

ExxonMobil

DISCOVERY SERIES



Mozart: Cats and Mice with Mercury Chamber Orchestra



 Mercury
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

THE
HOBBY
CENTER
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

2026-2027 Season 5th Grade Curriculum Guide

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About the Performance

Mozart: Cats and Mice

Mercury Chamber Orchestra is proud to present *Mozart: Cats and Mice*, a playful reimagining of Mozart's first opera, featuring a new English libretto adapted for contemporary audiences. The original opera, *Bastien und Bastienne*, was inspired by *The Village Soothsayer*, a tale by famous philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Written by Mozart when he was only twelve years old, it was intended to be accessible to young listeners.

Our version transforms the story into a fairy tale: Bastien and Bastienne are charming mice, the magician becomes a wise great horned owl, and the "lady of the castle" is portrayed as a glamorous, feline figure — a cat who might have stepped out of *Cats the musical*! The enchanting staging includes sleight-of-hand magic and optical effects, honoring the opera's original patron, the hypnotist Mesmer.



mercuryhouston.org



THE
HOBBY
CENTER
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Mercury Chamber Orchestra



Led by Artistic Director Antoine Plante, Mercury Chamber Orchestra shares the power of classical music through exciting performances and school programs, reaching over 6,000 students each year and making music fun and meaningful for everyone in Houston.

About the Performance

Mozart's Childhood Timeline

Ages 0-5

1756-1761: Mozart is born in Salzburg, Austria, and composes (writes) his first piece of music at age 5!

Age 6

1762: Mozart performs for royalty in Vienna with his sister.

Ages 7-10

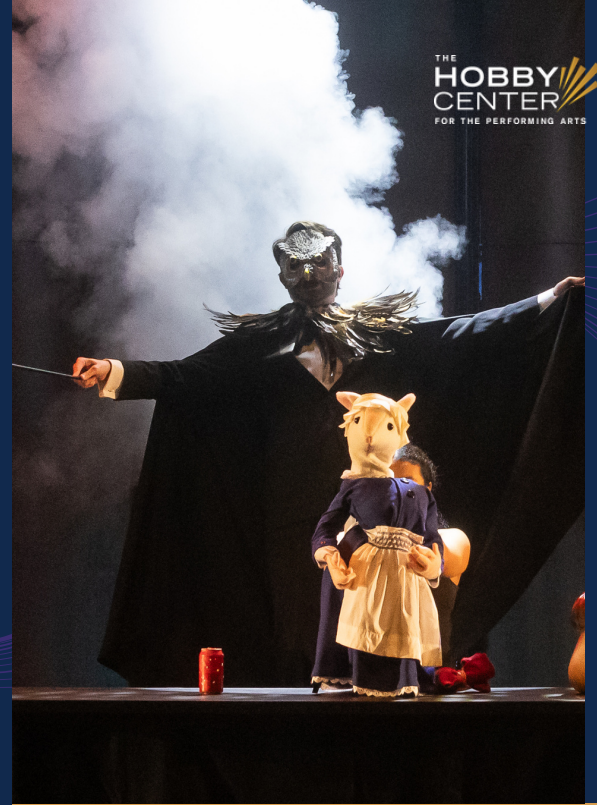
1763-1766: Mozart tours Europe, performing for kings and learning new music styles.

Age 12

1768: Mozart composes (writes) his first opera, *Bastien und Bastienne* — the same age as some 5th graders!

Age 13

1769: Mozart becomes lead violinist in Salzburg and keeps composing music nonstop.



On the stage...



Singers

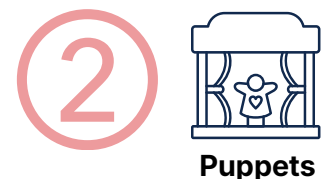


Instrumentalists

2 Violins, 1 Viola, 1 Cello,
1 Bass, 1 Percussionist



Conductor



Puppets



SCAN HERE

**Meet
Mozart!**

<<





About the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts opened to the public in 2002 in downtown Houston, at the edge of the city's renowned Theater District. The district is home to several major performing arts organizations, including Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ballet, Houston Symphony, Performing Arts Houston, Theatre Under The Stars, DaCamera, and Alley Theatre. Located beside Tranquility Park and one block from Houston City Hall, the Hobby Center was named in honor of former Texas lieutenant governor and Houston businessman William P. Hobby Jr. after his family foundation made a significant contribution to the project. The Hobby Center was built on the site formerly occupied by the Houston Music Hall and Sam Houston Coliseum, both of which were demolished in 1998. Today, the Hobby Center includes three performance spaces designed specifically for theater, music, and live performance experiences:

- **Sarofim Hall** is a 2,650-seat proscenium theater designed to accommodate large-scale touring Broadway productions and major live performances. Resident companies include Theatre Under The Stars and Broadway Across America. The hall's design combines grandeur with theatrical elegance. Golden latticework frames the space, while multi-storied gold-leaf columns stand in contrast to deep midnight-blue walls. Overhead, the Joe and Lee Jamail Celestial Dome Ceiling features twinkling fiber-optic stars arranged to mirror the Texas night sky.
- **Zilkha Hall** is an intimate 500-seat "jewel-box" theater, a term used to describe smaller performance spaces designed with rich detail, warmth, and close audience connection. Home to many of Houston's local arts organizations, the hall features excellent acoustics, deep-rose tones, and walnut wood accents across two seating levels.
- **The Founders Club** is an intimate live music venue with cabaret-style seating. Guests may purchase tables of four or be seated with others, creating a social and relaxed atmosphere. The series features both local performers and nationally recognized artists in a format not commonly found in Houston. Concerts span a variety of genres, including Broadway songbook, jazz, and world music.

ExxonMobil DISCOVERY SERIES

The ExxonMobil Discovery Series is the Hobby Center's flagship education program, welcoming 5th grade students from across Houston to experience live performances by local and touring artists. Aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the series brings dance, music, and theater to life in ways that connect directly to what students are learning in the classroom. Every performance is free—including transportation—and includes curriculum materials and artist Q&As that deepen the experience.

For the 2026-27 school year, the Hobby Center is thrilled to be partnering with 22+ school districts to serve nearly 50,000 5th graders.

Special thanks to lead underwriter ExxonMobil and generous supporters: Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, Elkins Foundation, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Albert and Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, The John M. O'Quinn Foundation, Texas Commission on the Arts, H-E-B, Vivian L. Smith Foundation, and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion

Theater Etiquette

Before you come to the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Please take some time to talk with your students about what to expect. Going to a live performance is a group experience unlike any other, and many students are more familiar with going to the movies or sporting events. Please help them prepare for what they'll see and how they should act. Other things to Keep in Mind: Make sure your students use the restroom before they leave school or at the theater before the show. If you get up during the performance, you may miss the best part! The performance runs approximately one hour long with no intermission. In entering or exiting the theater, safety is the primary concern. Please follow instructions from the house managers and ushers in taking your seats.

Going to a performance is different than going to a movie:

- This production is performed live. The performers can see, hear and react to the audience!
- Audience members can show the performers when they appreciate their performance! If something is funny, you can laugh! If the performers are doing a great job, then you can clap!
- Sometimes, the performers will ask you to participate by singing or clapping; please do not talk unless the performers ask you to!
- At the end of the show, the performers will bow. This is called a curtain call. If you really loved the show, you can give them a standing ovation to show that you appreciate their hard work!
- School clothes are appropriate, but some people like to dress up to go to the theater. Just make sure you are comfortable.

Going to a performance is the same as going to a movie:

- The lights dim before the performance begins and the theater stays dark during the show.
- Audience members are expected to stay quiet in their seats during the performance.
- Audience members may NOT take any pictures or video during the performance. (This is distracting to the performers and other audience members and this show contains copyrighted artistic material.)
- All cell phones and other electronic devices should be powered OFF or put on SILENT as soon as you enter the theater.

VISIT RESTROOM BEFORE - NOT DURING.

ARRIVE EARLY.

QUIET & SEATED DURING SHOW.

NO PHOTOS OR VIDEOS DURING SHOW.

PHONES OFF/SILENCED.

RESPECT THE SPACE & OTHERS.

LISTEN & ENGAGE.

APPLAUD APPROPRIATELY.

Vocabulary

Opera & Music Terms

- **Aria** – A solo song that lets a character share deep emotions, just like you can express big feelings through your own voice.
- **Comic Opera** – A funny type of opera that uses music and humor, perfect for audiences who enjoy playful stories and clever surprises.
- **Ensemble** – A team of performers working together, just like you do when you collaborate in class or in a group project.
- **Libretto** – The words of the opera, like a script.
- **Opera** – A type of play where the story is told with music. The characters sing their lines instead of speaking, and the music helps show their feelings. Operas usually have costumes, sets, and acting like a musical, but with more singing and big voices.
- **Opera Buffa** - A type of opera that is a funny story with a happy ending, where some of the words are spoken instead of sung.
- **Opera Comic** - A type of opera that is a funny story with a happy ending, where some of the words are spoken instead of sung.
- **Overture** – The opening music that sets the mood.
- **Violin Family** - The violin family of musical instruments was developed in Italy in the 16th century. At the time the name of this family of instruments was viole da braccio which was used to distinguish them from the viol family (viole da gamba). The standard modern violin family consists of the violin, viola, cello, and the double bass. Instrument names in the violin family are all derived from the root viola, which is a derivative of the Medieval Latin word vitula (meaning "stringed instrument").

Storytelling

- **Anthropomorphic** - Ascribing human characteristics to nonhuman things.
- **Dramatic Irony** – When the audience knows something the characters don't, your critical thinking helps you spot important clues before the characters do.
- **Misunderstanding** – A mix-up that changes the story, your listening and empathy skills help you notice when something's not quite right.
- **Resolution** – The part where the problem is solved, just like you find solutions when things go wrong.

Character & Theme Terms

- **Disguise** – A way to hide or change identity, your creativity helps you imagine what it's like to step into someone else's shoes.
- **Loyalty** – Sticking by someone you care about, you know how important it is to show care and support for others.
- **Metamorphosis** - Change of physical form, structure, or substance especially by supernatural means.
- **Trust** – Believing in someone's honesty or kindness, you use trust every day with your friends, family, and teachers.

PRE-SHOW

DISCUSSION

Fine Arts

- What do you think an opera is? How might it be different from a play or a musical?
- Mozart lived in Austria over 250 years ago. What do you imagine life was like then?
- Why do you think animals are sometimes used as characters in stories or shows?

Reflection

- How can music show a feeling like excitement, fear, or silliness?
- How do people sometimes misunderstand each other? What helps rebuild trust after a mistake?
- What do you think this show will look and sound like on stage?

Bonus!

- Explore Mozart's Childhood Home



SCAN

[in Salzburg, Austria](#)
[Click or Scan](#)

Explore the Opera Voice



SCAN

[The Opera Voice](#)
[Click or Scan](#)



All performance photos by Lynn Lane

PRE-SHOW

ACTIVITIES



All performance photos by Lynn Lane

Design an Opera Animal

Invent a new character: what animal are they, what role do they play, what would their costume look like?

Sound Effects

Use only your voices and classroom objects (desk tapping, paper rustling, pencils) to mimic storm, wind, or animal sounds.

Design a Cover

Create a mock program cover for *Mozart: Cats and Mice*. Include a title, illustration of characters, and “advertisements”.

Around the World

Locate Austria on a map. What else do we know about European composers of the 18th century?

Musical Weather Map

Listen to excerpts of storm music from Mozart, Vivaldi, Beethoven, and film scores. Match each one to emotions or weather types.

Scan or Click & Discuss



Mozart



Vivaldi



Beethoven

SOUNDS BEFORE THE STORM

Music • Nature • Imagination

Listen closely. How can composers use sound to create weather, emotion, and a story in your imagination?

Name: _____

Date: _____

1 LISTEN, FEEL & DESCRIBE

Use Scan/Click to hear each piece. Circle or check the words that match what you hear.



Scan/Click

VIVALDI — "STORM"
FROM THE FOUR SEASONS

☐ CALM

☐ FAST

☐ LIGHTNING



Scan/Click

BEETHOVEN —
PASTORAL SYMPHONY: STORM

☐ SCARED

☐ QUIET

☐ PEACEFUL



Scan/Click

JOHN WILLIAMS —
"THE IMPERIAL MARCH"

☐ POWERFUL

☐ HEAVY RAIN

☐ EXCITING

What sounds reminded you of thunder or wind? _____

How would you describe a storm using only sound? _____

2 INTERPRET MUSIC & NATURE



Mozart's original opera was set in the countryside.
Bastien was a shepherd who watched over animals.

Imagine you are a young shepherd in a valley or field. What might you hear?



☐ WIND



☐ BIRDS



☐ WATER



☐ LAUGHTER



☐ MUSIC

Why do you think composers write music about storms or nature?

3 PREDICT THE PERFORMANCE

This opera uses animals to tell a story.

What do you think the performance will be about?

What might you see or hear? Check all that you predict.



☐ Dancers
moving like
animals



☐ Opera
singing



☐ A cat
causing
trouble



☐ Mice
arguing



☐ A wise
owl



MY BIGGEST PREDICTION: _____

WHERE HAVE I HEARD THAT BEFORE?

Mozart in Games, Cartoons & Everyday Life

Mozart's music is not only heard in concerts and operas. It also appears in video games, cartoons, movies, and online videos. Listen, match, and explore how familiar music creates mood.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1 MATCH THAT MOZART!

Scan each code to listen. Then draw a line from each piece to one place you might hear it.



Scan/Click

**EINE KLEINE
NACHTMUSIK
(SERENADE NO. 13)**

☐ Bluey



Scan/Click

**RONDO
ALLA TURCA**

☐ Looney Tunes



Scan/Click

**QUEEN OF
THE NIGHT
(THE MAGIC FLUTE)**

☐ Animal Crossing



Scan/Click

**PIANO
SONATA NO. 16**

☐ Mario + Rabbids
Kingdom Battle



Scan/Click

**THE MARRIAGE
OF FIGARO
(OVERTURE)**

☐ Just Dance

2 THINK & SHARE

1. Which piece sounded the most familiar? Where have you heard it before?

2. Why do you think Mozart's music is still used in video games, cartoons, or movies?

3 DESIGN A SCENE

Draw a scene from a game, show, or commercial that could use Mozart's music.

Music I chose: _____

The music makes my scene feel: _____

☐ PLAYFUL

☐ EXCITING

☐ MYSTERIOUS

☐ DRAMATIC

FIFTH GRADE

TEKS Alignment

ELAR & READING- §110.7

TEKS: 5.3(A), 5.6(C), 5.9(D)

Student Learning Connection:

Students interpret narrative and theme through character, voice, and message conveyed in music and staging.

Science -§112.7

TEKS: 5.6(D), 5.7(A), 5.11(C)

Student Learning Connection:

Students explore sound, energy, and biological systems used in performance and voice.

Mathematics - §111.7

TEKS: 5.4(G), 5.5(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students identify patterns and shapes in music and staging. Musical sequences connect with math concepts.

Social Studies - §113.16

TEKS: 5.4(A), 5.5(B), 5.22(B)

Student Learning Connection:

Students analyze how Mozart's time and cultural background influence the art form.

LOTE -§114.4

TEKS:5.1(A), 5.2(B), 5.3(C)

Student Learning Connection:

Students recognize how meaning is shared across languages and cultures through music.

Health - §115.17

TEKS: 5.1(B), 5.5(B), 5.12(B)

Student Learning Connection:

Students explore self-expression, empathy, and conflict resolution through characters' emotional journeys.

Fine Arts -§117.118

TEKS:5.1(A), 5.2(B), 5.3(C)

Student Learning Connection:

Students respond to live music and performance, evaluating how artistic choices express meaning.

FIFTH GRADE

STAAR Alignment



RLA

STAAR Reporting Category:

Comprehension; Author's Purpose & Craft

Student Learning Connection

Follow story and theme through music and staging. Analyze how opera shows meaning without narration.

Mathematics

STAAR Reporting Category:

Patterns & Relationships, Geometry & Space

Student Learning Connection

Spot patterns in music and movement. Observe shapes and space on stage.

Science

STAAR Reporting Category:

Force & Energy, Body Systems

Student Learning Connection

Explore sound and vibration in performance. Connect voice and breath to body systems.

FIFTH GRADE

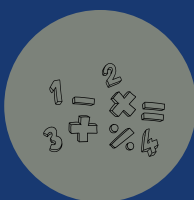
Curriculum Connections



English Language Arts

In The Classroom

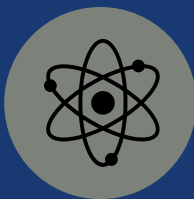
Use the performance to compare how stories are communicated through music, movement, and spoken language. Have students analyze mood, theme, point of view, or symbolism, then write a response explaining how the performers communicated meaning without relying on traditional dialogue.



Mathematics

In The Classroom

Connect rhythm to mathematical thinking by exploring patterns, fractions, sequencing, tempo, and repetition. Students can create rhythmic compositions, identify repeating patterns, or compare note values using fraction concepts.



Science

In The Classroom

Extend the performance into investigations of sound energy. Students can experiment with vibrations, pitch, volume, resonance, and the properties of different materials to explain how percussion instruments produce sound.



Social Studies

In The Classroom

Use the opera to explore 18th-century Europe, the Enlightenment, and the cultural traditions that shaped Mozart's work. Compare historical customs, roles, and artistic expression with modern interpretations to better understand how culture changes over time.



Health / SEL

In The Classroom

Discuss how trust, communication, empathy, and forgiveness influence relationships throughout the story. Invite students to reflect on how characters resolve conflict and connect those lessons to their own communication and problem-solving skills.

Discussion



Performance Reflection

- What moment from *Mozart: Cats and Mice* stayed with you the most? Why?
- How did the singers, musicians, and staging help tell the story?
- What surprised you most about the performance or the characters?

Emotional Connections

- Which character did you understand or empathize with the most? Why?
- How did the music help you recognize the characters' emotions?
- What did Bastien and Bastienne have to learn before they could trust each other again?



Culture & Community



- What did this performance teach you about life and entertainment in Mozart's time?
- How did this modern production make an 18th-century story feel relatable today?
- If you directed your own version, what setting or characters would you choose, and why?

Careers in the Arts

- Besides the singers and musicians, what careers helped bring this production to life?
- What role would you most like to explore, performer, director, costume designer, lighting designer, stage manager, composer, or another theatre career? Why?



POST-SHOW Activities

Write your own Aria (song)

- **Solo or Small Groups**

Use a simple melody (Twinkle Twinkle, ABCs) and rewrite lyrics about something emotional (jealousy, a secret, a surprise, a reunion).



Composer Web

- **Solo Activity**

Create a visual map of all the people involved in making the opera (composer, lyricist, conductor, stage crew, actors, etc.).

Recast the Show

- **Solo or Small Groups**

If this story were set in your community, what animals, setting, or costumes would be different?



Storm Emotions Collage

- **Solo Activity**

Use crayons or pastels to show how storm music from different eras makes you feel. Title your piece after the emotion it creates.

Career Spotlight

- **Explore Performing Arts Careers**

Choose one career involved in the show, such as performer, composer, percussionist, lighting designer, stage manager, sound engineer, producer, or arts educator. Research what that person does and identify one skill they need to be successful. Share your findings with the class.



WRITE YOUR OWN SONG

Create New Lyrics for Mozart: Cats and Mice

Mozart used melody to tell stories. Now it is your turn to create lyrics inspired by the performance.



Name: _____

Date: _____



DID YOU KNOW?

When Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote the original *Bastien und Bastienne*, he was only 12 years old—about the same age as you! He used melody, characters, and singing to help tell the story.

1 CHOOSE YOUR MELODY



Choose a familiar melody you know well, or write your own.

☐

Twinkle, Twinkle,
Little Star


☐

ABCs

ABC

☐

FRÈRE
JACQUES


☐

Another melody:

2 CHOOSE A STORY MOMENT



Which moment from *MOZART: CATS AND MICE* will inspire your lyrics?

☐

When Bastienne
gets caught in
the storm


☐

When the Owl
casts the spell


☐

When Bastien
resists the Cat


☐

When everyone
celebrates at
the end


☐

Another moment: _____

3 WRITE YOUR NEW LYRICS



Write a few lines that fit the melody and tell what happens in your chosen moment.

My song's mood: _____ One important word: _____ My first line: _____

4 REHEARSE & PERFORM



Practice your lyrics quietly, then share them with a partner or the class.

☐

My words fit the melody.

☐

My lyrics tell part of the story.

☐

I used expression.

☐

I performed with confidence.



WHAT DID YOU DISCOVER?

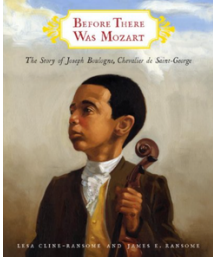
What was easiest or most challenging about matching new words to an existing melody?



OPERA VOICE CHALLENGE: Try performing one line with clear diction, strong expression, and supported breath.

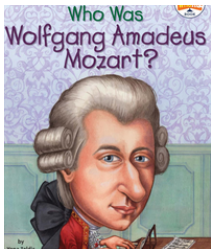
FIFTH GRADE RESOURCES

Books



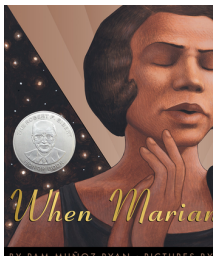
"Before There Was Mozart: The Story of Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-George" by Lesa Cline-Ransome

Tells the story of Joseph Boulogne, a groundbreaking Black musician and composer whose talent and perseverance helped him overcome prejudice and achieve success in 18th-century France.



"Who Was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart?" by Yona Zeldis McDonough

Introduces students to Mozart's life as a child musical prodigy who began composing at age five and later created more than 600 works. The biography also explores his career, personal challenges, and the musical world of 18th-century Europe.



"When Marian Sang" by Pam Muñoz Ryan

Tells the true story of Marian Anderson, the acclaimed contralto who overcame racial discrimination to share her extraordinary voice with audiences around the world. Her historic Lincoln Memorial concert demonstrates the power of music, courage, and perseverance to challenge

Websites

Classics for Kids



A free website that introduces students to classical music through kid-friendly audio episodes, interactive games, composer bios, and classroom-ready activities.

Link: [Classics](#)

New York Philharmonic



Features fun, interactive games like "Instrument Lab" and "Composer's Gallery," where students can explore orchestra sections, learn about composers, and even compose their own short piece.

Link: [Kids Zone](#)

CONNECT WITH US

thehobbycenter.org/education

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**Let us know what you think.
Please take our survey!**



**[Post-Show
Student Survey](#)**



**[Post-Show
Teacher Survey](#)**