

The American Dream

January 22 & 23, 2025

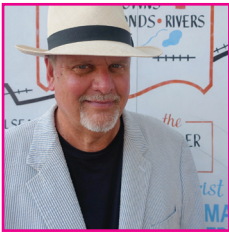


Listening Guide

The United States is largely a nation of immigrants. Comprising the current population of the United States are newly arrived immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees; individuals who are the descendants of immigrants, slaves, and indentured servants; and indigenous peoples for whom the United States is their native land. This rich and complicated tapestry yields a diversity of hopes, aspirations, experiences, and dreams for the future.

Schooltime: The American Dream explores and celebrates the many people who make up our nation. It ponders the experiences that bring people to the United States, the promises they see in this country, and the lives they lead. It also asks us to consider for ourselves what hopes, concerns, and dreams we have for the communities where we live and for our nation.

Listen carefully to the music featured on *Schooltime: The American Dream*. Discuss what you hear and what you think each composer is trying to express. Then use the classroom resources provided to dig deeper into the areas that resonate with you or where you want to learn more.



MICHAEL DAUGHERTY

Gold

The Pittsburgh Symphony is proud to be the first orchestra to perform this work by American composer Michael Daugherty. Originally composed as a three-movement suite for symphonic band titled *The Adventures of Jesse Owens*, the PSO premiered the orchestral version of the final movement, “Gold,” in June 2024. The piece is so new that no orchestral recording exists!

Listen to the original version of *Gold* performed by the University of Michigan Symphony Band.

- How does the piece begin?
- Which instruments play the melody?
- What musical choices create a sense of motion?
- Shortly before the end of the piece, the tempo changes and a brief snippet of “My Country Tis of Thee” is heard. Why do you think composer Michael Daugherty included this musical quotation? How would you describe this moment in the piece?
- How would you change the instrumentation if you were writing this piece for an orchestra?
 - Which instruments would play the melody?
 - What changes would you make?
 - What would you keep the same?



ZHOU TIAN

"D-O-N-E" from *Transcend*

Zhou Tian's three-movement piece *Transcend* commemorates the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. Thousands of skilled Chinese immigrants provided critical labor to build the railroad, including some of the most dangerous sections across the American west. Upon completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, a nationwide telegraph went out with just one word typed in Morse code: DONE.

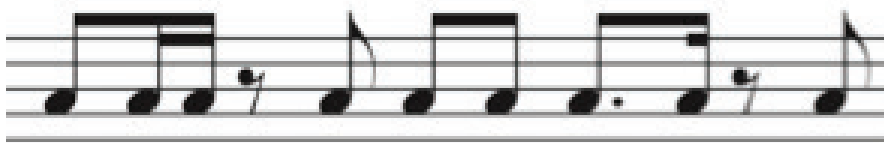
Listen to "D-O-N-E" from the world premiere of *Transcend*, performed by the Reno Philharmonic.

- Zhou Tian uses the Morse code pattern for the word "done" as a recurring rhythm throughout the piece, as notated here. Tap along each time you hear it.

List the instruments that perform the Morse code rhythm throughout the piece:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- About halfway through the movement, Zhou depicts the sound of a steam train. What musical choices create this effect?





GABRIELA LENA FRANK

"Coqueteos" from *Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout*

American composer Gabriela Lena Frank draws on her Peruvian-Jewish heritage to create music that combines elements from multiple traditions. *Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout*, she explains, "draws inspiration from the idea of mestizaje as envisioned by Peruvian writer José María Arguedas, where cultures can coexist without the subjugation of one by the other. As such, this piece mixes elements from the western classical and Andean folk music traditions."

Listen to "Coqueteos" from *Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout*, performed by the Chiara String Quartet.

- Frank creates an array of textures using only string instruments. How many different musical textures do you hear? Pick one word to describe each of them.
- What sound production techniques are used to create these textures?
- How successful do you think the piece is in combining western classical and Andean folk music traditions equally, "without the subjugation of one by the other"?
- What do you imagine when you listen to this piece?



**PETER
BOYER**

Ellis Island: The Dream of America

Ellis Island: The Dream of America combines the words of seven immigrants – as recorded through the Ellis Island Oral History Project – with orchestral music, historic photographs, and original projected artwork. How do these different artistic mediums interact to create one cohesive work?

Listen to the opening movement, “Prologue,” from *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*.

- Composer Peter Boyer layers the sound of many different instruments to open the piece. Name the instruments you hear. Why might Boyer choose to start the piece this way?
- What instrument introduces the main theme? Where does the theme go next in the orchestra?
- How many different sections do you hear within the Prologue? What happens in the music when a new section begins? Why do you think the Prologue has multiple sections?
- How do you know the Prologue is coming to an end (without looking at the timestamp)?

Next, listen to *Interlude 2* and *Interlude 3*.

- How would you describe *Interlude 2*?
- How would you describe *Interlude 3*?
- Do the interludes contrast or reinforce each other? What makes you say that?
- How do the interludes move the story forward?

Now, listen to “Words of Manny Steen.”

- What do you imagine during this movement?
- How do the composer’s musical choices affect the feeling of the story?
- How would the “Words of Manny Steen” feel without music? Or with different music?

Finally, listen to the last movement, “Epilogue: The New Colossus.”

- What do you hear in the Epilogue that was also in the Prologue?
- How do the words and music interact with each other? Does hearing both simultaneously enhance your experience or distract from it?
- How would you describe the ending of the music? Why do you think the composer chose to end the piece this way?