

Topeka Symphony
2025 School Day Concert
Race to the Symphony

Teacher Guide

Target Audience: 4th Grade

Concert Length: ~45 minutes

Theme: Racing, Speed, and the Power of Music

Concert Overview

It's lights out and away we go—to the symphony! Grand Prix racing champions **Mario Spaghetti-Andretti** and **Sir Lightning McHamilton** are your hosts for this high-speed musical adventure. Together, they introduce audiences to music that celebrates speed, motion, and victory — from **Formula 1** and **Top Gun** to **Beethoven, Bizet, and Tchaikovsky**.

Students will experience how **tempo, rhythm, and dynamics** make music *move* — just like race cars zooming around a track!

Encourage students to wear their favorite team colors and cheer on the “racers” as they journey through a symphonic Grand Prix.

Learning Goals

By the end of this concert experience, students will be able to:

- Identify how composers use **tempo, rhythm, and dynamics** to create energy and excitement.
 - Recognize famous musical themes and connect them to their cultural or historical contexts.
 - Describe how music can tell a story or express motion (like racing!).
 - Appreciate the instruments and teamwork of a symphony orchestra.
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The Music Lineup & Listening Connections

<u>Piece</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Musical Focus</u>	<u>Connection to Racing Theme</u>
Overture from <i>Carmen</i>	Georges Bizet	Fast tempos, drama, and excitement	Played at every race while the winners celebrate!
Formula 1 Theme	Brian Tyler	Brass fanfares, modern rhythms	The <i>official</i> sound of Grand Prix racing—high-octane and cinematic.
The Final Countdown	Europe (arr. Mortimer)	Repetition, rhythm	An anthem of anticipation and triumph.
Symphony No. 5, Movement 1	Ludwig van Beethoven	Famous “short-short-short-long” rhythm	Intense drive and focus—like a racer’s determination.
William Tell Overture (Finale)	Gioachino Rossini	Accelerating tempo	Famously used in racing and chase scenes!
Chariots of Fire	Vangelis / arr. Ayres	Slow build, emotional theme	The glory of victory and persistence.
1812 Overture (Finale)	Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky	Dynamics, celebration	A musical “finish line” explosion!
Route 66	Bobby Troup	Jazz rhythm, swing feel	The open road—music for cruising! Used in Pixar’s <i>Cars</i> !

<u>Piece</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Musical Focus</u>	<u>Connection to Racing Theme</u>
Top Gun Anthem	Harold Faltermeyer	Orchestra blend	Heroic, soaring sound of flight and speed.
Super Mario Bros. Theme	Koji Kondo / arr. Tyler Lona	Playful rhythm and melody	A fun nod to video-game racing worlds!

Key Musical Concepts

<u>Concept</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Example in Concert</u>
Tempo	The speed of the music	Compare <i>Chariots of Fire</i> (slow) vs. <i>William Tell Overture</i> (fast)
Dynamics	How loud or soft the music is	<i>1812 Overture</i> has sudden loud bursts like fireworks
Rhythm	Patterns of beats in time	<i>Beethoven's 5th</i> has a famous rhythmic pattern
Melody	A tune you can hum	<i>Super Mario Bros.</i> theme is instantly recognizable
Orchestration	How instruments are used together	<i>Formula 1 Theme</i> mixes brass and percussion for power

YouTube Recordings

Bizet – Carmen Overture

Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddYhQoFxs4Y>

Tyler – Formula 1 Theme

Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AYy-BcjRXg>

Beethoven – Symphony No. 5 – Movement 1

Listen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7AQeN-x_Xs

Rossini – William Tell Overture – Finale

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

Tchaikovsky – 1812 Overture – Finale

Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RN6g5reFmg>

Ayres – Chariots of Fire

Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pQIRZZ9NMs>

Pre-Concert Classroom Activities

1. Warm-Up: Feel the Speed

- Have students move around the room in slow motion, then fast motion, matching the speed of the music being played.
- Play excerpts of *Chariots of Fire* and *William Tell Overture* and ask: “Which music feels like slow motion? Which feels like racing?”

2. Sound of Victory

- Ask: “What does *winning* sound like?”
- Students brainstorm musical ideas: loud/soft, high/low, fast/slow.
- Listen to *1812 Overture* and identify how Tchaikovsky creates a celebration with sound.

3. Meet the Orchestra Pit Crew

- Discuss the orchestra as a *racing team* — strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion.
- Each “team” contributes a different kind of power:
 - Conductor = team captain
 - Strings = speed
 - Brass = power
 - Woodwinds = agility
 - Percussion = energy

4. Composer Trading Cards

- Assign small groups a composer (Beethoven, Bizet, Tchaikovsky, etc.)
 - Students create “racing cards” with:
 - Name, Country, Time Period
 - Famous piece (e.g., *Beethoven’s 5th*)
 - “Top Speed” (tempo), “Horsepower” (energy), “Style” (classical, romantic, etc.)
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During the Concert

Encourage students to:

- Watch how the conductor’s motions control the orchestra’s tempo (like a race flag!).
- Listen for “**gear shifts**” — when the music suddenly changes speed or energy.
- Notice **which instruments lead** the “race” at different times.

Concert Behavior Reminder:

Just like a race track, the symphony hall has rules!

- Quiet during the music
 - Clap when the conductor turns around
 - Celebrate respectfully — no “engine revving” until the end!
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Vocabulary Review

Word Definition

Overture An opening piece that sets the mood for what follows

Orchestra A large group of musicians playing string, wind, brass, and percussion instruments

Conductor The person who leads the orchestra

Dynamics How loud or soft music is played

Tempo The speed of the music

Melody The main tune or theme

Harmony Notes played together to support the melody

Rhythm The pattern of beats or movement in time

Curriculum Connections

Music: Tempo, dynamics, orchestral instruments, form

Science: Sound waves, vibrations, energy

Social Studies: Historical composers, geography of Europe

Language Arts: Descriptive writing about sound and movement

Art: Visual expression of rhythm and motion

Teacher Tip

Encourage students to **listen like racers** — always alert, ready for changes in pace, and aware of teamwork! The symphony is a thrilling race where everyone wins by discovering how music moves us.

Post-Concert Reflection

Discussion Questions:

1. Which piece felt the fastest?
2. Which piece sounded the most like a race or chase scene?
3. What did you notice about how the orchestra made loud or exciting moments?
4. How does teamwork in an orchestra compare to teamwork on a racing team?

Creative Extension Ideas:

- **Compose a “Race Song”:** Use classroom instruments or body percussion.
- **Draw the Music:** Create racing-inspired art while listening to one of the pieces again.
- **Write a Soundtrack Review:** “If I were the conductor, I’d make the race sound like...”

Build Your Composer Trading Card

Assign each student a composer. Use the worksheet below to fill out their “stats.”

Worksheet 1: Composer Trading Card

Front Side – Draw or Glue Composer Picture

Composer Name: _____

Country: _____

Time Period: _____

Famous Piece: _____

Tempo Power: (Fast ⚡ / Slow zzz / Mixed 🎵) _____

Music Style: _____

Fun Fact: _____

Back Side – Racing Stats

Trait

My Composer’s “Race Car” Style

















Horsepower (Energy): Low Medium High



Tires (Instruments Used): _____

Finish Line Feeling (Mood): _____

Worksheet 2: Concert Listening Log

Name: _____ Date: _____

Piece Title	Composer	Tempo How Fast?	Dynamics How Loud?	What Did It Make You Imagine?
		 	 	
		 	 	
		 	 	
		 	 	

(Use the turtle  for slow and the racecar  for fast!)

Worksheet 3: Draw the Music

Choose one piece from the concert and draw what it makes you see or feel!

Think about:

- Does it sound like a race? A storm? A celebration?
- Which instruments might be “racing” each other?
- What colors match the sounds?

Title of the Piece: _____

Composer: _____

(Draw your scene below!)

Worksheet 4: Post-Concert Reflection

Name: _____

1. My favorite piece from the concert was: _____
Because it made me feel _____.
 2. One thing I learned about the orchestra is: _____.
 3. The music that sounded fastest was: _____.
 4. I noticed the conductor used _____ to make the orchestra go faster or slower.
 5. If I could write a racing song, it would sound like: _____.
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