Laughter is a form of communication that all humans recognize and do in the same way. No matter where in the world we live, we all have the ability to laugh. In fact, laughter is one of the first things you do as a newborn to communicate with your parents. Try getting through a day without even chuckling—it’s almost impossible! Music is also a form of communication. It’s often performed at social events, it conveys meaning and emotion, it brings people together, and is used to unify a group’s mood. Think about how you feel after you hear your team’s fight song! Laughter and music are full-on collaborations between mind and body, which means the teamwork at this concert between the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and The Second City will be a full-on workout!

**MUSIC AND LAUGHTER—**

Leonard Bernstein was one of the greatest American composers of all time. In 1960, he created the classic TV series *The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra*, which introduced children to classical music and the instruments of the orchestra. Listen to Leonard Bernstein’s fun and funny Overture from Candide and notice how the wacky march quickly changes from one mood to another, just like a comedy routine. What mood does this music make you feel?

Edvard Grieg was a great champion of music from his native country, Norway. As such, when Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen asked Grieg to write music for his play, Peer Gynt, he delighted in the opportunity. Think about something you do every day, like brushing your teeth (hopefully!). Now think about doing that action to the four different movements from Peer Gynt. The first movement “Morning Mood” is about the break of dawn. What would brushing your teeth to this slow, sweet music look like? Could you do it for very long before cracking up?

Each movement in Peer Gynt communicates a different mood. What do you think the mood of the movement called “Ase’s Death” will be like? Will brushing your teeth to this sad music now be the most miserable teeth-brushing-experience you’ve ever had?

**“Music can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable.”**
— LEONARD BERNSTEIN

**“Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.”**
— VICTOR BORGE
In 1945, Benjamin Britten was asked to write music for a children’s film that explained all of the different instruments of the orchestra. Afterward, he took this movie music and turned it into a concert piece called The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra. His inspiration for this composition was a tune by his favorite composer, Henry Purcell. Britten then wrote a set of variations on that tune. Each variation changes the melody a little bit and features a different instrument, or group of instruments, in the orchestra.

What’s a variation?

Think about your laugh. Now think about how your laugh sounded when you were a baby. How do you think it would sound if you were a giant? How would it sound if you were a grown adult? It’s still your laugh…but with variations!

Next up are the strings! Made from hollow, wooden boxes that have metal strings stretched across them, these instruments are played using a bow. Like all instruments, the larger the size, the lower the sound. The instrument that is one size bigger than the violin is the viola, and for some reason, there are lots of jokes about violas!

The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra begins with the woodwinds. Like their name suggests, they are made of wood and have a mouthpiece in which you blow—that’s the wind! As you listen to the woodwinds, can you hear the humor in the music? Many of the variations on Purcell’s theme sound silly and fun when played on these instruments.

Britten then features the percussion section. Percussion instruments make a sound when they are struck, shaken, scraped, plucked, or rubbed. Some percussion instruments cannot play a melody, but one that can is the timpani drum. Percussion instruments communicate many different moods, and when they play together in The Young Person’s Guide, it’s hard not to smile.

Q. How do you keep your violin from being stolen?
A. Put it in a viola case.

The celebratory ending to this music has all of the instruments playing very fast, with the Purcell tune being passed from instrument family to instrument family. Can you hear how the musicians are all communicating together as they play? Notice how the music captures the joy of playing in a symphony orchestra!

Music and laughter can create moments of harmony and bring people together. It’s our hope that the music and laughter you experienced at today’s concert has shown you the pleasure of working together and brings you closer to those around you.

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About the intersection between orchestral music and humor, Edwin says, “Being funny is about timing! It’s not only what you say or do, it’s how you time it. Try saying something funny with different timing and see how your friends react. Some classical music is funny too, and once again, timing is everything. The funniest moments in music often involve silence, about timing!"
**INSTRUMENTS OF THE ORCHESTRA**

**THE STRING FAMILY** includes violin, viola, cello, bass and harp. These instruments are made of wood and strings and are played by vibrating the strings using a bow or plucking or striking the strings with the fingers.

**THE WOODWIND FAMILY** includes flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and saxophone. These instruments all have the same basic shape: a long tube with a mouthpiece at one end. The flute is played by blowing across a mouthpiece to create a vibration. Oboe, clarinet, bassoon and saxophone are all played by blowing air into a single or double reed attached to the mouthpiece, creating a vibration that results in sound.

**THE BRASS FAMILY** includes horn, trumpet, trombone, euphonium and tuba. Brass instruments make a sound when the players vibrate their lips inside a mouthpiece, which is fitted into the instrument. The players can change pitch on a trumpet, horn or tuba by pressing on valves. Trombone players change pitch by moving the slide back and forth.

**THE PERCUSSION FAMILY** includes snare drum, bass drum, gong, triangle, xylophone, timpani and piano, among many others. Percussion instruments are struck, scraped or shaken.

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**RESOURCES:**

- **Content for Kidsbook** was created by Katy Clusen with graphic design by Shawn Sheehy.
- **Kidsbook** is a publication of the Negaunee Music Institute. For more information, call 312-294-3410 or email institute@bso.org.

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