asking for objective feedback void of judgement will help create a feeling of safety, trust and sharing in the classroom. The feedback helps the performer to make choices about what to change in their work for next time. All participants learn from each other new ways of looking at and thinking about the world.

Learn more about this tool here: http://opd.mpls.k12.mn.us/descriptive_review2
SCUBERT’S SYMPHONY NO. 8 “UNFINISHED,” ALLEGRO MODERATO

ABOUT THE COMPOSER
Franz Schubert was born in Vienna, Austria. In addition to playing several instruments, Franz also sang very well. When he was 10, he was accepted at the Imperial and Royal Seminary, which trained boys for the Court Chapel Choir. That choir still exists today as the Vienna Boys’ Choir. Schubert wrote his first symphonies for his school orchestra, and for friends of the family who used to get together to play -- the whole Schubert family was very musical. Schubert also wrote piano, choral, and chamber music, but he is probably most famous for composing over 600 songs.

ABOUT THE MUSIC
The Minnesota Orchestra will be performing the first movement ONLY.

We don’t know why Schubert never finished his B minor symphony. This has been one of music’s great unanswered questions for more than a hundred years, and, despite some intelligent speculation, we still come up empty-handed today.

At least we know that he didn’t finish it. For many years, music lovers persisted in believing that the missing movements sat, forgotten, in some Viennese attic. On the other hand, scholars no longer suggest that Schubert intended to write a two movement symphony, giving the composer credit for a bold stroke that, for all his daring, is not his.

The facts are scarce and mysterious, which has only heightened the intrigue over the years. There was no mention of this symphony made during the composer’s lifetime. It lay buried, like hidden treasure, in Anselm Hüttenbrenner’s cluttered study until the 1860s–more than thirty years after Schubert’s death–when it was dusted off to take its place as no. 8 among the known Schubert symphonies.

The full score, clearly written in Schubert’s own hand, is dated 30 October 1822, Vienna, and signed, with his characteristic flourish, Franz Schubert. The manuscript, headed “Symphony in B minor,” includes two movements: a wonderful, singing Allegro moderato and a heartbreaking Andante con moto—both so sublime that the Unfinished nickname is all the more frustrating. On the back of the final page of the Andante are nine measures of a scherzo, fully scored, followed by four blank pages. In the 1960s, Christa Landon discovered a missing leaf that ought to have come before the empty pages, containing measures ten through twenty and then stopping abruptly, as if Schubert had been interrupted midthought. (A piano sketch of the symphony shows that Schubert had planned the entire scherzo and the beginning of a trio.)

“LISTEN FORs” and ACTIVITIES
1. Listen for two contrasting melodies in the first minute of music. Can you hear the mysterious “chugging” sixteenth notes in the strings? Can you hear the beautiful melody in the woodwinds? Create a movement piece (in pairs, small groups, or class split in half) where some students show movement for the choppy sixteenth notes heard in the strings while the others show smooth movements heard in the woodwinds. Or do a compare and contrast and describe each of these sounds!

2. Listen for parts in the music where a note is suddenly emphasized. We call these accents! Can you put your hands on your head every time you hear an accent while you listen?

3. Listen for the famous melody in the cellos. Guess what? There’s a little sample of this melody at the end of Stookey’s The Composer is Dead. Maybe you can find it! I bet you can sing this melody too!

4. Listen for the strings as they move their bows quickly but stay on the same pitch. This is called a “tremolo” and can often sound scary or creepy. There are quite a few places in this piece where the strings play “tremolo.” Can you find them? Can you play a “tremolo” using an Orff instrument at your school?
SCHUBERT’S SYMPHONY NO. 8 “UNFINISHED,” ALLEGRO MODERATO
(cont.)

5. This piece is essentially a large ABA form.
   • Designate one part of your room as “A” and one as “B”. Have students stand in the part of the room they think they are hearing as they listen to the music. (Students will need at least one full listen prior to this activity.)
   • Relate this piece to music students are currently studying that has ABA form.
   • Use material found in this piece—sixteenth notes, tremolos, accents, choppy v. lyrical—as inspiration for students to compose their own ABA piece.
STOOKEY’S THE COMPOSER IS DEAD

ABOUT THE COMPOSER
Nathaniel Stookey (b. 1970) is an American classical music composer. He is the youngest composer ever commissioned for the San Francisco Symphony’s New and Unusual Music Series. He collaborated with children’s book author Lemony Snicket on the work The Composer Is Dead, a musical introduction to the orchestra for children. In 2007 as an artist in residence with Norcal Waste Systems (San Francisco’s garbage company), he composed Junkestra, a classical composition for thirty instruments made out of trash found at the San Francisco dump. Among the instruments are a plastic trash can lid, bicycle wheels, a car bumper, pots, pans, mixing bowls, serving trays, sewer pipes, deck railing, a saw, a bird cage, a shopping cart, glass bottles, and an oil drum.

ABOUT THE MUSIC
The Composer Is Dead was originally created as an orchestral work by Nathaniel Stookey with narration by Lemony Snicket. The work was commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony and premiered at Davies Symphony Hall on July 8, 2006, with Lemony Snicket narrating and Edwin Outwater conducting. It was first published by G. Schirmer/Associated Music Publishers.

Stookey’s The Composer Is Dead is similar to Sergei Prokofiev’s Peter and the Wolf and Benjamin Britten’s The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra in that it is intended to introduce young audiences to the instruments in the orchestra. The world premiere recording by the San Francisco Symphony, with Handler narrating as Snicket, and Edwin Outwater conducting is to be included with every copy of the expanded book.

PLOT
Beethoven, Bach and Mozart are dead. Were they drowned out by the drums? Did the clarinet sneak up on them? Or did the trumpets blow them away? Help solve this perplexing mystery. In the quest to discover who killed the composers, our Inspector interrogates each section of the orchestra to determine what they do and how they work. Children’s author Lemony Snicket is world-renowned for his stories captured in A Series of Unfortunate Events, selling more than 60 million copies worldwide in 39 languages. Nathaniel Stookey created The Composer Is Dead as an orchestral work with narration by Lemony Snicket.

“LISTEN FORs” and ACTIVITIES
Pre-existing teaching guides for The Composer is Dead are available online. Here are three that we like:

PDF of Teaching Guide from Harper Collins (For Elementary Grade Levels)

PDF from the St. Louis Symphony (For Elementary Grade Levels)
http://www.stlsymphony.org/media/pdf/cp/1112/KKComposerDead.pdf

PDF from the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (For Upper Elementary & Middle School Levels)
STRAVINSKY’S CIRCUS POLKA

ABOUT THE COMPOSER
Igor Stravinsky was born in St. Petersburg, which was the capital of Russia at the time. His father was a famous opera singer, so as a kid, Igor got to hang out at the opera house, where he met all the famous musicians of the day. At one performance, he even caught sight of Tchaikovsky.

Igor began taking piano lessons at age 9. When he grew up, he started studying law. One of his fellow law students was the son of composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who agreed to give Stravinsky composition lessons. Law fell by the wayside completely after Stravinsky had a big success with The Firebird, which he composed for Serge Diaghilev, head of the Russian Ballet. Stravinsky went on to write more ballets for Diaghilev. One of those was The Rite of Spring, about a pagan ritual in ancient Russia. The opening night audience found the music and choreography so shocking that there was actually a riot in the theater! Stravinsky moved around a lot. In Europe, he lived in France and Switzerland; during World War II, he came to the United States, where he lived in both California and New York. Stravinsky’s music moved around, too -- he never really picked one style. He wrote Russian-sounding music, music that looked back to previous centuries, modern music, opera, and religious music -- including a symphony with psalms in it.

ABOUT THE MUSIC
George Balanchine, the “father of American ballet” and Igor Stravinsky, arguably the most innovative composer of the pre-WWII period, really did partner up to write a performance for fifty elephants (with fifty ballerinas on top of them) for the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus. The resultant work was called Circus Polka: For a Young Elephant. The elephants, all fifty of them, wore pink tutus.

Not too surprisingly, the crowd loved it.

As for the music, Stravinsky’s piece galumphs amusingly enough through vestiges of rhythmic ideas from his own Danses concertantes reimagined for very large mammals, with an unexpected nod at one point toward Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony, and ending with a heavily underlined and quotation-marked parody of Schubert’s March militaire No.1 in D major.

This is the phone call that is said to have taken place between Balanchine and Stravinsky:

Balanchine: “I wonder if you’d like to do a little ballet with me.”
Stravinsky: “For whom?”
Balanchine: “For some elephants.”
Stravinsky: “How old?”
Balanchine: “Very young.”
Stravinsky: “All right. If they are very young elephants, I will do it.”
STRAVINSKY’S CIRCUS POLKA
(cont.)

“LISTEN FORs” AND ACTIVITIES
1. LISTEN!
   A) Introduce students to the sounds of a march and a polka BEFORE listening to the Stravinsky.
   C) Polka: Strauss’ Thunder and Lightning Polka, http://youtu.be/hASDPscH43x8. (Teachers, this is an excellent video to watch with your students as well!) Can you hear the accents? Watch the conductor show the accents! What instruments do you hear?
   D) Now listen to Stravinsky’s Circus Polka. Try the Descriptive Review Protocol on page 6 to encourage thoughtful responses from your learners. 1) What do you notice? 2) What questions do you have about the music? 3) What is the music about?

2. DANCE!
   A) You can dance the polka! Since it is tricky to dance a polka using the Stravinsky or Strauss examples above, we suggest starting with the Pennsylvania Polka. http://youtu.be/WCXwTcZ1mAA
   B) Students can do this movement alone or in pairs. Begin as solo dancers facing the same direction. “Hop step step” to the right (RLR); “Hop step step” to the left (LRL).
   C) Ready for pairs? Try two lines that face each other! Remember, one line will have to start with their left foot so everyone is moving in the same direction!
   D) As students feel comfortable, have them link up with any hand hold that works best (loose hand hold, link pinky fingers, hands on shoulders).
   E) Now play 30 seconds-1 minute of the Stravinsky polka. Can they dance to it? Ask students why or why not? What do they notice about the music? (Meter changes, tempo changes, much slower than the Pennsylvania polka.)
   F) What circus animals do you think are dancing this polka and why? Share your ideas with a friend.
   G) Give students the background on the collaboration between Stravinsky and Balanchine for the Circus Polka. If they’d like to try and polka as if they were elephants, use the first 20 seconds of the piece.

3. Focus on Percussion!
   You will hear a lot of snare drum and cymbals in this music. Touch the picture of the snare drum or the cymbals when you hear it. Or, pretend you’re playing the instrument!
Balanchine and Stravinsky in 1957, possibly discussing a tarantella arranged for panda bears

SOURCES:

www.classicsforkids.com

http://cso.org/uploadedfiles/1_tickets_and_events/program_notes/031110_programnotes_schubert_symphony.pdf

http://victoriasymphony.ca/concerts/lemony-snickets-the-composer-is-dead/

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Composer_Is_Dead

http://www.ingramcontent.com/Teacher%20Guides/HCCB%20Composer%20Is%20Dead%20TG.pdf

http://www.rpo.org/UserFiles/File/PDF/intermediate%201112/MFY_IL_The_Composer_Is_Dead_LESSON_New.pdf

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circus_Polka

http://dangerousminds.net/comments/circus_polka_stravinskys_ballet_for_elephants_1942