



DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
STUDENT MINI-GUIDE

Virtual Educational Concert Series  
**WOMEN COMPOSERS: JUSTICE IN MUSIC**



**FACEBOOK LIVE WATCH PARTY: FRIDAY, JUNE 19TH, 2020 AT 2:00PM**  
AVAILABLE TO STREAM ANY TIME ON YOUTUBE AND DSO REPLAY

Women have historically been excluded as composers in concert halls, and while that has started to change in recent years, there is still much more work to be done to ensure all people can express themselves through music. *Women Composers: Justice in Music* includes excerpts from pieces Juliet Palmer and Nkeiru Okoye. Palmer and Okoye chose to highlight important (and under-told) stories from Michigan's history through their music.

Students can use the activities in this mini-guide to prepare for viewing the DSO's accompanying "virtual" ECS performance, a compilation of previously recorded pieces curated for educational purposes during the shutdown. The concert will air on Facebook Live and DSO.org and be publicly available after on YouTube and the DSO's streaming service, DSO Replay.



## Virtual Educational Concert Series WOMEN COMPOSERS: JUSTICE IN MUSIC

### Concert Program

Leonard Slatkin, *conductor*

Thomas Wilkins, *conductor*

Juliet Palmer  
(b. 1967)

*Oil & Water*

Nkeiru Okoye  
(b. 1972)

*Black Bottom*

I. Tribute 1: Shout

II. Two Shops on Hastings

III. Tribute 2: Moan

VIII. 5461 Brush Street

IX. Tribute 4: Dance



# DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LEONARD SLATKIN, Music Director Laureate

*Music Directorship endowed by the Kresge Foundation*

JEFF TYZIK  
Principal Pops Conductor

TERENCE BLANCHARD  
Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb  
Jazz Creative Director Chair

NEEME JÄRVI  
Music Director Emeritus

## FIRST VIOLIN

Kimberly Kaloyanides  
Kennedy  
INTERIM CONCERTMASTER  
*Katherine Tuck Chair*  
Hai-Xin Wu  
INTERIM ASSOCIATE  
CONCERTMASTER  
*Schwartz Shapero Family  
Chair*  
Jennifer Wey Fang  
ASSISTANT CONCERTMASTER  
*Walker L. Cisler/Detroit  
Edison Foundation Chair*  
Marguerite Deslippe\*  
Laurie Goldman\*  
Rachel Harding Klaus\*  
Eun Park Lee\*  
Adrienne Rönmark\*  
Laura Soto\*  
Greg Staples\*  
Jiamin Wang\*  
Mingzhao Zhou\*  
Yoonshin Song~  
CONCERTMASTER

## SECOND VIOLIN

Adam Stepniewski  
ACTING PRINCIPAL  
*The Devereaux Family Chair*  
Will Haapaniemi\*  
*David and Valerie  
McCammon Chair*  
Hae Jeong Heidi Han\*  
*David and Valerie  
McCammon Chair*  
Sheryl Hwangbo\*  
Sujin Lim\*  
Hong-Yi Mo\*  
Alexandros Sakarellos\*  
*Drs. Doris Tong  
and Teck Soo Chair*  
Joseph Striplin\*  
Marian Tanau\*  
Jing Zhang\*  
Open, PRINCIPAL

## VIOLA

Eric Nowlin, PRINCIPAL  
*Julie and Ed Levy, Jr. Chair*  
James VanValkenburg  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Caroline Coade  
Glenn Mellow  
Hang Su  
Shanda Lowery-Sachs  
Hart Hollman  
Han Zheng  
Mike Chen

## CELLO

Wei Yu, PRINCIPAL  
*James C. Gordon Chair*  
Abraham Feder  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
*Dorothy and Herbert  
Graebner Chair*  
Robert Bergman\*  
Jeremy Crossmer\*  
David LeDoux\*  
Peter McCaffrey\*  
*Joanne Danto and  
Arnold Weingarden Chair*  
Haden McKay\*  
Una O'Riordan\*  
*Mary Ann and Robert Gorlin  
Chair*  
Paul Wingert\*  
*Victor and Gale Girolami  
Chair*

## BASS

Kevin Brown, PRINCIPAL  
*Van Dusen Family Chair*  
Stephen Molina  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Linton Bodwin  
Stephen Edwards  
Christopher Hamlen  
Nicholas Myers

## HARP

Patricia Masri-Fletcher  
PRINCIPAL  
*Winifred E. Polk Chair*

## FLUTE

Sharon Sparrow  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
*Bernard and Eleanor  
Robertson Chair*  
Amanda Blaikie  
*Morton and Brigitte Harris  
Chair*  
Jeffery Zook  
Open, PRINCIPAL  
*Women's Association for  
the DSO Chair*

## PICCOLO

Jeffery Zook

## OBOE

Alexander Kinmonth  
PRINCIPAL  
*Jack A. and Aviva Robinson  
Chair*  
Sarah Lewis  
*Maggie Miller Chair*  
Monica Fosnaugh  
Open, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

## ENGLISH HORN

Monica Fosnaugh  
*Shari and Craig Morgan  
Chair*

## CLARINET

Ralph Skiano  
PRINCIPAL  
*Robert B. Semple Chair*  
Jack Walters  
*PVS Chemicals Inc./Jim  
and Ann Nicholson Chair*  
Laurence Liberson  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Shannon Orme

## E-FLAT CLARINET

Laurence Liberson

## BASS CLARINET

Shannon Orme  
*Barbara Frankel and Ronald  
Michalak Chair*

## BASSOON

Robert Williams, PRINCIPAL  
Victoria King  
Michael Ke Ma  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Marcus Schoon

## CONTRABASSOON

Marcus Schoon

## HORN

Karl Pituch, PRINCIPAL  
Johanna Yarbrough  
Scott Strong  
Bryan Kennedy  
David Everson  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
Mark Abbott

## TRUMPET

Hunter Eberly, PRINCIPAL  
*Lee and Floy Barthel Chair*  
Kevin Good  
Stephen Anderson  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
William Lucas  
Michael Gause  
*African-American Orchestra  
Fellow*

## TROMBONE

Kenneth Thompkins, PRINCIPAL  
David Binder  
Randall Hawes

## BASS TROMBONE

Randall Hawes

## TUBA

Dennis Nulty, PRINCIPAL

## PERCUSSION

Joseph Becker, PRINCIPAL  
*Ruth Roby and Alfred R.  
Glancy III Chair*  
Andrés Pichardo-Rosenthal  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
*William Cody Knicely Chair*  
James Ritchie

## TIMPANI

Jeremy Epp, PRINCIPAL  
*Richard and Mona Alonzo  
Chair*  
James Ritchie  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

## LIBRARIANS

Robert Stiles, PRINCIPAL  
Ethan Allen

## PERSONNEL MANAGERS

Heather Hart Rochon  
DIRECTOR OF ORCHESTRA  
PERSONNEL  
Patrick Peterson  
MANAGER OF ORCHESTRA  
PERSONNEL

## STAGE PERSONNEL

Dennis Rottell, STAGE MANAGER  
Ryan DeMarco  
DEPARTMENT HEAD  
Noel Keesee  
DEPARTMENT HEAD  
Steven Kemp  
DEPARTMENT HEAD  
Matthew Pons  
DEPARTMENT HEAD  
Michael Sarkissian  
DEPARTMENT HEAD

## LEGEND

\* These members may voluntarily revolve seating within the section on a regular basis

~ Leave of absence



# SECTION 1

## Clean Water

Fresh water is one of the few things humans absolutely need to live. In Michigan we have the Great Lakes, which together hold about 21% of the world's fresh surface water. Juliet Palmer's *Oil & Water* was inspired partly by the Great Lakes, which separate Michigan from her home in Ontario, Canada.

One story Dr. Palmer tells through *Oil & Water* is about the struggles some communities face keeping access to clean drinking water. Even in Michigan, where we are surrounded by big, beautiful, and clean freshwater lakes, some of our communities experience this conflict.

Some Michigan cities have made national and international news headlines over water struggles. In Flint, residents' drinking water was contaminated with lead, a toxic chemical, when the government switched water sources to save money. Parchment's water was contaminated with PFAS, another toxic chemical. Activists in Detroit led demonstrations against water shutoffs, which cut off water to some homes in the city.

Oil also played a role in several of the water conflicts that inspired Juliet Palmer, such as the protests against oil pipelines running through Native American lands. In the piece, actual recordings of protesters are integrated into the music.



Flint, MI, residents had to pick up bottled water after their tap water was poisoned with lead. Images uploaded to Flickr by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Public Domain. [Link](#). [Link](#).

### Further Reading: Program Notes

Check out Juliet Palmer's program notes on *Oil & Water* to find out about many more of the events, people, and places that inspired her. Have you heard or read about any of them before? Are there other stories or historical events that the piece reminds you of that she hasn't listed?



**CHECK IT OUT:**  
*Oil & Water*  
Program Notes  
<https://bit.ly/37z8GFU>

*Continued on the next page...*



Palmer wanted to highlight these and other water access struggles in her music. Even the title, “oil and water,” evokes conflict: oil and water are two liquids that cannot mix, no matter how much you stir them together.

Palmer’s music also reminds audiences that water sustains life. In oceans and lakes, like our Great Lakes, water is a habitat for fish and many other living organisms. Surface water, ground water, and rain water are essential for land animals, plants, and humans. Juliet Palmer reminds us that all ecosystems depend on healthy water access.



Lake Superior, the largest of the five Great Lakes.

Image uploaded to Flickr by mity102181. Used under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/) license. [Link](#).



Protesters supporting the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe’s fight against an oil pipeline running through their lands.

Image uploaded to Flickr by Earthjustice. Used under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/) license. [Link](#).

## Composer Spotlight: Juliet Palmer

Dr. Juliet Palmer is a New Zealand-Canadian composer, artist, and performer. Her works span many musical genres, and many also include other art forms like dance and film.

She earned Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in music from Auckland University in New Zealand and a Master of Fine Arts and Ph.D. in composition from Princeton University in the United States. Her creations have premiered around the world, including the orchestral piece *Oil & Water*, which the Detroit Symphony Orchestra commissioned and premiered in June 2019.



Juliet Palmer at Orchestra Hall in Detroit, 2019.



**READ MORE:**

<https://www.julietpalmer.ca/>

# ACTIVITY 1

## Water and Oil

Chemically, oil is less dense than water. Because it is less dense, oil floats on top of water and will not mix in, no matter how much you stir.

Using a tall glass, jar, or other container with see-through sides, add equal amounts of oil and water. Observe how the oil and water separate. Then, experiment with stirring (or shaking, if your container has a lid!) the contents together. Even though the oil might break into smaller droplets, it still won't blend in with the water.

Listen to the first five minutes of *Oil & Water*. Can you connect anything that you see in your oil/water mixture to anything that you hear in the music? How do you think those represent some of the conflicts that inspired Juliet Palmer?

### Materials:

- Water
- Any kitchen oil (olive oil, vegetable oil, canola oil)
- A clear glass or other container
- A spoon if your container does not have a lid



### ON THE PROGRAM:

Juliet Palmer

*Oil & Water*

<https://bit.ly/3edByGk>

## Notes:

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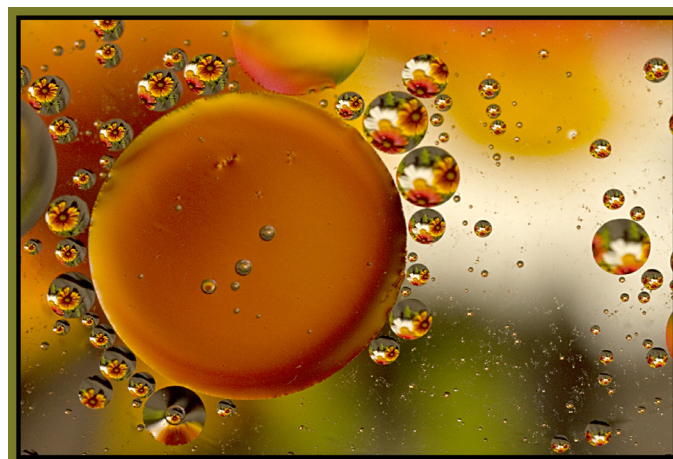
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*"Oil and Water Art," uploaded to Flickr by M. Orchard. Used under [CC BY-NC 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/) license. [Link](#).*

# SECTION 2

## Black Bottom

The next piece on the program is *Black Bottom* by composer Nkeiru Okoye. Dr. Okoye was inspired by the complex fabric of Detroit's history. The piece recounts the musical and social life of Detroit's **Black Bottom and Paradise Valley** neighborhoods from the 1920s to the 1960s. Black Bottom was a thriving African American community, and a destination for Black entrepreneurs, public figures, and musicians.

However, as part of its "urban renewal" plans in the 1950s and 1960s, the government chose to demolish Black Bottom and Paradise Valley to build the I-375 Chrysler Freeway. When it did so, the government forced the residents of both neighborhoods to find new homes, destroying the community and businesses they had built over the decades. The process was a painful and unjust experience for Black residents who didn't feel like their voices were heard or valued by the government.

To give life to this important history, Nkeiru Okoye included many different musical influences in *Black Bottom*. The first, second, third, eighth, and ninth movements of the piece are featured in this week's program. Read about each below to discover its musical influences and what they mean.

### Tribute 1: Shout

The first movement is inspired by African-influenced traditions such as Kwanzaa. By using African influences, the piece pays tribute to the African heritage of most Black Bottom residents. The non-verbal singing passages allow the four vocalists, particularly the soprano, to explore their voices as instruments.

### Two Shops on Hastings

Hastings Street was a vibrant center of the Black Bottom community. This movement pays tribute to two stores on Hastings: Joe's Record Shop and Barthwell's Drugs. Like many of the records sold at the time, you can hear strong jazz and popular music influences. The movement also uses several techniques to tell the stories of the stores, including the **African "talking instrument"** tradition and representation of Sidney Barthwell (the drug store's owner) in the trombone.

### Tribute 2: Moan

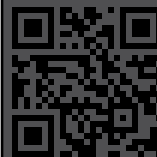
Like the first Tribute, this movement references African musical traditions. This time the music is mournful, representing the pain of residents as bulldozers destroy the community they love. The chimes heard toward the end evoke church bells (like those in the four prominent Black churches in the neighborhood) ringing out notes from the Doxology.

### 5461 Brush Street

The eighth movement of the piece pays tribute to Dr. Rosa Lee Slade Gragg, an influential and successful educator, community leader, and political activist who, despite her accomplishments, is not very well known today. Dr. Gragg advised Detroit mayors, Michigan governors, and even three U.S. presidents (Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson) on women's, labor, and civil rights.

## Further Reading: Program Notes

Check out the program notes from the world premiere of *Black Bottom* for information on the other movements in the piece!



### CHECK IT OUT:

*Black Bottom*  
Program Notes

<https://bit.ly/2N0CvG6>



A flyer for Barthwell's Drug Store.  
Image courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

Continued on the next page...



She also founded a vocational school in Detroit and led numerous activist and charitable causes. The movement's title, "5461 Brush Street," references the address of the Detroit Association of Women's Clubs (DAWC), a social and charitable organization for African American women in Detroit that she led in the 1940s.

To this day, the DAWC is located at 5461 Brush Street in a house Dr. Gragg bought. The house sits on the intersection of Ferry and Brush, and its original address was actually 326 East Ferry Street. Racist housing policies on Ferry Street at the time forbid Dr. Gragg from owning the house because she was Black.

Dr. Gragg purchased the home anyway. She knocked in the wall on Brush Street, installed a new door, and changed the address to 5461 Brush Street, which got around the racist housing rules. In 2019, 78 years after she beat the racist housing policies on Ferry Street, the intersection of Ferry and Brush was renamed "Dr. Rosa L. Gragg Boulevard" in honor of her many achievements.

Because Dr. Gragg's story is not as well-known as it should be, the eighth movement of *Black Bottom* has the vocalists tell her story with lyrics, like a recitative in an **opera**. Unlike an **aria** in an opera, which has the structure of a song, a **recitative** follows the **rhythms** of ordinary speech. To honor her, the vocalists also repeat her name over and over: "Dr. Rosa Slade Gragg."

**Tribute 4: Dance**

This final Tribute honors the memories of Black Bottom residents and their ancestors while looking to the future. Dr. Okoye identifies this movement with **Sankofa**, an idea of the Akan people in Ghana that knowing the past is vital to making the future better.



**Dr. Rosa Slade Gragg (second from right) and friends.** Image courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.



**5461 Brush Street, still the current meeting space of the Detroit Association of Women's Clubs.**

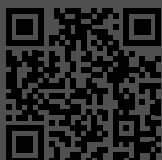
**Composer Spotlight:**  
**Nkeiru Okoye**

Dr. Nkeiru Okoye [pronounced in-KEAR-roo oh-KOY-yeh] was born in New York City to an African American mother and Nigerian father, and she grew up traveling between the United States and Nigeria. She earned a Bachelor's degree in music composition from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and a Master's and Ph.D. from Rutgers University.

She names a wide range of influences on her music, from George and Ira Gershwin to Arnold Shoenberg to West African traditions. She composes in many different genres, including for piano, orchestra, theatre, and opera. Her composition *Black Bottom* was commissioned and premiered by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in March 2020.



*Nkeiru Okoye at the Paradise Valley historical marker in Detroit, 2019.*



**READ MORE:**  
<https://www.nkeiruokoye.com/home>



# ACTIVITY 2

## Finding Your Voice

The many influences and illustrations Nkeiru Okoye infused into *Black Bottom* make it a wonderful and engaging composition, but also provide a powerful basis for discussing Detroit's (and the United States') complicated and uncomfortable history with race and class.

In Dr. Okoye's words, "*Black Bottom* isn't just about this one neighborhood because it repeats in any number of places. It's going on now, so it's a very relevant concept even for today in most cities."<sup>[source]</sup>

Reflect on an issue, past or present, that is important to you. In what way(s) can you raise awareness for that issue? Politically, socially, artistically? Write below the issue you chose, why it is important to you, and how you can raise awareness and make change.

**What issue is important to you and why?**

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**What talents or skills do you have that can help you tell others about it?**

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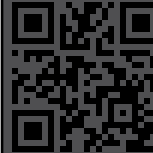
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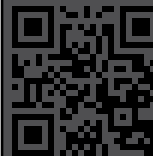
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### Further Reading: Black Bottom

Check out the articles below for more about the history behind *Black Bottom*.



**CHECK IT OUT:**  
Fox 2 Detroit feature  
<https://bit.ly/3hzlBet>



**CHECK IT OUT:**  
Michigan Chronicle feature  
<https://bit.ly/3fz3Sml>

# SECTION 3

## Timbre: “Tone Color”

**Timbre**, or “tone color,” is a musical term referring to the quality of a sound. Unlike **pitch** or **dynamics**, which can be the same from one instrument to another, timbre is unique to each instrument. The quality of that instrument’s sound is how you can tell it apart from any other instrument!

For example, a trumpet has a very different timbre from a flute. Even if both instruments played the same note at the same volume, you could easily tell which was which. Some words you might use to describe the trumpet’s timbre are “bright” and “full,” while you might say the flute is “light” or “airy.”

For composers who want to create a specific effect or tell a certain story, timbre is very important. Our composers this week were inspired by historical and current events, and thus had to think carefully how they would evoke those themes through the instruments in the orchestra.

**Reflect:** Think of a song you really enjoy. How would the song’s mood change if the instruments and timbre were different?



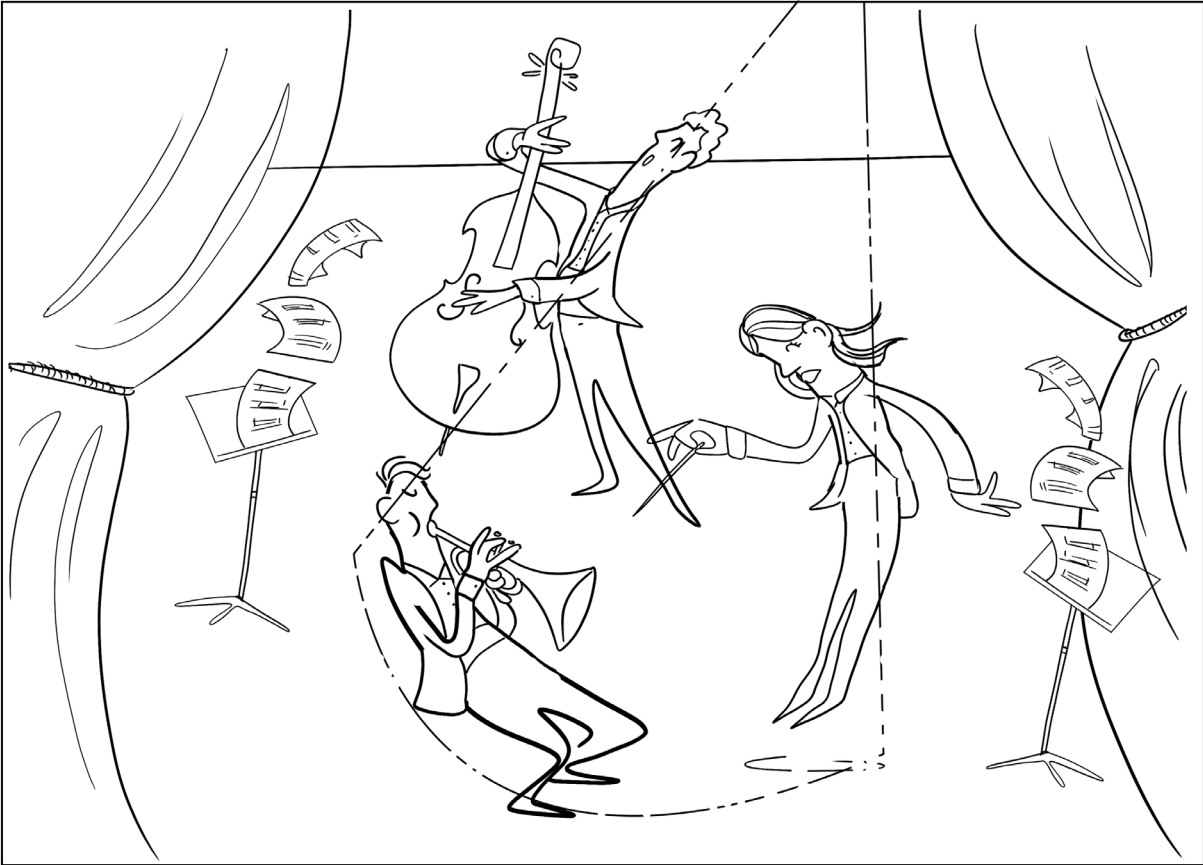
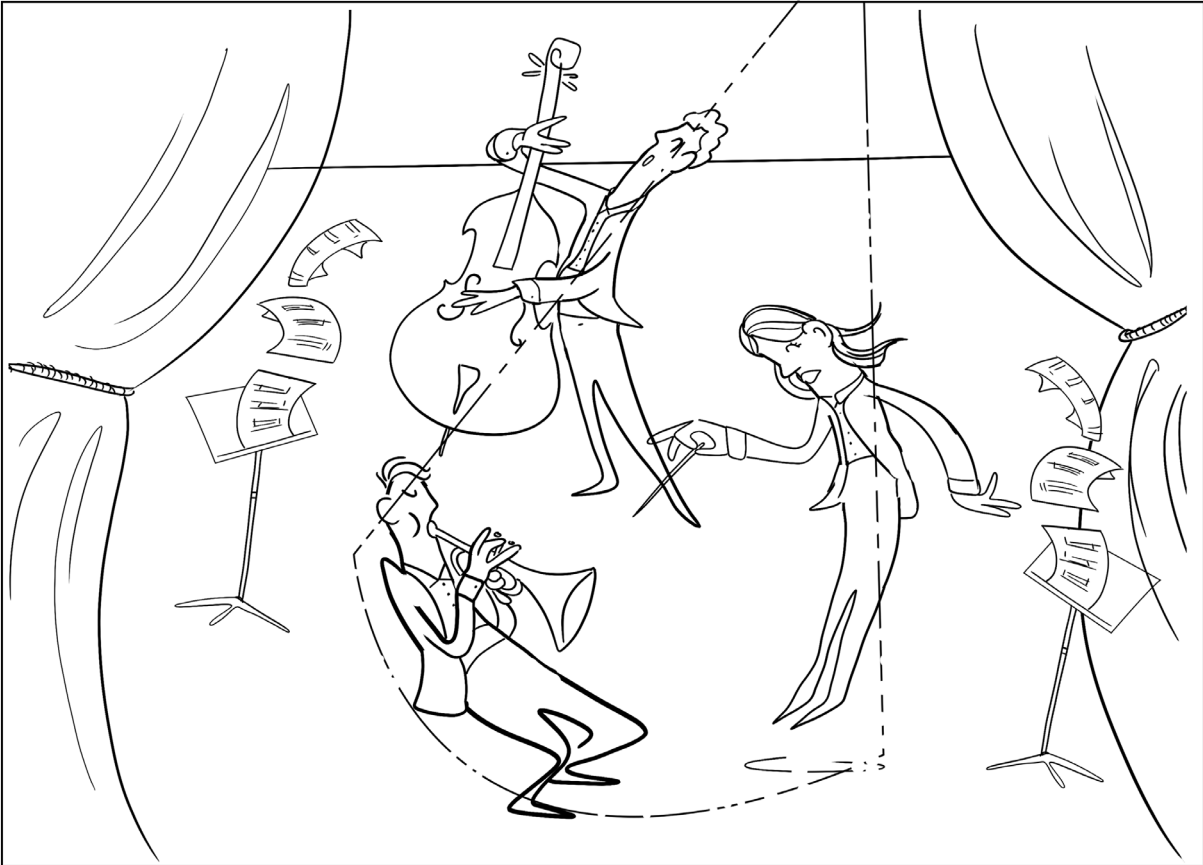
The Detroit Symphony Orchestra performing on Orchestra Hall stage in Detroit.

# ACTIVITY 3

## Colors and Mood

An easy way to demonstrate the effects of tone color is this experiment with actual colors! The images on the next page are the same. Choose a set of four colors to use on one image and a set of four different colors to use on the other.

Reflect on how the effect of the image changes with a different palette of colors. Do the colors you chose make it seem happier, sadder, funnier, or something else? Composers can create the same effects in their music just by choosing which instruments play!



# GLOSSARY

## *Terms in order of use*

**Black Bottom and Paradise Valley:** Two majority-African American communities in Detroit which were destroyed to make space for the I-375 freeway in the 1960s.

**Talking Instrument:** A West African musical tradition in which an instrument recreates the tone and rhythm of human speech.

**Opera:** An artform that incorporates music and theatre. Operas portray stories and are (almost always) completely sung-through using formal singing techniques.

**Aria:** A distinct segment of music in an opera that follows the structure of a song.

**Recitative:** A segment of music in an opera that is sung-through, but follows human speech patterns rather than a song structure. Recitatives help advance an opera's story.

**Rhythm:** The pattern of notes in music.

**Sankofa:** A principle of the Akan people in Ghana which states that you must learn from the past to improve the future.

**Timbre:** The quality of a sound which allows a listener to distinguish it from other sounds (also called "tone color").

**Pitch:** How high or low a music note is.

**Dynamics:** The levels of volume in music. Dynamics are written using Italian terms like "piano" ("quiet") and "forte" ("loud").