

# BSO FAMILY CONCERTS

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2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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## 2022 Boston Symphony Orchestra Family Concert Family Listening Guide

*So Now What: A Musical Look at*

*Anticipation, Expectation, and a New Certainty*

*Towards the Fulfillment of Our Promise*

### Thomas Wilkins

*Artistic Advisor for Education and Community Engagement and*

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Thank you to the educators who helped create our Youth and Family Concerts Resources:

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We hope these materials are helpful in creating a fun and meaningful concert experience for your family. We also hope that your Family Concert experience is the start (or continuation) of a long-term relationship with the BSO and orchestral music!

Please let us know what you enjoy, find useful, and would like more of next time. We encourage you to send your comments to [education@bso.org](mailto:education@bso.org).

With appreciation,

The Boston Symphony Orchestra's Educators Advisory Council and  
The Education and Community Engagement Department

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2021/22 YOUTH & FAMILY CONCERTS SPONSOR

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Explore Symphony Hall and the Concert Theme p. 4

Explore Your Musical History p. 5

### Background Information and Listening Guides

The following program includes a guide to help you anticipate the **louder** and quieter parts of the music you will hear. Read the key for each piece from left to right.

The symbol  indicates a quieter part; the symbol  indicates a louder part.

<b>Peter BOYER</b>	<i>Silver Fanfare</i>	p. 6
<b>GROFÉ</b>	Sunrise, from the <i>Grand Canyon Suite</i>	p. 7
<b>BRITTEN</b>	Storm, from Four Sea Interludes from <i>Peter Grimes</i>	p. 9
<b>MASCAGNI</b>	Intermezzo, from <i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i>	p. 11
<b>SCHUMAN</b>	Chester, from <i>New England Triptych</i>	p. 13
<b>PRICE</b>	Juba Dance, from Symphony No. 1	p. 15
<b>LISZT</b>	<i>Les Préludes</i> , Symphonic poem	p. 17

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INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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2021/22 YOUTH & FAMILY CONCERTS SPONSOR

## EXPLORE SYMPHONY HALL

We encourage families to visit the [Boston Symphony Orchestra website](#) to learn interesting facts about the history and unique design of Symphony Hall.

## EXPLORE THE THEME

As a family, you may like to talk about the words and ideas in this concert’s title. **Some possible conversation starters:**

**ANTICIPATION:** When you look forward to something that is going to happen in the future.

**When have you felt anticipation?** How many **synonyms** can you think of for the word “anticipate”? (Synonyms are words that have the same or almost the same meaning.)

How many **antonyms** can you think of for the word “anticipate”? (Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings.)

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BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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**EXPECTATION:** When you feel eager for something specific to happen.

**When have you experienced expectation about something that’s going to happen?**

How many **synonyms** can you think of for the word “expectation”?

How many **antonyms** can you think of for the word “expectation”?

**PROMISE:** Promise is a word with many jobs. It can be a noun or a verb (action word).

For the concert, Maestro Wilkins uses “promise” as a noun, meaning **the potential for positive things that lie ahead in the future.**

Can you think of other kinds of “promises”?

## EXPLORE YOUR MUSICAL HISTORY!

Before or after the concert, discuss how music has been important to members of your family. **Some possible conversation starters:**

- How is music important to you?
- What role has music played in your family, both now and in the past?
- What family musical traditions do you talk about or carry on today?

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INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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## *Silver Fanfare*

by Peter Boyer (b. 1970)



American composer **Peter Boyer** was born in Providence, Rhode Island, and has written for many major orchestras. In 2010, the Boston Pops Orchestra and conductor Keith Lockhart commissioned Boyer's *The Dream Lives On: A Portrait of the Kennedy Brothers* as part of their 125th anniversary season. *Silver Fanfare* is a powerful and rousing concert opener. It is popular for special occasions, such as season-opening concerts by the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra (led by conductor Thomas Wilkins!) and the Boston Pops. The “President’s Own” U.S. Marine Band performed it on tour – you can watch this version (use the second link in the “Listen” section below). Fanfares mark the beginning of something, and Boyer originally wrote the *Silver Fanfare* as the first movement of a larger piece to commemorate the Pacific Symphony’s 25th (or “silver”) anniversary.

### Things to listen and look for:

This is a fast and dramatic piece, which is sometimes played with fireworks on the Fourth of July. It begins **loud** ... then gets softer and playful ... and ends **loud** again!

Listen for **percussion**, then **brass**, then **woodwinds**. When can you hear **bells**?

Use the links below to listen to (and watch different orchestras playing) *Silver Fanfare*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUMmPdFsauQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCymaLhQGaE>

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INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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## Sunrise, from the *Grand Canyon Suite*

by Ferde Grofé (1892-1972)



**Ferde Grofé** (1892-1972) was born in New York City and studied music in Germany as a child, learning to play several instruments. He left home as a teenager and did odd jobs before earning his living solely through music, playing with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and with cabaret bands as well as on movie sets. Grofé’s career encompassed virtually every aspect of musical life. He performed and recorded as a pianist, conducted, and even formed his own orchestra. He was also active as a film composer in Hollywood and was nominated for an Academy Award. Walt Disney made a live-action documentary film of the Grand Canyon using music from Grofé’s *Grand Canyon Suite*. Due to its use by Disney, in cartoons, and in television commercials, the suite’s “On the Trail” movement became familiar to generations of Americans.

The *Grand Canyon Suite* illustrates five “views” of the canyon in five movements: “Sunrise” (the piece you will hear in this concert), “The Painted Desert,” “On the Trail,” “Sunset,” and “Cloudburst.”

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INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



ARBELLA  
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## Things to listen and look for:

Have you ever gotten up very early in the morning, and watched and listened to the world “waking up”? That’s what this music is about – only in a very specific place: the Grand Canyon!

The piece starts out slow and quiet...

And **gradually gets louder**...

Can you hear “birds”? Can you hear “crickets”?

What images or pictures do you imagine as you listen to the music?

Between about 4 minutes into the piece and the end, the music gets increasingly **loud and fast** – ending *fortissimo* (**VERY LOUD**).

What do you think is happening at the Grand Canyon in the last section of this song, when the music becomes faster and very loud?

## Listen

Use this [link](#) to listen to “Sunrise” (and if you like, other parts of the *Grand Canyon Suite*).

# BSO FAMILY CONCERTS

INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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## Storm, from Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes* by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)



Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) graduated from the Royal College of Music when he was only 19. In 1944, BAI Music Director Serge Koussevitzky commissioned him to write his opera *Peter Grimes*, which was a huge success and established him as one of England's most important composers. *Peter Grimes* takes place on the coast of Suffolk, England, where fishermen and villagers are exposed to the challenges of the seafaring way of life. "Storm" from the Four Sea Interludes reminds us of the destruction that Nature can sometimes unleash.

### Things to listen and look for:

This piece begins **loud** – Listen for the strong **drumbeats**!

Listen for the **piccolo** and **flute** playing high notes.

Listen for the **cymbals**!

What part of the storm "story" do you think the **drum** is telling?

The **cymbals**? The **piccolo** and **flute**?

The **string instruments**? The **brass instruments**?

# BSO FAMILY CONCERTS

INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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About halfway through, the music gets soft and **quiet** – What part of the storm is this?

Then at the end, it gets very **loud** again. What do you imagine is happening?

## Listen

Click [here](#) to listen to this music while looking at a painting of a storm scene.

Click [here](#) to see the American Youth Symphony performing this piece.

# BSO FAMILY CONCERTS

INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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## Intermezzo from *Cavalleria rusticana*

by Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945)



Despite fame during his lifetime, Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945) is today known outside of Italy for only one piece, his one-act opera *Cavalleria rusticana* (“Rustic Chivalry”), which is still performed frequently throughout the world. This piece is an example of “verismo” opera, that is, opera that draws on real life and “ordinary” people for its source material, rather than larger-than-life historical or legendary figures and stories. *Cavalleria rusticana* tells the story of a Sicilian love triangle among Turiddu, Lola, and Alfio. At the end of the opera, Turiddu and Alfio are preparing for a duel to the death. The famous Intermezzo describes the tranquil scene of the village square, empty of people, contrasting sharply with the conflict and violence of the scenes before and after.

### Summary, and things to listen and look for:

This piece is a slow one, describing a peaceful, calm scene. It is fairly quiet at the beginning, gets **louder** about half-way through, then gets quiet again at the end.

Notice how the **string instruments** start off, then have a “conversation” with the **oboe’s** high notes.

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INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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After that, listen and watch for the **harp** (you can really notice the **harp** in the second YouTube video below!).

On the final note, can you hear the **piccolo**?

In the first YouTube video below, can you see how the conductor's arm and hand movements indicate when the music will be **loud**, and when it will be *softer* or quieter?

## Listen

Click [here](#) for a great view of a conductor leading an orchestra in playing this piece.

Click [here](#) for more close-ups of different orchestra members playing this piece, including the **harpist**.

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INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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## “Chester” from *New England Triptych*

by William Schuman (1910-1992)



William Schuman was born and raised in New York City. Among his many honors included the first Pulitzer Prize for Music as well as becoming president of both the Juilliard School of Music and, later, Lincoln Center. He composed for orchestra, chorus, and concert band, completing eight symphonies as well as a violin concerto, choral music, ballet music, and film scores.

*New England Triptych* is a three-movement work incorporating the melodies of William Billings, often regarded as America’s first composer. “Chester” became Billings’ most popular song and was frequently sung by soldiers during the American Revolution. Like many songs from the time, the title “Chester” was simply named for an arbitrary town and had nothing to do with the subject of the song. The song told the story of how American soldiers responded in battle to British aggression.

### Things to listen and look for:

This piece begins soft and slow... then gets **louder**.

You may notice that the **tempo** gets faster at some point.

# BSO FAMILY CONCERTS

INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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Listen for the **cymbal**... and for **drumrolls**.

Can you hear some instruments echoing or repeating musical patterns that other instruments have played before?

At some point close to the end, you may notice that the music gets quieter again...

then **louder**, with a *crescendo* to a **loud** and dramatic ending!

## Listen

Click [here](#) to see a high school choir performing William Billings' "Chester."

Click [here](#) to listen to a version of William Schuman's "Chester."

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INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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## Symphony No. 1 in E minor: III. Juba Dance

by Florence Price (1887-1953)



Florence Price was the first African American woman to have a composition played by a major orchestra. She was a classical composer, pianist, organist, and music teacher. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, she studied music at New England Conservatory in Boston at age 16. She moved to Chicago with her family in 1927 as part of the Great Migration. Symphony No. 1 was premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933, as part of the World Fair. This is a big deal in itself, but it is made even more important because Price is the first African American woman composer who had classical music performed by a major symphony orchestra.

Juba Dance is the 3rd movement of the symphony. Juba is a musical tradition where body percussion is used to accompany singing and dancing. It is named from social dances of enslaved West African people who were forced to work on plantations. Plantation owners were afraid that enslaved people were sharing secret codes in the rhythm of their drums, so they banned instruments!

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INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



ARBELLA  
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2021/22 YOUTH & FAMILY CONCERTS SPONSOR

## Summary, and things to listen and look for:

This is a fast piece, with lots of changes in dynamics (loudness and quietness). It starts out quiet, then gets **loud**...

Quiet, then **loud** again...

Quiet, then **loud**...

And once more, quiet, then **LOUD!**

Listen for the *sl—i—ding* **trombone**.

What other instruments or musical patterns help to create a sense of **movement** in this “dance song”?

Listen for the **percussion** at the end of the piece: **drums**, then a final **cymbal CRASH!**

## Listen (and watch)

You can watch and listen to a version of this piece with a dance performance [here](#).

You can watch and hear a university orchestra perform this piece [here](#).

# BSO FAMILY CONCERTS

INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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## *Les Préludes, Symphonic poem*

by Franz Liszt (1811-1886)



The Hungarian composer Franz Liszt (1811-1886) was known as the best, showiest, most virtuosic pianist of his time, and perhaps of all time. He was very well-traveled and well-connected: he counted among his friends the composers Hector Berlioz, Frédéric Chopin, Clara and Robert Schumann, Camille Saint-Saëns, and many others. He eventually became father-in-law to the opera composer Richard Wagner, who married Liszt's daughter Cosima. Outside of music, Liszt was also acquainted with many writers and artists and members of the nobility.

Liszt wrote music mostly for his own instrument, the piano. Like many Romantic composers, Liszt based many of his own original works on ideas and characters from literature, like William Shakespeare's Hamlet and the epic poem *Commedia* by Dante Alighieri, calling these works "symphonic poems." *Les Préludes* was the first musical piece by Liszt or any other composer that was called a "symphonic poem." The poetic connection is reflected in the piece's variety of moods, from passionate and lyrical to stormy. Liszt was an innovator in creating very different moods using the same basic musical material.

### Things to listen and look for:

What "moods" does the music express? At the beginning? In the middle? At the end?

# BSO FAMILY CONCERTS

INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION

2021–2022 SEASON

BSO EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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This piece begins slow and quiet, then gradually **gets louder**.

Listen for **strings** and **flutes** having a “conversation” together!

Then, listen for **brass** and **strings** having a **louder “conversation.”**

Then, it gets softer again...

Listen for the **harp**.

Which instruments do the **oboes** have a “conversation” with?

Next, the music gets faster, and **louder** ...

then softer and slower again...

Again, **louder** and faster.

Listen for **cymbals**!

Which instruments play along with the **drumbeats**?

The piece ends slow and **loud**.

## Listen

Use the links below to listen to (and watch different orchestras playing) *Les Préludes*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jb2bkVQwtBs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM47hhXrJho>