This preparatory guide accompanies a virtual program inspired by My Magic Breath: Finding Calm Through Mindful Breathing, by New York Times best-selling author Nick Ortner and Alison Taylor and illustrated by Michelle Polizzi. Integrating animated illustrations, solo performances by musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and narration by Amy Eshleman, First Lady of Chicago, the program helps children — along with their parents, caregivers and teachers — harness the calming and restorative power of mindful breathing.

This program is a collaboration between the Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chicago Children’s Theatre.

The video can be found on the CSO’s website and the Chicago Children’s Theatre’s website.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE VIRTUAL PROGRAM

Prepare your children for this experience and make it more enjoyable and impactful:

- Introduce your children to the music they will hear on this video by purchasing recordings or downloading a playlist of the concert repertoire through Spotify or YouTube. Listen to this music before watching the video:
  - Prelude and Gigue from Suite No. 1 in G Major for Solo Cello, BWV 1007
  - Adagio from Sonata No. 1 in G Minor for Solo Violin, BWV 1001
  - Corrente from Partita in A Minor for Solo Flute, BWV 1013
  - Sarabande from Suite No. 3 in C Major for Solo Cello, BWV 1009
Using scarves, streamers, handkerchiefs, etc., move the way the music makes you feel, following these prompts:

- Have children listen to each piece of music and express how the music moves them while dancing with a scarf, streamer or handkerchief.
- Sit or stand face to face with your child and make eye contact.
  - Choose who will be the leader and who is the follower.
  - Ask the leader to move in a way that expresses how the piece makes him/her feel. Is it slow or fast? Do you feel it in your arms, legs, hips or neck? The point is not to throw off or trick your partner, but to move as one.
  - Ask the follower to mirror exactly what the leader is doing.
  - Switch roles and repeat the activity.
- Ask children and adults to choreograph a dance that has a beginning, middle and end.

Using paper, crayons, markers or paint, create art that responds to the emotion of the music. Use the steps below to sharpen children’s listening skills:

- Listen to the sounds around you as you close your eyes for a minute. What do you hear?
- Listen to one of the musical pieces by J.S. Bach with your eyes closed. What do you hear? How does the music make you feel?
- Listen to the music again. Respond to the music by creating a piece of art.
- Ask the children to describe what they were thinking about or noticing while listening to the music.

Try this mindful breathing technique called triangle breathing.

- Watch the triangle breathing video.
- Breathe with the video.
- Listen to Sarabande from Suite No. 3 in C Major for Solo Cello and match your breathing to the music.