STORYTIME
WITH THE
SYMPHONY

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra
Stephen Mulligan
Conductor
In this Concert for Young People by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, children will be introduced to composers who loved to tell stories. Don’t you need words to tell a story? How can music tell a story without words? Composers rely on melody, rhythm, tempo, and musical dynamics to make the story come to life.

Often, musical instruments — whether the strings, woodwinds, brass, or percussion — take on specific roles to make the story extra exciting!

Welcome to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra!
We’ve got a story to tell!
Mozart Goes to a Wedding

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (“MOWT-zart”) was a famous child prodigy. A “prodigy” is someone who shows great talent at a young age—and Mozart definitely did that! He was playing the piano, the violin, and writing music when he was only five years old! He grew up to become a great composer known all around the world.

Mozart especially liked to write operas. An “opera” is a story told with songs, performed by singers and an orchestra. Operas often start with a lively “overture” that samples the best songs and sets the mood for the story to follow.

Mozart’s comic opera, “The Marriage of Figaro,” is about a funny servant named Figaro who is excited to marry a maid named Susanna. When their boss is too lovey-dovey with the bride-to-be, Figaro and Susanna set a trap to teach him a lesson. As you will hear, the overture to Mozart’s “The Marriage of Figaro” promises a lot of punch, pow, and excitement.

Bizet: Fighting the Bulls

French composer Georges Bizet (BEEZ-AY) was another child prodigy. He took piano lessons from his mother and was accepted into a major music school in Paris when he was only 9.

Bizet also loved to read books so he was eager to tell stories with his music when he became a composer. His famous opera, “Carmen” is about a beautiful Spanish gypsy who falls in love with a famous bullfighter! Bizet’s music provides a big entrance for the bullfighter, like a march of the champions. You can almost hear the bullfighter flinging his cape, and waving to the cheering crowds.

Grieg: Running Away From Trolls

Composer Edvard Grieg (“GREEG”) was born in Norway, a beautiful country in northern Europe. He was raised in a family where everyone sang or played a musical instrument. Much of Grieg’s music was inspired by Norway and the Norse myths handed down from early Vikings.

Grieg wrote music for a play about a folk hero in Norway named “Peer Gynt.” In the story, Peer meets the daughter of the Troll Mountain King, and follows her into a dark cave. In the beginning, Grieg’s music sounds creepy and suspenseful as Peer tiptoes about the darkness. As Peer gains confidence, so does the music. Once the trolls discover him, however, Peer has to run like crazy because he is being chased by trolls — and Grieg’s music becomes action-packed!

Grieg shows us how a composer uses music to create an exciting action scene! Watch out for trolls! Run!

Say Hello to Mama Koku!

Mama Koku is a Master Storyteller who has performed throughout Georgia and across the United States. As an educator, she teaches children of all ages.

Say Hello to the Orchestra and the Conductor!

An orchestra is a large group of musicians playing in four different groups of instruments. Each section has a different quality.

The string section is made up of violins, violas, cellos, and basses. These instruments can sound soft and sweet, or soaring and grand.

The woodwind section consists of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons. Woodwinds carry the melody over the quietest and the loudest parts of a piece.

The brass section includes horns, trumpets, trombones, and tubas. Brass instruments create epic swells and sudden bursts of sound in the loud, exciting parts of music.

The percussion section is home to drums, chimes, gongs, cymbals, and whistles. These instruments provide pounding rhythms, booming drum rolls, and driving energy.

The conductor faces the orchestra with his or her back to the audience. Using a baton, the conductor “marks time” so that the musicians play together on the same beat.
Composer Jean Sibelius (Sh-BEL-ee-us) was born in Finland, another country in the northern Europe. As a young man, he settled with his wife next to a beautiful lake in Finland and raised six daughters. Sibelius wrote music for a play about a woman on a sick bed thinking back on better days in her life. Sibelius’s music, “Valse Triste,” means “sad waltz” – but it’s about being both happy and sad. In the story, the sick woman imagines that she is dancing with her long-lost husband. The music revisits happy memories but the situation is still very sad.

Beethoven: Knocking at the Door
Composer Ludwig van Beethoven (LOOD-vig VAHN BAY-toh-ven) was born in Germany – and started playing the piano when he was so small that he stood on the bench to reach the keys. People adored Beethoven and his passionate music that asked big questions and made people sit up and listen. His Fifth Symphony includes a famous musical phrase – short-short-short-LONG – that is said to be Fate knocking at the door. Other musical selections tell specific stories but Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony creates a fresh musical journey for each person who listens to it. Try coming up with your own story!

Smetana: Happy Endings!
Czech composer Bedrich Smetana (SMEH-tah-nah) learned the violin from his father and gave his first piano recital at the age of 6. Another child prodigy! Smetana also loved his homeland very much that he often told the story of its folktales and traditions in his music. Smetana’s opera, “The Bartered Bride,” takes place in a village during the holiday carnival. A girl named Marenka is expected to marry one boy but she loves another boy instead! You can tell from the sound of the music that Smetana is going to give her a happy ending. The music is upbeat and entertaining!

Remember the energy of Mozart’s Overture to “The Marriage of Figaro?” How does Smetana’s overture sound the same? How does it sound different?

Telling a Story with Music
When composers want to tell a story with music, they use several different tools. A few of these tools are melody, rhythm, tempo, and instrumentation.

Melody is the tune we hear, sing or hum when we listen to music. Mozart’s melodies are very easy to recognize and remember. A melody will tell you whether a story is happy, serious, lovey-dovey, or even sometimes kind of sad – as in Bizet’s “Toreador Song” or in Sibelius’s “Valse Triste.”

Rhythm is the pattern of long and short notes in music. The “beat” is the steady pace that makes you clap along. Rhythm is the changing pattern that rests on top of that beat. Rhythm adds energy and drive to the music – and to the story – as in Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony or in Grieg’s “In The Hall of the Mountain King.”

Tempo is the speed of the music. It could be quick, brisk, and playful – or it could be slow and stately. You can get a clue from the tempo as to the type of story being told – as in Mozart’s “Overture to The Marriage of Figaro,” or in Grieg’s “In The Hall of the Mountain King.”

Instrumentation means which musical instrument the composer chooses to carry the music. A trumpet suggests a heroic sound and a violin offers a more heartfelt sound. Sometimes, instruments are picked to represent the voice of a particular character – as in Grieg’s “In the Hall of the Mountain King,” or in Sibelius’s “Valse Triste.”

Another tool is called musical dynamics. These are the instructions on how to play the music. It could get suddenly loud or suddenly soft. It could be slow and strong or fast and light – or anything in between, depending on the story – as in Grieg’s “In the Hall of the Mountain King,” or in Beethoven’s “Fifth Symphony.”
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The **brass** section includes horns, trumpets, trombones, and tuba. Brass instruments are important in the loud, **exciting** parts of the music.

Brace yourself! This is going to get loud!

The **string** section is made up of violins, violas, cellos, and basses. These instruments can sound soft and sweet, or soaring and majestic.

The sweet part always makes me cry!

The **percussion** section is home to drums, chimes, gongs, cymbals, and whistles. These instruments provide pounding rhythms, booming drum rolls, and driving energy.

Let’s get this party started!

The **woodwind** section contains flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons. Woodwinds can carry the melody over both the quietest and the loudest parts of music.

Stand back. I’ve got something to say!
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With Deepest Gratitude