

STL SYMPHONY

DAVID ROBERTSON | MUSIC DIRECTOR



AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR GRADES 6-12 PRESENTED BY THE
ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION



A special invitation for teachers and student writers

Enter your best writers in **Express the Music**, now in its 21st year of promoting stories and poems from public, private, and parochial school students throughout the region. The 2017 junior division winner was a 7th grader from St. Margaret Mary Alacocque in Mehlville. An 11th grader from Parkway South High School won first place in the senior division. In March 2017, 53 finalists were publicly honored before more than 1000 cheering people at Powell Hall.

Over the years, hundreds of teachers and thousands of grade 6-12 students from the bi-state region met this curricular challenge. We know your students can as well.

Express the Music is an opportunity for writing across disciplines, particularly English language arts, music and social studies.

How it works

Students listen, write, edit, share—the teacher chooses.

Guided by you, students listen to this year’s musical selection and respond to its impact and structure in creative writing projects—prose or poetry. You can find several ways to integrate this project with your school’s curriculum.

Then, you choose **up to seven** students’ compositions per class and enter them in the 2018 Express the Music contest. Seven compositions per class includes both prose and poetry in a mix you decide—Junior Division (Grades 6-8), Senior Division (Grades 9-12).

This year’s music selection is “Overture to The School for Scandal,” Op. 5, by American composer Samuel Barber. Information about this selection—the composer, the work, links with history—is at the end of this document.

Where to find the music

1. Your school or local library
2. Google Search or on YouTube.com, you can click on performances by
 - **The Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by Leonard Slatkin
 - **The New York Philharmonic Orchestra**, conducted by Victor De Sabata
 - **The Detroit Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by Neemi Järvi
3. Your school’s music teacher.

Play the musical selection for the students on good quality equipment and encourage them to share whatever thoughts come to their minds. What feelings, mental images and memories does the music evoke? Encourage students to make their own unique interpretations. List their responses for the class. The music is a way to spark their creativity, rather than something to be analyzed.

How to enter

Submit up to seven (7) entries per class per participating teacher. If you have more than one class, seven entries may be submitted from each class.

Entries must be word-processed, double-spaced on 8.5” x 11” white paper, one side only. Type must be black in 10 pt. or larger font with page margins of 1” on all sides with no illustrations or embellishments. For entries longer than one page, staple once.

Entries must be limited to the following lengths: Junior Division (Grades 6-8): 400 words, Senior Division (Grades 9-12): 600 words.

Do not submit previously published entries or works entered in other competitions. Entries will remain the property of Express the Music.

How to prepare an entry

- Assign a unique Student ID Number to each entry. The student's name **must not appear** on the submitted composition, but place the ID number on the top right corner of each page.
- Complete an **Identification Card** for each student. Paper clip the card to each entry. Blank ID cards are found at the end of these instructions. Do not staple Identification Cards to entries and please do not fold pages.
- On the **Identification Card** please confirm unusual spellings and, where necessary, provide a phonetic pronunciation of the student's name.
- Complete the 2018 **Inventory Sheet**. List all entries (up to 7) from your class on the Inventory Sheet. If you have more than one class, please use a separate Inventory Sheet for each class. 2018 Inventory Sheets are found at the end of these instructions.

Mailing instructions

In a 9" x 12" envelope, enclose a) the **student compositions**, b) with their **Identification Cards** attached, and c) the **Inventory Sheet**

The return address must include the teacher's name, school name, school district and school address.

ENTRIES MUST BE MAILED AND POSTMARKED BY JANUARY 19, 2018. Express the Music will notify all finalists through their teachers in late February.

Mailing Address

Express the Music
Symphony Volunteer Association
718 North Grand Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63103

Questions? Call 314-286-4190 or email expressthemusic@slo.org.

Judging

Judges will not be given the name, grade level, or school of the writer. Poems and prose entries will be judged separately. Each entry goes through preliminary judging first. Finalists selected by the preliminary judging panel will then be evaluated by a separate, final-judging panel of expert writers and editors.

Our judges will rate the entries on four dimensions: 1) an engaging and clear voice, 2) responsiveness to the musical selection, 3) a structure that keeps readers involved, and 4) good writing mechanics that support the voice—the writer's style or the composition's point of view.

Awards and prizes

Finalists will receive certificates and other gifts in a public ceremony at Powell Hall on Sunday, March 4, 2018. All finalists' entries will be compiled and published in the 2018 Express the Music book.

Cash prizes for the top three entries in each category—prose and poetry—will be awarded:

Junior Division (Grades 6-8):

1st place for Prose: \$200 / for Poetry: \$200

2nd place for Prose: \$100 / for Poetry: \$100

3rd place for Prose: \$75 / for Poetry: \$75

Senior Division (Grades 9-12):

1st place for Prose: \$400 / for Poetry: \$400

2nd place for Prose: \$200 / for Poetry: \$200

3rd place for Prose: \$100 / for Poetry: \$100

Tips for Teachers

- Use Express the Music for authentic interdisciplinary collaboration. You might want to have students listen to the piece and start their writing in music class, then revise and edit in English class.
- There should be some indication that the music has influenced the written piece. Allow enough time for students to listen to the music more than once to explore the emotions and thoughts that form in their minds. They'll become more familiar and comfortable with it through repeated listening.
- Most teachers who have produced multiple winners have dedicated specific class time to this project.
- Entries will be reproduced "as is." Help students edit carefully for mechanics such as spelling, grammar, and spacing on the page.
- Encourage students to write "from the heart" rather than to fit a rubric.
- Entries must be limited to the following lengths: Junior Division (Grades 6-8): 400 words, Senior Division (Grades 9-12): 600 words.
- Set your usual high expectations. Encourage students to write expressively but refine their writing with your input and editing. Feedback on drafts from friends is usually helpful as well. The judges are looking for good creative writing that is influenced by the musical selection's impact on listeners.

Tips for Writers

- Listen to the music several times and sense the feelings. Write from your own experience, using images that evoke feelings like those.
- Some prose writers make a rough outline or storyboard before they start. Good writing has "good bones."
- If you're writing a poem, and want to focus on one musical effect, ask yourself: What mood dominates the musical experience you are having for the whole piece? You can concentrate the poem on that, or you can create a longer, more narrative poem in response to the changes in the music.
- If a story has human characters, create a brief biographical description of each one early, as you draft your story.
- Go for clarity, using the voice you chose for this project. Cutting out or altering text that distracts or confuses readers focuses the writing and promotes clarity.

The School for Scandal and its times

England in the 1770s was a country in transition, moving from an agricultural and mercantile economy toward a capital-driven industrial revolution. The "spinning jenny" was patented in England by James Hargreaves in July 1770, immediately promoting increased demand for cotton fiber to feed the new weaving machines and creating markets for cheaper, factory-produced linens and cloth for clothing. James Watt developed a reliable steam engine by 1778, and the industrial revolution transformed British society.

George III was on the throne, and the American colonists were creating serious trouble for the monarchy as early as 1770: The Battle for Golden Hill in New York and the Boston Massacre were attempts by the Crown to quell colonists' open objections to being taxed without being represented in Parliament. Later in the decade Parliament finally repealed all the Townshend Act's provisions except the Tea Tax. But, of course, the Tea Tax and colonists' lack of representation in Parliament still angered them. By the middle 1770s, the American colonies were in full revolt.

Back in London, however, the good life went on. Theatre was (and is) a principal diversion there, perhaps more so than in other great cities. *The School for Scandal*, a five-act comedy written by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, enjoyed wide audiences from its first performance in 1777. It is still performed occasionally today, recently in 2009 at the Barbican Center in the City of London. (An impressive **teaching package from the Barbican** is available.)

Samuel Barber's "Overture to the School for Scandal" references the 1777 play.

The play is chock-full of characters with colorful names and outrageous behaviors to match: The Teazles, Sir Oliver Surface and his family, Sir Benjamin Backbite, Sir Harry Bumper, Mrs. Candour, and more. Its convoluted plot reveals much about high society of the time while its comedy drives the message home.

Sir Oliver, newly arrived back from a long stay in India, plans to leave his estate to his nephews but discovers that their conduct makes them unworthy. Because his nephews do not know what he looks like, he disguises himself as a “Mr. Stanley,” a needy relative, and later as a money-lender, a “Mr. Premium,” to get more information by spying on the nephews and their hard-partying crowd. Meanwhile Lady Sneerwell, an already-wealthy young widow and informal headmistress of the loosely organized School for Scandal, has her own informant, Snake, spy on them. She wants Sir Peter’s ward Maria to marry whichever nephew will end up with Sir Oliver’s fortune. The plot thickens quickly from there but love wins out, truth comes out, and the “correct” couples are united.

About the composer

Samuel Barber, born in West Chester, Pennsylvania in 1910, was 21 years old when he completed the “Overture to the School for Scandal,” Opus 5, while a student at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. He went on to compose many other works for solo instrument, small ensemble, orchestra, the opera and dance stages, and film. Among his compositions are several for young performers. His best-known work is the “Adagio for Strings” (1938), in an orchestration for string orchestra based on the second movement of Barber’s only String Quartet (1936).

Barber’s musical performance gifts were recognized early in his life; he began piano studies and composing music at age seven. In a letter to his mother, a pianist, penned when he was 10, Barber confessed that he was meant not to be an athlete but a composer. He was admitted to studies at the Curtis Institute at age 14. His promise as a composer grew during his teens, leading to many commissions and awards throughout his productive life.

Composers William Schuman and Gian-Carlo Menotti, the latter a life-long companion of Barber’s, supported Barber’s individuality against the pressure to imitate the European greats at the time: Alban Berg, Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, Jean Sibelius, Richard Strauss, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky to name some of the most prominent. His music also competed for concert programming with the rise of many great American composers, among them George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, Elliott Carter, Virgil Thomson, Roger Sessions, and Walter Piston. Luckily for Barber, Arturo Toscanini and other leading conductors were eager to commission works and perform his music, especially for American audiences.

Barber surrounded himself with many musical friends and admirers, who supported him as he waged a losing battle with cancer late in his life. While he was still able, he visited Menotti in Scotland and, back in New York, he held a huge farewell party in 1978 for those he cherished throughout his productive years. He died in his apartment on January 23, 1981 with his close friends by his side.

A sample “feelings map”

Most music like School for Scandal triggers a variety of responses as it goes along. Keeping track of feelings as they change in the music might help listeners grasp the emotional structure of the music in more detail. Use adjectives or adverbs to create this “feelings map” of the music. Then, students draft stories or poems that reflect the emotional structure of the music.

Here is an example “feelings map” from an imaginary musical work, not from this year’s selection:

Opening – calm, peaceful
Then – getting agitated, aggressive
Peaceful for a while
Becoming agitated, confusing
Majestic
Suddenly – calm, maybe sad
Picking up speed – optimistic, bright, cheerful
Calming down – the peaceful feel comes back
Ends softly, maybe hopeful



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2018 IDENTIFICATION CARD

Please print clearly in blue or black ink.

Student's name _____

Phonetic pronunciation _____

Grade _____ I.D.# _____

Student's address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

School name _____

Teacher's name _____

Teacher's email _____



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2018 INVENTORY SHEET

Please print clearly in blue or black ink.

School _____ District _____

School address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

School phone _____

Teacher's name _____

Teacher's email _____

Teacher's home phone _____

Teacher's department: English Music Other (specify) _____

Principal _____

This card must be included with your entry package.

Information should be consistent with the entry identification cards.

Student's name	Grade
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____

How many total students in your class wrote essays from which you selected your final entries for submission? _____

I understand the specifications outlined in this guide. The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra is not responsible for the theft, damage or loss of the enclosed entries. All entries become the property of the SLSO.

Teacher's signature _____