



**California
Festival**
A Celebration
of New Music

Community Musical Portrait

Community Musical Portrait

Every community across California is unique, representing diverse groups of people, a variety of perspectives, and landmarks that create a sense of belonging and pride.

Explore the people, places, and shared experiences within your community, and then create a musical portrait that reflects your community's unique identity.

Learning Exploration

How can music celebrate and represent communities and landscapes across the state of California?

Key Objectives: Students will...

- Explore the sights and sounds of communities and landscapes from across California.
- Consider how a variety of musical elements and artistic representations can bring a personal story or community to life.
- Create and share original music with a collaborative community of musicians.
- Develop their own imaginations and discover personal connections to music.

Let your musical imagination soar!

The activities in this guide are meant to spark ideas and offer a framework for creating original compositions. All activities can be adapted for different ages, skill levels, and types of learners. For those that need a little more guidance, suggested composition strategies and supporting worksheets have been included.



Composition Activities

Step 1

REFLECT

Step 2

EXPLORE

Step 3

CREATE

Step 4

SHARE

RESOURCES

Additional Resources

Access student worksheets, listening samples, and other accompanying resources.



1

REFLECT



Reflect on the ways that a community represents people with shared experiences, a sense of belonging and pride, and utilizes artistic expression to communicate common fears, hopes, and dreams.

Use these questions to guide and document your thinking or group discussion:

- *When you walk through your neighborhood, what do you notice?*
- *What people and places do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell?*
- *What important elements of your community would you like for others to know or experience?*
- *Who are notable people or what important landmarks are a part of your community?*
- *What people, places, or events in your community are you proud of? What inspires you?*
- *What emotions do you feel when you think about specific experiences within your community?*

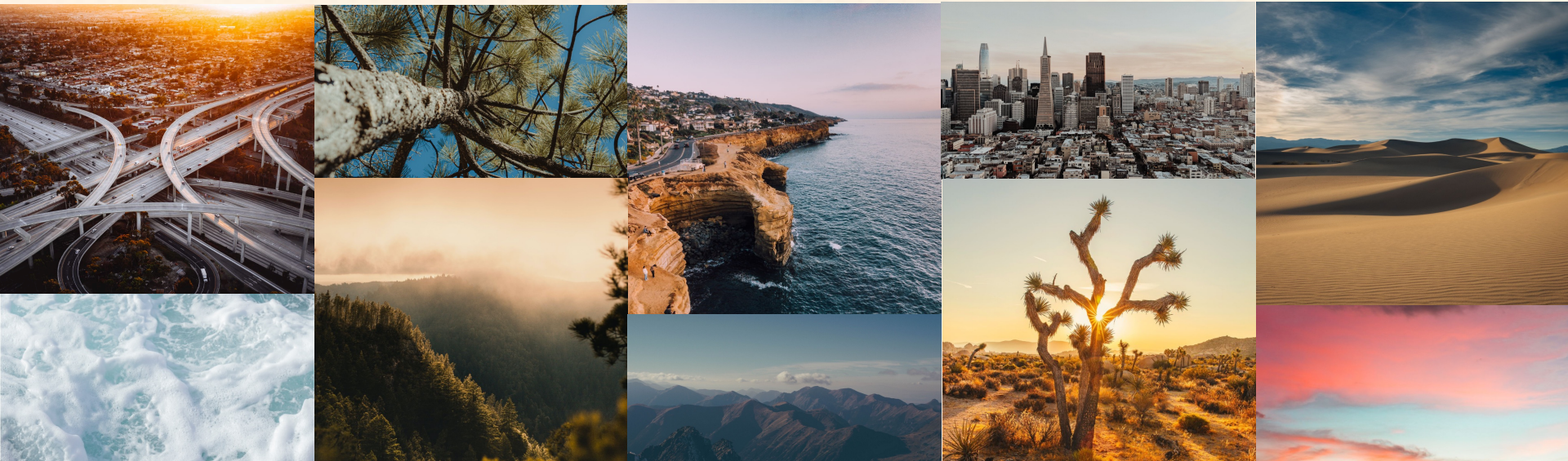


2

EXPLORE



Take a mental or physical walk around your community. Draw a map, take or draw pictures of your neighborhood, and make note of important people, places, and other interesting elements.



3

CREATE



Create a musical theme or soundscape to represent your community. Use your community reflections and these prompts to get started.



1. Consider musical representations within your community:

- *What types of sounds do you hear as you walk around your neighborhood?*
- *What types of music do you hear at home or in your community? What music do you feel represents you or your community?*
- *What musical elements (such as instruments, tempo, dynamics, etc.) could you use to communicate the mood or feeling of your community?*



2. Use a specific detail from the community portrait as inspiration. For example: people having a conversation, a popular tune heard from a radio, a famous person or landmark.

3. Create a short musical idea to represent your community. Then explore ways to create variations on this musical theme. For example: singing or playing it slower or faster, repeating it, singing the notes in a different order, playing it on different instruments, etc.



3

CREATE *continued*



4. **Experiment with different ways to change the mood of the theme** by using tempo, dynamics, and different sounds or instruments.



5. **Experiment with adding accompanying rhythms to the melody or theme** by clapping, tapping, or playing a percussion instrument. Are these rhythms inspired by something you notice in your neighborhood? *For example: footsteps walking down the street or raindrops hitting a rooftop.*
6. **Consider if you will add lyrics to your composition**, either through writing original lyrics or by incorporating a known poem or story.



4

SHARE



Share your new composition by creating a written or drawn score and/or by recording a performance with audio or video.

- ❖ Email visual score(s), audio and video links, and small supporting files to Composers@LAPhil.org.
- ❖ For larger files, please upload to the California Festival Dropbox.

[Click Here to Upload](#)





Listening for Inspiration

Explore some of these musical works that were inspired by different California communities.

- California-born jazz pianist and composer Dave Brubeck’s [“Trolley Song”](#) evokes the sounds and memories of a San Francisco trolley car.
- [“I Left My Heart in San Francisco,”](#) famously performed by Tony Bennett (with music by George Cory and lyrics by Douglass Cross), is one of the official anthems for the city of San Francisco.
- [“I Love L.A.”](#) by Randy Newman is a musical love letter to the city and Newman’s birthplace.
- [“Lights”](#) by Journey is a reflection on San Francisco – the “city by the bay,” where the rock band was formed in 1973.
- [Contested Eden](#) by Gabriela Lena Frank reflects on the California wildfires and climate change that are affecting her beloved home state.
- [“The Dirt is Red Here”](#) from *Earth Speaks* by Reena Esmail is a choral work that explores the earth through the lens of California’s Native Americans. The lyrics are a setting of the text by Ohlone poet Stephen Meadows.





Accompanying Worksheets

Access and download these resources on the [CA Festival website](#).



A Guide for Young Composers

Creating a California Soundscape

Think about the California community landmark that inspires you. Take a physical or mental walk through that place and answer these questions.

What do you notice?	What do you hear?	What do you see?
What people and/or places do you see?	What emotions or feelings come to mind?	What important elements of this place would you like for others to know or experience?

Draw a picture (or create a collage) that represents the elements you want to communicate through your music.

Creating a California Soundscape 1

Creating a Soundscape

Explore the California Festival

Celebrating the collaborative and innovative spirit that thrives in California

cafestival.org

