ULSTER ORCHESTRA

PRIMARY SCHOOL CONCERTS 2026

TALE OF THE TITANIC

Teacher Resource Pack



WELCOME!

Welcome to this year's Ulster Orchestra Primary School Concerts resource.

This year, we'll set sail on a musical journey through one of Belfast's most famous stories: the tale of the Titanic. Together, we'll explore its incredible story - from its building in Belfast and its launch into the world, to life on board, its tragic loss, and the ways the tale of the Titanic continues to be remembered today. We can't wait to share this unforgettable adventure with you and your pupils.

Inside this resource, you'll find a welcome from our presenter, a biography of our conductor, an introduction to the orchestra, information about some of the music you will hear, and everything you need to learn our participatory song, *Tale of The Titanic*. These materials are designed to help you and your pupils get the most from the concert experience and build excitement ahead of the performance.

There's no pressure to complete everything, or even anything at all. Your pupils will still be able to take part, enjoy the music, and join in.

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* You are receiving this resource pack because your school has signed up to attend the 2026 Ulster Orchestra School Concerts. Please do not publish this booklet or any part of it online or share this material with anyone outside of your school.

A WELCOME FROM OUR PRESENTER



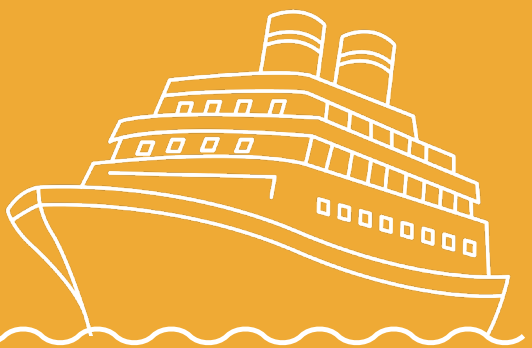
Jessie Grimes Presenter

Hello everyone! I'm so excited to share the magic of the Ulster Orchestra with you all in November, to sing with you, and explore the amazing story of Belfast's own engineering marvel: the Titanic.

My name is Jessie. I'm from Dublin and I'm a clarinet player, workshop leader and presenter on a mission to spread joy and silliness through music. I have the fancy title of Artist in Residence at Ireland's National Concert Hall, and I create and present shows with the National Symphony Orchestra Ireland each year, as well as orchestras across the UK.

I love sharing orchestral music because it's just such an epic sound that everyone deserves to enjoy it. Playing clarinet in orchestras has led me all over the world from New York's Carnegie Hall to Beijing's National Performing Arts Centre. I've recorded everything from tv soundtracks to swanky new compositions, but my favourite clarinet achievement so far has definitely been being an animated poo for London Rhymes...

These days, I live in the countryside in England with my spouse Brogen Murphy the award-winning middle grade author of Wildlands. When not making music, I like improv comedy, foraging for wild mushrooms and jumping into any lake, river or sea I can find – the colder the better!



BIOGRAPHY OF OUR CONDUCTOR

Derrick Morgan Conductor



Derrick Morgan is a young Scottish conductor based in Glasgow. He recently completed a two-year tenure as Assistant Conductor of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO), working closely with Music Director Thomas Søndergård and many leading guest conductors.

Derrick's recent highlights include assisting Patrick Hahn with a concert performance of Wagner's complete Ring Cycle with the Sinfonieorchester und Oper Wuppertal. He has also conducted the RSNO in music by Shostakovich and Amy Beach, and regularly returns to the orchestra for its Viennese New Year's concerts.

This season, Derrick makes his debuts with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Ulster Orchestra, and returns to the RSNO for a national schools tour. He will also conduct the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland Engagement Orchestra on tour in 2027.

Derrick is passionate about sharing music with audiences of all ages. He has worked extensively in education and community engagement, including through Scotland's Sistema programme, Big Noise, and the NYOS Engage programme. He was formerly Assistant Artistic Director of the Nevis Ensemble, working with communities across Scotland.

He has conducted orchestras including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Ensemble, BBC Singers, Auckland Philharmonia and Norwegian Radio Orchestra, and is a strong advocate for new music and emerging composers.



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ORCHESTRA



Meet some of the musicians from the Ulster Orchestra, learn about their instruments, why they love playing them and what they sound like with our **Instruments of the Orchestra** series on YouTube. There are **14 short videos** showcasing all the instruments of the orchestra:



Watch the playlist here

INSTRUMENT FAMILIES

The orchestra is made up of four families of instruments: the **String** family, the **Woodwind** family, the **Brass** family and the **Percussion** family.

STRINGS

The string family includes the **Violin**, **Viola**, **Cello** and **Double Bass**. These instruments each have four strings and are played with a bow. You can also play them by plucking the strings with your fingers – this is called pizzicato. There are **42 string players** in the Ulster Orchestra – the strings family is always the largest group of instruments in the orchestra, and often play lush melodies and add lots of texture to pieces of music.

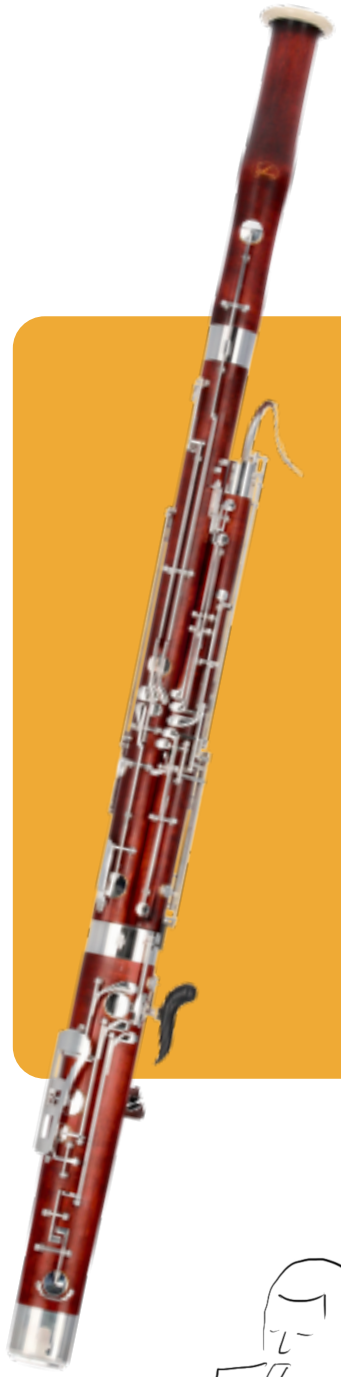




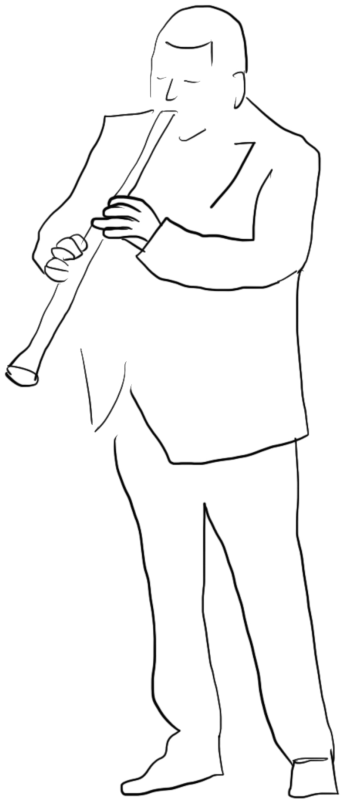


WOODWIND

The woodwind family includes the **Flute**, **Oboe**, **Clarinet** and **Bassoon**, and some additional instruments like the **Piccolo**, **Cor Anglais**, **Bass Clarinet** and **Contrabassoon**. Historically woodwind instruments got their name from being made of hollowed out wood, but now they are mainly made from plastic, metal or a combination of both. Performers produce sound by blowing air into their instrument through a mouthpiece or reed. There are **9 woodwind players** in the Ulster Orchestra and you often hear them playing beautiful singing solos.







BRASS



The brass family includes the **French horn**, **Trumpet**, **Trombone** and **Tuba**. The brass player has to press their lips against the mouthpiece and vibrate their lips incredibly quickly which makes a buzzing sound. This buzz travels through the instrument as a vibration, making their sound. There are **10 brass players** in the Ulster Orchestra, all of the family members sound bright and triumphant. These characteristics make brass instruments favourable for royal fanfares and war themed pieces.





PERCUSSION

The percussion family is the largest of all of the instrument groups. It consists of any instrument that makes a sound when hit, that's a lot of instruments! Percussion instruments are made from a mixture of materials including metals, woods, rubbers, bone, dried foods and plastics. Sticks and mallets are often made of wood but tipped with plastic, cotton or rubber. Timpani drums are a collection of big copper bowls with a synthetic drum skin stretched over the top. At the bottom of the bowl is a foot pedal to change the drum's pitch. There is **1 percussionist and 1 timpanist** in the Ulster Orchestra full-time; For special concerts like our Schools Concerts, we bring in extra percussionists, so you'll see 4 percussionists and 1 timpanist.

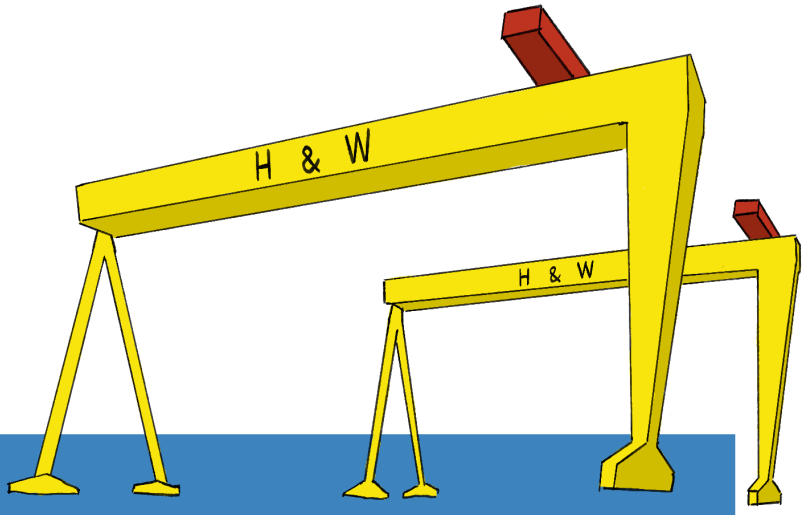






SOME OF THE COMPOSERS AND THEIR MUSIC

The music you will hear at the concert helps us tell the story of the Titanic. As you listen, see if you can hear how the music changes to match the excitement, fun, danger and sadness of the journey.



1 BUILDING THE TITANC

Zoom & Zip, Elena Kats-Chernin

Hear the busy shipyard come alive as the workers hammer, build and create the mighty Titanic.

Listen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARyXwzWp2x8

Musical features to listen for: Listen for the strong, heavy beat and energetic rhythms, alongside warm, singing melodies. Can you hear the music changing between powerful machinery and more gentle, expressive sounds?

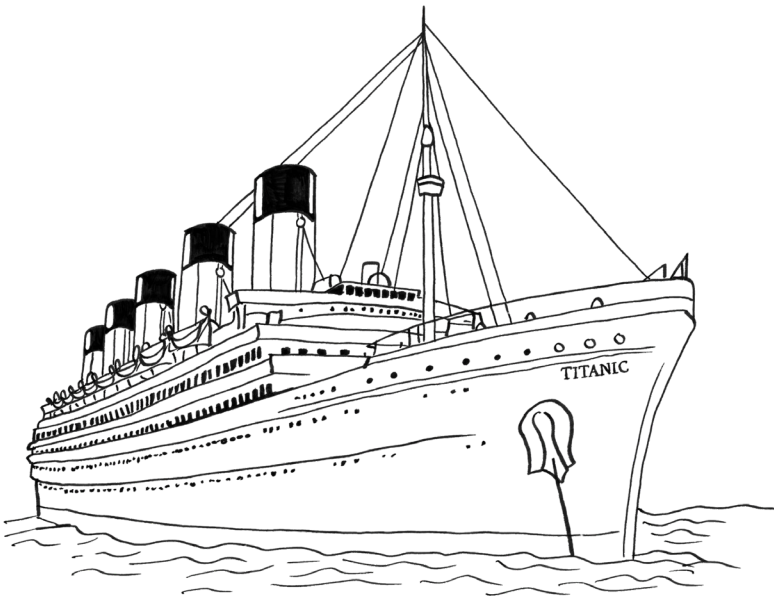
2 SETTING SAIL

The Fair Day, Hamilton Harty

The Titanic sets off on her exciting voyage, filled with the hopes, dreams and excitement of everyone on board.

Listen: https://youtu.be/j9t-M5Z-oUM?si=hXAN0LKAQsPIaojy

Musical features to listen for: Listen for lively rhythms, bright melodies and changing musical ideas that create a sense of celebration, excitement and movement - like a great adventure beginning.



3 LIFE ON BOARD



Shenanigan, Kati Agócs

Life below deck is full of fun, dancing and laughter as passengers enjoy themselves on board the Titanic.

Listen: https://youtu.be/kXYMnJ49-hM?si=NPo53eAKg4tTelAc

Musical features to listen for: Listen for the lively folk-dance rhythms and playful melodies, especially the flute solo, and see if you can hear the music skipping and dancing along.



4 ICEBERG / DISASTER

Symphony No. 5, Beethoven

The mood suddenly changes as the Titanic meets the iceberg, and the voyage turns into a terrifying disaster.

Listen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jv2WJMVPQi8

Musical features to listen for: Listen for the famous four-note opening - short, short, short, long - and the strong, dramatic rhythms that create a feeling of danger, urgency and fear.

5. LOSS

Nearer, My God, To Thee

As the Titanic sinks, we remember those who lost their lives and the sadness of saying goodbye.

Listen: https://youtu.be/xbKF09SHwl4?si=eXcCL1bBmWQXOqrk

Musical features to listen for: Listen for the slow, gentle melody and peaceful, hymn-like sound, which creates a feeling of sadness, comfort and reflection.



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TITANIC SINKS, 1500 DIE

Carpathia Picks Up 675 Out of 2200---Races for New York---Survivors Mostly Women and Children.

POLICE ORDER DORR'S ARREST

Lynn Chief Accuses Him of the Murder of George E. Marsh.

Suspect Said to Have Left Boston Thursday Night--Auto Found Here.

Giant Steamer Goes Down Before Help Arrives.

Virginian or Parisian May Have Some Survivors

White Star Officials Admit "Horrible Loss of Life".

CREATE A GRAPHIC SCORE

Based on *Nautilus* by Anna Meredith



This is Anna Meredith, she composed the piece *Nautilus* in 2011

She is Scottish

She is a producer and performer

Her music covers and combines lots of different styles from classical to electronic pop.

Nautilus is a fast, loud, five-minute-long piece of music that starts like a wake-up call. It works like a machine and mixes classical instruments with a heavy rock or techno beat.

A nautilus is a sea creature that has been on earth over 480 million years. It is like an octopus with a shell. Anna Meredith was walking on a beach when she had the idea for this music.

WATCH AND LISTEN:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vajhs2wBeCU&list=RDVajhs2wBeCU&start_radio=1



GRAPHIC SCORE LESSON PLAN

Anna Meredith's piece *Nautilus* is a great piece of music to explore the concept of graphic scores. Graphic scores describe a piece of music that is written using shapes and pictures instead of traditional notes.

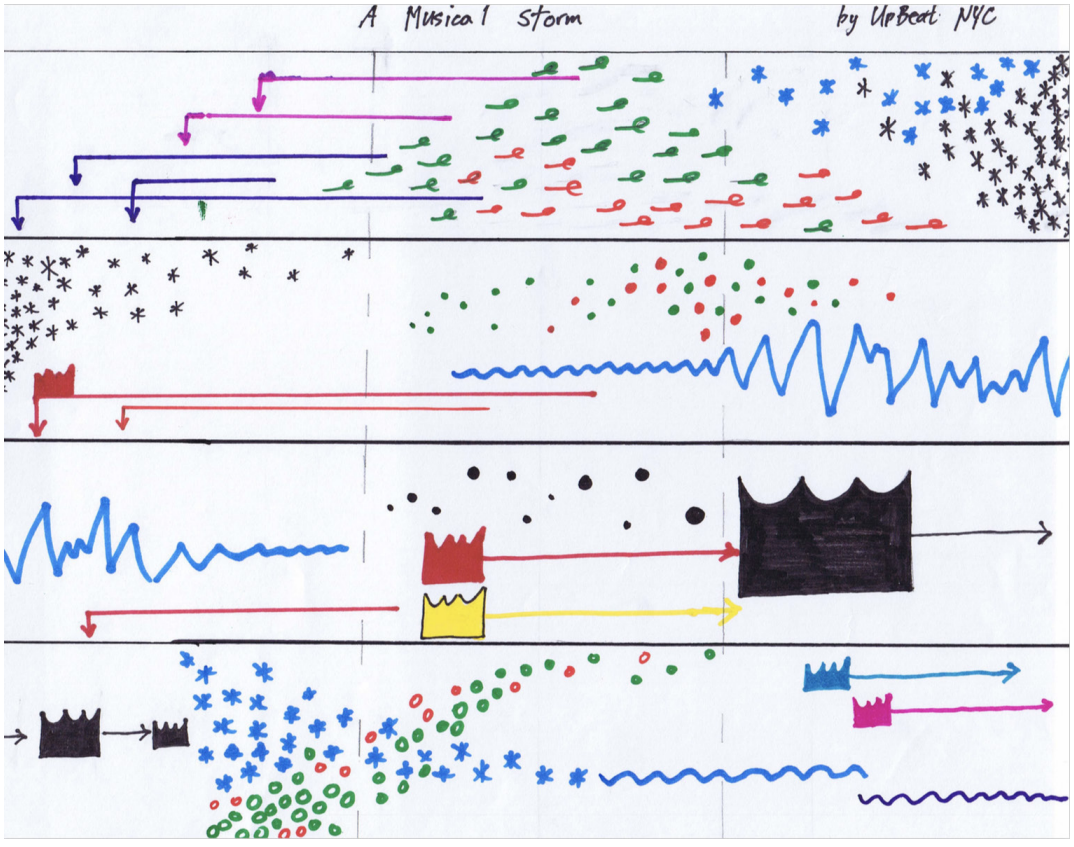
If you do this exercise with your pupils we would love to see their graphic scores, details on how and where to send them are below.

① Introduce the idea of Graphic Scores

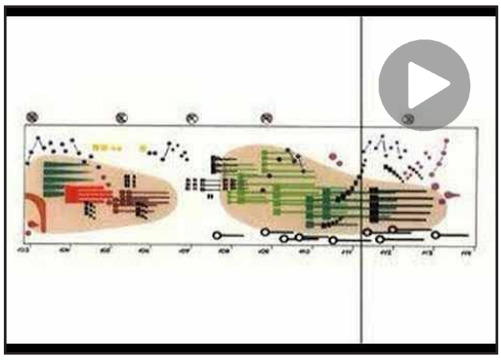
Ask: "If music was a picture, what would loud sound like? What would a loud crash look like versus a quiet rumble or a short sharp noise?" Take a few quick verbal answers, there are no wrong answers.

Explain: a graphic score is a piece of music written using pictures and shapes instead of traditional notes. Example below. Key idea: shape and colour can show sound.

Ask: "What sounds might some of the shapes and colours on this example show?"



② Video and discussion



Show video of *Artikulation* by Ligeti

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71hNl_skTZQ

Ask: "What features do you notice?" You could ask them to look out for Pitch – highs/lows, Articulation – smooth and connected or short and separated, Dynamics – louds/softs, Speed – fast or slow passages and what colours and shapes represent those things. Write their suggestions on the board.

③ Create a Graphic Score

Play Anna Meredith's Nautilus video/audio once through with pupils just listening, eyes closed or watching, no drawing yet.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vajhs2wBeCU&list=RDVajhs2wBeCU&start_radio=1

Play it again (or continue) and let pupils draw as they listen
For example:

- Jagged, sharp lines or spinning spirals when the brass gets loud and powerful
- Encourage colouring in these shapes to match the mood (bold reds/oranges for loud brass, cooler blues/greens for quieter moments)

Prompt them while listening: "Listen out for the tubas and cellos – low and rumbling. How is that different from the high flutes and piccolos? Do the lines get bigger or smaller, higher or lower on the page?"

4 Share and discuss

In pairs or small groups, pupils show their graphic score and explain one choice they made (eg. "I drew a big spiral here because the music got really loud"). Ask a few volunteers to share with the whole class.

Recap: A graphic score uses shape, line, and colour instead of musical notes to show sound.

Ask: "What was hardest to draw? What did you enjoy drawing most? Why?"

5 Extensions Ideas

Pupils could add a key/legend explaining what each shape/colour represents.

Pupils could swap scores and try to "perform" or describe a classmate's drawing back to them.

6 Share your pupils' Graphic Scores

We would love you to share pupils' graphic scores with us.

To submit them you can either post them to us or scan and email them to the address below.

The deadline for sending your creative responses is Monday 2nd November 2026.

By email: Lce@ulsterorchestra.com

By post:
Ulster Orchestra
32 Townsend Street
Belfast, BT13 2E

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Sing Along - *Tale of the Titanic*

At the concert, we would love for your pupils to sing along with the song 'Tale of the Titanic' - words and music written by our presenter Jessie Grimes with children from St. Malachy's Primary School, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Friday Afternoons reconnects teachers and young people with singing, through free music, quality resources and training. An evolution of Benjamin Britten's collection of songs for schoolchildren, traditionally sung on a Friday Afternoon, it provides exciting music-making opportunities for all. The song 'Tale of the Titanic' is part of the Friday Afternoons '5 Nations' Collection, where children from England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland worked with a composer to produce a new song about their country. You can find the whole collection in the 2025 playlist.

Words will be on the screen at the concert but if you'd like to learn the song in advance, lyrics are on the next page or can be downloaded alongside an MP3 of the song, backing track, piano score here.

Teaching tips also available on the Friday Afternoons website or linked below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q35avtrpelA&time_continue=54&source_ve_path=MjM4NTE&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.brittenpearsarts.org%2Ffriday-afternoons%2Fsongs%2Ftale-of-the-titanic

TALE OF TITANIC

Written by Jessie Grimes and the children of St Malachy's Primary School, Belfast, Northern Ireland as part of the Friday Afternoons '5 Nations' Project 2025 commissioned by Britten Pears Arts.

They call me Mary O'Hale
I served the rich and wealthy
America was calling me that morning
I set sail

The ship she hit an iceberg
The captain ignored all warnings
So many died that morning
So many lost their lives

What a pity
New York City
They would never see

She was called "the unsinkable ship"
She was made in East Belfast
She was called "the unsinkable ship"
She sank, split in half

She was called "the unsinkable ship"
She was made in East Belfast
She was called "the unsinkable ship"
She sank, split in half

They call me a survivor
I am now rich and wealthy
America, she welcomed me
Bud sadness never left

I was last to board a lifeboat
While all around were screaming
Crashing, tilting, creaking
She was swallowed by the sea

What a pity
New York City
They would never see

She was called "the unsinkable ship"
She was made in East Belfast
She was called "the unsinkable ship"
She sank, split in half

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