

Music and Poetry

Youth Concert, January 28, 2022
Lensic Performing Arts Center
The Santa Fe Pro Musica Orchestra
David Felberg, conductor
Anne-Marie McDermott, piano
Kathryn Mueller, soprano



Composer Reena Esmail

What is Poetry?

Poetry is a type of writing that uses words in surprising and powerful ways. Poetry has been called a magical art as it opens doors to places we never thought possible—to new feelings, to dark secrets and brilliant insights, to the unexpected and the unknown. Yet for all its magic, poetry just uses the common words of our every day speech.

What is Music?

Music is the arrangement of sounds to express emotional feelings and ideas. Like poetry, music can open up a rich world of emotions that can include the display of opposites like happiness and grief, love and hate, calmness and anger. Music can also present contrasting ideas like loud and soft, fast and slow, dark and light, liveliness and laziness, beauty and ugliness.

Ideas that poetry and music share:

- Cadence: an ending point, like the end of a sentence
- Rhythm: short, ordered patterns of sound
- Rhyme: words that sound similar—musical patterns that sound similar
- Repetition: to say it again

On this video you will hear a sample from a new work called *The History of Red*. This piece was written in 2020 for a singer and an orchestra of string and wind instruments, harp, and percussion. The music was written by the Indian-American composer [Reena Esmail](#) and set to a poem by the Chickasaw poet Linda Hogan.

This poem explores the color red's association with life and death (opposites). Here is Linda Hogan's poem: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55705/the-history-of-red>

Some ideas to notice in the poem:

- The poem opens simply and powerfully with the word “First”
- Notice how the use of the word “and” at the beginnings of some of the lines creates movement and connection
 - and then—and they—and one—and that—and red—and this—and climbed
- Look for how the color red is directly used
 - red bison—red wet mask—red land—red fear—red fruit—red shadows—red feather
- And look for how the color red is indirectly used
 - blood—wounded—iron—fire—birth—knife—hunters
- Rhymes can sometimes be found in only small parts of words. These are called imperfect rhymes. Other names for these kinds of rhymes are slant, near, or lazy rhymes. Here are some examples:
 - Stanza 2
 - lake-face
 - clay-carry-caves (the hard “ca”)
 - Stanza 4
 - handle-animal
 - Stanza 6
 - sky-skin-escape (the hard “sk” and “sc”)
 - Stanza 10
 - bison-nation (“son” and “tion”)
 - burning-living (the “ing”)
 - left-death (the “e”)

In addition to *The History of Red*, this video also presents the Pro Musica Orchestra performing samples from the following works:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in B-Flat Major, K. 450

Felix Mendelssohn, Symphony No. 4 in A Major, “Italian”



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) was a pianist and composer who lived in Vienna, Austria, when it was the cultural capital of the western world. He is now one of the most famous composers who ever lived. During his time, he would write a piano concerto for himself, perform it a few times, and then write another one. He didn't want his audience to get bored! In all he wrote 27 concertos for piano and orchestra.

Concerto—a musical composition written for a solo instrument and an orchestra (a large group of instruments, including strings and wind instruments, sometimes percussion). A concerto is like a conversation between the two different musical entities.



Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) grew up in a cultured and wealthy Jewish family in Germany. He started playing piano at the age of 6 and gave his first public performance at the age of 9. As a teenager he wrote 12 symphonies and continued to write extraordinary music until his early death at the age of 38.

Symphony—a multi-movement work for orchestra. The movements typically include a fast movement that opens the work, followed by a slow movement, then a dance movement, and concluding with another fast movement.