

2025 Paint to Music Contest - Overview of Musical Selections

Grades K-5 Selections:

- **Florence Price's *Adoration*** is a gentle and thoughtful piece that shows her talent for mixing Black American musical traditions with classical music. Originally meant to be played in a church setting as a devotional piece, *Adoration* has been arranged for different instruments like strings and woodwinds, making it popular with more listeners. Even though it is simple, the piece is full of emotional warmth, with a smooth, flowing melody that creates a feeling of respect and peaceful reflection.

Price's music often includes elements of African American spirituals. While *Adoration* does not directly use any spirituals, it captures the spirit of that tradition through its deep emotion and soulful phrasing. Written later in Price's career, *Adoration* shows many of the traits that define her work: a mix of African American musical styles with European classical forms, a strong focus on melody, and an emotional honesty that connects with listeners across different cultures and musical traditions.

- **Steve Reich's *Clapping Music*** is a landmark work in the **minimalist** genre, embodying the composer's interest in rhythm, process, and the use of everyday sounds as musical material. *Clapping Music* is scored for two performers who produce all the sound using just their hands.

Clapping Music was inspired by Flamenco, a passionate and expressive art form from southern Spain that combines singing (cante), guitar playing (toque), dance (baile), and rhythmic clapping (palmas) that reflects deep emotions and cultural traditions.

The piece begins with both performers clapping the same rhythmic pattern in unison. The rhythmic motif is inspired by traditional African and Latin American rhythms. As the piece progresses, one performer continues clapping the same rhythm while the other gradually shifts the pattern out of sync by one beat at a time. This technique is known as "phasing." As the patterns move in and out of alignment, complex rhythmic interactions emerge, creating a rich, evolving tapestry of sound despite the seemingly simple means.

- **Arturo Márquez *Danza de Mediodía*** is a lively and rhythmic piece that blends traditional Latin American dances with classical music. Márquez is known for his *Danzón* series, which brought Mexican dance music to concert halls. Composed in 1996, the piece captures the vibrant energy of midday life in Latin America, a time full of activity, movement, and celebration.

The music is filled with rhythmic energy and colorful sounds, drawing from Márquez's deep knowledge of dance forms like the *danzón*, mambo, and other popular Latin American rhythms. *Danza de Mediodía* mixes classical music with popular dance styles, making it an exciting and dynamic piece that connects with listeners of all kinds. Its catchy rhythms and bright melodies make it a standout in modern orchestral music, celebrating the spirit of Latin American dance and culture.

Grades 6-12 Selections:

- **John Williams' "Air and Simple Gifts"** was played during an important moment in American history—the day President Barack Obama became president in 2009. The music was made just for this event, showing ideas of unity, diversity, and hope that many people felt at the time.

The piece starts with a soft and peaceful section called "Air," with calm melodies played by strings. The music feels gentle and makes the listener think deeply. It represents the importance of the moment and the hope for a new beginning in America. This part honors the serious and respectful mood of the day while looking forward to positive change.

After the "Air" section, Williams brings in the melody of "Simple Gifts," a famous Shaker hymn, which is a simple song made by a religious group called the Shakers, who believe in living humbly and connecting spiritually. This folk tune shows the ideas of thankfulness and living simply. Williams blends this melody smoothly with the rest of the orchestra, mixing classical music with folk music, showing the mix of different cultures in America. By combining classical and folk music, Williams shows the idea of American diversity, where different traditions come together to make something richer.

- **Camille Saint-Saëns' *Danse macabre*, Op. 40** blends spooky and fun elements to tell the story of the "dance of death." Composed in 1874, this piece shows Saint-Saëns' creative use of the orchestra, his ability to tell a story through music, and even a sense of humor hidden behind the theme of death. *Danse macabre* tells the tale of Death, who appears at midnight every Halloween and makes the dead rise from their graves to dance to his fiddle until the morning.

Danse macabre is a great example of how Saint-Saëns could combine technical skill with storytelling. It has a dramatic style and makes imaginative use of different instruments. Its mix of the eerie and the playful continues to entertain audiences, making *Danse macabre* a lasting favorite in classical music.

- **Jessica Meyer's *Getting Home... I Must Be*** is a very personal and emotional piece of music about finding where you belong and feeling at home. Written in 2015, it shows Meyer's special way of mixing new classical music with strong feelings, almost like telling a story in a movie.

In this piece for solo viola, the musician uses a tool called a loop pedal, which lets the player record short parts of the music and play them back, making layers of sound so it feels like more than one person is playing. This creates a rich, growing sound that makes the music feel even deeper and more emotional, as it tells a story about going on a journey and thinking about where you belong.

The title *Getting Home* can mean two things. It can be about going back to a familiar place, but it can also be about finding a feeling of home inside yourself and in the world.