



High School Open Rehearsals



BSO High School Open Rehearsal *Brahms Symphony No. 2*

Nov. 13, 2025

Educators' guide

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High School Open Rehearsals



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Introduction

About the BSO

The Boston Symphony Orchestra gave its inaugural concert in 1881, and the rest is [history](#). Led by Music Director Andris Nelsons since 2014, today the BSO reaches millions of listeners through not only its concert performances in Boston and at Tanglewood, but also via educational and community programs, radio, television, recordings, and tours.

The Boston Symphony Orchestra's mission is to foster and maintain an organization dedicated to the making of music consonant with the highest aspirations of the musical art, creating performance, and providing educational and training programs at the highest level of excellence.

High School Open Rehearsals: An overview

High School Open Rehearsals invite students in grades eight-12 to sit in on a BSO rehearsal, offering a unique glimpse into the inner workings of a world-class orchestra.

- Groups may participate in an interactive pre-concert interview from 9:30-10:00am.
- The rehearsal starts at 10:30am, when students will get an intimate look at the rehearsal process assisted by the Conductor Cam, a live recording that lets the audience see the conductor from the orchestra's point of view.
- High School Open Rehearsals are scheduled from 10:30am-1:00pm, but they may end before 1:00pm. The orchestra typically takes a short break about midway through the rehearsal.

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Symphony Hall code of conduct

- Please enter quietly, keeping noise to a minimum as you enter the hall and find your seats.
- If entering during the pre-rehearsal musician interview or after the rehearsal has started, enter silently so as not to disrupt the pre-rehearsal program.
- Remain seated at all times during rehearsal while musicians are performing.
- Guests may not interfere with performers or events in any way.
- If you must leave before the orchestra's break or the rehearsal's end, please follow the instructions of the BSO usher staff to minimize disruption.
- Mobile phones should be silent and put away during the musician's interview and rehearsal.
- Photography and video are not permitted during the musician interview or rehearsal but are allowed during breaks and after the rehearsal.
- If possible, please wait for a piece to finish before leaving your seats.
- Symphony Hall has a zero-tolerance policy for bullying or harassment of any kind, including but not limited to harassment based on race, national origin, gender identity, gender presentation, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion, and citizenship. Harassment includes but is not limited to stalking, verbal or physical intimidation, offensive verbal comments, physical assault and/or battery, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome physical attention.
- If you are made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe, please immediately report any concerns to Symphony Hall staff or security personnel so appropriate action can be taken. Such acts of harassment or discrimination may lead to ejection from the premises.
- Please remember that this is a functional rehearsal for professional musicians. We appreciate you honoring these guidelines to respect the musicians and your fellow audience members.

For more information about the Symphony Hall code of conduct, check out www.bso.org.

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Prohibited items

- Outside food and beverages (except bottled water), including leftovers and restaurant to-go bags. If food is required due to a medical condition, please see security or another staff member for accommodations.
- Interchangeable lens camera, video, and/or audio recording equipment
- Flashlights and laser pointers
- Illegal substances
- Demonstration signs
- Noise-making devices and fireworks
- All weapons, including firearms, ammunition, knives, swords, scissors, pepper spray, and any dangerous items

All guests will be screened prior to entering Symphony Hall. Items that are confiscated may not be returned. If you are unsure about an item, please do not bring it with you.

SIGN



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Audience etiquette

Here are some key points on **symphony etiquette** to keep in mind when attending a BSO performance.

Arrival: Arrive on time. Latecomers may have to wait until a suitable break in the program to be seated.

Clapping: Wait until the conductor lowers their hands to clap and avoid clapping between movements of a piece.

Dress code: Adhere to your school's dress code policy when attending with your school group.

Silence your devices: Ensure that your phone and other electronic devices are silenced or turned off before the performance begins.

Respectful behavior: Remain seated and maintain silence during the performance. Avoid talking, reaching over the balconies, or making noise that could disturb others.

These guidelines will help ensure a pleasant experience for you and your fellow concertgoers.



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Brahms Symphony No. 2

About the conductor: Dima Slobodeniouk



Dima Slobodeniouk

Praised for his exhilarating approach and energetic leadership by musicians and audiences alike, Dima Slobodeniouk has become one of the most sought-after conductors of his generation.

Slobodeniouk works with the world's foremost orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Berliner Philharmoniker, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Münchner Philharmoniker, Wiener Symphoniker, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Concertgebouworkest Amsterdam, and NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo.

During the 2024-25 season, Dima Slobodeniouk debuted with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He opened the season with a series of concerts at the Aspen and Tanglewood music festivals, before embarking on a tour with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and Augustin Hadelich. He returned to lead orchestras such as the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestra de Paris, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, and Dresdner Philharmonic. Further afield he conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony

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Orchestra and NHK Symphony Orchestra. In the opera pit, Slobodeniouk led a series of performances of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* at the Savonlinna Opera Festival in his home country of Finland.

Soloists with whom he has collaborated include Leif Ove Andsnes, Martha Argerich, Emanuel Ax, Khatia Buniatishvili, Seong-Jin Cho, Isabelle Faust, Kirill Gerstein, Barbara Hannigan, Håkan Hardenberger, Martin Helmchen, Alexandre Kantorow, Patricia Kopachinskja, Beatrice Rana, Baiba Skride, Yuja Wang, and Frank Peter Zimmermann.

Known for his musical expertise and interpretive depth, Slobodeniouk is also an acclaimed recording artist. Recent notable recordings include Esa-Pekka Salonen's Cello Concerto with Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and Nicolas Altstaedt (Alpha) for which he received an ICMA Award. His latest release on the BIS label is Stravinsky's Symphony in Three Movements and Symphony in C, which he recorded with Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia where he was music director until 2022. Other releases on this label include the works of Kalevi Aho with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, winner of the 2018 BBC Music Magazine Award, a later disc of Aho's *Sieidi* and his Fifth Symphony, as well as a disc featuring music inspired by the Finnish folk epic, the Kalevala. For the Ondine label, Dima Slobodeniouk recorded works by Perttu Haapanen and Lotta Wennäkoski with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Slobodeniouk studied with Ukrainian violinist Olga Parkhomenko at Helsinki's Sibelius Academy, from which he graduated in 2001. It was there that he also took up his conducting studies with Leif Segerstam, Jorma Panula, and Atso Almila.

He was music director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia from 2013 to 2022, principal conductor of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra from 2016 to 2021, and the artistic director of the Sibelius Festival. Together with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, he has built an extensive and highly acclaimed media library of live concert recordings in recent years. A passionate believer in widening opportunity, he started a conducting initiative while at the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, giving aspiring conductors podium time with a professional orchestra and the opportunity to work with him on selected repertoire.¹

For more information about his work, visit [Dima Slobodeniouk](#).

¹ *Dima Slobodeniouk*. BSO - Conductor Dima Slobodeniouk. (1970, November 13). <https://www.bso.org/profiles/dima-slobodeniouk>



About James Carter, saxophonist



James Carter

James Carter is a powerhouse musician and one of the most admired saxophonists of his generation, garnering plaudits for his role in helping to propel jazz full tilt into the future over his 40-plus year career. His music is fueled by deep respect and intimate knowledge of jazz tradition.

Carter harbors a command of his instruments that is astonishingly complete, though he only employs that technique in the service of canny ideas. Even when he appears on the verge of shattering his horn, overblowing rapid-fire lines to otherworldly effect, he's evoking early jazz, jump blues, the avant-garde and other lessons residing inside his vast, scholarly knowledge of the music of the African American experience.

"Music and life do not separate," he said. "My elders have taught me that music is a culture and a way of life."

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Detroit native Carter shared his childhood home with five musically inclined siblings in "a house filled with all manner of sounds, from the Beatles to funk and Hendrix."

At the tender age of 17, the young prodigy shared a stage with Wynton Marsalis. At 23, he released his landmark debut album "JC on the Set," hailed by many as the arrival of a new jazz master. Over the decades that followed, Carter has cemented his reputation as one of this generation's most charismatic and versatile soloists, boasting collaborations with Lester Bowie, Julius Hemphill, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Kathleen Battle, Frank Lowe & The Saxemblem, the World Saxophone Quartet, Wynton Marsalis, and Madeleine Peyroux among other jazz greats.

Honing his craft to a jaw-dropping technical level, Carter is the master of a family of saxophones, flute, and clarinet. He is a powerhouse virtuoso likened by composer Roberto Sierra to the great Paganini. It was, in fact, this astounding instrumental flexibility, coupled with an eclectic body of recordings that inspired the Spanish maestro to write the celebrated Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra for the 31-year-old. Written expressly for Carter and mixing jazz, Latin, and classical elements, the work showcases the multi-instrumentalist's outstanding technical virtuosity whilst allowing him "the freedom to improvise."

The four-movement piece sees Carter take center stage throughout, executing swift instrument transitions between tenor and soprano saxophones and employing a full gamut of musical expression, from furiously fast Coltrane-like tempo to a quiet ballad.

Carter has performed the concerto with the Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra Berlin, MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Oregon Symphony, and several other U.S. orchestras.

Touring the world as a soloist, leading his Organ Trio, Quartet, and Quintet, Carter can also be heard on more than 32 recordings.

Carter is the winner of multiple DownBeat awards, and in 2004 received one of America's highest cultural awards: the Dr. Alaine Locke Award, given annually to individuals who have provided exemplary service and leadership in the promotion of African American culture.²

For more information, check out [Concerto for Saxophones | James Carter](#).

² James Carter. BSO - Guest Saxophonist James Carter. (2025, November 13). <https://www.bso.org/profiles/james-carter>



About the composer



Tania León

Cuban-born American composer, conductor, and educator Tania León is one of the most acclaimed and influential musicians of her generation. She was the first Latin American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in Music in 2021. In 2022, she was awarded a Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime artistic achievements. In 2023, she received the Michael Ludwig Nemmers Prize in music composition from Northwestern University and became the first woman to be honored with the highest composition prize conferred by Spain, the XIX Premio SGAE for Iberian American Music Tomás Luis de Victoria. In 2024, she earned the Distinguished Artist Award from the International Society for Performing Arts. And in 2025, she was the recipient of the Recording Academy's Special Merit Award, the Trustees Award. She was also recognized by Carnegie Corporation of New York as part of their 2025 Class of Great Immigrants, Great Americans, which celebrates the exemplary contributions of immigrants to American life. In addition, Columbia University selected her as the 2025 recipient of the prestigious William Schuman Award, which is given to recognize the lifetime achievement of an American composer whose works have been widely performed and generally acknowledged to be of lasting significance. She held Carnegie Hall's Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair for its 2023-2024 season and served as composer in residence with the London Philharmonic Orchestra for its 2023-24 and 2024-25 seasons.

As a composer, León has been commissioned to write music for leading orchestras, ensembles, and soloists around the world, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, NDR Symphony Orchestra, Grossman Ensemble, International

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Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble Modern, violinist Jennifer Koh, the Curtis Institute, The Crossing choir with flutist Claire Chase, soprano Julia Bullock, cellist Alisa Weilerstein, and violinist Jennifer Koh. León studied conducting Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. She has guest conducted the New York Philharmonic, Santa Cecilia Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Marseille, the Gewandhausorchester, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Guanajuato, and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Cuba, among others.

Her groundbreaking activities include serving as founding member and first music director of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, founder of the Brooklyn Philharmonic's Community Concert Series, co-founder of the American Composers Orchestra's Sonidos de las Américas Festivals, new music advisor to the New York Philharmonic, and founder/artistic director of Composers Now, a presenting, commissioning, and advocacy organization for living composers.

Honors include the New York Governor's Lifetime Achievement Award; inductions into the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; and fellowship awards from ASCAP (including the Victor Herbert Award), the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, and the Guggenheim Foundation, among others. She also received a proclamation for Composers Now from the Mayor of New York City, and the MadWoman Festival Award in Music in Spain.

As an educator, León has guest lectured and served as visiting professor at Harvard University, Yale University, Chicago University, Hamburg Musikschule, and others. She has received honorary doctorate degrees from Brooklyn College, Colgate University, Columbia University, the Curtis Institute of Music, Dominican University, Juilliard, Oberlin, New Jersey City University, and SUNY Purchase College. She served as U.S. artistic ambassador of American culture in Madrid, Spain in 2008. A CUNY professor emerita, she was awarded a 2018 United States Artists Fellowship, Chamber Music America 2022 National Service Award, Harvard University 2022 Luise Vosgerchian Teaching Award, and New York University 2023 Dorothy Height Award. In 2023, Columbia University's Rare Book & Manuscript Library acquired León's archive. In 2024, Brooklyn College announced the creation of the Tania León Chair of Music, the institution's first-ever endowed chair of music.³

For more information on her and her work, visit <https://www.tanialeon.com/> .

³Tania León. BSO - Tania León. (1970, November 13). <https://www.bso.org/profiles/tania-leon>

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Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra

The music of Sierra's Concerto for Saxophones ranges from sharp and rhythmic to achingly lyrical to rock and roll.

In addition to soprano and tenor saxophone (solo), the score of Sierra's Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra calls for an orchestra of piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion (drum set, bass drum, tambourine, marimba, vibraphone, suspended cymbal, tam-tam, cabaza, gong, triangle, wood block), piano, harp, and strings. The concerto is about 20 minutes long.

Puerto Rico's most prominent composer of concert music, Roberto Sierra (born October 9, 1953, in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico) is also one of the most frequently performed of all American composers. This stems in part from the broad range of his style, which speaks the languages of jazz, Afro-Caribbean, and a wide swath of European concert music with equal facility, whether stylistically isolated or in subtle combination. His Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra is a case in point. He has also been incredibly prolific, writing music for an extraordinary variety of instruments, ensembles, and occasions, from tiny solo works to seven symphonies, numerous concertos, and a large-scale Mass.

Sierra's musical environment in the environs of San Juan naturally included salsa bands and other popular music, and that music has remained a part of his own language. His *Sinfonía No. 3* is even subtitled *La Salsa*. On the classical side, the great cellist Pablo Casals established the important Casals Festival there in 1955 and lived there for decades. There are two major orchestras as well as the Puerto Rico Conservatory, where Roberto Sierra studied before attending the University of Puerto Rico. Sierra was later an administrator at both schools, serving as chancellor of the Conservatory. He taught at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, from 1992 until his retirement in 2021, and held the title of Old Dominion Foundation Professor in the Humanities. He lives in Camillus, New York, near Syracuse.

Sierra's cosmopolitan facility of style and technique grew via studies in Europe, including time with the great avant-garde individualist György Ligeti between 1979 and 1982. This was during a time when Ligeti's own style was changing significantly and beginning to incorporate the influence of African polyphonic drumming, his knowledge of which he credited Sierra with enriching. For his part, Sierra has employed Afro-Caribbean, South and Central American, and Spanish musical traditions, even as his treatment of instruments and the orchestra are based on European models. His approach is much in keeping with the longstanding seeding of "classical" music with folk and popular ideas in the music of Handel, Dvořák, Bartók, and

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Copland. 20th-century Latin American precedents include Ginastera in Argentina, Villa-Lobos in Brazil, and Chávez in Mexico, among many others.

Sierra first came to wide prominence in 1987 with the premiere of his *Júbilo* at Carnegie Hall in New York by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra under Czech conductor Zdeněk Mácal. Named that orchestra's composer-in-residence, he wrote several pieces for them, resulting in a full CD of his work in 1994. His 20-plus concertos include *Concierto Caribe* for flutist Carol Wincenc, a double concerto for violin and guitar with orchestra premiered by soloists Frank Peter Zimmermann and Manuel Barrueco, three percussion concertos, and many others. His Concerto for Orchestra was composed on commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation for the Philadelphia Orchestra's centennial; he has also been composer-in-residence with that ensemble. His music has been commissioned and performed by many of the major orchestras in the country, and he has had a particularly strong relationship with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C., which premiered his major *Missa Latina Pro Pace* in February 2006; it was subsequently recorded by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra.

Sierra wrote his Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra for James Carter, whom Sierra has compared to Paganini. The two shared an artist manager, so he was more than casually aware of Carter's career. He became fixated on the idea of writing a concerto for Carter, creating a part that allows the saxophonist to shift seamlessly between fully composed and improvised passages. The concerto was commissioned by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, which premiered it, with Carter as soloist and Neeme Järvi conducting, in October 2002.

Carter plays both tenor and soprano saxophones in the piece, the latter used only in the second and third movements. The first movement begins with an orchestral flourish, then moves into a Latin rhythm under a fully notated tenor saxophone solo. Orchestral winds individually play virtuosic lines in counterpoint to the soloist, like partners in a jazz context. The first improvised opportunity for the saxophone is in a modernist, aleatoric (i.e., free) context, as the rhythmic process dissolves into chaos before regaining its bearings. An improvised cadenza allows the soloist to stretch out, and some lyrical moments begin to show the range of the music.

That lyricism is fully explored in the second movement, featuring soprano saxophone. The form of the movement is almost songlike, with a familiar chord progression. The seemingly free, highly ornamented soprano saxophone solo is fully notated in the first part. The melodic emphasis continues as the soloist switches to tenor sax, but the music, which includes solo improvisation, becomes mysterious and atmospheric in the orchestra. The last episode returns to the song-like form and ends with an improvised solo cadenza.

The third movement is an orchestral scherzo in 3/8 time. The soloist is back to tenor sax, playing energetic, punchy lines over an orchestra alternately aggressive and delicate, but always active. The soloist switches to soprano, and the music moves into a languid, bluesy feel, which remains as tenor sax returns. The scherzo idea returns to finish the movement, ending with another improvised cadenza for tenor sax. Carter will likely use this cadenza to

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transition to the mood of the finale, which is an irresistible homage to 1950s rock and roll, the rhythm tellingly similar to that of the Latin-tinged opening movement. Along with the solo part, there's great fun in the exuberant simultaneous soloistic lines heard throughout the orchestra right up to the final joyous shout.⁴

⁴ Kirzinger, R. (2025). *Robert Sierra*. BSO - Concerto for saxophones and orchestra. <https://www.bso.org/works/sierra-concerto-for-saxophones-and-orchestra>



Brahms: Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73



Johannes Brahms

Brahms: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73

Brahms's Second Symphony is a work of many moods, balancing the uneasy tranquility of its first two movements with the geniality of the third and the unbridled exuberance of the fourth.

Johannes Brahms wrote the Second Symphony in the summer of 1877. Hans Richter led the Vienna Philharmonic in the premiere December 30, 1877. Brahms's close friend Georg Henschel led the first BSO performance in the orchestra's first season, on February 25, 1882.

In a letter to Clara Schumann, Johannes Brahms offhandedly revealed something fundamental about himself: "I always write only half-sentences, and the reader... must supply the other half." He was talking about his letters, which were often misread, and were often intended to be. In person and on the page, Brahms was chronically given to the oblique, the ironic, the unspoken. Likewise, in some of his music we find an ironic play of surface appearance and hidden importance; but in his art the irony was no joke, rather a symptom of his own thickly shrouded inner world.

Another example is the celebrated Brahmsian lyricism. When we think of his warmly lyrical moments, we usually think of his instrumental works, rather than where we would expect to find that warmth in his songs. When Brahms was setting words with their inescapable emotions, he pulled back; he only warmed fully within the abstractions of instrumental music. Yet despite his

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historical reputation as a creator of "pure" music, his life and feelings always went into his work, where they could at once lie hidden and sing for all the world.

Perhaps the most regularly misread of Brahms's major works is his Second Symphony. From the beginning, critics hailed it as a sunny and halcyon vacation from the turbulent First Symphony. The Second, everybody said, is Brahms's counterpart to Beethoven's *Pastoral*, and looks back further to Haydn and Mozart at their most congenial.

But if the Second paints an idyll, it is a lost idyll. Brahms himself hinted at its tangled import. To friend and critic Eduard Hanslick he wrote, "It'll sound so cheerful and lovely that you will think I wrote it specially for you or even your young lady." He cited the benevolent influence of his composing spot on the Wörthersee: "[there are] so many melodies flying around that you have to be careful not to step on them." Meanwhile, having just finished the First Symphony after some fifteen years of wrestling with it, Brahms completed the Second — and several smaller works — during one delightful four-month working vacation in the summer of 1877.

To Clara Schumann, however, Brahms described the symphony as "elegiac." To his publisher, he wrote, "The new symphony is so melancholy that you won't be able to stand it. I've never written anything so sad.... The score must appear with a black border." There the presumable joke is that the symphony usually strikes listeners as suave and enchanting. After all, every movement is a major key.

The deeper irony hidden in Brahms's words is that the elegiac black border is as much a part of the symphony as its more explicit cheeriness. Brahms's Second is like a vision of nature and youth troubled by shadows that come and go like dark clouds in a summer sky.

In his book on the Second Symphony, *Late Idyll*, Harvard scholar Reinhold Brinkmann calls this supposed hymn to nature and serenity a "questioning of the pastoral world, a firm denial of the possibility of pure serenity." Brahms's testament to the past is haunted by a skepticism and foreboding that seem prophetic.

The questioning begins within the gentle opening. We hear a little three-note turn in the basses (D–C-sharp–D), a melodic shape that will pervade the symphony. The basses are answered by an elegant wind phrase that at once suggests a Strauss waltz (Brahms admired the Waltz King) and the hunting horns of a Haydn symphony or divertimento. But all this gracious simplicity is deceptive. Anyone trying to waltz to this opening will fall on his face: the phrasing of the basses and the answering winds are offset by one measure, with neither predominating. At times the movement falls into tumultuous stretches where the meter is dismantled. The breezy and beautiful first theme is followed by a fervent second theme that, in itself, is in A major — but

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harmonized in F-sharp minor. Throughout the symphony, the brightness of major keys will be touched by darker minor-key tints.

The more salient voices disturbing the placid surface are the trombones and tuba. After the balmy opening, the music seems to stop in its tracks; there is a rumble of timpani like distant thunder, and the trombones and tuba whisper a shadowy chorale, in cryptic harmonies. That shadow touches the whole symphony. Later, the development section is intensified by braying brasses — startling for Brahms, more startling in this halcyon work.

From the beginning of the symphony's career there were some who saw the shadows. One of them, conductor and Brahms acquaintance Vincenz Lachner, complained to the composer about "the gloomy lugubrious tones of the trombones" intruding on the tranquility. Brahms replied with one of the most revealing statements he ever made about his music or about himself:

I very much wanted to manage in that first movement without using trombones.... But their first entrance, that's mine, and I can't get along without it, and thus the trombones.

I would have to confess that I am...a severely melancholic person, that black wings are constantly flapping above us, and that in my output — perhaps not entirely by chance — that symphony is followed by a little essay about the great "Why." ...It casts the necessary shadow on this serene symphony and perhaps accounts for those timpani and trombones.

The "little essay" Brahms mentions is another product of the same summer, the motet "Warum ist das Licht gegeben" (Opus 74, No. 1: "Wherefore is the light given to them that toil?") in which the chorus proclaims Job's anguished question, "Why? Why?" Thus the trombones, the necessary shadow, the great "Why."

The second movement begins with a sighing high-Brahmsian cello theme. While the tone throughout is passionate and Romantic, the movement's languid beauties are unsettled by rhythmic and harmonic ambiguity. It ends with a chromatic haze like an expansion of the first movement's trombone chorale, and underneath, the relentless strokes of timpani that, for Brahms, were an image of fate, and the thought of fate always ominous. The final sustained chord sounds remarkably frail and uncertain for B major.

If the keynote of the first two movements is tranquility compromised, in the last two movements gaiety and frivolity break out. Brahms was generally influenced by the vacation spots where he composed, for example the cliffs and crashing seas of Rügen that helped complete the stormy

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First Symphony. This time the pleasures of the Wörthersee have the last word. The third movement unfolds as a charming and jocular scherzo marked by sudden shifts of rhythm and meter: an elegant Allegretto grazioso leaping into a skittering Presto.

The finale is a romp, with one droll and delicious theme after another, ending unforgettably with a triumphant D major blaze of trombones. Here Brahms does something he was not supposed to know how to do - make an instrument the bearer of meaning. The trombones as harbingers of fate have become the heralds of joy; avant-gardists of the next century would call that "tone-color composition." If the great "Why" is ultimately unanswerable, this time Brahms was happy to lay aside the question in favor of joie de vivre, flourishing his trombones like a wineglass.

Of Brahms' four symphonies, the Second often seems the most atavistic, the least ponderous and self-conscious. Yet in its pensive irony as in its masterful craftsmanship, in its dark moments as in its jubilation, the Second is essentially Brahms. He was a composer who looked back to the giants of the past as an unreachable summit, and who looked to the future of music and civilization with increasing alarm. He was a man who felt spurned by his beloved hometown of Hamburg, who called himself a vagabond in the wilderness of the world. So midway through his journey as a symphonist, Brahms wrote a serenely beautiful masterpiece whose secret message is that you can't go home again.⁵

Read about [Brahms: Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73 | Classical Music Notes.](#)

By Jan Swafford⁶

⁵ Swafford, J. (2025). *Symphony No. 2 in D, Opus 73*. BSO - Brahms Symphony. <https://www.bso.org/works/brahms-symphony-no-2>

⁶ *Jan Swafford is a prizewinning composer and writer whose most recent book is Mozart: The Reign of Love. His other acclaimed books include Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph, Johannes Brahms: A Biography, The Vintage Guide to Classical Music, and Language of the Spirit: An Introduction to Classical Music. He is an alumnus of the Tanglewood Music Center, where he studied composition.*

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High School Open Rehearsal program

The conductor typically rehearses in program order, but this order is subject to change on the rehearsal day without advance notice.

9:30-10:00am Pre-rehearsal talk

- Interview with saxophonist James Carter by BSO Program Manager Zoe Murphy

10:30am Rehearsal

- Tania LEÓN *Time to Time* (world premiere; BSO co-commission)
- Roberto SIERRA Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra
- *Intermission*
- BRAHMS Symphony No. 2

Featuring



Boston Symphony Orchestra



Dima Slobodeniouk
conductor



James Carter
Saxophone



Digital and supplementary materials

Grades nine-12 • Brahms Symphony No. 2 and featured artists



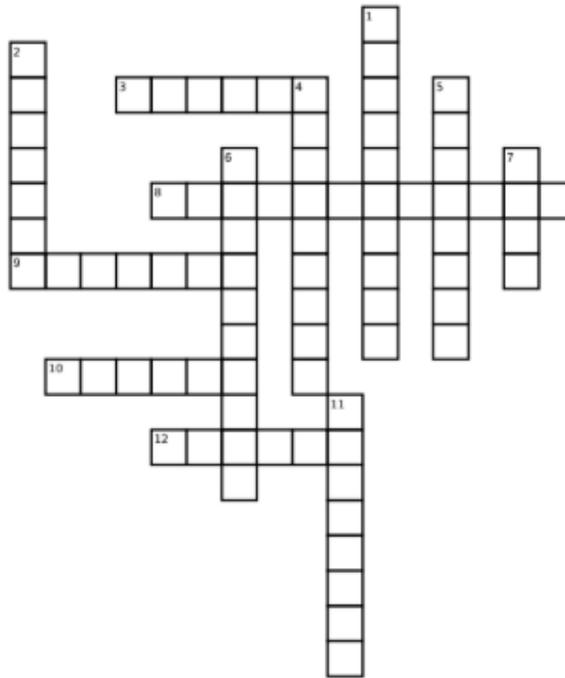
**Boston Symphony
Orchestra**

High School Open Rehearsals



Classical music crossword

Grades nine-12 • Brahms Symphony No. 2 and featured artists



Down:

1. Massachusetts music festival where Slobodeniouk opened his 2024-25 season
2. Slobodeniouk's home country where he led Boris Godunov at Savonlinna Opera Festival
4. James Carter's primary instrument
5. Prize that Tania León won in 2021
6. Austrian lake where Brahms composed Symphony No. 2 in summer 1877
7. Tania León's country of birth
11. Legendary violinist to whom Roberto Sierra compared James Carter's virtuosity

Across:

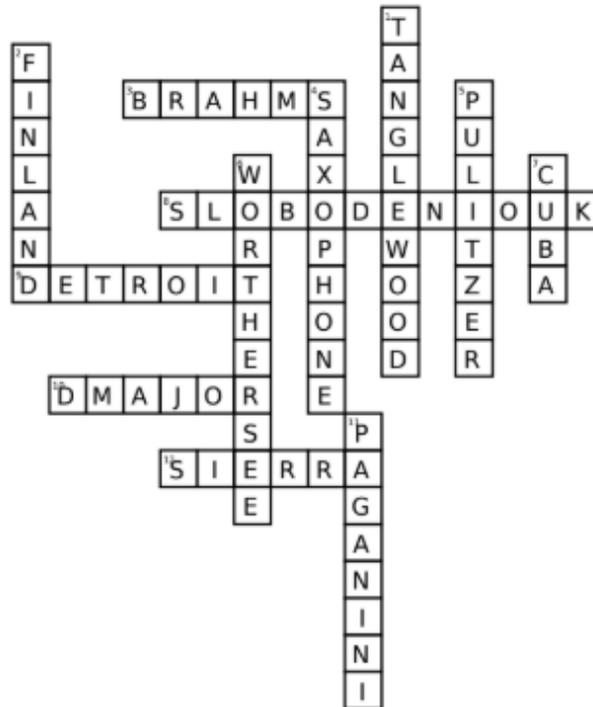
3. German composer of Symphony No. 2 in D Major
8. Finnish conductor who debuted with LA Philharmonic and Chicago Symphony in 2024-25 season (last name)
9. James Carter's hometown and city where Sierra's Concerto for Saxophones premiered in 2002
10. Key of Brahms's Second Symphony (two words, no space)
12. Puerto Rican composer who wrote Concerto for Saxophones, comparing Carter to Paganini (last name)

High School Open Rehearsals



Classical music crossword answer key

Grades nine-12 • Brahms Symphony No. 2 and featured artists



Down:

1. Massachusetts music festival where Slobodeniouk opened his 2024-25 season
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High School Open Rehearsals



BSO quick quizzes: Show what you know!

Dima Slobodeniouk, conductor High School quiz (grades 9-12)

1. What qualities and experiences have helped Dima Slobodeniouk become a successful conductor?
 - A. He started his career as a jazz pianist and played in pop bands.
 - B. He works with top orchestras and is praised for his energetic leadership.
 - C. He was discovered on a reality TV show for musicians.
 - D. He conducts only in his home country of Finland.
2. How has Finnish culture influenced Dima Slobodeniouk's musical work?
 - A. He composes electronic music based on Finnish fairy tales.
 - B. He avoids performing any music from outside of Finland.
 - C. He has recorded music inspired by the Finnish folk epic, the Kalevala.
 - D. He only performs with Finnish soloists.
3. Why are collaborations important in Slobodeniouk's career as a conductor?
 - A. They allow him to perform without rehearsing.
 - B. They help create unique interpretations of music with world-class soloists and orchestras.
 - C. Collaborations help him avoid international travel.
 - D. Collaborations are only for recording sessions, not live concerts.
4. How has Slobodeniouk used media and technology to share his music?
 - A. He live-streams his daily practice sessions on social media.
 - B. He built an acclaimed media library of live concert recordings with Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia.
 - C. He created a mobile app that teaches conducting techniques.
 - D. He only allows his concerts to be heard in person.

High School Open Rehearsals



 **Dima Slobodeniouk, conductor**

 **Teacher answer key and explanations**

1. **B** – He works with top orchestras and is praised for his energetic leadership.
2. **C** – He has recorded music inspired by the Finnish folk epic, the Kalevala.
3. **B** – They help create unique interpretations of music with world-class soloists and orchestras.
4. **B** – He built an acclaimed media library of live concert recordings with Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia.

Curriculum Framework:

- Question one – Career and artistic practice
 - Strand: Connections, concepts, and applications⁷
- Question two – Music and cultural context
 - Strand: Historical and cultural context⁸
- Question three – Interpretation and collaboration
 - Strand: Artistic perception⁹
- Question four – Music and technology
 - Strand: Connections, concepts, and applications¹⁰

⁷ Objective: To analyze the professional development and achievements of a working artist in a global context.

⁸ Objective: To explore how cultural heritage and education impact artistic interpretation and programming.

⁹ Objective: To evaluate how artists collaborate and respond to one another in musical settings.

¹⁰ Objective: To connect the use of media and technology in professional music careers.

High School Open Rehearsals



James Carter, saxophonist High School quiz (grades nine-12)

1. According to the passage, what best describes James Carter's approach to jazz music?
 - A. He focuses mainly on replicating the classic jazz sound of the 1920s.
 - B. He combines traditional jazz elements with innovative, forward-looking ideas.
 - C. He avoids referencing earlier jazz styles in order to sound modern.
 - D. He is primarily influenced by European classical composers.
2. Which of the following best reflects Carter's musical philosophy as stated in the text?
 - A. Music is purely a form of entertainment.
 - B. Music and life are separate disciplines that should not mix.
 - C. Music is a culture and a way of life.
 - D. Music must always follow written notation without improvisation.
3. What is significant about the Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra composed for James Carter?
 - A. It limits Carter to performing only the tenor saxophone.
 - B. It showcases his versatility by blending jazz, Latin, and classical styles.
 - C. It was written for Carter's debut album "JC on the Set."
 - D. It does not include any opportunities for improvisation.
4. Which statement best summarizes James Carter's contribution to jazz and music culture?
 - A. He is known primarily as a studio musician who rarely performs live.
 - B. He has advanced jazz by combining deep respect for tradition with innovative performances.
 - C. He has focused his career exclusively on teaching and research.
 - D. His primary influence comes from rock music rather than jazz.

High School Open Rehearsals



🎵 James Carter, saxophonist

📖 Teacher answer key and explanations

#	Correct Answer	Explanation Summary	Massachusetts Music Framework Alignment
1	B	Carter propels jazz forward while drawing on early jazz and blues traditions.	ARTS.MU.Re7.1.HSII, ARTS.MU.Cn11.0.HSI
2	C	Carter states, “Music and life do not separate... music is a culture and a way of life.”	ARTS.MU.Re8.1.HSI, ARTS.MU.Cn10.0.HSI
3	B	The concerto blends jazz, Latin, and classical styles and allows improvisation.	ARTS.MU.Re7.2.HSII, ARTS.MU.Cn11.0.HSII
4	B	Carter combines deep respect for tradition with innovation, influencing modern jazz.	ARTS.MU.Re9.1.HSI, ARTS.MU.Cn11.0.HSII

1. **Correct answer: B** - The text notes that Carter “helps propel jazz full tilt into the future” while drawing from “early jazz, jump blues, the avant-garde,” showing both reverence for tradition and innovation.

Framework alignment:

- **MA: ARTS.MU.Re7.1.HSII** – Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.
- **MA: ARTS.MU.Cn11.0.HSI** – Relate musical ideas and works to personal and external contexts.

2. **Correct answer: C** - Carter says, “Music and life do not separate... music is a culture and a way of life,” showing his belief that music is inseparable from lived experience.

Framework alignment:

- **MA: ARTS.MU.Re8.1.HSI** – Interpret intent and meaning in musical works based on context and expressive qualities.
- **MA: ARTS.MU.Cn10.0.HSI** – Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make music.

3. **Correct answer: B** - The passage describes the concerto as “mixing jazz, Latin, and classical elements” and allowing Carter “the freedom to improvise,” demonstrating both stylistic fusion and artistic freedom.

Framework alignment:

High School Open Rehearsals



- **MA: ARTS.MU.Re7.2.HSII** – Analyze how musicians’ expressive intent is conveyed through their interpretation.
- **MA: ARTS.MU.Cn11.0.HSII** – Relate musical ideas and works to societal, cultural, and historical contexts.

4. **Correct answer: B** - The text calls Carter “one of the most admired saxophonists of his generation,” whose music “is fueled by deep respect and intimate knowledge of jazz tradition,” showing both mastery and innovation.

Framework alignment:

- **MA: ARTS.MU.Re9.1.HSI** – Evaluate musical works and performances, applying criteria based on context and expressive qualities.
- **MA: ARTS.MU.Cn11.0.HSII** – Relate musical ideas and works to cultural and historical contexts.

High School Open Rehearsals



Tania León, composer

High School quiz (grades nine-12)

1. Which of the following statements best describes Tania León's impact on music?
 - A. She is known mainly for performing popular songs as a vocalist.
 - B. She is one of the most acclaimed composers and conductors of her generation, known for her innovation and advocacy.
 - C. She has focused primarily on teaching dance and choreography.
 - D. She became famous for her film soundtracks and pop collaborations.
2. Tania León was the first Latin American woman to receive which major honor?
 - A. The Kennedy Center Honor
 - B. The Guggenheim Fellowship
 - C. The Pulitzer Prize in music
 - D. The Grammy Award for best classical album
3. What organization did Tania León found to support living composers and new works?
 - A. The Dance Theatre of Harlem
 - B. Composers Now
 - C. The American Composers Orchestra
 - D. The Curtis Institute of Music
4. Which of the following best summarizes Tania León's contributions as an educator and cultural leader?
 - A. She limits her teaching to one university in Cuba.
 - B. She is known for discouraging cultural exchange in music.
 - C. She has served as a guest professor at major universities and advocates for global musical collaboration.
 - D. She focuses only on performing her own works and avoids teaching.

Short response prompt (optional, five points):

After listening, describe how León's use of rhythm and instrumentation expresses movement and progress, the central ideas behind *Stride*.

High School Open Rehearsals



🎵 Tania León, composer

📖 Teacher answer key and explanations

Answer key

1. **✔ Correct answer: B** - León's career includes numerous international awards and leadership roles as a composer, conductor, and advocate for new music, reflecting her broad influence.

Framework alignment:

- **MA: ARTS.MU.Re7.1.HSII** – Analyze how structure and context of varied musical works inform response.
- **MA: ARTS.MU.Cn11.0.HSI** – Relate musical ideas and works to personal and external contexts.

2. **✔ Correct answer: C** - In 2021, León became the first Latin American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in music, marking a milestone in classical music history.

Framework alignment:

- **MA: ARTS.MU.Re9.1.HSI** – Evaluate musical works and performances applying criteria based on context and expressive qualities.
- **MA: ARTS.MU.Cn11.0.HSII** – Relate musical ideas and works to cultural and historical contexts.

3. **✔ Correct answer: B** - León founded and serves as artistic director of Composers Now, which commissions and presents works by living composers and advocates for creative diversity.

Framework alignment:

- **MA: ARTS.MU.Re8.1.HSI** – Interpret intent and meaning in musical works based on context and expressive qualities.
- **MA: ARTS.MU.Cn10.0.HSI** – Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make music.

4. **✔ Correct answer: C** - León has lectured and held visiting professorships at major institutions such as Harvard and Yale and served as a U.S. artistic ambassador, promoting cross-cultural engagement.

Framework alignment:

- **MA: ARTS.MU.Re7.2.HSII** – Analyze how musicians' expressive intent is conveyed through interpretation.
- **MA: ARTS.MU.Cn11.0.HSII** – Relate musical ideas and works to societal, cultural, and historical contexts.

High School Open Rehearsals



 **Tania León, composer**

 **Teacher answer key and explanations (cont'd)**

5. Short response scoring rubric:

- **Exemplary (five pts):** Identifies rhythmic vitality, layered textures, and connection to the idea of “stride” or forward movement.
- **Proficient (four pts):** Mentions rhythm and energy with some detail.
- **Developing (three pts):** General mood description without musical examples.
- **Beginning (one-two pts):** Minimal or unclear response.

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework Alignment:

- **Responding:** Analyze how music conveys meaning through rhythm, texture, and cultural influence.
- **Connecting:** Relate musical ideas to personal and cultural contexts.
- **Creating (optional extension):** Students may compose a short rhythmic pattern inspired by Afro-Cuban percussion.

High School Open Rehearsals



Roberto Sierra: Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra

High School quiz (grades nine–12)

Quiz questions

1. Roberto Sierra's Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra blends a variety of musical influences. Which of the following best describes the range of styles present in this work?
 - A. Traditional European classical styles only.
 - B. Afro-Caribbean rhythms, jazz, and European concert traditions.
 - C. Rock and pop music exclusively.
 - D. Minimalist electronic techniques.
2. What makes the solo saxophone part in Sierra's Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra especially distinctive?
 - A. It uses only one saxophone throughout the piece.
 - B. It alternates between fully composed and improvised passages.
 - C. It is accompanied by a jazz combo instead of an orchestra.
 - D. It avoids any lyrical or melodic sections.
3. Roberto Sierra studied with the avant-garde composer György Ligeti, whose music incorporated African rhythmic ideas. How did this influence Sierra's own compositional style?
 - A. He abandoned traditional rhythm completely.
 - B. He adopted African and Latin American rhythmic traditions into classical forms.
 - C. He began composing only electronic works.
 - D. He wrote exclusively for percussion instruments.
4. In the finale of the Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra, Sierra pays tribute to which musical style?
 - A. 18th-century symphonic form
 - B. Baroque fugue writing
 - C. 1950s rock and roll
 - D. Gregorian chant



Roberto Sierra: Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra

Teacher answer key and explanations

Aligned with the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework for Music

1. Correct answer: B - Sierra's music reflects his Puerto Rican roots and his exposure to jazz and European concert traditions. This fusion of global and classical elements defines his compositional voice.

Student learning objective: Students will recognize and describe how diverse musical styles can combine to create a unique artistic voice.¹¹

2. Correct answer: B - Sierra wrote the concerto for James Carter, designing it to showcase both Carter's classical precision and jazz improvisation skills.

Student learning objective: Students will identify how improvisation functions within a classical concerto and how it enhances musical expression.¹²

3. Correct answer: B - Sierra combined European orchestral techniques with the complex rhythms of Afro-Caribbean and Latin American traditions, enriching his works with cross-cultural rhythmic energy.

Student learning objective: Students will explore how composers integrate cultural and historical influences into contemporary concert music.¹³

4. Correct answer: A - The concerto's final movement channels the rhythmic energy and fun of 1950s rock and roll, reflecting Sierra's playful blend of classical and popular idioms.

Student learning objective: Students will analyze how rhythm and style can evoke cultural periods and connect classical works to popular traditions.¹⁴

¹¹ **Framework Connection:** MU.R.1.10 – Analyze how elements of music express intent and meaning.

¹² **MU.Cr.2.10:** Demonstrate understanding of stylistic features and conventions in music creation & performance.

¹³ **MU.Cn.10.10:** Analyze how understanding context and culture informs music creation & performance.

¹⁴ **MU.R.3.10** – Evaluate how music communicates intent, meaning, and mood through expressive elements.

 Boston Symphony
Orchestra

High School Open Rehearsals





🎵 Johannes Brahms: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73

Student quiz (grades nine–12)

Directions: Read each question carefully and select the best answer. You may refer to your listening activity notes and any handouts provided.

1. Brahms' Symphony No. 2 in D Major is often compared to which earlier composer's *Pastoral* Symphony for its apparent warmth and lyricism?

- A. Mozart
- B. Beethoven
- C. Schubert
- D. Haydn

2. Although the Second Symphony is frequently described as cheerful and serene, Brahms himself hinted at a deeper mood. Which of the following best captures that hidden tone?

- A. Romantic passion and drama
- B. Melancholy and introspection
- C. Playful humor and lightness
- D. National pride and heroism

3. The trombones play a symbolic role throughout the symphony. In the first movement, they most clearly represent:

- A. The carefree joy of nature.
- B. A musical joke mocking earlier composers.
- C. The "shadow" or melancholy that underlies the symphony's cheer.
- D. The influence of folk melodies from the Wörthersee.

4. Listening activity:

Listen to the finale of Symphony No. 2. Which best describes Brahms's use of rhythm and orchestration in this movement?

- A. Strict, march-like rhythm with limited dynamics.
- B. Rapid, shifting tempos and bright orchestral colors.
- C. A slow, lyrical pace dominated by strings.
- D. Minimal use of brass and percussion.

High School Open Rehearsals



Extended prompt (optional, five points): After listening, describe how Brahms balances joy and melancholy in the music. Refer to at least one musical element (melody, harmony, dynamics, or instrumentation).

High School Open Rehearsals



Johannes Brahms: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73

🎓 Teacher answer key and explanations¹⁵

1. Correct answer: B. Beethoven

Explanation: Brahms' Second Symphony was often compared to Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony for its seemingly sunny, nature-inspired character.

2. Correct answer: B. Melancholy and introspection

Explanation: Though outwardly serene, Brahms described the work as "melancholy" and even suggested publishing it with a "black border." The symphony blends light and shadow, revealing his deeply introspective side.

3. Correct answer: C. The "shadow" or melancholy that underlies the symphony's cheer.

Explanation: The trombones symbolize the darker emotional "shadow" that interrupts the tranquil surface. Brahms himself said that "black wings are constantly flapping above us," referring to this contrast.

4. Correct answer: B. Rapid, shifting tempos and bright orchestral colors.

Explanation: The finale bursts with rhythmic vitality and colorful orchestration, ending with a jubilant D-major fanfare. The brass, once symbols of fate, now proclaim joy and triumph.

¹⁶Listening and discussion prompt (Suggested rubric):

- **Exemplary (five pts):** Student clearly identifies both joyful and somber elements, referencing specific musical features (e.g., "bright brass fanfares contrast with darker harmonies").
- **Proficient (four pts):** Recognizes contrasting moods with some musical detail.

¹⁵ Framework Connections:

- *Responding:* Students analyze expressive intent through instrumentation and harmony.
- *Connecting:* Students link Brahms's emotional world to 19th-century Romantic ideals.
- *Performing/Creating (optional):* Students may compose or improvise a short melodic idea inspired by contrasting moods in the symphony.

¹⁶ Massachusetts Curriculum Framework Alignment:

- Responding to, analyzing, and interpreting music
- Understanding relationships between music and history/culture
- Listening and describing elements of music

High School Open Rehearsals



- **Developing (three pts):** Mentions general mood without specific evidence.
- **Beginning (one-two pts):** Minimal or inaccurate response.

High School Open Rehearsals



Additional resources

Please use the links below to access quizzes and an editable social story to prepare students and chaperones for their experience at Symphony Hall.

Social story

- [Social story](#) – Available on the BSO website.

Quizzes (PDF – download and print)

- [Brahms quiz](#)
- [Dima Slobodeniouk quiz](#)
- [James Carter quiz](#)
- [Sierra concerto lesson plan and activities](#)
- [Tania León quiz](#)

Explore Symphony Hall

- [Classical music crossword](#)
- [Classical music crossword](#) (answer key)
- [Symphony Hall scavenger hunt](#) (digital)
- [Symphony Hall scavenger hunt](#) (PDF)
- Scan the QR code to learn about the [history of the BSO](#).



Listen and watch

- [Listen to Brahms Symphony No. 2](#) (performed by the BSO)
 - [Sound sleuth listening guide](#) (Digital)
 - [Sound sleuth listening guide](#) (PDF)
- [Watch Dima Slobodeniouk conduct](#) (Sibelius' Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43, performed by the BSO)