

Book Review by the barefoot Librarian( Eve Panzer)

Maestro Orpheus and The World Clock Audiobook

Created by Joanne Grodzinski and Robert Pennee

Written and Illustrated by Robert Pennee

2022 ISBN: 9798425808370

The narrators are Canadian actor R.H. Thomson, with Leslie Marshall, Marshall Matson, and B.J. McLellan.

The English Chamber Orchestra recorded the music.



The **CLASSROOM TEACHER'S GUIDE** (1997) was written by Joanne Grodzinski and Carolyn McMillan. Illustrations are by Jacob Grodzinski and John Thomas Riddolls, Jr. Joanne Grodzinski revised this second edition (2023). ISBN 9798391878650

Maestro Orpheus and The World Clock is a unique, creative, and lyrical children's audiobook! It is a mystery and a fantasy story masterfully woven with classical music. So much attention was paid to every detail of this production, from the story, the narrators, the musical selections, and the orchestra, all keeping the audience engaged and enthralled. In addition, there is an extensive instructional guide to help educators and parents understand and teach the many educational layers and curriculum connections this audiobook has to offer.

The story begins as 10-year-old Fred reluctantly visits his aging grandfather, who spends his time building and repairing clocks. When Fred wakes in the middle of the night to find that time has stopped, he meets Maestro Orpheus and begins an adventure-filled journey. Maestro Orpheus is responsible for winding the World Clock, which keeps time going. Fred, Maestro Orpheus, and their companion Lyre (a musical instrument similar to a harp), who lost her voice, journey down the Corridor of Time in search of The World Clock, which Maestro Orpheus must wind, or time will stop forever!

Along the Corridor of Time are endless doors with numbers above each. These numbers are actually the dates of the year musical composers were born. Along the way, Fred enters several doors and hears stories of four composers' childhoods (**Bach, Haydn, Chopin, and Janacek**). These stories are about the start of their musical interests, which revolve around their grandfathers. Although these stories are untrue, they provide continuity and connection to the story of Fred and his grandfather. In addition to the story, Fred hears some music from each composer, and as Fred remarks, " ... *you can hear the story in the music.*"

They "...*also encounter the Doors to A Timeless World and The End of Time ...*" where Fred learns about the relationship between time and music. Because they have entered so many doors along The Corridor of Time, they almost ran out of time to save the World Clock. Once they reach the World Clock, Fred faces a dilemma – if time stops, his grandfather will stay the same age and not die. But music and time are inextricably interwoven, and Maestro Orpheus warns there will be no more music if time stops. He

explains that just like each composer's music evoked the memory of the story that was told in their respective rooms, music will help Fred remember his grandfather. So, Maestro Orpheus and Fred wind the World Clock "...so time will march forward..." and "...music will continue to grace our lives."

The narration, music, and sound effects are professional and superb. The lyrical tale is told by gifted narrators whose voices fit their characters, bring them to life, and engage the imagination of the listeners. The music pieces performed by the English Chamber Orchestra are well chosen for the story. The music is gorgeous and captivating, enriching the story and evoking a wide range of emotions in the audience. The storytelling and the music are seamlessly entwined, creating a memorable, extraordinary experience.

But the experience does not end with the hour-long audiobook. An in-depth 77-page **CLASSROOM TEACHER'S GUIDE**, designed by educators with extensive experience in the classroom and as a music consultant, is also part of the package. It is clear that innumerable hours and much thought have gone into its creation. It contains many rich and detailed materials for educators, making it easy for a classroom teacher or a parent to use, even those with no musical background.

Each chapter has a synopsis and background information on the composers and their music. Questions and discussion topics for every chapter are provided for pre-listening and post-listening "...to test knowledge and comprehension and to encourage application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the material", as well as "...encourage children to communicate their ideas and feelings, to use critical and creative thinking skills, and to apply aesthetic judgment." Guided active listening questions motivate children to pay attention to details. For instance, students are asked to listen for how many times the clock chimes in Chapter 1. The guide provides musical connections that "...will help the class to see how various aspects of music work together to express a mood or feeling." In addition, there are guided curriculum connections to many areas, such as music, art, math, science, geography, history, mythology, and language arts. Research project suggestions include topics such as clocks, time zones, musical instruments, and musical careers. In addition, there are activity worksheets that can be printed out and games for the students to play.

This audiobook provides an extraordinary experience for children ages 5-12. The story offers mystery, fantasy, and adventure. It is narrated to perfection by talented actors, capturing the minds and imaginations of children. But it goes even further by weaving exquisite music seamlessly into the story. Without being aware, students are learning about the relationship between time and music, as well as being introduced to classical composers and their music. In addition, there are extensive connections to a broad spectrum of curricula for the teachers to pursue. This audiobook's many elements and layers and the comprehensive Teachers Guide make it a must-have for educators. Since the story relies so heavily on music and narration, it can only be truly experienced through the audiobook format.