The Snowman

Symphony for the Schools
Education Guide

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Education Assistant, The Phoenix Symphony
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All Phoenix Symphony education and curriculum guides align with state and national standards. When taught in full, this guide fulfills the following Arizona Academic Content Standards for Music and Science, as well as Common Core Math and Reading Standards:

**Arizona Music Standards**
ST1.CO1.PO1: Singing on pitch with an appropriate tone quality  
ST1.CO4.PO1 (2): Creating music to accompany or tell a story  
ST2.CO1.PO4 (K-8): Exploring and analyzing the relationship of music to language arts, visual arts and literature  
ST3.CO1.PO3 (Grades 1-5): Recognizing patterns (AB, ABA, canon and rondo forms)

**Arizona Science Standards**
ST1.CO2.PO3 (3-4): Conduct investigations in life, physical, and Earth and space sciences  
ST1.CO2.PO4 (1-2): Record data from guided investigations in an organized and appropriate format

**Common Core Math Standard**
1.G.1: Distinguish between defining attributes (e.g., triangles are closed and three-sided) versus non-defining attributes (e.g., color, orientation, overall size); build and draw shapes to possess defining attributes

**Common Core Reading Standards**
Key Ideas and Details: 2 (K-2): Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson  
Key Ideas and Details: 3 (K-2): Identify characters, settings, and major events in a story
The Snowman

A book by Raymond Briggs 
Music by Howard Blake

*The Snowman* is a critically acclaimed children’s book by author and illustrator Raymond Briggs. This picture book, completely without words, tells the story of a little boy who builds a snowman that comes to life! The story follows them throughout their magical night and details all of the adventures that they enjoy, from a motorcycle ride to a party with snowmen.

The film *The Snowman* is an animated adaptation of the book. Like the book, it has no dialogue, but only music throughout. The music, which has become very famous over the years, was written by the British composer Howard Blake. The most famous piece of music from the movie score is entitled “Walking in the Air,” and it forms the centerpiece of the film. It is one of Blake’s most famous compositions; it later became very popular as a standalone composition.

Focus on a Composer: 
Howard Blake, O.B.E.

Howard Blake grew up in Sussex, England, where he began singing as a boy soprano at age 11. At age 18, he won a scholarship to study piano and composition at The Royal Academy of Music. While at the Academy, he became interested in film music and, within a few years of graduating, he was recruited to record a solo piano album, to work as a session musician and as a composer and arranger.

The Snowman was written for orchestra and “boy soprano.” But what is a soprano? A soprano is just one of several different voice types. If you’ve ever seen a choir, you might have noticed that not everyone is singing the exact same part. This is because no two voices are exactly same—just like how no two snowflakes are the same! So, people are grouped into four main voice types. There are several things that determine a person’s voice type. Some of the most important elements are a person’s vocal timbre and their ability to sing different pitches (also known as vocal range).
Sing! Sing! Sing!

Musical Terms: Timbre
An instrument or a vocalist’s timbre is simply its unique musical voice or color. It’s how you can tell who is talking to you even if you can’t see them. Each person’s vocal chords are different; the unique shape or length of someone’s vocal chords (along with many other body parts that play a role in talking or singing) give that person their special voice.

Musical Terms: Pitch
All sound requires vibration—quick back-and-forth motion of an object. To illustrate this, take a rubber band, stretch it out, and pluck it. The sound you hear comes from the vibration of the rubber band. But in order to tell sounds apart, we assign them a pitch—how high or low the sound is.

A sound’s pitch is directly related to it’s rate of vibration: the higher the pitch, the fast the vibration; the lower the pitch, the slower the vibration.

Voice Types
Although every person’s voice is different, traditionally, we group singers into four main groups (listed from highest to lowest): Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Because everyone’s voices are different, there are many sub-groups within these categories, but we’ll focus on the four main voice types:

- **Soprano**: typically women, though sometimes young boys sing these parts (they are called “trebles” or boy sopranos, like in *The Snowman*). Sopranos are capable of singing higher than any other voice type.
- **Altos**: the lowest female voice type (with some exceptions).
- **Tenor**: the highest male voice type (again, there are some exceptions).
- **Basses**: the lowest of all voice types, sung by men.

Musical Terms: Range
An instrument’s or a vocalist’s range is the distance between the highest pitch they are capable of singing and the lowest pitch they are capable of singing. Again, just like with timbre, vocal chords are important to someone’s vocal range (see the Science of Sound text box below).

Science of Sound: Vocal Chords
Humans make sound using vibration as well; our vocal chords, or vocal folds, vibrate when we pass air through them. We change the pitch of our voice by either tightening or loosening those vocal chords (which changes their rate of vibration). The picture on the right shows a set of vocal chords which are open, allowing air to pass through. When they close, air is forced between them and they begin to vibrate, creating the sound of the human voice.
Assessment: Vocabulary Review

Instructions: Match the vocabulary words on the left with their definition on the right by filling in the blank with the correct letter.
Teachers: answers are on page 12 of this guide.

____ Pitch
A. How high or how low a sound is

____ Voice type
B. The lowest female voice type

____ Tenor
C. The distance between a singer’s highest pitch and lowest pitch

____ Vibration
D. The highest of all voice types

____ Alto
E. The four main groups of voices

____ Timbre
F. The quick back-and-forth movement of an object

____ Soprano
G. A body part in a person’s throat that vibrates to make the human voice

____ Range
H. The highest male voice

____ Vocal Chords
I. An instrument or a vocalist’s unique musical voice or color

____ Bass
J. The lowest of all voice types
Lesson: Music and Math
“Universal Symmetry”
Grades 1-3

Time:
35-40 minutes

Standards:
Arizona Music Standard
ST3.CO1.PO3 (Grades 1-5): Recognizing patterns (AB, ABA, canon and rondo forms)

Common Core Math Standard
1.G.1: Distinguish between defining attributes (e.g., triangles are closed and three-sided) versus non-defining attributes (e.g., color, orientation, overall size); build and draw shapes to possess defining attributes [symmetry]

Objectives:
TSW relate geometric symmetry to musical symmetry through analysis of musical forms.
TSW experience and understand musical form on both a small and a large scale.

Materials:
• A recording of Robert Schumann’s “Folk Song” from Album for the Young, Op. 68 no. 9 (about 1’30”):
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMoiUHOxdro&feature=BFa&list=PL8333E0452D20DEE5
• Optional: a recording of another piece not in a symmetrical form (most rock/pop music)

Prerequisites:
Students should have had an introduction to symmetry from a geometric perspective. This lesson would also work well as an introduction to musical form and to reinforce concepts dealing with symmetry.

Procedure:
Review
Begin by reviewing qualities that make an object symmetrical, including an ability to fold said object in half and an axis of symmetry. Explain that symmetry occurs not only with shapes, but in other subjects as well, including music (if you choose, you can offer examples like palindromes, art, nature, architecture, etc.).

Development
Introduce the idea of “form” in music: a piece of music can be divided into sections that have specific characteristics. These sections can be short or long in length. The defining characteristics could be anything: one section might sound happy and another section might sound sad; one section might be slow while another is fast; or, it might be that one section uses certain words while another section uses different words. We often label the sections with letter names, such as A or B, for simplicity.

To illustrate this on a small scale, have the students sing “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” Explain that the first two lines (“Twinkle, twinkle, little star; How I wonder what you are”) create the first section, which we will call the “A” section, while the next two lines (“Up above the world so high; like a diamond in the sky”) are the second section, which we will call “B.” Then, the first section comes back to end the song. The sections are different in two ways: the words are different, and the tune of each section is different. Write “ABA” on the board and explain that this is the form of the song (for a complete diagram of “Twinkle, Twinkle,” see the next page).
Lesson: Music and Math
“Universal Symmetry”
(continued)

“Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” Form Diagram

A     B     A

“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,         “Up above the world so high,          “Twinkle, twinkle, little star
How I wonder what you are.”           Like a diamond in the sky.”          How I wonder what you are.”

Note that an ABA form is symmetrical, in that there are two identical parts (the A sections) on either side of an axis of symmetry (the B section). If there is time, suggest other musical forms that could be considered symmetrical (ABABA, ABCBA, etc.).

Guided Practice
Next, have the students recognize form on their own. Explain that the next piece that you’ll be analyzing has longer sections, but that they will still be labeled A and B. Ask students to listen for big changes in the music, then play Schumann’s “Folk Song” once through. Ask students to raise their hands when they hear a big change in the music. Help them recognize that the first section returns at the end of the piece, and that this song is in ABA form, and is thus symmetrical. To reinforce this, stop the music after the A section (around 30 seconds in) and after the B section (around one minute in). You can compare the first and third sections back to back for clarity’s sake. If you like, use the provided Form Diagram on the next page (page 9).

Differentiated Instruction

• Do another song with sections that are not symmetrical (examples include most pop or rock songs, or even pieces like the national anthem). Identify the main sections as a group, then write the non-symmetrical form on the board (it might be something like ABABC or ABAC). Compare the symmetrical forms to the non-symmetrical forms on the board.

• Ask students to think of other songs that could be considered symmetrical. Listen to the songs as a group, chart their form, and test to see if they are symmetrical or not.

Conclusion
Lead students back to the beginning of the lesson by asking them to define symmetry as it pertains to shapes. Use the criteria they provide to explain how music can be symmetrical as well (repeat that a middle section could be considered an axis of symmetry, etc.).

Notes
Some students will attempt to test the symmetry of the form letters (ABA) as compared to the music they represent. Reiterate that the letters are only symbols to represent a section of music, and that you are not testing vertical symmetry of the letters.
### Form Diagram Worksheet

**Robert Schumann’s “Folk Song” from *Album for the Young*, Op. 68 no. 9**

Use the following words to describe the changes in music from section to section, or make up your own:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Sad</th>
<th>Fast</th>
<th>Slow</th>
<th>Many notes</th>
<th>Few notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Section A</strong> Describe:</th>
<th><strong>Section B</strong> Describe what changed:</th>
<th><strong>Section A</strong> Describe:</th>
</tr>
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Lesson: Music and Science
“Vocal Range Discovery”
Grades K-4

Time:
One or two full class periods

Standards:
Arizona Music Standards
ST1.CO1.PO1: Singing on pitch with an appropriate tone quality

Arizona Science Standards
ST1.CO2.PO3 (3-4): Conduct investigations in life, physical, and Earth and space sciences
ST1.CO2.PO4 (1-2): Record data from guided investigations in an organized and appropriate format

Objectives:
TSW learn to define their vocal range and the range of others.
TSW will collect data in an organized and systematic manner.
TSW chart out various vocal ranges and compare and contrast them.

Materials:
Piano or keyboard; worksheet (see page 11)

Prerequisites and Suggestions:
This activity would work well in a music classroom to reinforce scientific data collection. The teacher should have a knowledge of the location of middle C (C4) on a piano or keyboard. Knowledge of the note-octave classification system (A4, A5) is a plus. You do not need to be a music expert, however, to perform this activity; if you need help, ask your music teacher to clarify.

Procedure:
To begin, define vocal range for the students: vocal range is the distance between the highest note and lowest note that someone can sing, and it is one of the important factors in finding someone’s voice type. Demonstrate how to find someone’s vocal range through the following steps:

- Start by finding the highest note in the subject’s range. Begin on a comfortable note (probably C4, or middle C, for most students this age), then go up using ONLY the white notes on the piano (no black notes for simplicity’s sake). If the subject can sing the note comfortably, it is in their vocal range; mark it down with an ‘X’ on the chart provided on page 11.
- Continue going up, repeating the process. The top of the subject’s range is the highest note they can sing comfortably.
- Repeat the process, starting on middle C, but going down. The bottom of their range is the lowest note they can sing comfortably.

Conclusion
As a group, write the total number of people in the class that can sing each note on the board. See who can sing the lowest and who can sing the highest. Try this activity at different times (morning/night, beginning of the year/end of the year) to see how much everyone’s voices vary.
Lesson: Music and Science
“Vocal Range Discovery”
Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender (M/F)</th>
<th>G2</th>
<th>A2</th>
<th>B2</th>
<th>C3</th>
<th>D3</th>
<th>E3</th>
<th>F3</th>
<th>G3</th>
<th>A3</th>
<th>B3</th>
<th>C4</th>
<th>D4</th>
<th>E4</th>
<th>F4</th>
<th>G4</th>
<th>A4</th>
<th>B4</th>
<th>C5</th>
<th>D5</th>
<th>E5</th>
<th>F5</th>
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Octave 2: c2 d2 e2 f2 g2 a2 b2 c3
d3 e3 f3 g3 a3 b3 c4 d4 e4 f4 g4 a4 b4 c5 d5 e5 f5 g5 a5 b5 c6
Lesson: Music and Language Arts
“Musical Storytelling”
Grades K-2

Time:
One full class period

Standards:
Arizona Music Standards
ST1.CO4.PO1 (2): Creating music to accompany or tell a story
ST2.CO1.PO4 (K-8): Exploring and analyzing the relationship of music to language arts, visual arts and literature

Common Core Reading Standards
Key Ideas and Details: 2 (K-2): Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson
Key Ideas and Details: 3 (K-2): Identify characters, settings, and major events in a story

Materials:
Several story books (perhaps recently studied or seasonally-appropriate); Classroom instruments (Orff instruments, guitars, percussion instruments, etc.); found instruments (anything that makes sound, like cups, paper, the floor, keys, bottles, etc.); a video of Walt Disney’s Peter and the Wolf, composed by Prokofiev: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr25umYkxe4

Objectives:
TSW identify the mood(s), main idea, point of view, major events and characters of a story.
TSW discover how music can be read as a text.
TSW compose musical accompaniment to a story using sounds that represent important elements of that story.

Prerequisites:
Familiarity with story elements or a particular story is a plus.

Procedure:
Review
Begin by reviewing the concepts listed above in a well-known story or fable. As a class, identify the characters, main idea, point of view, major events, and any time there is a change in the overall mood in the story.

Development
Explain that, just like a story, music has many of the same important elements: it can have a main idea, different characters or moods, different points of view, and major events. Music even has the equivalent of an author, called a composer. Illustrate this by playing Peter and the Wolf by Prokofiev and drawing the students’ attention to the following music elements:

- Each character in the story has its own representative theme music (the bird is represented by the flute; the duck by the oboe; the cat by the clarinet; the grandpa by the bassoon; Peter by the strings; and the wolf by the French horns).
Lesson: Music and Language Arts
“Musical Storytelling”
(continued)

- Often, when several characters are together in a scene, the music transitions back and forth quickly between the two themes, or even blends those themes, much like a conversation and dialogue in a story.

- Changes in the scene or mood are reflected in the new musical accompaniment (like when the animals enter the forest or when the wolf chases the duck through the lake).

- Some events have sound effects that accompany the music (like the crying when the wolf seemingly eats Sonja the duck or when Peter shoots his pop gun). In these ways, music is accomplishing all of the same things that a story text does.

Guided Practice
Students will be composing their own soundtrack by creating a musical text to accompany their story. Split the class into groups of 5 or 6 and assign each their own story. Have the group identify the criteria listed above; facilitate discussion and identification of those elements as necessary.

One person in their group will read the story while the other students provide the music and sound effects. Students should assign classroom instruments (guitars, percussion, Orff instruments) or found instruments (crumpled paper, pencils on a desk, etc.) creatively to the elements of the story (e.g., an evil character is represented by a low drum or scary sound; a change in point of view is indicated by a loud clap; a happy mood is assigned to the glockenspiel; the main idea of the story might be represented by a clap each time it is alluded to in the text). The more creative, the better.

Conclusion
Each class should present their “musical” to the rest of the class. As a class, discuss the characters, events and moods that each group addressed, as well as the creativity they used in assigning instruments or sounds.
### Assessment Answer Key

Instructions: Match the vocabulary words on the left with their definition on the right by filling in the blank with the correct letter.

Teachers: answers are on page 12 of this guide.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td><strong>Pitch</strong></td>
<td>A. How high or how low a sound is</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td><strong>Voice type</strong></td>
<td>B. The lowest female voice type</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td><strong>Tenor</strong></td>
<td>C. The distance between a singer’s highest pitch and lowest pitch</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td><strong>Vibration</strong></td>
<td>D. The highest of all voice types</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td><strong>Alto</strong></td>
<td>E. The four main groups of voices</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td><strong>Timbre</strong></td>
<td>F. The quick back-and-forth movement of an object</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td><strong>Soprano</strong></td>
<td>G. A body part in a person’s throat that vibrates to make the human voice</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>H. The highest male voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td><strong>Vocal Chords</strong></td>
<td>I. An instrument or a vocalist’s unique musical voice or color</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td><strong>Bass:</strong></td>
<td>J. The lowest of all voice types</td>
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