

# North Winds: *The Bremen Town Musicians* Educational Guide, Grades K-8

## About the Performance

This classic Grimm's fairy tale, featuring an ensemble of musical animals, demonstrates that "what's old is new," and shows wisdom and teamwork saving the day. North Winds composer and hornist, Michael Weinstein has written a new score beautifully illuminating the voice of each character in the five instruments of the woodwind quintet: oboe, clarinet, French horn, flute and bassoon. This program instills imagination and creativity by showing students how musicians make sounds on their instruments, introducing basic musical concepts, and blending words and music with each instrument to create an array of emotions and characters.



## About the Artists

North Winds is comprised of five of New England's best professional wind instrumentalists. Passionate about education as well as performance, this exciting quintet introduces students to an important family of orchestral instruments and demonstrates the ability of instrumental music to create characters and tell stories. The musicians in North Winds are:

- **Jacqueline DeVoe**, flute
- **Gregory Newton**, bassoon
- **Marguerite Levin**, clarinet
- **Michael Weinstein**, French horn
- **Kyoko Hida-Battaglia**, oboe and English horn

## Program Learning Goals

1. To become familiarized with woodwind instruments.
2. To explore how sounds convey emotion and can be used to tell stories.
3. To introduce basic musical concepts, including theme, melody, and rhythm.
4. To make visual and emotional connections with music.

## Essential Questions

1. What instruments are in the woodwind family and how are they related?
2. How does music tell a story?
3. How can music help us to express ourselves?

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## Vocabulary

- **Woodwind instruments:** musical instruments sounded by blowing air into or across a mouthpiece
- **Beat:** the steady pulse of a song or piece of music
- **Rhythm:** a strong pattern of notes or beats in music
- **Melody:** a series of notes that creates the main part of a song or piece of music
- **Theme:** the primary melody of a piece of music

## Key Facts and Context for Students

### What is classical music?

Classical music is a very broad term. It includes music originally written, or **composed**, in **Europe** over many hundreds of years, but is now played all over the world. Classical music is performed with instruments, voices, or both! Usually musicians read music written on pages of **sheet music** which tells them what to play and how to play it.



### *The Bremen Town Musicians* by the Brothers Grimm

**Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm** were brothers born and raised in Germany in the late 1700s. They collected and published hundreds of folktales between 1812-1857. In *The Bremen Town Musicians*, a group of animals decide to leave their farms to travel to Bremen, where they can live freely and become musicians. The story is about their travels and what they learn during their adventure.

### Featured Instruments in this Performance:



### Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

- What do you know about classical music? What would you like to know? How could you find out more?
- What woodwind instruments do you know? How are they played?
- How does music make you feel?

### Pre-Performance Activity: Musical Groupings

#### Learning Goal:

To learn about different groupings of musical ensembles.

#### Materials:

Musical Groupings Worksheet (see page 4),

Musical Groupings Worksheet Answer Key (see page 5)



#### Directions:

1. Tell students that they are going to see a performance by a woodwind quintet. What do they think that means? Which instruments do they think will be played? How many musicians do they think will perform?
2. Explain that musical groups use specific words to describe the size of the ensemble and its instrumentation.
3. Tell students the number of performers in a musical group can differ. Write “solo,” “duo,” “trio,” “quartet,” and “quintet” on the board. Discuss how many people are in each type of ensemble (solo: 1, duo: 2, trio: 3, quartet: 4, quintet: 5).
4. Play a grouping game with the class. Call out the names of musical ensembles (duo, trio, etc.) and have students form small groups with the correct number of people.
5. Tell students musical instruments are grouped into different families depending on the materials they are made from and/or how they are played.
6. In small groups or individually, fill out the Musical Groupings Worksheet. Look up any unfamiliar instruments to figure out which instrument family they belong to.
7. Review the answers for the Musical Groupings Worksheet with the class. Which instruments did students know? Which instruments were unfamiliar?
8. Remind students that they will see a woodwind quintet perform. How many musicians will play? If only four woodwind instruments are listed on the worksheet, what instrument do they think the fifth musician will play? (*Answer: French Horn*) Why do they think this instrument is included in a woodwind quintet?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Musical Groupings Worksheet

**Directions:** Place the instruments listed below into their musical instrument families.

**Instruments:**

Violin  
Drums  
Oboe  
Tuba

Clarinet  
Trombone  
Cymbals  
Viola

Timpani  
Cello  
French Horn  
Flute

Bassoon  
Xylophone  
Double Bass  
Trumpet

#### String Family

#### Woodwind Family

#### Brass Family

#### Percussion Family

**ANSWER KEY**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Musical Groupings Worksheet**

**Directions:** Place the instruments listed below into their musical instrument families.

**Instruments:**

- |        |          |             |             |
|--------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Violin | Clarinet | Timpani     | Bassoon     |
| Drums  | Trombone | Cello       | Xylophone   |
| Oboe   | Cymbals  | French Horn | Double Bass |
| Tuba   | Viola    | Flute       | Trumpet     |

**String Family**

**Violin**  
**Viola**  
**Cello**  
**Double Bass**

**Woodwind Family**

**Flute**  
**Clarinet**  
**Oboe**  
**Bassoon**

**Brass Family**

**Trumpet**  
**Trombone**  
**French Horn**  
**Tuba**

**Percussion Family**

**Drums**  
**Cymbals**  
**Timpani**  
**Xylophone**

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### Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What instruments did North Winds use in their performance? How were they played?
- What did you notice in the performance? What did you see and hear?
- How is hearing a story told out loud with music different from reading a book or watching a movie?

### Post-Performance Activity: Musical Storytelling

#### Learning Goals:

- To recall the characters and plot of a familiar story.
- To apply the knowledge of the instruments and sounds of a woodwind quintet to the characters of a familiar story.

#### Materials:

Musical Storytelling Worksheet (see page 7)



#### Directions:

1. Discuss the performance of *The Bremen Town Musicians* by North Winds. Explain that each member of the woodwind quintet had a role to play in the story. Why do you think Michael Weinstein picked these instruments to represent each character?
2. Review the characters from the story and the instruments that portrayed them. Discuss the characteristics of the sound of each instrument in the woodwind quintet (see the bottom of the worksheet for an overview).
3. Make a list of favorite familiar stories on the board. Review the summary and main characters of each story.
4. Complete the Musical Storytelling Worksheet (in a large group, small groups, or individually). Encourage students to think about matching the personality traits of the story's characters with the qualities of each instrument.
5. Present each story and their musical instrument character pairings. Ask students how they decided which instrument to pair with which character.

#### Extensions:

- Write your own story featuring at least three characters. Pick songs to pair with each character. Tell the story out loud and play short excerpts of the songs when each character is featured to bring the story to life.
- Write a review of the North Winds' performance. What did you like? Were there any surprises? What are your favorite instruments?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Musical Storytelling Worksheet**

**Directions:** Choose a favorite story. Write down the title, summary, and five main characters from the story. Assign each character an instrument from the woodwind quintet that matches the character's personality.

**Story Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary:** *What happened in the story? What was the problem? How was it solved?*

	Name	Instrument
Character #1		
Character #2		
Character #3		
Character #4		
Character #5		

**Instruments in a woodwind quintet:**  
**Flute:** high sound, airy, light, graceful  
**Oboe:** medium high sound, clear, raspy, insistent  
**Clarinet:** low and high sound, warm, mellow, round  
**Bassoon:** low sound, rich, gentle, buzzy  
**French Horn:** low and high sound, loud, dark, smooth

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### Further Resources

- [The Kennedy Center's Digital Classical Music Collection](#)
- [The Boston Symphony Orchestra Presents "Berlioz the Bear" by Jan Brett](#)
- [The Redlands Symphony Presents "Carnival of the Animals" by Camille Saint-Saëns](#)
- ["Doxie and Andre's Flight Path" by Andrea Bonsignore](#)
- Levine, Robert: *A Child's Introduction to the Orchestra*, Black Dog & Leventhal (2019)
- Marsalis, Wynton: *Squeak, Rumble, Whomp! Whomp! Whomp!: A Sonic Adventure*, Candlewick Press (2021)
- Speed Shaskan, Trisha: *Opening Night With the Woodwind Family!*, Picture Window Books (2010)

### Curricular Connections

#### Arts Standards: Music

##### Creating

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. (M.Cr.01)
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. (M.Cr.02)

##### Performing

- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. (M.P.06)

##### Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (M.R.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (M.R.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (M.R.09)

##### Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (M.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (M.Co.11)



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## **Curricular Connections, continued**

### **English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards**

#### **Reading**

- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (R.PK-12.2)
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (R.PK-12.4)

#### **Writing**

- Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences. (W.PK-12.3)

#### **Speaking and Listening**

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

#### **Language**

- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. (L.PK-12.3)
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings. (L.PK-12.5)

### **History and Social Science**

#### **K**

- Topic 1: Civics: classroom citizenship (HSS.K.T1)
- Topic 3: History: shared traditions (HSS.K.T3)

#### **Grade 1**

- Topic 1: Civics: communities, elections, and leadership (HSS.1.T1)
- Topic 3: History: unity and diversity in the United States (HSS.1.T3)

#### **Grade 2**

- Topic 3: History: migrations and cultures (HSS.2.T3)

#### **Grade 7**

- Topic 4a: Physical and political geography of Europe (HSS.7.T4a)