



**Young People's Concerts
for Schools 2023:
*Our Community,
Our Earth***

RESOURCE MATERIALS
FOR TEACHERS

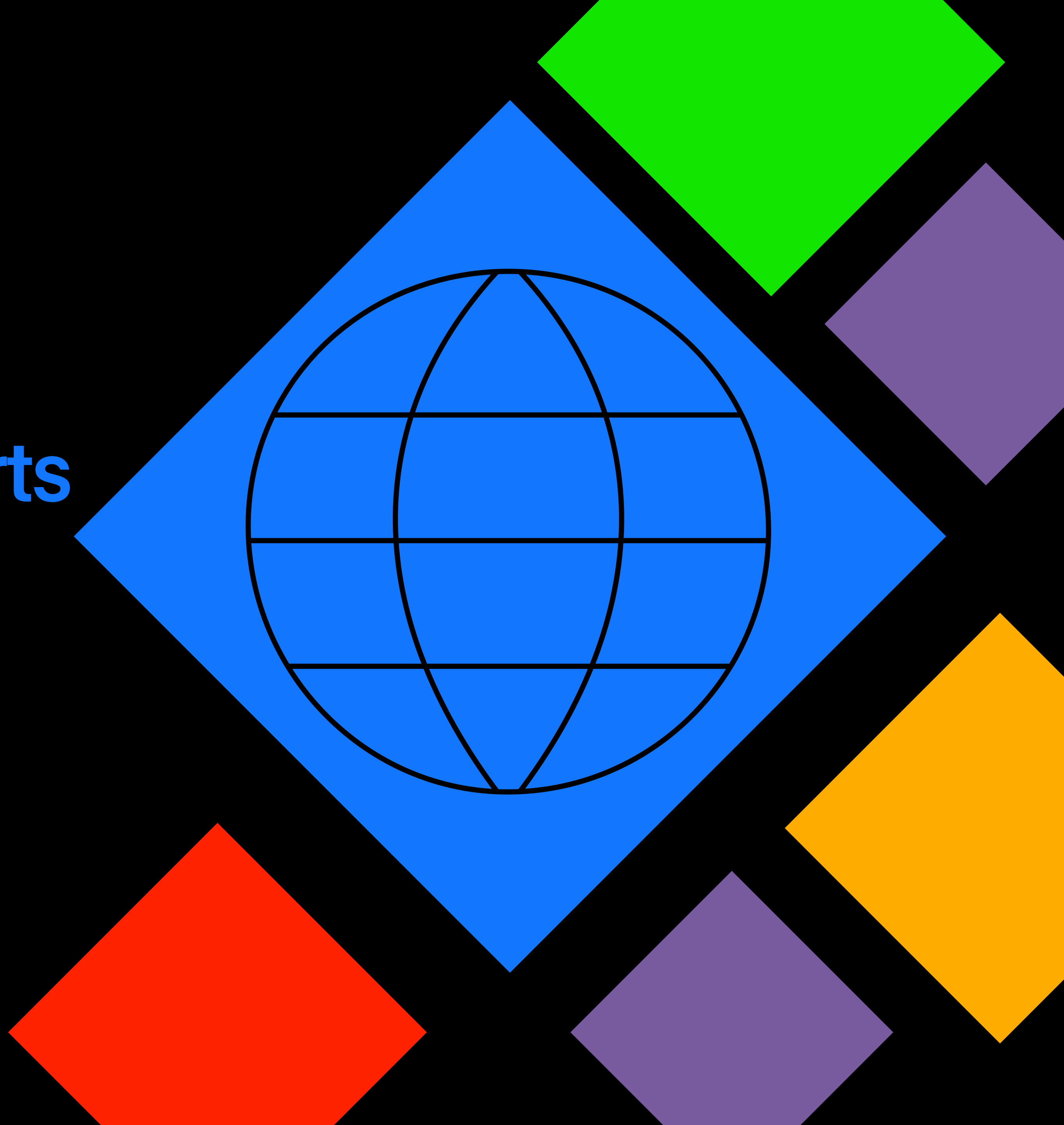


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EDUCATION AT THE NY PHIL

For generations, the New York Philharmonic has been engaging listeners through unforgettable concerts, workshops, and enriching opportunities for young composers and performers that deepen the understanding of music for all kinds of audiences. Schools from across New York City and beyond can experience the full orchestra at our [Young People's Concerts™ for Schools](#), and bring Philharmonic programming into your community, led by our Teaching Artist faculty, through our [Philharmonic Schools](#) and [Very Young Composers](#) Programs. These initiatives have engaged school communities in all five boroughs during the school day and afterschool for more than 25 years.

Family programming has been a hallmark at the Philharmonic for nearly a century. Our [Young People's Concerts™](#) engage children ages six to twelve around symphonic music from all eras — including the present day. [Very Young People's Concerts™](#), designed for pre-schoolers, combine great music with storytelling and games to unlock children's imagination and talent. [Digital Resources](#) — including concerts, interactive lessons, and other topics — are specially designed with students, teachers, and families in mind.

To learn more about the Philharmonic's many other education and community engagement programs, visit nyphil.org.



WELCOME TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE’S CONCERTS FOR SCHOOLS!

The lessons in this guide complement New York Philharmonic Young People’s Concerts to enhance your students’ experience in the concert hall and make meaningful connections between the modality of music and a range of core subjects. In keeping with *The Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts* and the Common Core, students will listen closely to distinguish different musical characteristics, just as they read texts closely for detail and evidence in class. They will compose music, develop musical literacy, and understand music as one strand of a rich web of cultural expression. They will build skills that open up all kinds of music in new ways. And they will hear the thrilling sound of the full New York Philharmonic.

Enjoy the lessons, indulge in listening, and have fun at your Young People’s Concert for Schools. See you there!



Gary Padmore

Vice President, Education & Community Engagement
The Sue B. Mercy Chair

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Writer: Erin Wight

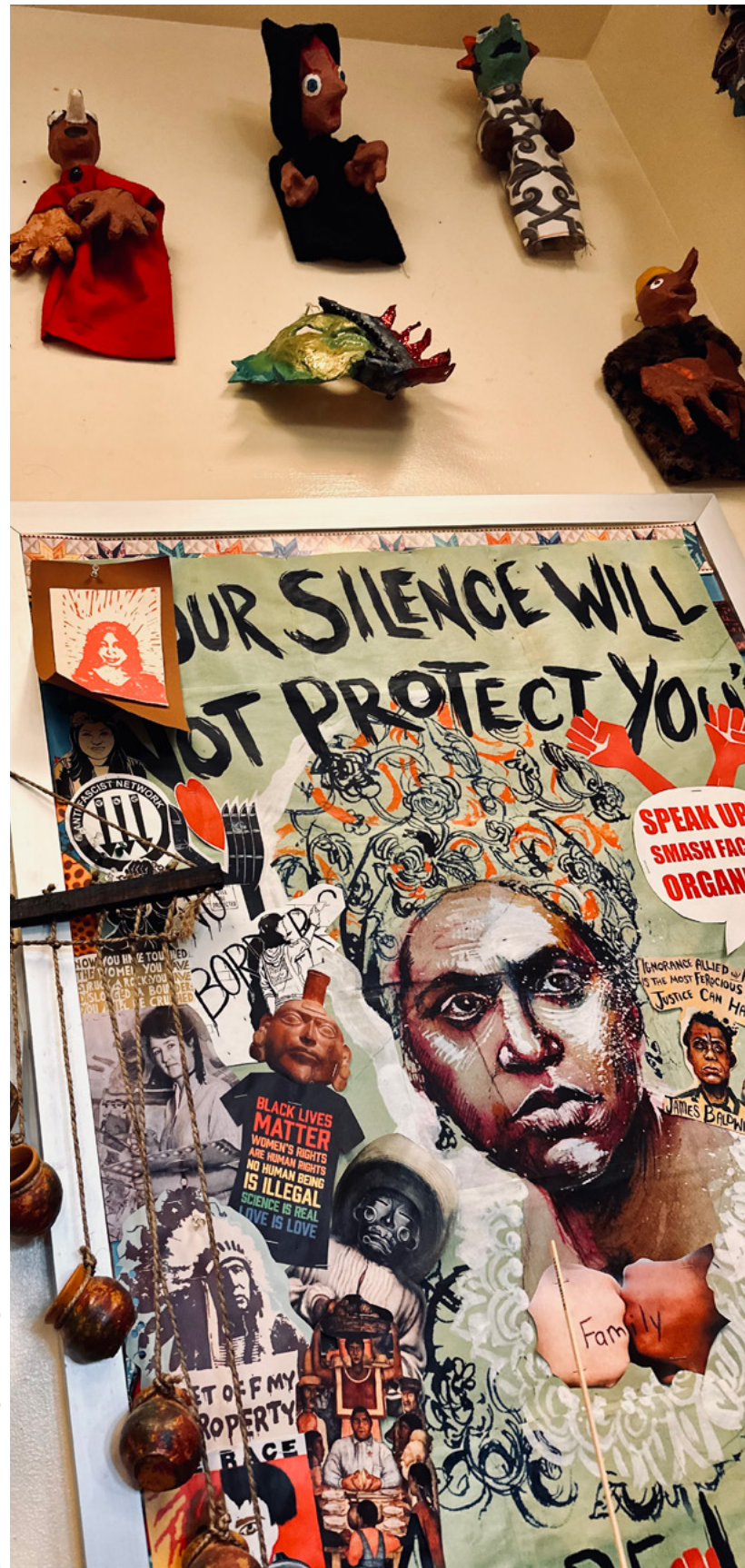
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OUR COMMUNITY, OUR EARTH



In the spring of 2022 we began conversations with our community partner, **El Puente — Leaders for Peace and Justice**, along with composer and former NY Phil Teaching Artist, **Angélica Negrón**. Through their art, El Puente and Negrón have shown a commitment to building community, making connections, and communicating issues that are vitally important to our times. Climate justice was a focal point for our discussions, inspiring us to develop a concert program that could support students' understanding of Earth systems and climate change impacts, and also provide opportunities for student-centered activism.

Set within the context of the symphonic music tradition, the 2023 Young People's Concerts for Schools will explore how the orchestra is like an ecosystem, where a balance of elements is critical to the health and wellbeing of the whole environment and community. Our program includes music composed over the past 300 years, allowing us to trace how the orchestra has evolved and adapted to express the relationship between composers and their natural environments and mirror our growing understanding of the Earth and Earth systems. We hope that performances of music by **Very Young Composers** — commissioned by the New York Philharmonic and written expressly through a climate justice lens — will make the connection between art and activism tangible and inspire your students to find their own creative ways to build agency around issues close to them.

Attention has been paid to design a range of lesson plans and activities that target different modalities of learning and promote cross-curricular applications. We hope this guide will serve as a jumping-off point for your own classroom explorations and at the same time familiarize your students with the orchestra: a sonic body of endless possibility and powerful symbol of the intersection of our environment and humanity.

Wed, January 25, 2023 | 10:30am and 12:00pm
Thu, January 26, 2023 | 11:00am and 12:30pm
Fri, January 27, 2023 | 10:30am and 12:00pm

Lidiya Yankovskaya conductor / co-host
Angélica Negrón co-host
Ken Kaissar scriptwriter
El Puente community partner
Habib Azar director

REBEL *Le Cahos*, from *Les Éléments*

DEBUSSY *The Play of the Waves*, from *La Mer*

Olli OKSANEN *Viimeinen Toivo (The Last Hope)*
(US Premiere)

Very Young Composers of PS 11, Brooklyn New
Work (World Premiere)

Angélica NEGRÓN *For Those...* (World Premiere—New
York Philharmonic Commission)

Mason BATES Selection from *Xinjiang Province,*
2112, from *Alternative Energy*

David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City

Commission Spotlight

A musical **commission** is an invitation to a composer or music creator to create a new piece of music. A commission request can come from a number of different places: for example, from another group of musicians, an organization hosting a concert or special event, or a foundation dedicated to helping artists create the music they want to make. The person or group extending the commission agrees to support the composer as they create their music — most often by paying them for their work — and sometimes can make special requests for ideas or sounds the piece might feature. All kinds of artists can be commissioned to create something new including visual artists, choreographers, writers, and fashion designers.

For this musical commission, the New York Philharmonic asked Angélica Negrón to create a musical work that responds to a visual art piece that would be created by young people at El Puente. The art piece reflects their perspective on climate change and its impact on historically marginalized communities, and the urgency for immediate action. For Negrón, this meant that the youth voice had to be at the center of the music making process — from creatively curated colors and images to the text that highlights this theme. The theme of “loss” permeates this piece, as students process and reflect on those who have been impacted by devastations of our environment and humanity.

Listen to Negrón speak about this new project, and what it’s like to work on musical commissions.



 [Angélica Negrón: Commission Spotlight](#)

Let’s Hear from YOU!

The New York Philharmonic wants your students’ passion and creativity to be part of *Our Community, Our Earth*. Share their compositions, art work, and persuasive speaking based on the prompts below. More information can be found in the designated “Let’s Hear from YOU!” sections of this guide.

1. Compose for a New Element

Build on Jean-Féry Rebel’s representation of the natural world by inviting students to compose and perform music for a new or revised element.

2. Create a Visual Impression

Create and share original visual art that expresses an impression of a meaningful natural place.

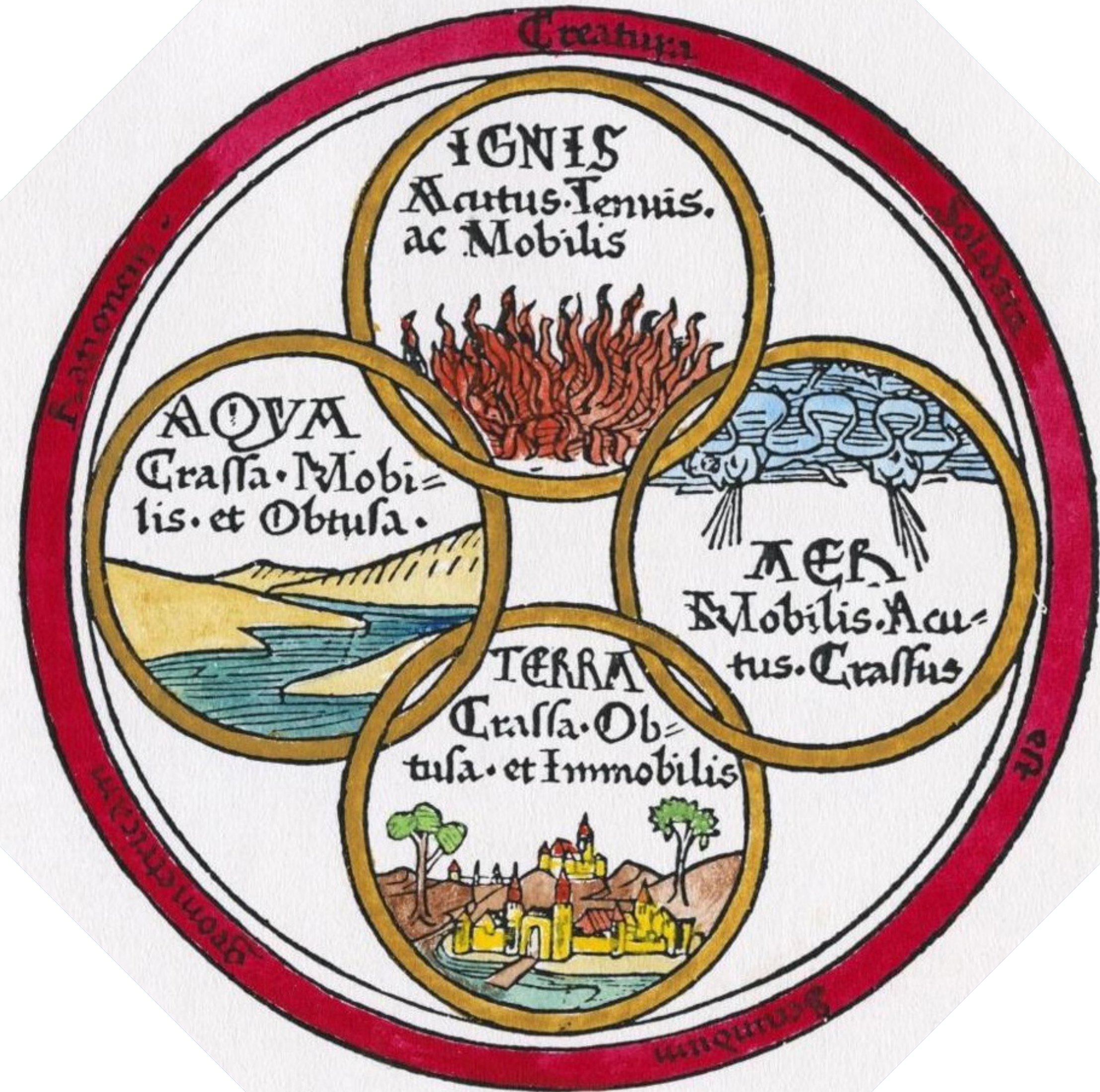
3. Make a Case for Action

Help students amplify their impact and inspire climate action by having them craft a short piece of persuasive speaking or writing.

UNIT 1: Making Connections

REBEL *Le Cahos*, from *Les Éléments*

So much of our world — our communities, our environment, our bodies — exist as systems where smaller elements come together to create a functional (or, at times, dysfunctional) whole. Many systems have, at their heart, a crucial interdependence between elements: consider the delicate balance required for healthy ecosystems. Outside of nature, the orchestra functions as its own kind of musical ecosystem: each element has its own critical role to play and together they aim for a unique sonic balance. Inspired by the thinking of his Age of Enlightenment era, composer **Jean-Féry Rebel** tackled both scientific and musical systems at once in his orchestral work *Le Cahos*, from *Les Éléments*. Since Rebel's time, scientific thinking around Earth's systems has evolved dramatically and continues to provide vast musical inspiration. Composers like **Claude Debussy**, **Mason Bates**, and **Angélica Negrón**, also represented on this concert program, have explored the tremendous creative possibilities that exist within orchestral ecosystems — over the past 100 years as well as envisaging the future.



ACTIVITY 1 THINKING IN SYSTEMS

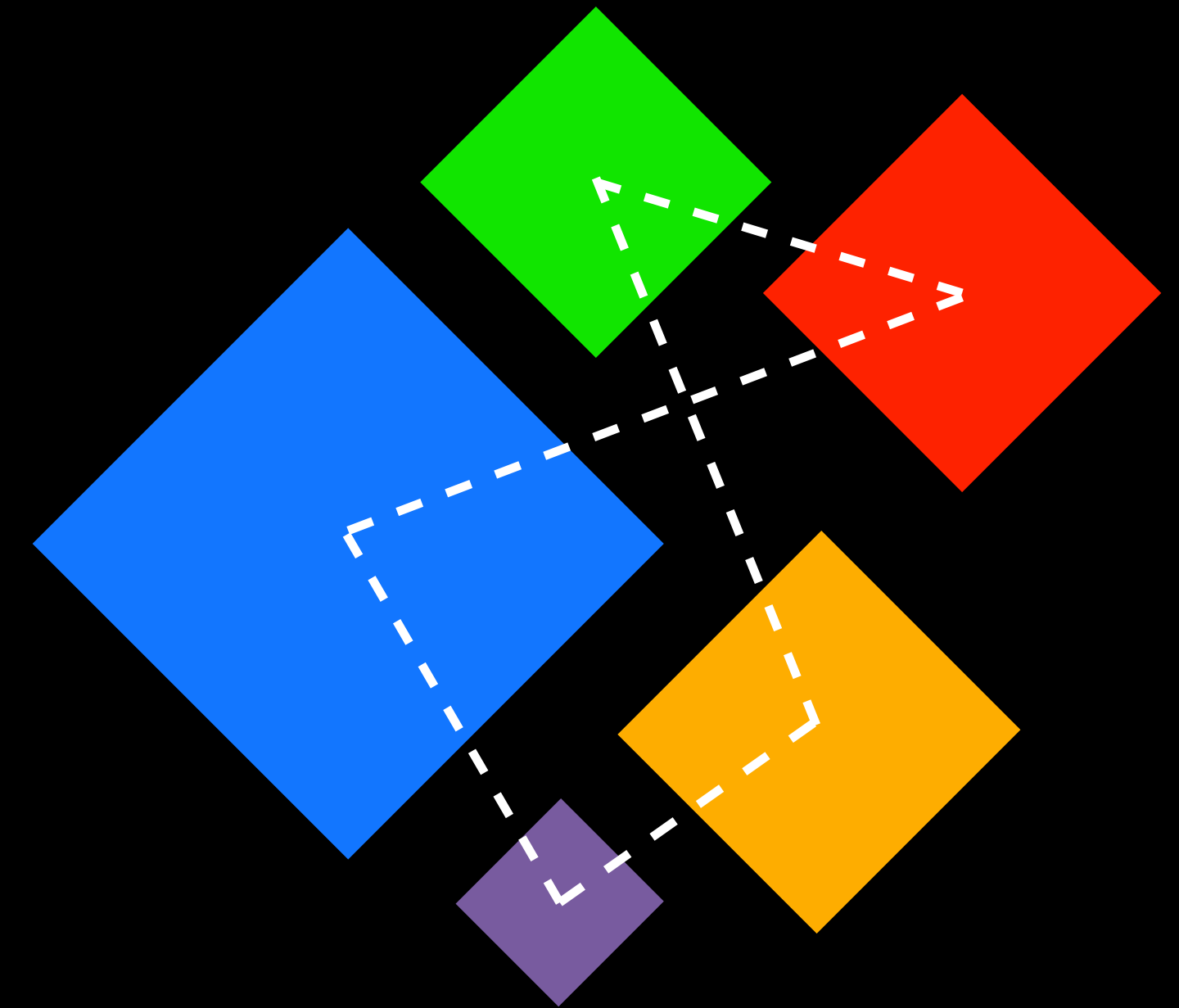
Goal: Model the concept of a system of interconnected parts using community and environmental examples. *(15 minutes)*

Tap into class knowledge of systems by working together to define the term “system.” As needed, refer to the definitions provided.

As a class, think of systems that students have already encountered in their learning, or in their day-to-day lives. Alternatively, discuss and add to the list below, as makes sense for your group.

What Are Examples of a System?

- ◆ Our Body
(contains many systems: digestive, nervous, respiratory, etc.)
- ◆ A Family
- ◆ A Classroom
- ◆ Communities
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Economy
- ◆ Government
- ◆ Earth
(contains many systems: ecosystems, spheres, water cycle, etc.)
- ◆ Solar System



System

A collection of parts, working together, forming a functional whole.

A network of relationships between elements or components that includes exchange of energy, matter, and information.

ACTIVITY 1 THINKING IN SYSTEMS CONTINUED

Choose one or two examples of systems and work as a class to create a systems diagram for each. Use questions, like those below, to help determine what your diagram(s) will look like.

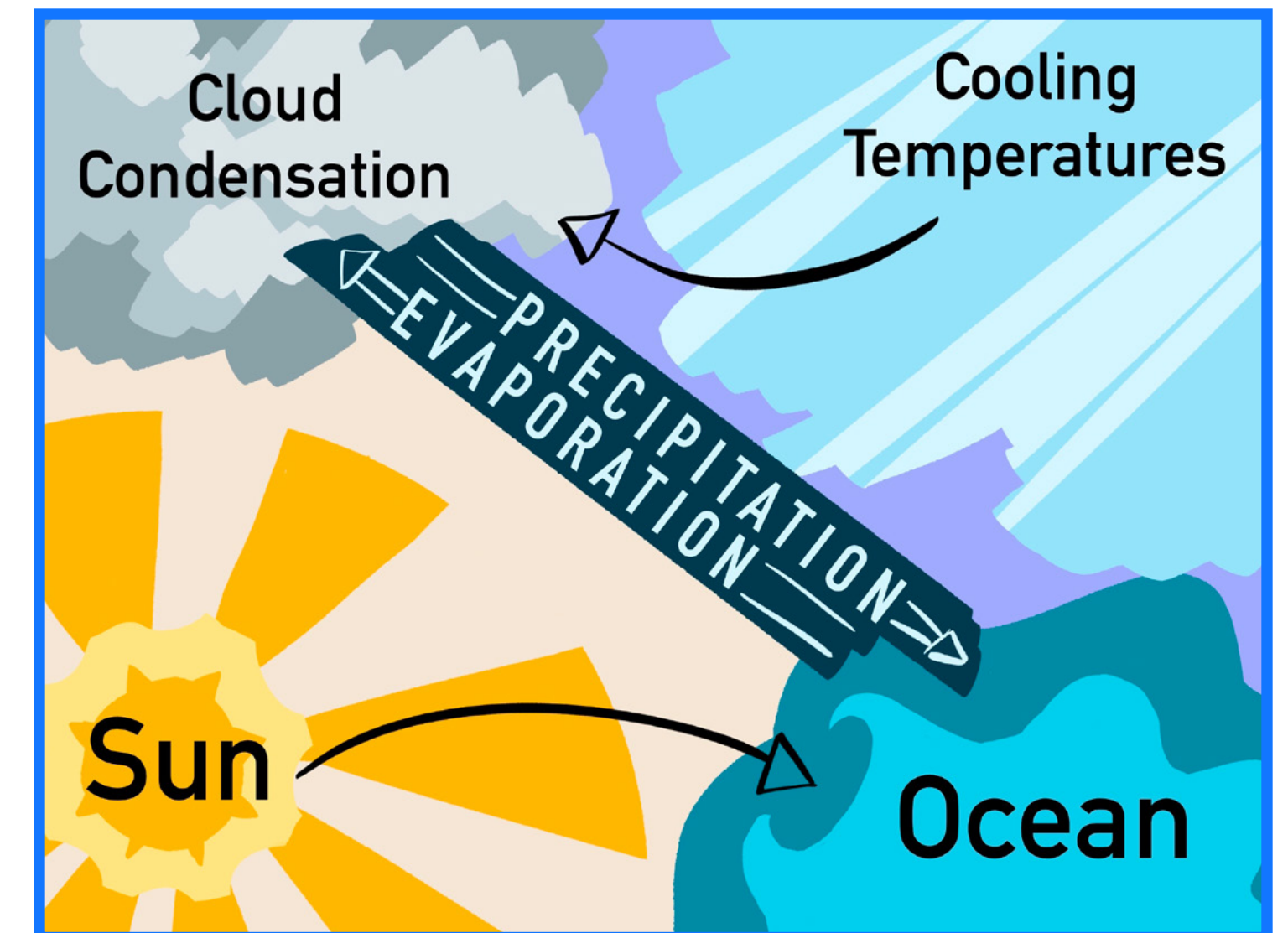
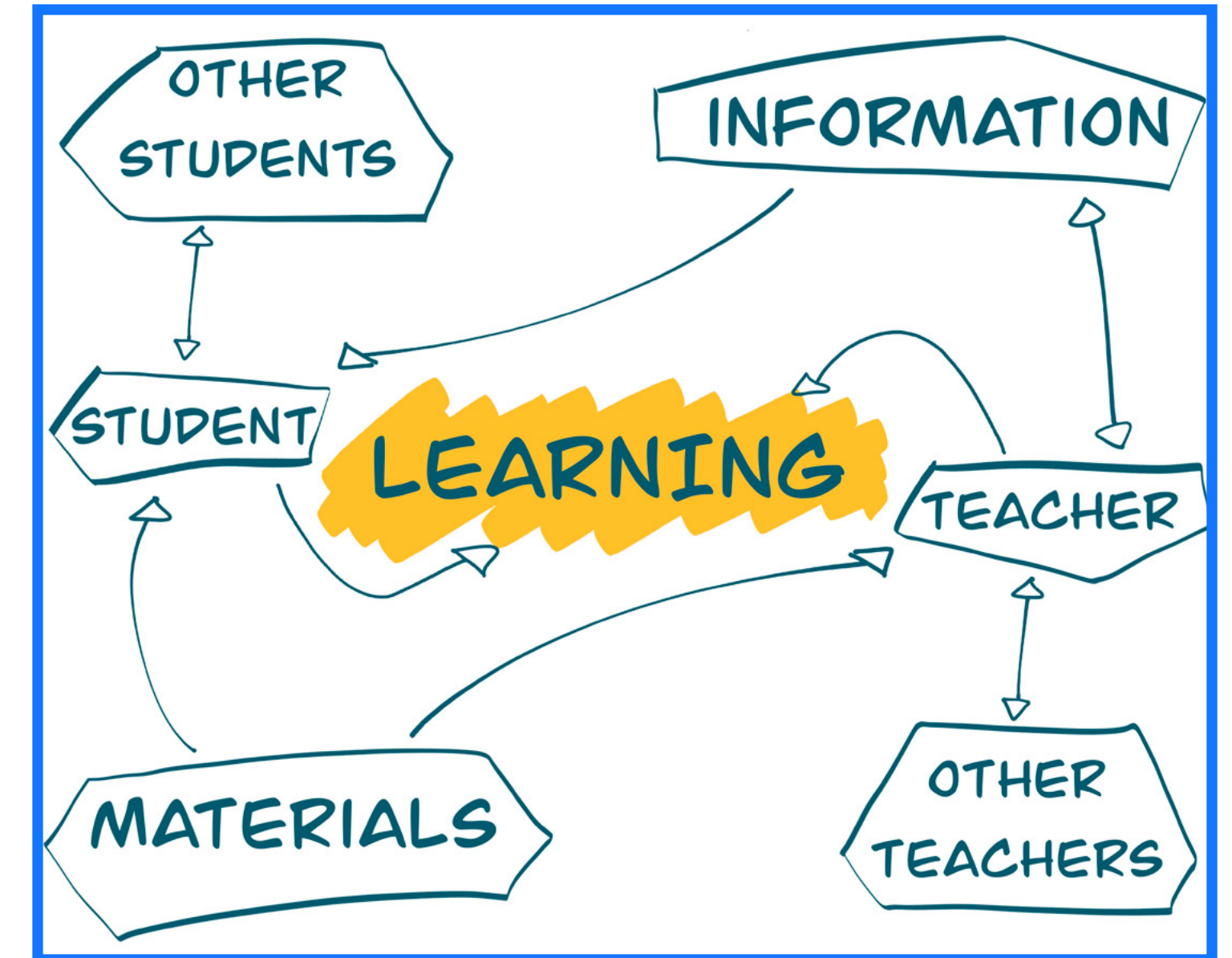
How is [our classroom] like a system, where the collective parts are working together?

What are some of the system's different parts or elements?

Note: You may wish to create a system diagram using manipulatives like sticky notes on a whiteboard, using a digital “whiteboard” page, or drawing it by hand on chart paper. Some examples of different options are shown to the right. Click on each to enlarge.

How are they connected or how do they interact?

How would you direct arrows of connection and action between the different parts?



ACTIVITY 1 THINKING IN SYSTEMS CONTINUED

Conclude by examining one last system:

How is the **orchestra** like a system?

After a brief class brainstorm of possible elements or parts of an orchestra, have students work in small groups to create their own diagram of an orchestra working as a system, including its parts and types of interactions. Provide manipulatives (like small pieces of paper or sticky notes), or have students draw on paper or use a digital slide or page.

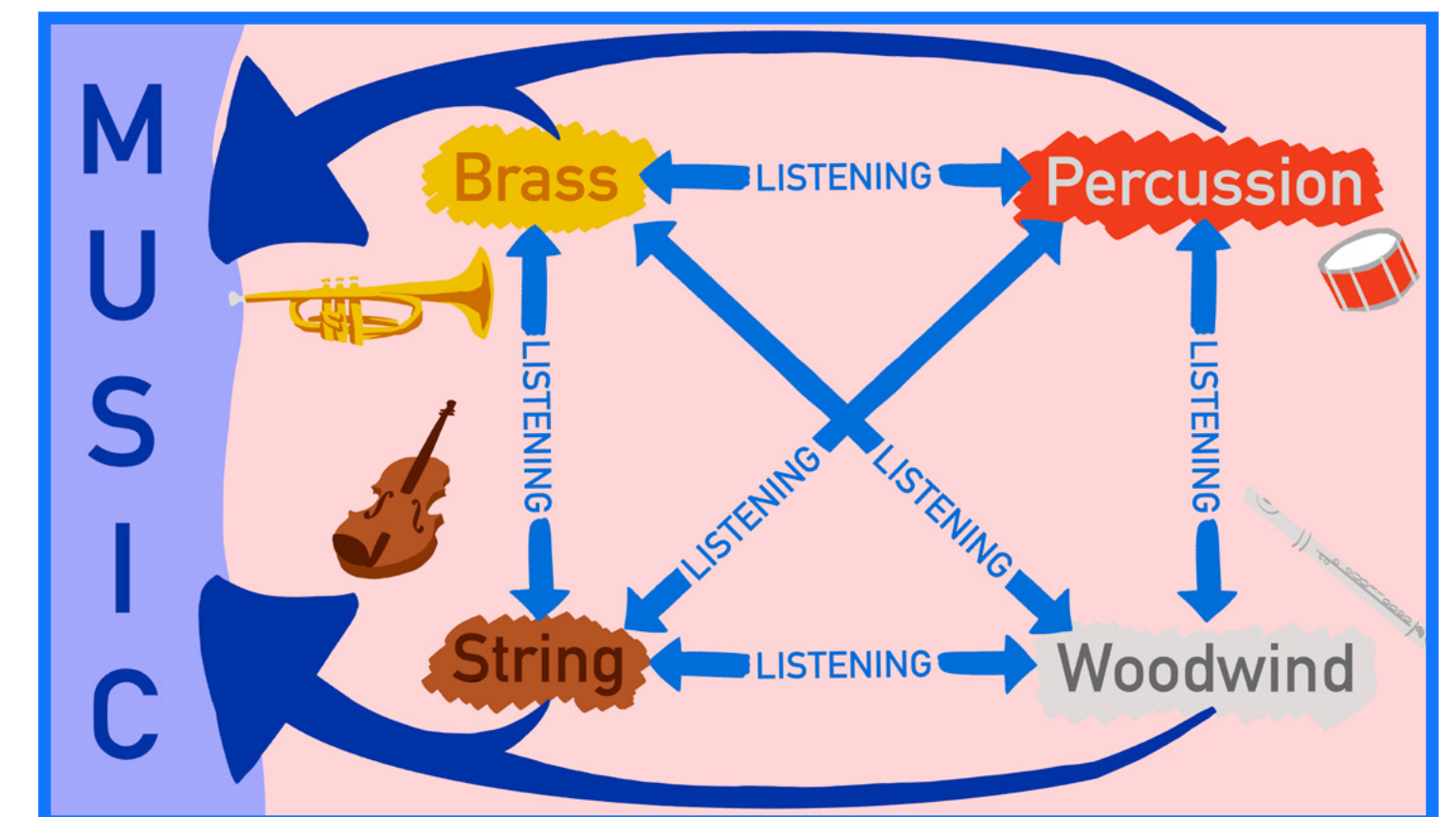
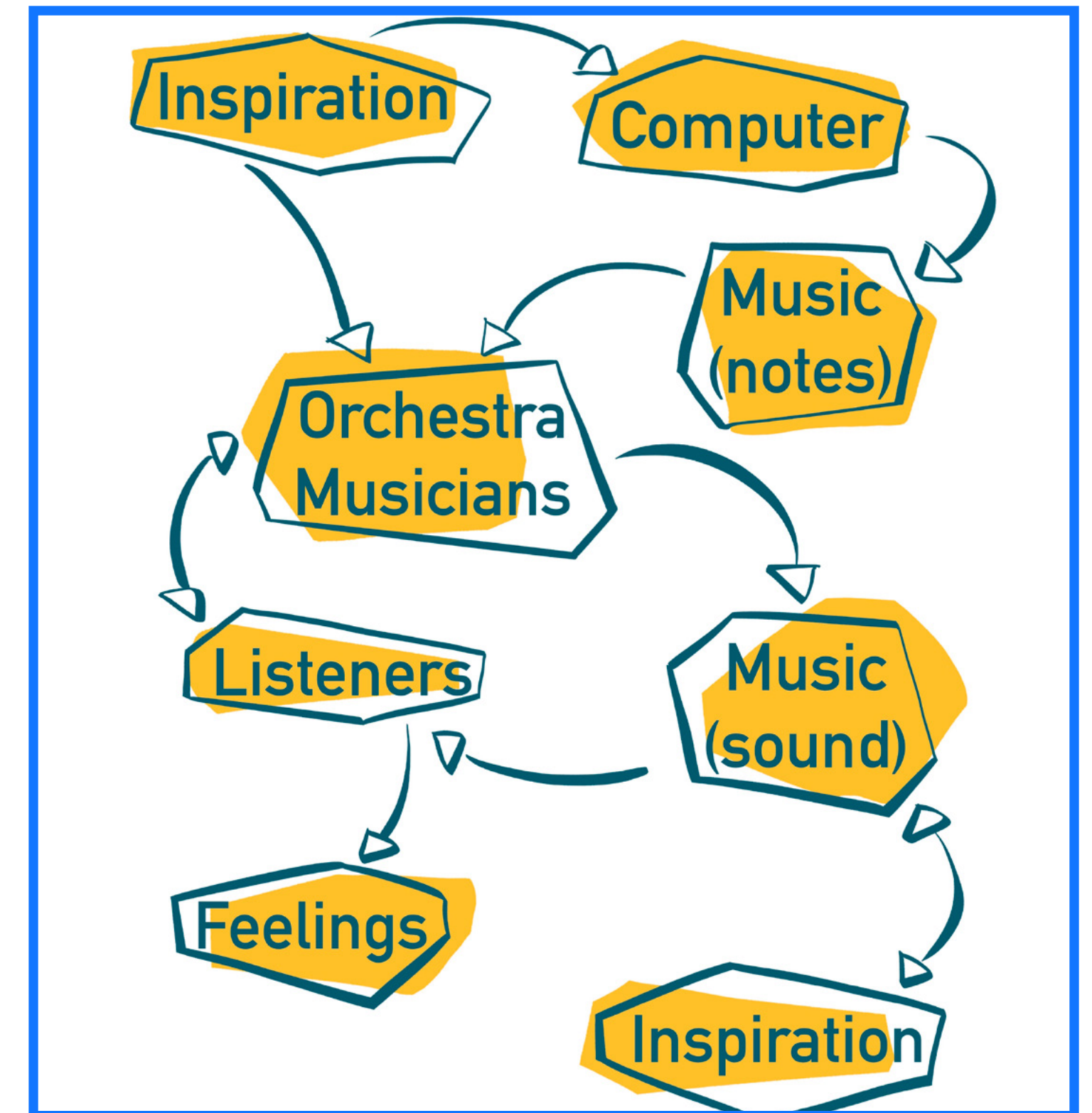
Note: There is no single or correct way for a drawing of an orchestra system to look. This exercise gives space for students to build on and question their existing knowledge of the orchestra as they continue learning and imagining music-making with systems in mind. Two examples of possible interpretations are shown to the right. Click on each to enlarge.

Share small group examples and reflect:

What are some different ways the elements of the orchestra are interacting in these examples?

After making your system, what new questions do you have about how the orchestra works?

Here is an [orchestra seating chart](#) that shows how the NY Phil sometimes sits on stage. As a class, and based on what your students know about different instruments, make some guesses about why this seating plan may be an effective system.



ACTIVITY 2 EXAMINING ORCHESTRA ECOSYSTEMS

Goal: Use the metaphor of “orchestra as ecosystem” to explore orchestral instrumentation and ways instruments of the orchestra interact (20 minutes)

Build on student systems thinking by introducing or reviewing a specialized type of system: an **ecosystem**.

As a class, very briefly share and discuss examples of ecosystems (e.g., desert, ocean, forest, etc.) and identify the local ecosystem of which your community is a part.

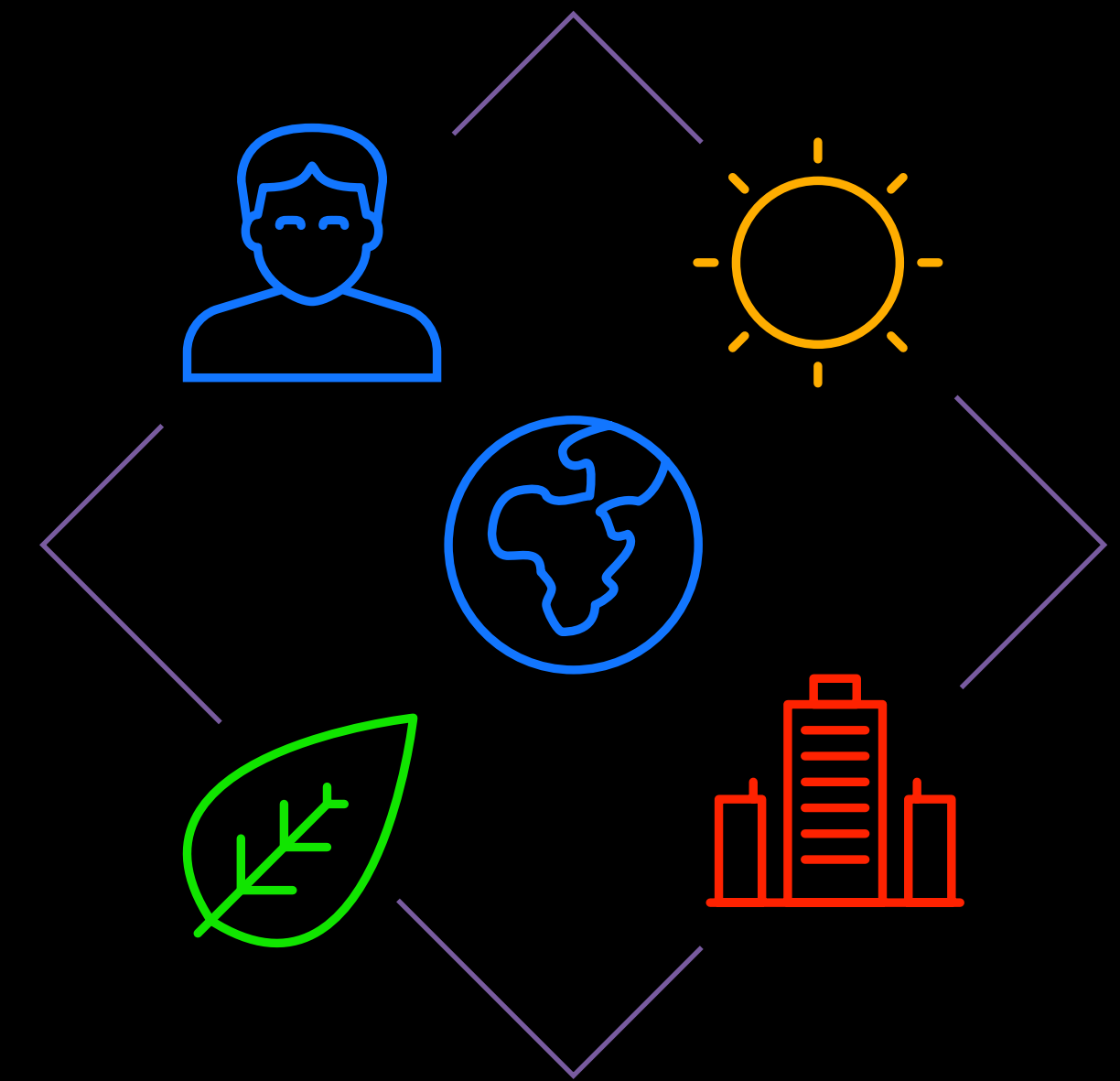
Emphasize that the **interdependence of elements** is a critical feature of an ecosystem:

In an ecosystem, every element is **connected and dependent** on one another. A small change in one part will cause shifts and changes throughout the system. Finding the right balance between elements is very important for maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

Here’s one example of how one change can ripple through many elements in an ecosystem. An ocean ecosystem’s temperature rises a small amount. This slightly warmer water makes it possible for a harmful animal disease to thrive and spread more easily. This new epidemic nearly wipes out an important predator. Without the predator around, the herbivore population explodes! This now giant group of hungry herbivores devours entire regions of the underwater kelp forests. Other marine animals who also depended on those plants for food or shelter now struggle to survive, and may die out, too.

What examples of ecosystems shifting out of balance have you heard or read about?

What are some changes to an ecosystem’s elements that might affect the ecosystem’s health?



Ecosystem

A community of interconnected living and nonliving things in an area, and their interactions.

ACTIVITY 2 EXAMINING ORCHESTRA ECOSYSTEMS **CONTINUED**

Extend student thinking by connecting ecosystems to the world of the orchestra:

Let's imagine the orchestra is not only a system, as we explored in Activity 1, but an **ecosystem** in which all musical elements depend on one another. Some examples of musical elements might be [dynamics](#), [tempo](#), [articulation](#), or [register](#).

What kinds of changes in the elements of the orchestra could throw a musical ecosystem out of balance?

What are some ways an orchestra ecosystem could work to stay in balance?

What might a "healthy" orchestra ecosystem sound like? Look like?

Share with your class the three Orchestra Ecosystem Snapshots to the right, each of which connects to a piece from the upcoming Young People's Concerts. Each Snapshot includes a diagram of instrument elements involved as well as a short orchestra ecosystem listening example. Compare ecosystems using ideas such as:

Circling instrumentation changes from one ecosystem to the next

Making predictions about sonic and expressive differences before listening

Noting on diagrams musical elements that especially stand out in each listening example

Reflect:

Why might the orchestra ecosystems change for different pieces of music?

What are some reasons why an orchestra ecosystem long ago might be different from an orchestra ecosystem now?

How might an orchestral composer decide what instruments or sounds to include in their music's orchestral ecosystem?

Orchestra Ecosystem Snapshots

 [Rebel's *Les Éléments* Orchestra Ecosystem](#)

 [Les Éléments Listening Example](#)

 [Debussy's *La Mer* Orchestra Ecosystem](#)

 [La Mer Listening Example](#)

 [Bates's Alternative Energy Orchestra Ecosystem](#)

 [Alternative Energy Listening Example](#)

Listen to Young People's Concerts for Schools conductor and concert co-host Lidiya Yankovskaya reveal how she imagines the orchestra is like an ecosystem:

 [The Orchestra as an Ecosystem](#)



Commission Spotlight

Bringing New Technology to the Orchestra



In Negrón’s new commission, she’ll be including multiple kinds of music technology that expand the ecosystem of the orchestra. In addition to amplifying the voices and messages of the young people of El Puente, Negrón’s choice of musical technology also gives listeners a special window into a secret side of nature. During the concert listen (and look out) for Negrón’s use of a musical device called MIDI Sprout, which uses special sensors attached to a plant to help generate parts of the music.

Negrón has used MIDI Sprout in many of her compositions, including her solo piece *estela*. About MIDI Sprout in *estela* she says:

“In connecting two electrodes to the leaves of a small *Zamioculcas* [plant] new rhythms and melodic gestures are generated by detecting the slight electrical variations in the plant which are then translated to MIDI data and mapped to [recorded] sounds... With this process, I intend to activate and make audible the secret life of plants to evoke distant landscapes connected to personal memories of places and spaces that are far away from me.”

Watch her perform an excerpt of *estela*

If you could invent or create some new kind of musical technology to add to the orchestra, what would it be like?

How would this technology affect the sound of the orchestra?

How might it change the ways the instruments interact?



Extension

Learn more about local New York City ecosystems, and efforts to restore and protect them for the future:

NYC Parks Department

[Ecosystems in New York City Parks](#)

[How NYC Parks Fights Climate Change](#)

Billion Oyster Project

[Restoring Oyster Reefs to New York Harbor](#)

New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

[NYC-EJA Member Organizations](#)

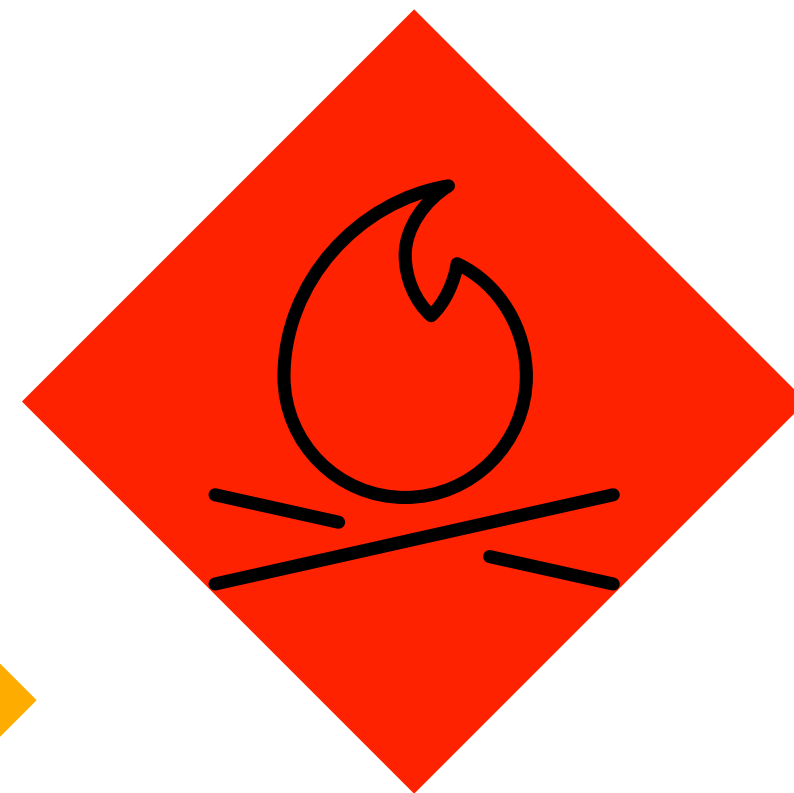
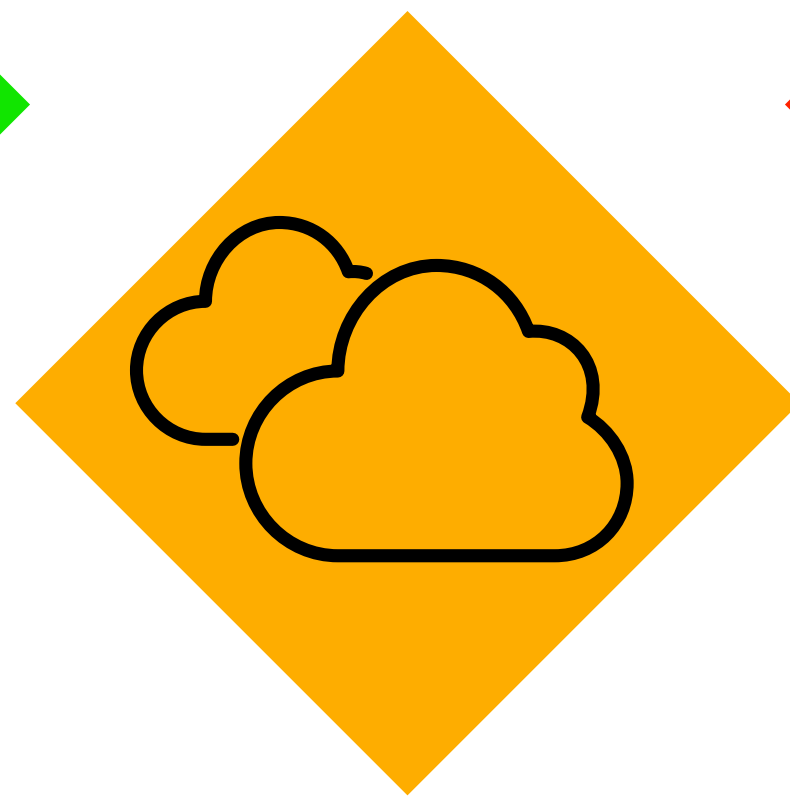
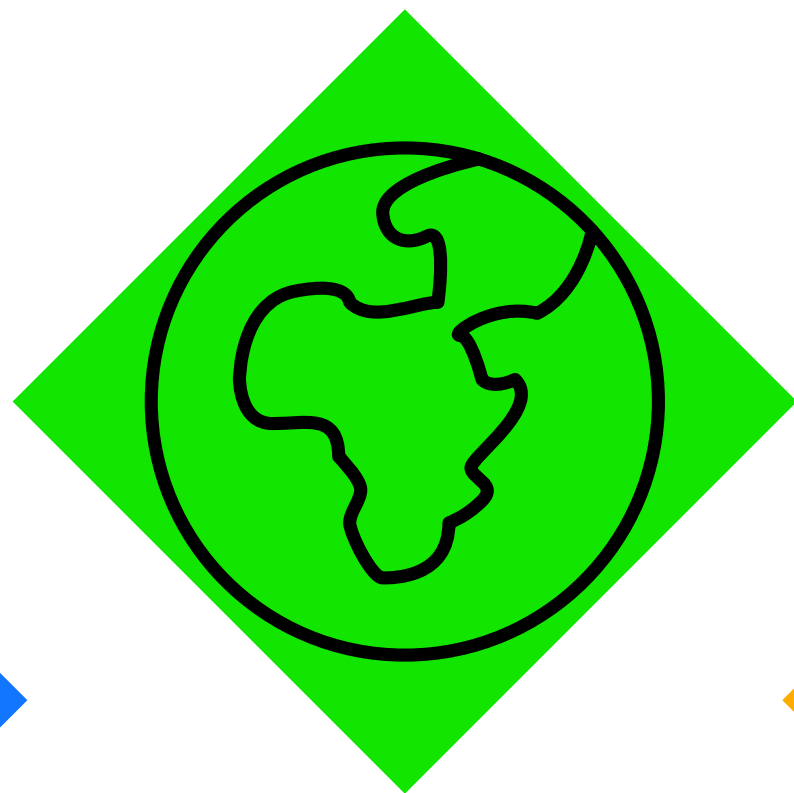
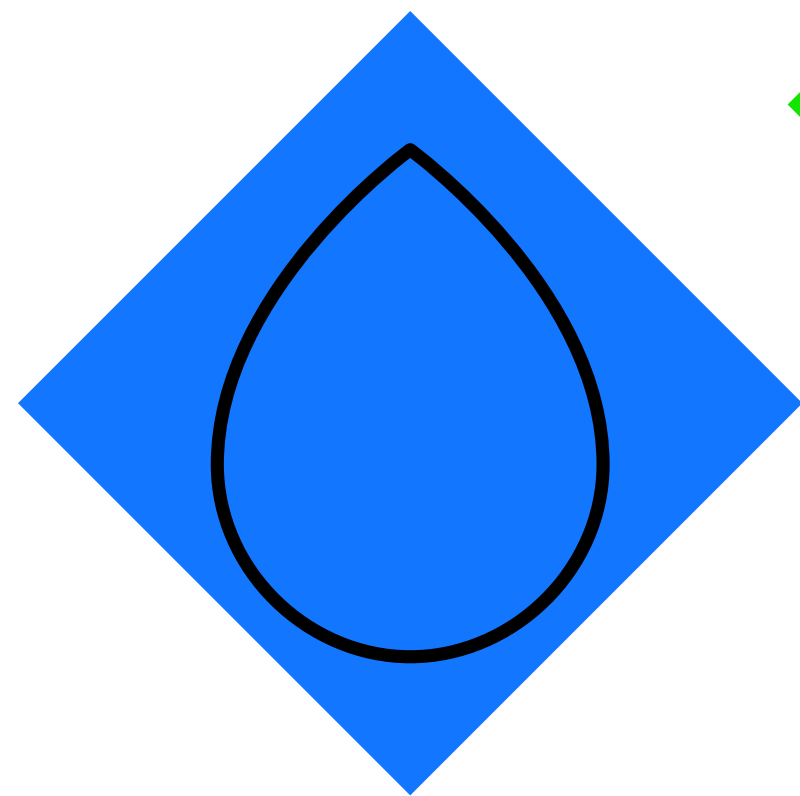
ACTIVITY 3 TELLING THE STORY OF A SYSTEM

Goal: Introduce the natural system that inspired Rebel and use guided listening to explore how he represented it musically. (20 minutes)

Explain:

Thinking in systems helps us understand complex things by breaking them down into parts and looking at their connections. So, what happens if you use one system to help explore another? You just might end up with a piece of music! Though he likely didn't think of it that way, composer Jean-Féry Rebel did combine two different systems when he used elements of his orchestra "ecosystem" to tell the story of another system of elements from the natural world. In his piece *Les Éléments*, instruments in the orchestra take on the roles of four classic elements people once thought made up everything on our planet: Water, Earth, Air, and Fire.

Where else have you encountered these four elements together as parts of a system?



Who was Jean-Féry Rebel?

French composer Jean-Féry Rebel (1666–1747) gained musical fame during his lifetime for leading and composing new music for the royal court of King Louis XIV. He came from a family of court musicians, and by age eight was noticed for his own talents on the violin. As an adult, he was first a performer with the “The King’s 24 Violin-Family Instruments,” an orchestra of renown across Europe, before moving on to roles as conductor and composer. *Les Éléments* was his final piece — and certainly an adventurous culmination of his 70-year career. Because *Les Éléments* makes bold use of dissonance (combinations of pitches that seem to “clash” or create a feeling of tension or unease) from the very first pitches, Rebel wrote his own “program notes” to explain and prepare listeners for what they were about to hear. This introduction is a bonus for us modern listeners: we get to learn, directly from Rebel, what he was imagining as he created this musical representation of the Earth’s elements in formation.



ACTIVITY 3 TELLING THE STORY OF A SYSTEM CONTINUED

Make a class chart with space for each Element. Work together to quickly fill in a few qualities and descriptions of what makes each Element unique. Have students briefly share with a partner some predictions about how each Element's qualities could be shown in Rebel's music.

Listen together to an example of each Element and share Rebel's brief musical descriptions. After each example, decide as a class on a simple symbol to represent the Element's musical material. Add the symbol to your class chart of qualities.

Reflect:

What are some ways Rebel made each Element's music unique from one another?

How did his music compare to your own musical ideas?

The bass represents **Earth**.

Note: It may be helpful to get to know "Earth" first, as it often appears along with other elements.

 Earth Example

The flutes, with their lines that move up and down, imitate the murmur of running **Water**.

 Water Example

Air is depicted by long held notes followed by trills in piccolos.

 Air Example

The violins, with their lively and brilliant music, represent the activity of **Fire**.

Note: This example also has some very present deep Earth below the Fire. Try to direct your ears to the higher, livelier violins!

 Fire Example

ACTIVITY 3 TELLING THE STORY OF A SYSTEM **CONTINUED**

Share a bit more of the “story” that inspired Rebel.

As an introduction to his music Rebel wrote:

“First there was Chaos, a confusion that ruled the Elements before they finally took their places in the natural order. Over and over, the different Elements tried to separate from one another and out of the Chaos. Finally, their struggles ended as Chaos faded and order appeared.”

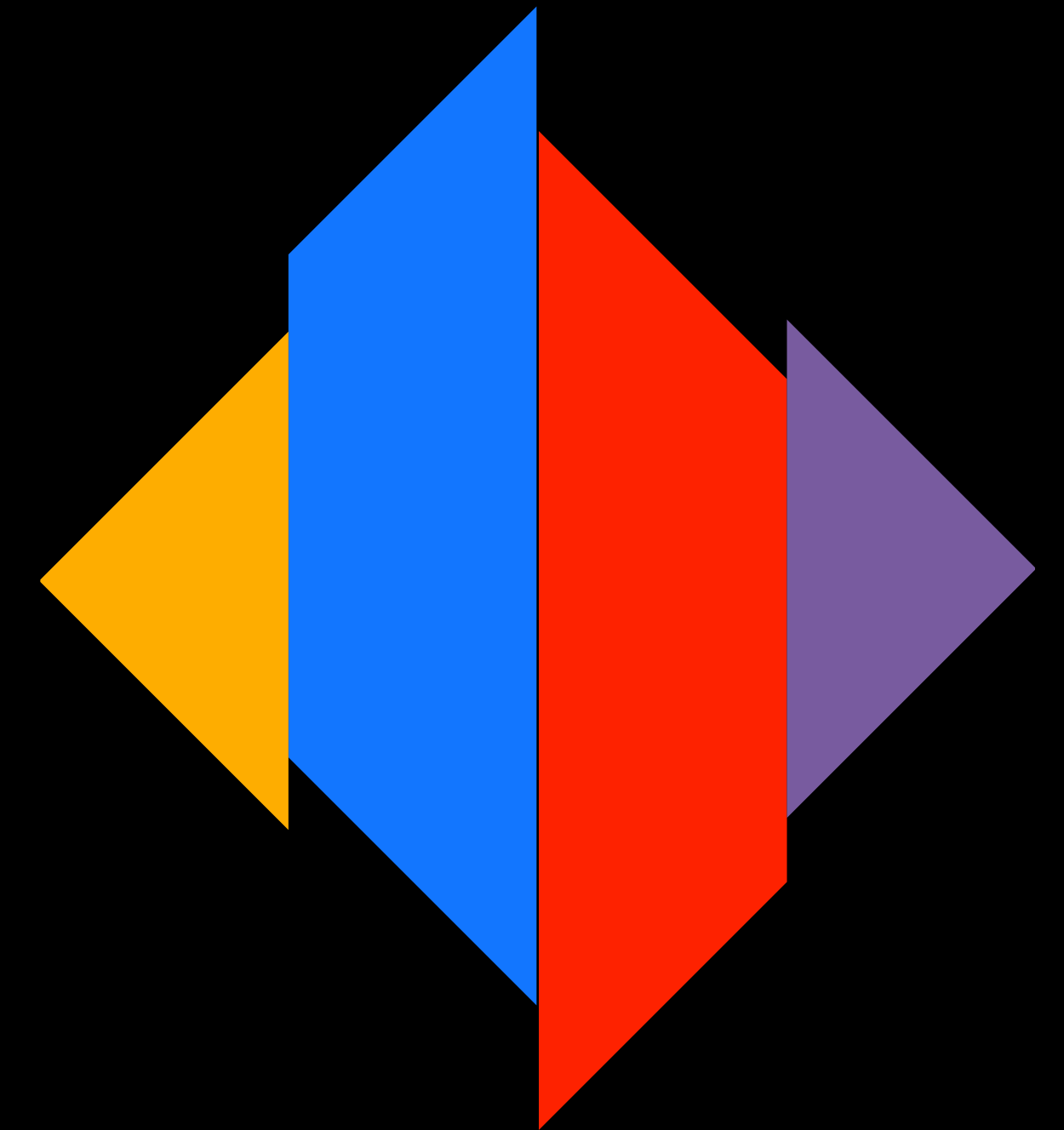
1 Listen to the first movement, or section, of Rebel’s *Les Éléments*, called *Le Cahos* (“Chaos”).

 [Le Cahos Opening](#)

What are some words to describe this sound?

Why do you think Rebel chose this sound for Chaos?

2 As a class, create a symbol for Chaos and add it across the bottom, or to the sides, of your Elements chart.



The Sound of Chaos

In his own program notes, Rebel explains how he created Chaos’s distinctive sound:

“I have dared to link the idea of the confusion of the Elements with that of confusion in Harmony. I have risked opening with all the notes sounding together, or rather, all the notes in an octave played as a single sound.”




This kind of cluster of neighboring notes was literally unheard of during Rebel’s time!

ACTIVITY 3 TELLING THE STORY OF A SYSTEM CONTINUED

Listen to three moments from *Le Cahos*.

Each example incorporates different combinations of Elements in their struggle to emerge from Chaos. If helpful, students can indicate what they hear by pointing to corresponding Element symbols while listening; you may model by pointing to symbols yourself from the front of the room.

Note: Listening notes are included to support student observations.

<p> <u>Le Cahos Example 1</u></p> <p>Water begins in the flutes, with Chaos soon interrupting, and Water continues. We switch focus to Fire in the violins near the end of the example, with Earth in the low strings supporting from below.</p>	<p> <u>Le Cahos Example 2</u></p> <p>A very similar order of elements to Example 1: Water begins in the flutes, and Chaos tries to interrupt. Then Fire burns brilliantly in the violins and Air is very* faintly played by flutes in the background. Deep Earth continues in the low strings.</p> <p><small>*Air is hardly audible in some recordings—no worries if listeners miss it here</small></p>	<p> <u>Le Cahos Example 3</u></p> <p>Water begins in the flutes and Chaos tries to overpower it. Then Fire and Earth team up and take their turn together. Air — with long tones in the piccolos — joins in, quietly, at first, then showing off with an ornamented display of trills. Finally, flowing Water and heavy Earth join Air.</p>
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What are some ways the Elements interact with Chaos?

How is Chaos part of this system?

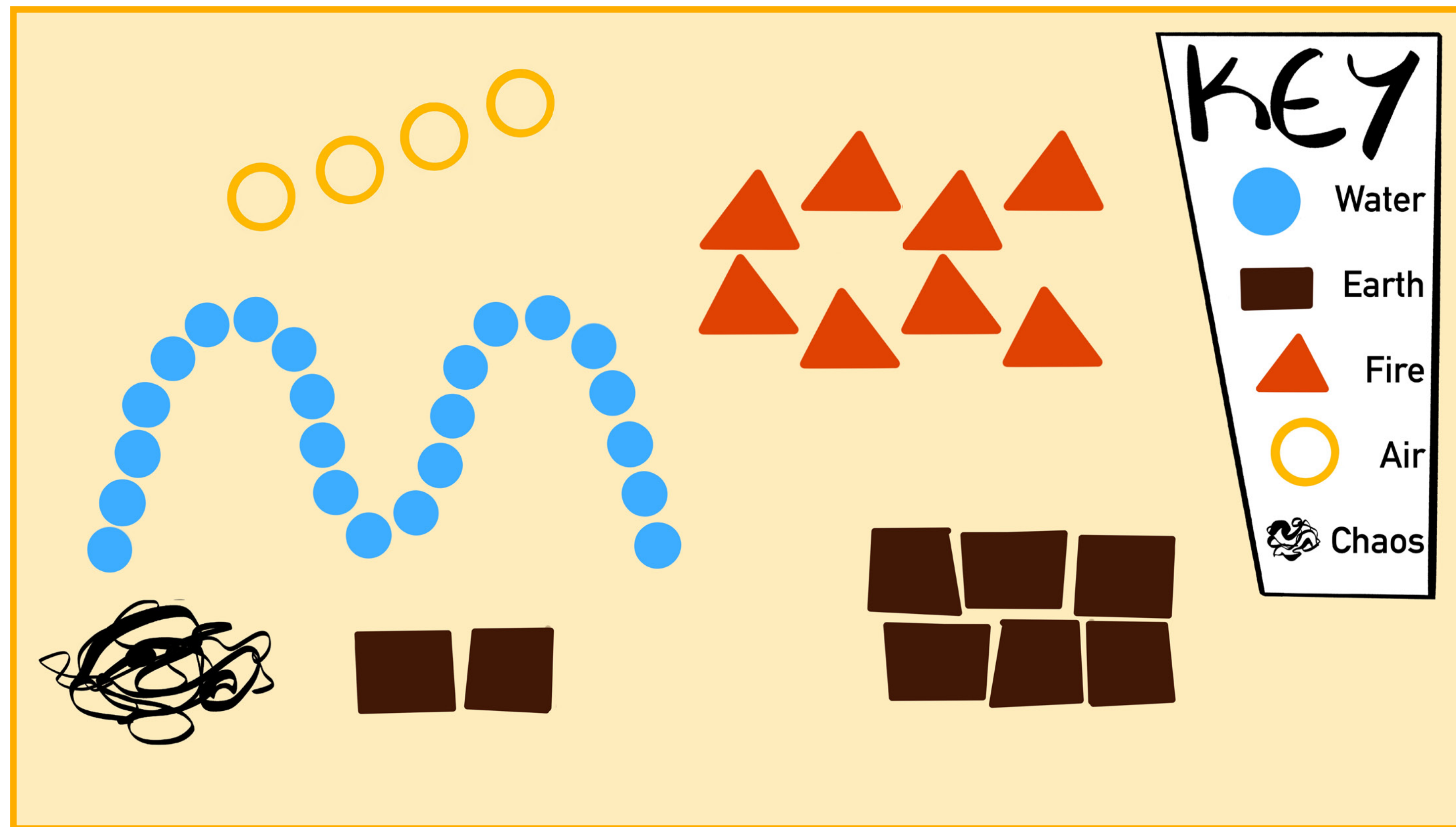
Do you think Rebel's Elements are like an ecosystem, in which they all impact one another? Why?

ACTIVITY 3 TELLING THE STORY OF A SYSTEM CONTINUED

Extension

Invite students to create their own listening maps that illustrate what they hear. Encourage them to use the class symbols to show different Elements appearing and interacting. An example can be found below.

Have students share and compare their listening maps. Reflect on their observations together.



ACTIVITY 4 REVISING REBEL'S SYSTEM

Goal: Imagine musical revisions to *Le Cahos* by creatively modifying one of Rebel's four original elements, or by incorporating an entirely new element of students' choosing. (15 minutes; more for "Let's Hear from YOU!" submission)

Explain:

The ancient elemental system of Water, Air, Fire, and Earth sparked Rebel's musical imagination, but even during his lifetime this idea was getting pushed aside in favor of new scientific theories. In the European society of which Rebel was a part, scientists were discovering that the systems interacting on our planet were much more complex.

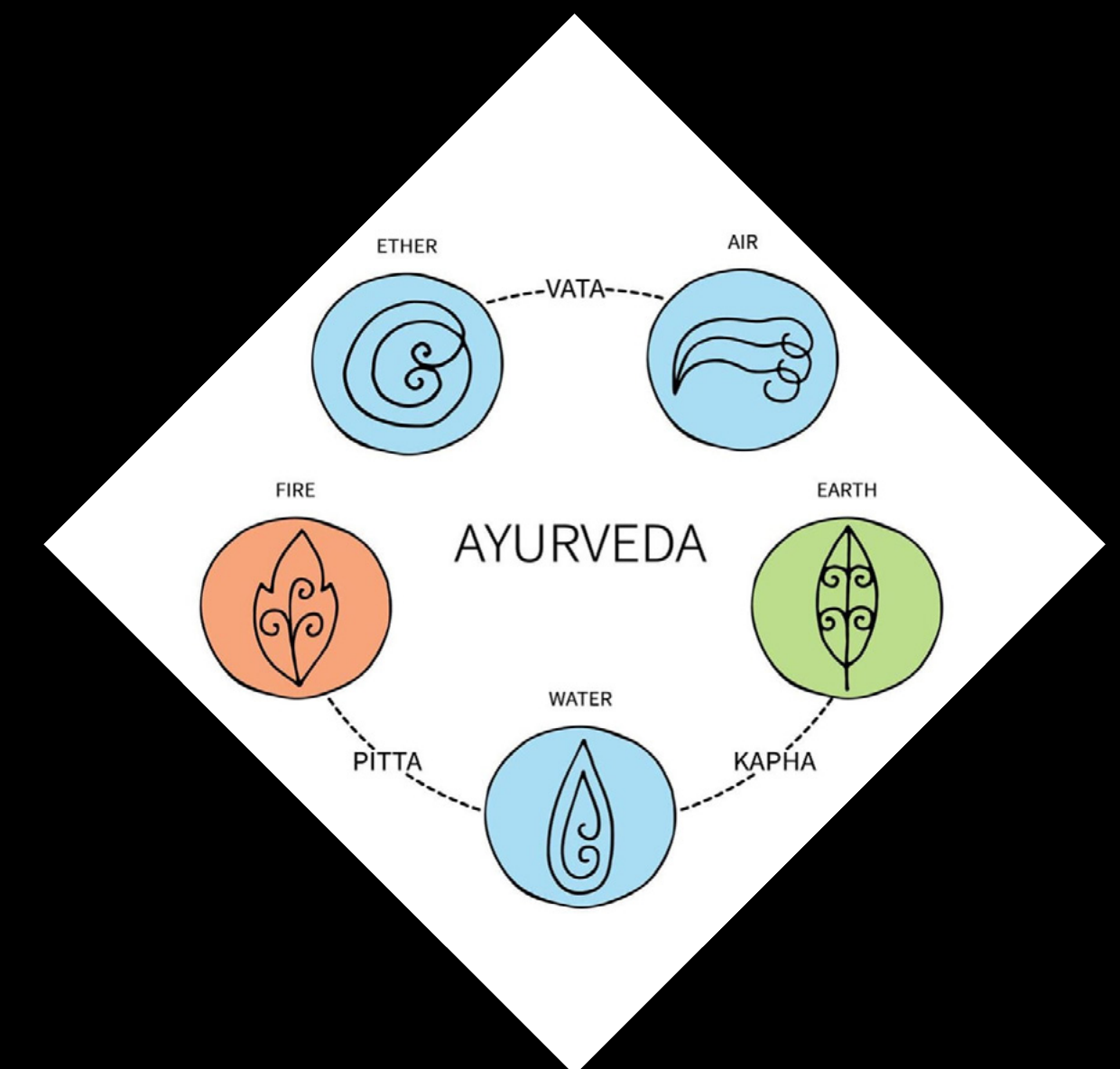
Given what you know about our planet, what important parts of its interconnected ecosystems are left out when one includes just the four elements from Rebel's piece?

What are some ways people today think about and interact with Water, Fire, Air, and Earth that are probably very different from Rebel's time, 300 years ago?

Work together to brainstorm and list some of the many possible elements or ideas missing from Rebel's system (e.g., plants, humans, animals, technology, outer space, magic, etc.) as well as examples of contemporary understandings we now have about the elements Rebel focused on (e.g., Earth systems, climate change's manifestations in each of the elements, the human impact on ecosystems, etc.)

The Fifth Element

Many cultures throughout history and all over the world — including ancient Greek, Japanese, Chinese, and Ayurvedic thinkers — added a fifth element to the basic four included in *Les Éléments*. The fifth element varied depending on context: it could be Metal, Space, Ether, Void, or Heaven, among others. Rebel even considered including a finale to his composition based on a fifth element popular with his European contemporaries: Love.



ACTIVITY 4 REVISING REBEL'S SYSTEM CONTINUED

Following your conversation, give students a challenge:

We're traveling back in time to help Rebel revise his piece. Pick one of his four elements you'd like to update to better match what we know about it today. Or choose one fresh, new idea you'd like to add into his old system.

Work in small groups or as a class to choose an addition or revision idea, and then use the two steps below to imagine how it could be represented musically.

What would music for this revised element or new idea in the system sound like? (Consider the musical tools in your composer's toolbox, like instruments, tempo, range, articulation, melodic contour, dynamics, etc.)

What will it sound like when your new or revised musical idea interacts with one of Rebel's original elements? Choose one of Rebel's musical ideas from Activity 2 and start imagining!

Let's hear from YOU! Compose for a New Element

As a class, or in small groups, compose and perform the music you've imagined for your new or revised element. Record and share with us! [Click here](#) to upload your recordings. In addition to your name and email, please include your school name and classroom grade(s) with each of your files.



Extension

Learn about the modern [Earth Systems Science](#) organization of our planet's systems into four spheres: Hydrosphere, Geosphere, Atmosphere, and Biosphere.

Note: Sometimes the Cryosphere is included as a fifth sphere, but it is also considered a subset of the Hydrosphere.

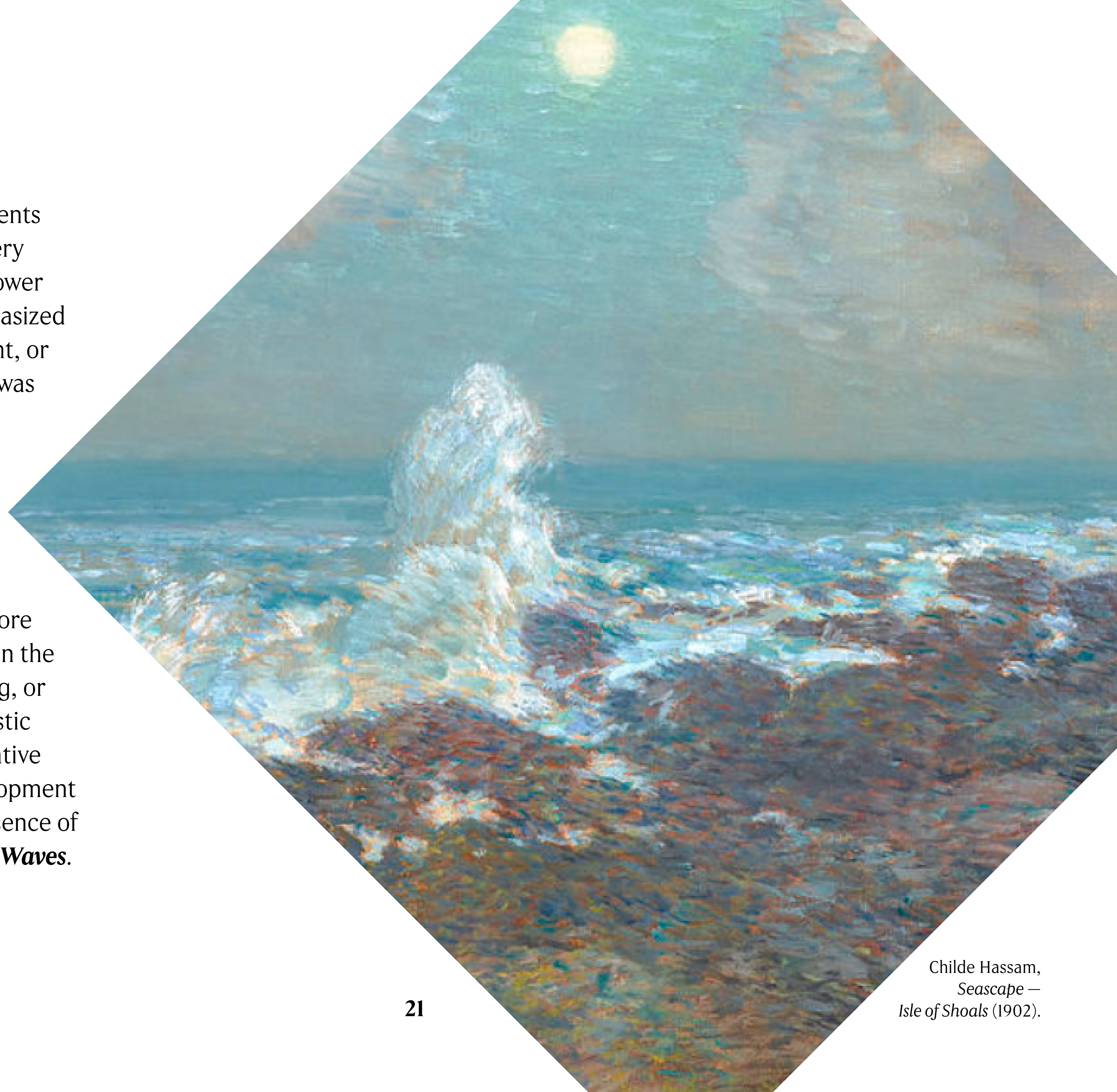
How does our modern understanding of the earth's systems compare to the one Rebel was inspired by?

If you were creating a new piece of music about our planet's systems, what kind of earth system or ecosystem would you use as inspiration?

UNIT 2: Making Impressions

DEBUSSY *The Play of the Waves*, from *La Mer*

More than 100 years after Rebel and his representation of the four elements of nature, artists of the 19th and early 20th centuries often expressed very different perspectives on the natural world. In recognition of nature’s power and the limits of humans to control their environment, artists now emphasized their individual connections to nature, including the awe, respect, delight, or fear it inspired in them. The music of French composer **Claude Debussy** was rooted in personal experiences with nature that sent him into a world of nostalgia, joy, and pleasure — particularly when he was thinking of the sea. In 1903, while working on his orchestral piece *La Mer* (French for “The Sea”), Debussy wrote to a friend, “You perhaps do not know that I was destined for the life of a sailor and that it was only by chance that I was led away from it. But I still have a great passion for the sea... [and] I have innumerable memories, and those, in my view, are worth more than a reality which, charming as it may be, tends to weigh too heavily on the imagination.” This prioritization of imaginatively conveying effect, feeling, or impression — rather than aiming for realism — earned Debussy the stylistic name **Impressionist**, which he actually despised. Nonetheless, his innovative use of orchestral timbres and his utterly unique sense of form and development manages, still today, to make a striking impression as he conveys the essence of *La Mer*, including its second movement, or section, titled *The Play of the Waves*.



ACTIVITY 1 DIVING INTO WATERY MEMORIES

Goal: Students tap into their own memories of strong impressions connected to personal experiences with water. (10 minutes)

Lead a short two-minute visualization exercise for your students to help them revisit a memory related to water. Start by brainstorming and sharing a few examples of experiences with water (e.g., stepping into the ocean, feeling raindrops, splashing in puddles, seeing the water as you walk over a bridge, visiting a favorite beach, drinking a cool glass of water when you're thirsty, learning to swim, etc.) Have students pinpoint one real-life water experience of their own to focus on. Ask students to keep that memory as you use prompts, like those below, to help reconnect with the **impression** this memory left behind. Encourage students to close their eyes, if they're comfortable doing so.

Impression prompts:

- ◆ *As you're in this memory, begin to notice what's happening with your senses...what are you touching with your body or your hands? What textures or temperatures do you feel?*
- ◆ *What can you smell around you?*
- ◆ *What sounds are happening around you? Are some close...off in the distance?*
- ◆ *As you're in this place, having this experience, what kind of mood does this memory create? How are you feeling? What's the energy of this place?*



ACTIVITY 1 DIVING INTO WATERY MEMORIES **CONTINUED**

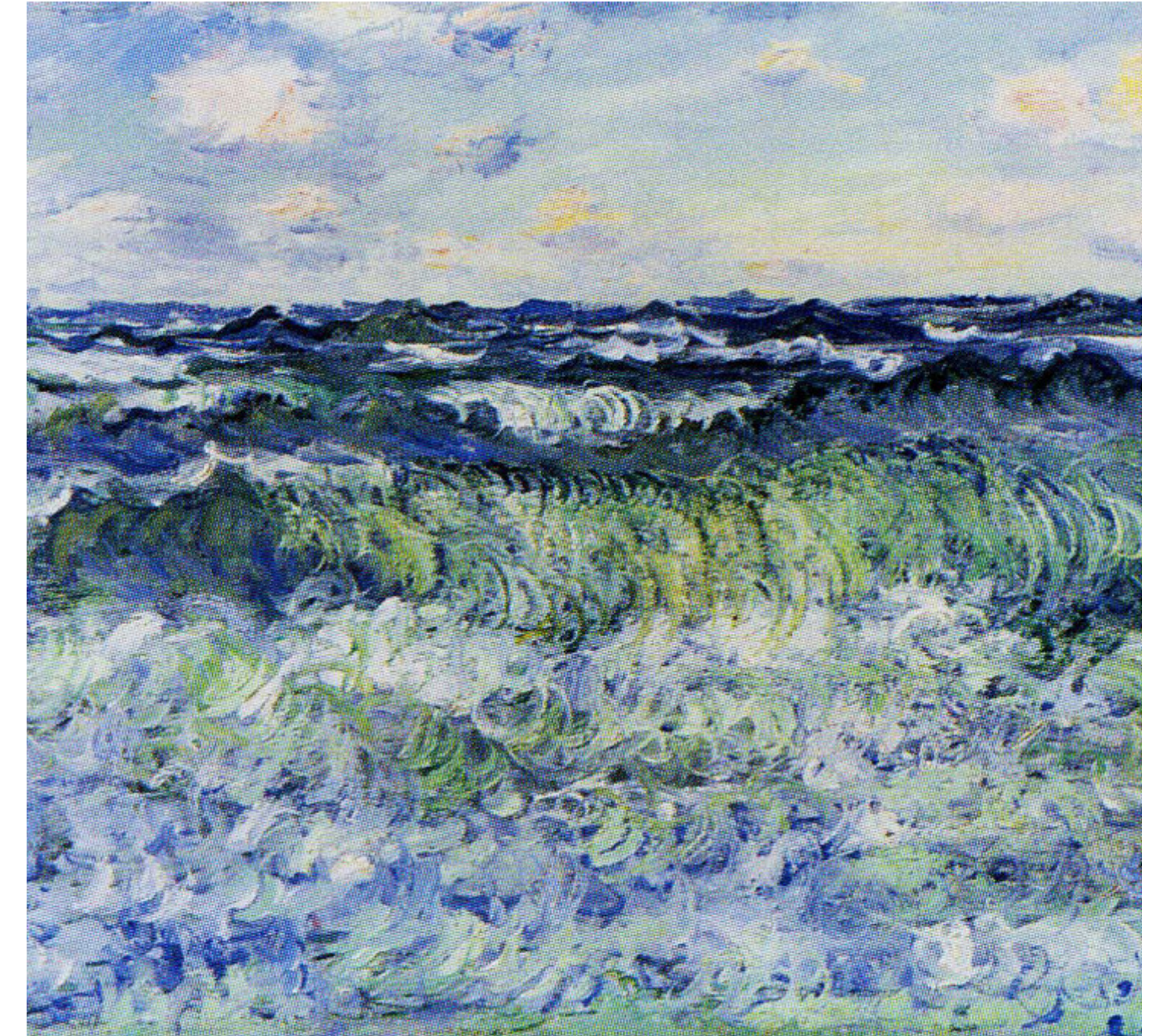
Gently ask students to open their eyes and, if helpful, write a few notes to themselves about what they experienced in their memory before reflecting together.

Which details from your imagination are the most important, intense, or special parts of this watery memory for you?

If you could bottle up and pass along this memory to someone, which parts would you put in the bottle? Why?

Explain:

Sharing this personalized memory bottle is different from giving someone a photo, a video, or a 360-degree virtual reality experience of your memory. It doesn't capture every detail, but it does share something important: your **impression**, or your own feeling of an experience. For some artists, expressing the impression of an experience or place is their biggest artistic goal. In the late 1800s, a European group of artists even became known as **Impressionists** because of this focus on conveying impressions and feelings. Composer Claude Debussy was one of these artists. In the Young People's Concert we'll be hearing one of his orchestra pieces that shares his impressions of **the sea**.



Claude Monet, *Sea Study* (1881)

Reflect on expressing impressions:

What's valuable in sharing the impression, or feeling, something gives you (e.g. a place, situation, object)?

Why might a composer or other artist want to share the impression something gives them with their audience?

How does experiencing someone else's impression about a place or thing affect your own feelings? How might someone's impression affect your actions?

ACTIVITY 2 IMAGINING DEBUSSY'S SEA

Goal: Listen to moments from *The Play of the Waves* and use multiple modalities to reflect back ideas about Debussy's expressions of the sea. (20 minutes)

Prepare three different stations around the classroom: **Gesture**, **Phrase**, and **Sketch**. Set up the Gesture station in a space clear of tables and chairs. Stock the Phrase station with pens or markers and a large piece of chart paper or many individual sticky notes for students to write ideas on. Stock the Sketch station with paper and pencils for students to sketch with.

Set up a brief pre-listening conversation:

In the music we're about to hear, composer Claude Debussy was trying to musically create the feeling or **impression** of the sea. He grew up near the ocean and loved thinking back on his memories of the sea. These memories were a big part of his inspiration for this music. He composed music about the sea divided into three different sections that he called musical **sketches**. We will be getting to know his sketch for orchestra named *The Play of the Waves*.

Brainstorm together:

What is a "sketch"? Why might Debussy have called his piece a sketch?

What do you picture when you hear the name "The Play of the Waves"? What sounds do you start to imagine?

Let students know they will have a chance to listen and respond to the music three times: once by creating a movement or **gesture** that connects to what they hear in the music, once by writing a few words or a **phrase** that gives an impression of what they noticed, and once by creating their own small visual **sketch** connected to this musical one.



ACTIVITY 2 IMAGINING DEBUSSY'S SEA **CONTINUED**

Divide the class into three large groups and assign each to a different response station to start at for the first listening. Listen two more times, so all groups have a chance to rotate through the stations and respond to the music in all three ways.

[Debussy Excerpt 1](#)

After listening three times, discuss and examine the responses as a class.

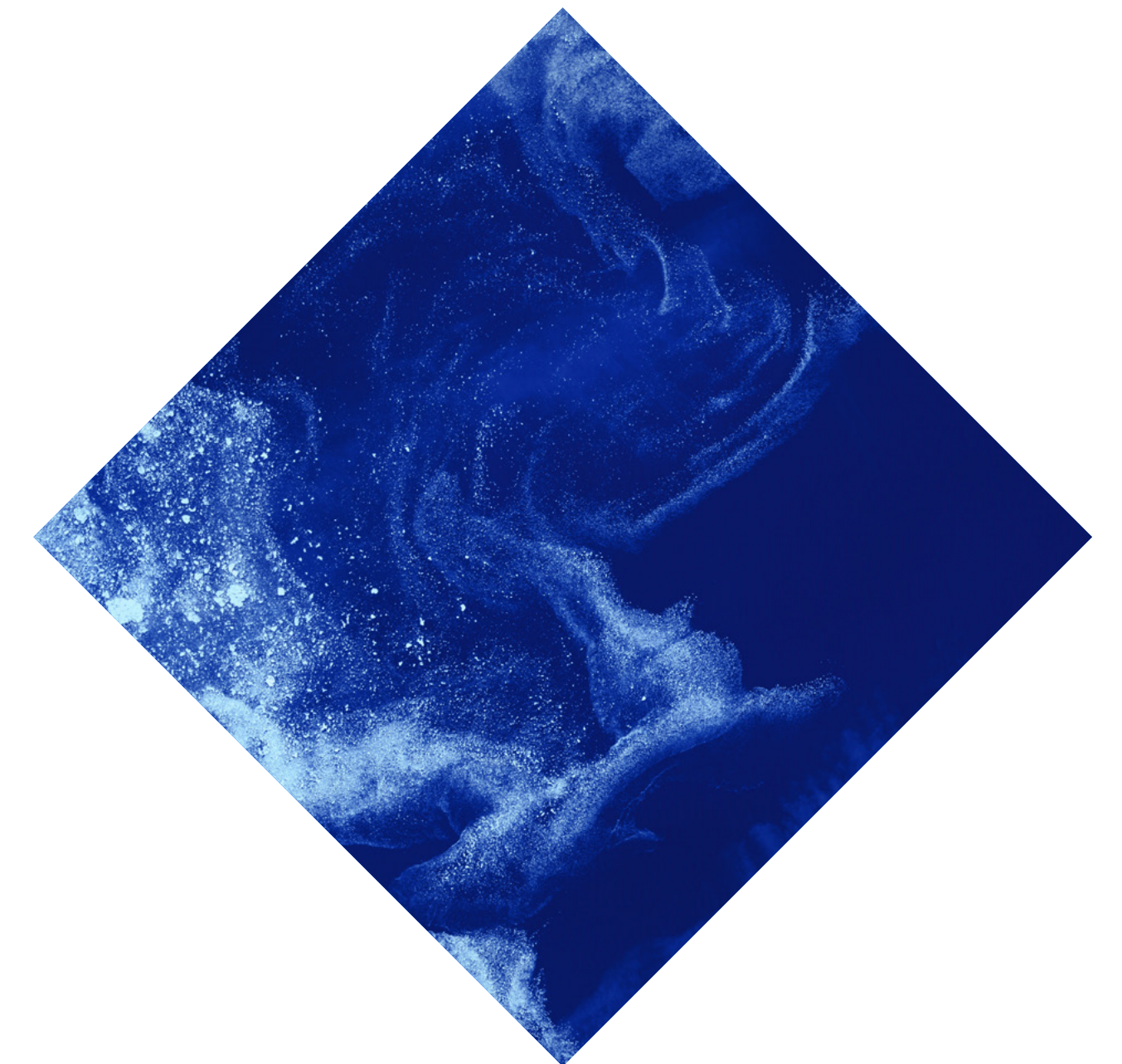
Before leading a listening of Excerpt 2, have students choose their favorite modality (i.e., gesture, phrase, sketch) to use as their way of responding to this new musical moment.

[Debussy Excerpt 2](#)

Let students know that just as Debussy shared his **impressions** through his music, they were sharing their **impressions** of what they heard using these three ways of responding.

Reflect:

Which way of responding to Debussy's music best helps you share your impression of what you hear? Why?



ACTIVITY 3 MOVING WITH WAVES

Goal: Use movement to explore Debussy’s use of musical layers as a form of interaction between elements in his orchestral ecosystem. (20 minutes)

Explain:

In *The Play of the Waves*, Debussy keeps the many elements of his [Orchestra Ecosystem](#) very busy. We’re going to be using our bodies to help us hear and understand how these instrumental elements are continually interacting and layering to create the impression of a lively sea.

Print out Instrument Role Cards from the link below. Invite volunteers (or small groups of volunteers) to come to the front of the room and give each an Instrument Role from Wave Scene #1. Have students read the Instrument Roles aloud to help coordinate the group and let the class audience know what’s happening.

[Debussy Wave Scene #1 Instrument Role Cards](#)

Support each student or small group of volunteers in finding a way to move that physically expresses the description on their Instrument Role Card. Source ideas from the class audience.

Listen to the music for Wave Scene #1. As the music plays, have the volunteers do their best to move along with their corresponding instruments — effectively acting out the layers and interactions in the music to create a “living score.”

Note: The music moves quickly and lining up student movements with their sounds will most likely not be totally in sync. That’s okay! The goal is to use movement to bring awareness to just how many layers and “roles” Debussy works with in his music. No need to aim for perfect portrayals.

[Debussy Wave Scene #1](#)



ACTIVITY 3 MOVING WITH WAVES CONTINUED

Invite the class audience to coach students in Instrument Roles to more closely match the music with their movements (e.g., modify movement size, change tempo, show another quality more clearly, etc.) Listen and perform at least once more.

Reflect:

What surprised you as we switched from just acting out the layers to hearing AND moving along with them?

What else do you notice about this moment in Debussy's Orchestra Ecosystem?

What are some especially interesting ways the elements are interacting?

As time and patience permits, repeat the process with Wave Scene #2.

[Debussy Wave Scene #2 Instrument Role Cards](#)

[Debussy Wave Scene #2](#)

For Wave Scene #3, have the entire class listen only. Encourage students to picture new movements and listen for Instrument Roles in their own imaginations.

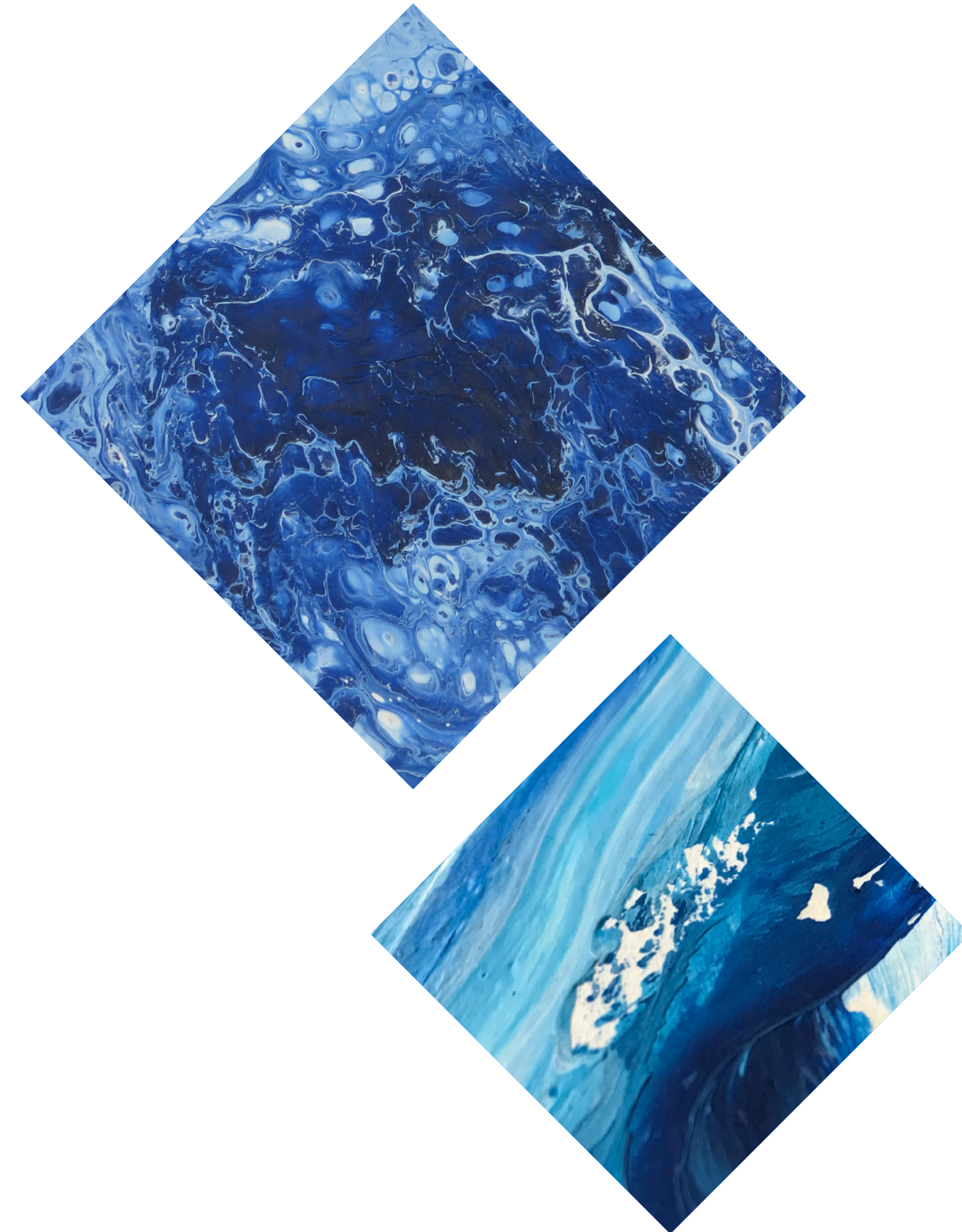
[Debussy Wave Scene #3](#)

What kinds of interactions do you hear happening in Debussy's Orchestra Ecosystem in this wavy scene?

How do the interactions in this moment compare to the interactions we acted out earlier?

If we were to act it out, how many different people would need to be involved to show everything that's going on?

What do you think Debussy wanted to share about the sea in this musical moment?



ACTIVITY 4 EXPRESSION THROUGH IMAGES

Goal: Investigate how visual art can support conveying an impression, as well as create original art meant to inspire feelings of connection and motivation. (10 minutes; more for “Let’s Hear from YOU!” submission)

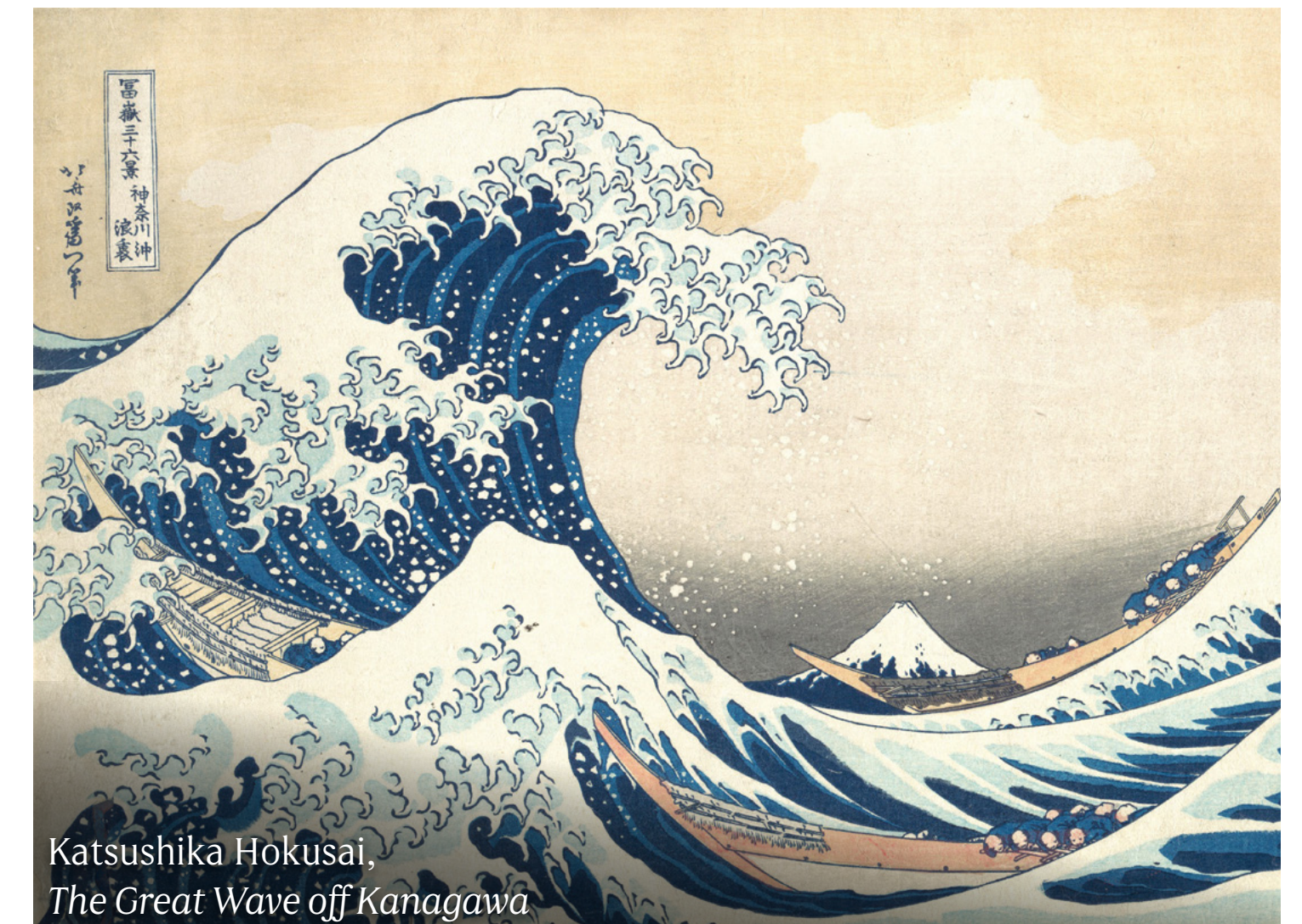
Explain:

When his music was being prepared to be printed for people to read and play, Debussy often wanted to pick out the cover art himself (he called it his “cover mania.”) For *La Mer*, he chose a cover inspired by famous Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai’s *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*. Debussy, like many people in France during his lifetime, was fascinated and inspired by Japanese art and culture. He kept a copy of *The Great Wave* hanging on the wall in the room where he worked. Many people who saw the cover of Debussy’s music would have recognized Hokusai’s wave right away.

How does cover art — like on a book, an album, or other kind of media — help give an impression of what’s inside?

What kind of impression do you think Debussy wanted this cover to give people?

Do you think Hokusai’s art is a good match for Debussy’s music? Why?



Katsushika Hokusai,
The Great Wave off Kanagawa



Cover illustration of the first edition of the score to Debussy’s *La Mer* (1905).

ACTIVITY 4 EXPRESSION THROUGH IMAGES CONTINUED

Today Hokusai's *The Great Wave* still makes a powerful impression on people and remains an incredibly famous work of art. It also continues to inspire modern artists all over the world. In fact, in the last ten years, a number of artists have borrowed the image to help make an impression about the ocean's ecosystem and humans' impact on it. Click on the images below for more information.



*Why do you think these artists used *The Great Wave* as part of their own work?*

What impressions do you think these artists wanted their new art to make?

What are some actions someone (like you!) might want to take after seeing this art?

Let's Hear from YOU! Create a Visual Impression

Create your own piece of visual art that expresses an impression of a natural place. Tap into your watery memory from Activity 1 in this Unit or choose another natural place as your inspiration.

What impression do you want your art to share about your inspiring place?

If your inspiring place is facing a problem, is there a way your art could impress upon viewers the need for action or help?

Share what you create with us! [Click here](#) to upload photos of your images. In addition to your name and email, please include your school name and classroom grade(s) with each set of files.

Commission Spotlight

Activist Art from El Puente

As part of their collaboration with Negrón, young people at El Puente explored some of the severe imbalances in the ecological and social systems in Puerto Rico exacerbated by climate change. As climate activists, these young people wanted to express the impact these imbalances have as well as their own feelings — or **impressions** — of what it's like to be grappling with the challenges of such extreme imbalances and unjust systems.



El Puente students' work with Negrón began with a viewing of the documentary *Landfall* about life in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria. Negrón, originally from Puerto Rico, created the film's score.

[Watch the *Landfall* trailer](#)

For high school-aged learners and beyond, PBS's *POV* has created [lesson plans and other learning resources](#) based on *Landfall*.



Extension

Visit local art created in response to climate change.

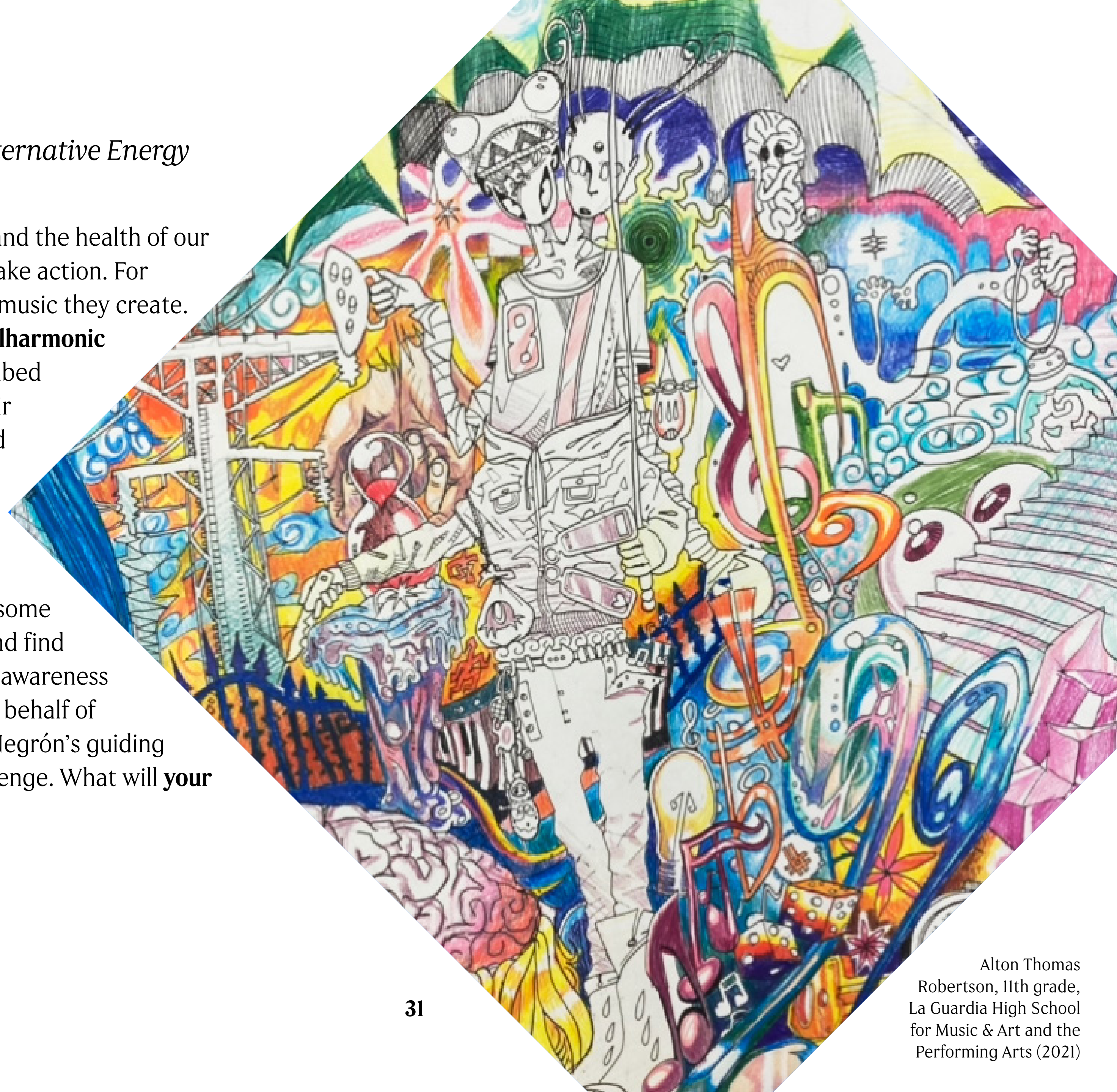
Socrates Sculpture Park

[The 2022 Socrates Annual: Sink or Swim Climate Futures](#)

UNIT 3: Making Change

Mason BATES Selection from *Xinjiang Province, 2112*, from *Alternative Energy*

When it comes to the daunting issues of our time — like climate justice and the health of our planet — positive change can only happen when people speak out and take action. For composers and musicians, one platform for speaking out is through the music they create. Living composers **Mason Bates**, **Angélica Negrón**, and the **New York Philharmonic Very Young Composers** featured on this program have found ways to embed challenging questions about climate change and climate justice into their musical works. In *Xinjiang Province, 2112*, a movement from a work titled *Alternative Energy*, Bates gives listeners a musical window into a dark future, encouraging us to wonder together: what could happen in 100 years if human energy consumption goes unchecked? As she creates, Negrón often asks, “How can technology help us see or hear nature more closely?” Her innovative use of musical technology reveals some beautiful answers. Importantly, her music also invites us to go further and find our own ways of connecting to the natural world around us. In turn, this awareness of our interconnected existence can be a powerful catalyst for action on behalf of the communities and ecosystems we are inherently part of. Another of Negrón’s guiding questions — what are the sounds of action? — can easily become a challenge. What will **your** sounds of action be and how can you use them persuasively?



ACTIVITY 1 LOOKING FOR POSSIBILITIES

Goal: Using the metaphor of “Windows and Mirrors,” explore how music can help us better understand our role in our ecosystem and humanity’s relationship with our planet. *(15 minutes)*

Introduce or review the pedagogic metaphor that stories can be **windows** and **mirrors**. As Rudine Sims Bishop, who originated the concept, explains:

“Books are sometimes **windows**, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange... When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a **mirror**. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience.”

*How could a piece of music be a window?
A mirror?*

*What pieces or songs have been windows or
mirrors for you?*

If possible, encourage students to consider examples of music from this Young People’s Concert as part of the above lines of questioning.

Let students know that composer Mason Bates used his piece *Alternative Energy* to tell a musical story. Like Rebel and Debussy, Bates was writing with the natural world on his mind. He was interested in exploring the impact humans have on the ecosystems we are part of, particularly when it comes to our insatiable need for sources of energy.



Xinjiang Province

In the intervening years since Bates first composed *Alternative Energy*, even more information has come to light about the many connections between climate change, the search for alternative sources of energy, the industrial energy sector in Xinjiang Province, and the ongoing oppression and ethnic cleansing of the Uyghur population in China.

[United Nations: UN News](#)

[Human Rights Watch: Uyghurs](#)

ACTIVITY 1 LOOKING FOR POSSIBILITIES **CONTINUED**

Before reading a short summary of the movement *Xinjiang Province, 2112*, have students hold this question in their minds:

Why might the composer be inviting us to look through this musical window into the future?

Zoom 100 years into the dark future of the *Xinjiang Province, 2112*, where a great deal of the Chinese energy industry is based on an eerie wasteland. A lone flute sings...dreaming of a forgotten natural world...A powerful industrial energy simmers to the surface, and drives us to a catastrophic meltdown.

Have students describe what they see through this story's window and invite them to offer ideas for why Bates might have invited them into the story.

Continue considering these ideas as you listen together to an excerpt from *Xinjiang Province, 2112*. As needed, revisit [Bates's Orchestra Ecosystem Diagram](#).

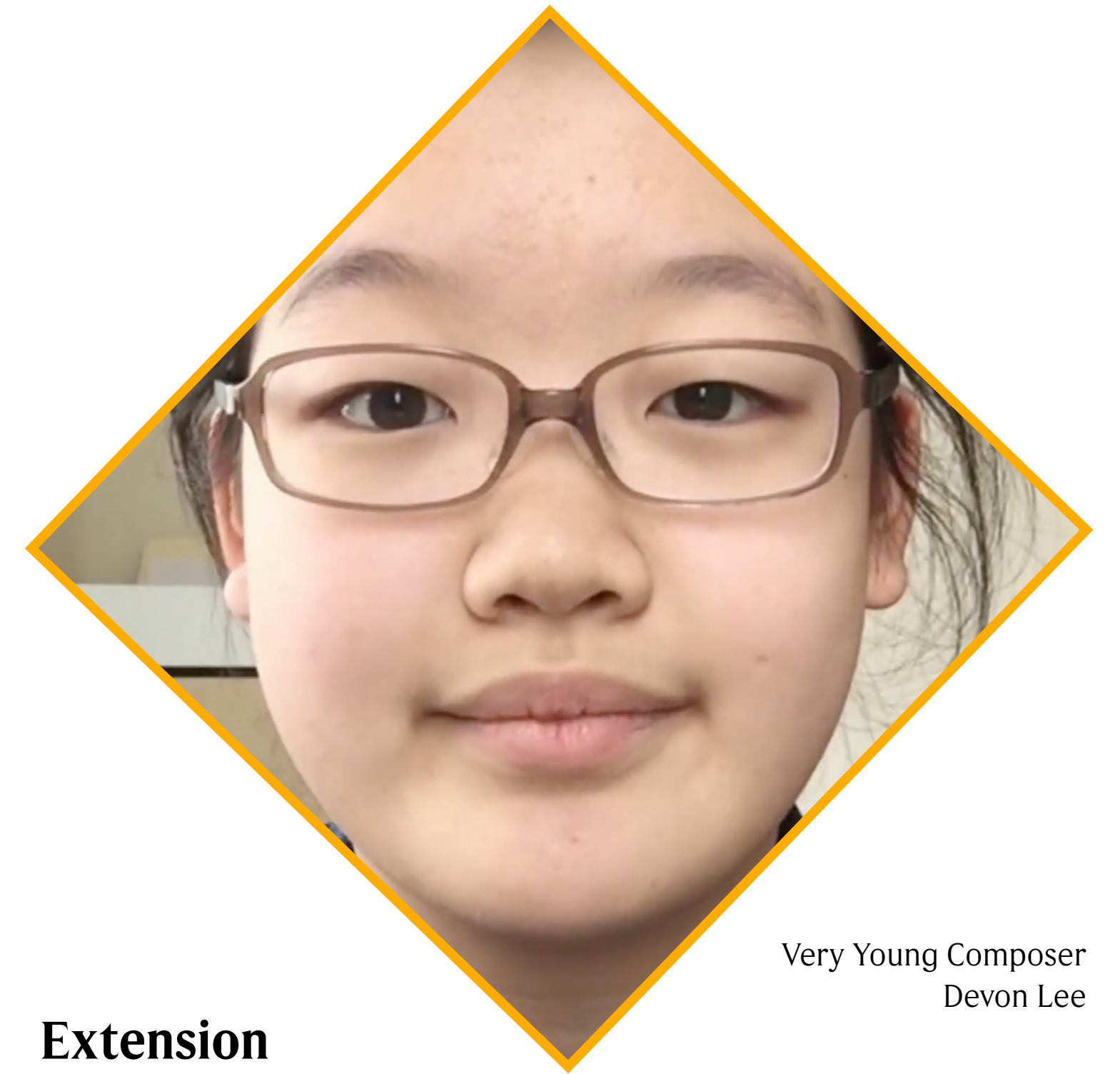
 [Xinjiang Province, 2112 Excerpt](#)

Reflect:

How does the sound of Bates's orchestra ecosystem – with electronic sounds from the laptop and speakers – help create the view of his imagined future?

Even though this musical story is a window into the future, how might it be a mirror, too?

What ideas might Bates have wanted to reflect back to us about people's impact on Earth's ecosystems?



Very Young Composer
Devon Lee

Extension

Listen to more musical windows into human effects on our planet's ecosystems. These New York Philharmonic Very Young Composers have written music in response to climate change and in support of sustainability and the preservation of nature.

[Not Clouds](#) by Devon LEE

[A Human Rhapsody](#) by Alexander ROTHCHILD DOUAIHY

ACTIVITY 2 STEPPING INTO A FUTURE WORLD

Goal: Reflect on the connections between art-making and other forms of activism and craft persuasive messages to inspire positive climate action. *(20 minutes; more for submission extension)*

Share with students that in addition to imagining stories — and music — as windows or mirrors, educator Rudine Sims Bishop proposed that stories could also be **sliding glass doors**.

The difference between a **window** and a **sliding glass door** is that the sliding glass door actually opens to invite you to enter into the world of the story. Now you're not just seeing what's happening from the outside, but you are part of the story being told. A sliding glass door encourages us to go from just watching to actually taking **action**.

Thinking back to *Xinjiang Province, 2112*, have students imagine they can slide open the glass door and step into that world.

After we step through the door of Mason Bates's musical story, the endangered ecosystems he imagined have become our real future. What should we do?

*Can creative storytelling about the present or future, like in *Xinjiang Province, 2112*, make an impact on climate change? Why?*

Hear composer Angélica Negrón share how she supports young people who wonder if art-making can make a real difference, and why she believes it can.

 [Angélica Negrón on Music Making, Activism, and How Art Can Change the World](#)



What are some other kinds of art or music you've encountered that inspires you to take action or make changes?

ACTIVITY 2 STEPPING INTO A FUTURE WORLD CONTINUED

Invite students to consider a climate action they could take in response to either Bates’s or Negrón’s messages and music. Use the Ripple template at the link below to help students organize their ideas and picture how their action could inspire further action from others.

[Ripples of Action](#)

If students need even more motivation to believe in the importance of their action, share a final quote:



**“I’ve learned you are never too small to make a difference”
— Greta Thunberg.**

Let’s Hear From YOU! Make a Case for Action

Record students’ speaking their short persuasive pieces based on the Extension below and send them to us! [Click here](#) to upload your audio files. In addition to your name and email, please include your school name and classroom grade(s) with each set of files.

Extension

Encourage students to amplify their impact and inspire climate action by having them craft a short piece of persuasive speaking or writing. Students should choose a natural space or element within an ecosystem in need of environmental interventions. Have students identify their audience and name the action step they believe their audience should take on behalf of this space or ecosystem. Consider adding persuasive weight by using tools from this guide, such as conveying personal impressions (see Unit 2, [Activity 1](#)) and highlighting the action’s effects on an interconnected system (See Unit 1, [Activities 1](#) and [2](#).)

ACTIVITY 3 CREATING THE SOUNDS OF ACTION

Goal: Students create a musical build to a climax using found classroom sounds and compare their creative choices to those used by Bates. (30 minutes)

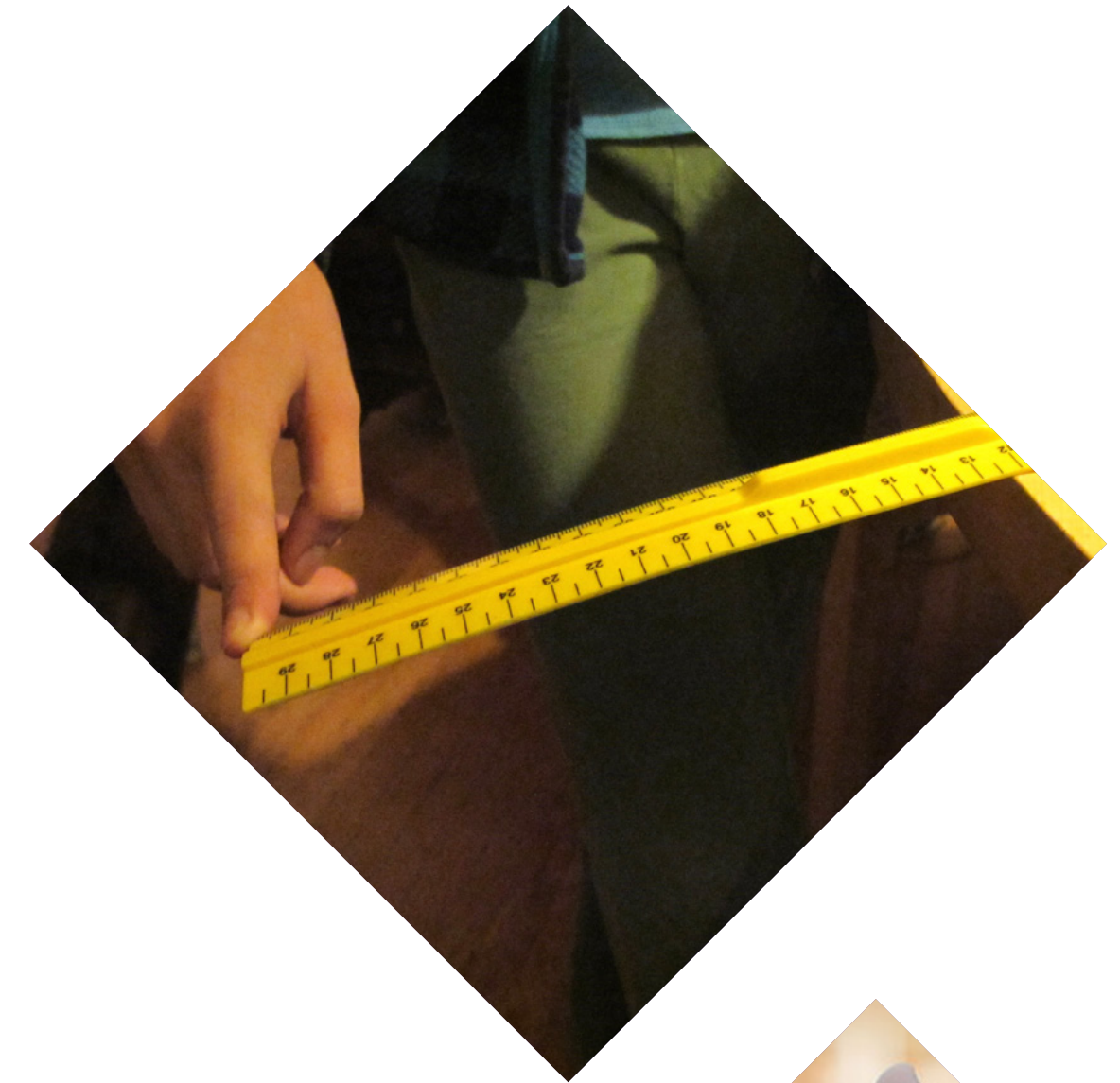
Inspiration can be found in an infinite number of places! As a class, share a few examples. They could include:

- ◆ Inspiration sources students have explored already for this concert (e.g. systems, the natural world, the ocean, etc.),
- ◆ Ideas that have inspired their own past musical creations
- ◆ Inspiration behind other music they enjoy listening to

Direct students to an inspiration source used by many composers, including Young People’s Concerts for Schools composers Mason Bates and Angélica Negrón.

Explain:

Sometimes giving yourself a **question** to explore can really spark your musical imagination. For Mason Bates, asking “what if?” questions and wondering about the future of our planet inspired his piece *Xinjiang Province, 2112*. Composer Angélica Negrón often jumpstarts her musical ideas by asking herself something more specific, like “What are the **sounds of action?**” Today, we’re going to borrow that exact question and use it as inspiration for our own music. Looking around our classroom, what are some **sounds of action** we might hear or make in this space?



ACTIVITY 3 CREATING THE SOUNDS OF ACTION **CONTINUED**

Have students explore the room and gather **found sounds** of “action.” These could include sounds students make with their bodies (e.g., speaking, footsteps) as well as sounds made by objects (e.g., pencils on paper, computer keyboard taps, chairs sliding, classroom instruments.)

Put students in pairs or small groups and invite them to experiment with creating a short rhythm using one or two of their found sounds of action.

Focus work with these questions:

How would our sounds need to change if we wanted to show different levels of action?

What if our level of action was low? How might your rhythm sound?

What if we wanted to increase our level of action to medium or high?

Brainstorm musical tools that could help show an increasing action and intensity (e.g., increase dynamics, increase tempo, add more layers of sound, etc.)

Challenge students to create three versions of their found sounds of action, each with a build in intensity: action starts, action builds, action peaks!

After inviting volunteers to share their creations, listen together to an excerpt from *Xinjiang Province, 2112*. Preface with a short narration of the action timeline for the movement.

According to Bates, over the course of his piece the energy — or level of action — changes dramatically. At first, the action just “simmers to the surface,” then becomes “wild splashes,” before finally ending with “a drive to a catastrophic meltdown.”

 [Xinjiang Province, 2112 Excerpt](#)



Reflect:

What kinds of musical changes did you hear that helped show an increase in action and energy?

How did Bates’s choices compare with your own?

Which ideas of his would you like to try out in your music? What ideas would you suggest he explore to build even more activity in his piece?

Commission Spotlight

Using Found Sounds



As Negrón worked with the artists at El Puente, they explored together the idea of taking **action** to support important issues, like working for climate justice. She started wondering “What are the sounds of action?” and began to gather ideas by recording the sounds of young people making their art. Here are a few examples.

- 🔊 [El Puente Art-Making Found Sound 1](#)
- 🔊 [El Puente Art-Making Found Sound 2](#)
- 🔊 [El Puente Art-Making Found Sound 3](#)

What do these sound like to you?

If you were going to imitate these sounds, how would you make them?

Which instruments might be able to copy these sounds?

Listen for how these sounds appear and become part of the musical system of the orchestra in the concert!



Extension

Create your own found sound piece inspired by another of Negrón’s compositions using [this lesson](#) by NYPhil Teaching Artist Zeynep Alpan.

A Message from El Puente about Angélica Negrón's Commission: *For Those...*

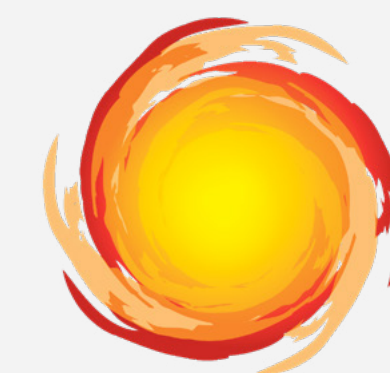
For Those... is a community mural created by Los Muralistas, an intergenerational community art collective of El Puente, a community-based arts and human rights organization serving the Brooklyn communities of *Los Sures* (the Southside) in Williamsburg and Bushwick as well as communities in Puerto Rico.

In the months and weeks leading up to November 1, 2022, Los Muralistas, along with students and teachers at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice and MS 50 El Puente Community School, created paintings, sculptures, performances, and a mural for El Puente's annual Día de los Muertos celebration.

El Puente began celebrating Día de Los Muertos 30 years ago. The tradition was introduced to our community by two young Mexican members of El Puente, Albertano Meza and Lilia Balbuena. The themes of recognizing and honoring our ancestors and cultural traditions as well as mourning and processing the loss of loved ones through the collective creation of works of art, food, and performance grew out of, and expanded upon, an existing tradition of shared cultural community ceremonies within El Puente. As a Latinx-led organization with leadership and members with origins in Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Mexico, and many other Latin American and Caribbean countries, the arts at El Puente have always been deeply rooted in our collective histories and cultural traditions. The work of Los Muralistas honor and reference these cultural touchstones while creating original work that addresses culturally relevant social justice and human rights issues.

For this project in partnership with the NY Phil, Los Muralistas entered into dialogue with composer Angélica Negrón to focus on the loss of land, life, and traditions on the island of Puerto Rico in the face of climate change — specifically in the wake of Hurricanes Maria and Fiona. Through a series of readings, viewing of documentaries, discussions, sharing of first-hand accounts, drawing sessions, and interviews with Angélica, Los Muralistas created the design for a mural that addressed the destruction of the environment and infrastructure in Puerto Rico along with the rise of disaster capitalism, governmental policies, and corruption that, in combination, threaten to destroy the natural environment and lives of the people of Puerto Rico.

We were excited to include Angélica in our process and to add the new dimension of original music to our repertoire of creative collaborations.



EL PUENTE
LEADERS FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

Facilitators

Joe Matunis and Alicia Martinson

Youth Muralistas

Melanie Adames	Monse Sanchez
Nashley Adames	Almarosa Corona
Elliana Duran	Mina Kumai
Crystal Cruz	Misa Kumai
Shareef Dean	Destiny Castro
Xanthia Lopez	

[Learn more about El Puente](#)

Audio Resources

[REBEL *Le Cahos*, from *Les Éléments*](#)

Singapore Symphony Orchestra: Pablo Beznosiuk, leader / violin
Recorded 2016. Courtesy of Singapore Symphony Orchestra.

[DEBUSSY *The Play of the Waves*, from *La Mer*](#)

New York Philharmonic: Alan Gilbert, conductor
Recorded 2012. Courtesy of New York Philharmonic Archives.

[Mason BATES Selection from *Xinjiang Province, 2112*, from *Alternative Energy*](#)

San Francisco Symphony: Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor
Recorded 2016. Courtesy of San Francisco Symphony.

About the Artists

[Lidiya Yankovskaya](#) conductor / co-host

[Angélica Negrón](#) co-host

[Ken Kaissar](#) scriptwriter

[El Puente](#) community partner

[Habib Azar](#) director

[NY Phil](#)