



## Exploring Musical Meaning in Orchestral Music: Programmatic vs. Absolute Music

*Tchaikovsky's Souvenir de Florence*

*Barber's Serenade for Strings*

### Repertoire List:

Tchaikovsky: *Souvenir de Florence*

Barber: *Serenade for Strings*

### Supplies:

White Board & Markers

### Class Discussion:

Musical Motivation

- What inspires composers to write certain pieces of music?
- Does music always tell a story?
- Does the story have to be the same for every listener?

### Critical Listening:

Perform excerpts from Tchaikovsky's *Souvenir de Florence* and Barber's *Serenade for Strings* without background context. Ask students to assign possible stories to the music. Students should use music vocabulary to support their answers including, but not limited to, articulation, sonority, tempo, rhythmic figures, and melodic motives. After suggestions are offered, discuss the composers' true creative motivation for each piece. Listen to the piece again and have students verbalize how knowing the premise each composer was writing under influences their personal interpretations of the pieces.

### Practical Application:

Students work in small groups to identify and present a programmatic piece in their school orchestra's repertoire including (1) the historical context surrounding the work, (2) how the story is represented through the music, and (3) practical ways to emphasize these discoveries in their own performance.