



The World for Christmas

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The World for Christmas

This is the Teaching Guide for the concert *The World for Christmas*. It has been designed for use by students in all three cycles of elementary education and their teachers. It can be used to prepare students for their concert experience, as well as to review and build on the learning initiated at the event.

Enjoy the Guide and the concert!



A BIT OF HISTORY

WHAT IS JEUNESSES

MUSICALES CANADA?

Jeunesses Musicales Canada (JMC) is one of Canada's foremost classical music presenters.

Each year, hundreds of concerts are presented especially for young audiences on a variety of exciting themes. The organization also presents concerts for the general public, helping Canada's best young musicians to develop their careers.

HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

Supporting the JMC in this mission is a wonderful artistic team, backed by over 300 volunteers. Since its inception in 1949, JMC has presented tens of thousands of concerts to young audiences, families and the general public in Quebec, the Maritimes and Ontario, and even in Western Canada.



→ **THE WORLD FOR CHRISTMAS... WHAT IS IT?**

You will soon be attending the theatrical concert *The World for Christmas*. It is the story of a mischievous but lovable little girl who sets out on a quest for her presents... But magically, she will find herself going around the world and discovering very different ways of celebrating Christmas. With her, you will learn about different traditions and cultures, and you will hear voices and musical instruments, including flutes, drums, and even sleigh bells!



→ **THE WORLD FOR CHRISTMAS... WHO IS IT?**

FOR YOUR TRIP AROUND THE WORLD YOU WILL BE GUIDED BY THREE FRIENDS, ARTISTS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE ALKEMIA ENSEMBLE. LET'S GO MEET THEM.



THE LITTLE GIRL:

Dorothea Ventura,
soprano

A multi-talented artist, Dorothea sings, dances, and plays flute and harpsichord! She shares her talent with several musical ensembles here in Canada and elsewhere in the world. She is curious and vivacious, and her love of music is very contagious!



THE MOTHER:

Stéphanie Pothier,
mezzo-soprano and percussion

Stéphanie also has many strings to her bow: she sings, also plays harpsichord, in addition to being an actual full-time mom! She likes to laugh, but she can also be very serious when necessary. Oh, and one more thing: she loves to cook. Yum!



THE FATHER:

Jean-François Daignault,
baritone, counter-tenor,
recorder and chalumeau

Jean-François is a very active man! He sings, plays recorder and even composes music. He is always eager to learn new things and to share them with family and friends!



→ THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

Once upon a time there was the story of Christmas, a big holiday celebrated all over the world in many different ways...

It was very cold out that night, but in the stable, the ox and the donkey kept the baby warm with their breath!

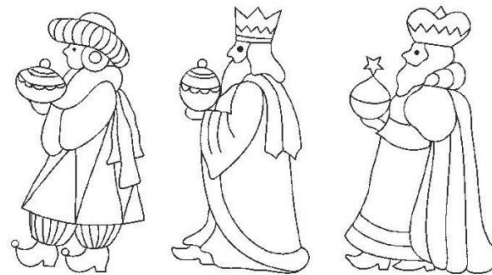
In Canada and in many other countries, Christmas is celebrated on Christmas Eve, December 24, and all day on December 25. Christmas is a Christian holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem, a small city in Judea that today forms part of the West Bank and southern Israel.

When the shepherds came home from the fields with their sheep, they found Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus in the manger. They were amazed to see a little baby in their stable.

The angels in Heaven sang that this child had been sent by God to bring Peace on Earth. In the sky, a huge bright star shone over the stable.



The story is that Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, had travelled a very long way to come to Bethlehem, Joseph's native city, to register in the census. Since many travellers arrived in the city at the same time, Mary and Joseph could not find a place to stay. As they were leaving the city, they saw a stable where an ox and a donkey were resting. Since Mary was about to give birth to her child, they settled in the stable for the night. This is where Jesus was born. Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes and placed him in a small manger filled with fresh hay.



Three Magi (wise men of their time), called Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar, saw the big star and set off to follow its path. They were sure that the star would lead them to a great King. They arrived at the stable a few days later, where they found the Baby Jesus and his parents. They offered magnificent gifts of gold, incense and myrrh to the Child.

Since the Wise Men got there later in the story, their arrival is celebrated on January 6, on the occasion of the "Feast of the Epiphany", also known as "Twelfth Night."



→ THE ORIGINS OF THE HOLIDAY

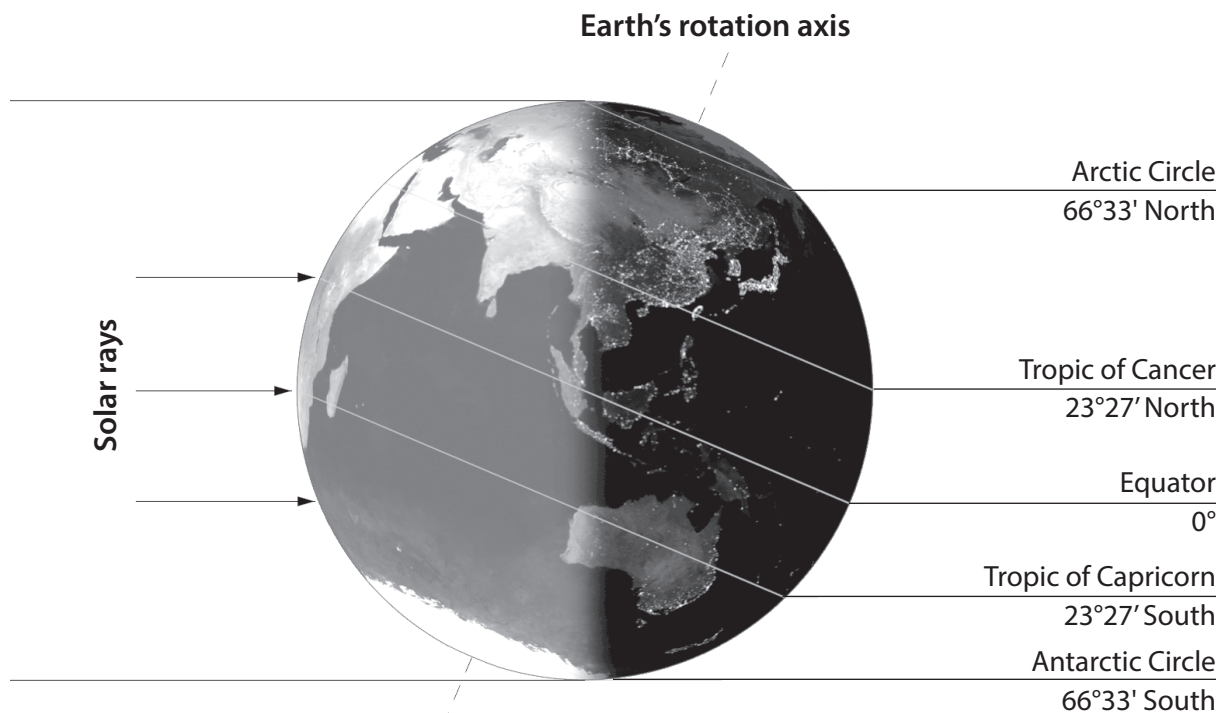
Christmas is generally associated with a family holiday with presents under the tree, Christmas pudding and shimmering lights. But why is Christmas on December 25? Where does Santa Claus come from? What are the origins of the Nativity Scene, the Christmas tree or the Advent wreath? In the following pages we will look at how the Christmas traditions came to be and the various ways in which it is celebrated.

WHY DECEMBER 25?

December 25 was probably chosen as the date to celebrate Christmas because other holidays were celebrated around that time, particularly the Winter Solstice, which marks the Sun's rebirth.

The Winter Solstice

The Solstice is an astronomical event which occurs when the Sun's position, as seen from the Earth, reaches its furthest point. This happens twice each year, marking the beginning of summer and the beginning of winter: the first Solstice occurs around June 21, the other around December 21. These dates vary slightly from year to year, and change over long periods of time based on slight movements in the Earth's axis of rotation.





→ A FEW CHRISTMAS SYMBOLS AND TRADITIONS

THE ADVENT WREATH

Advent is a period that includes four Sundays before Christmas. Traditionally, Christians light a candle on each Sunday before the holiday. These candles are often placed on a wreath made of evergreen boughs. This period gave rise to the tradition of the Advent calendar: a flat cardboard box pre-cut with small doors that you open one by one for 24 days starting on December 1. Each little door contains a sweet surprise, usually chocolate!



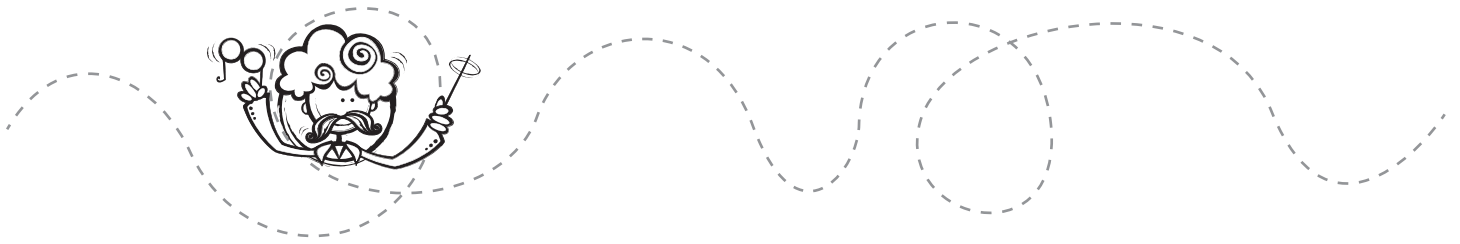
CHRISTMAS EVE AND CHRISTMAS MORNING

In the French Canadian tradition, families traditionally began their celebrations by going to midnight mass on Christmas Eve. Children would go to bed and be woken up in time for mass, as it actually did start at midnight. Today, the mass is usually held earlier in the evening, after which everyone goes home to a *Réveillon*, a traditional Christmas meal which can include turkey, seafood, or foie gras, followed by the traditional *bûche de Noël*, or Yule Log, a jelly-roll type cake in the shape of a tree log covered with chocolate cream icing. After the meal, it's time to open the presents! In the English Canadian tradition, families sometimes go to a mass or service on Christmas Eve, but then it's quickly to bed for the children, so that Santa Claus can come around with his sackful of presents for them to find on Christmas morning!



Did you know... The Yule Log is a reminder of an ancient tradition where a large log was put in the grate at the beginning of the *Réveillon*. The log, which had to come from the trunk of a fruit tree, was chosen for its size and quality, because it had to burn for at least three days. In some regions, wine is poured over the log while it burns to ensure a good crop, and sometimes it is sprinkled with salt to guard against witches...





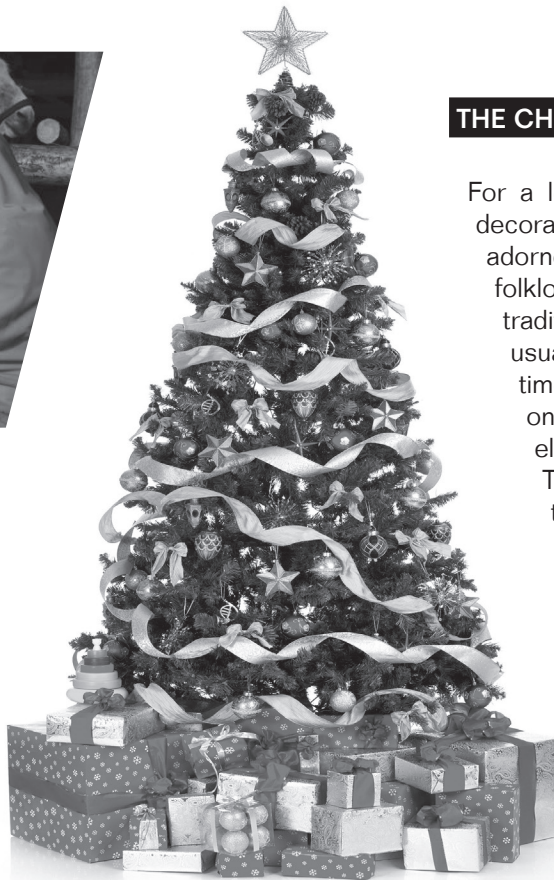
THE NATIVITY SCENE

The Nativity Scene is created each Christmas in honour the birth of Jesus in the manger where he was first laid. A miniature stable is built atop a table or on the floor, with all the characters from the story of the Nativity. The Baby Jesus is laid in a manger on a bed of hay, surrounded by his parents, Mary and Joseph; there are also two animals, an ox and a donkey, as well as the three Wise Men, Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar. Shepherds and sheep are often added near the stable, and angels and a star are placed above the Scene. It is said that the first Nativity Scene was created in 1223 in Greccio, Italy by St. Francis of Assisi, a famous Italian friar: this would have been a living Nativity Scene, meaning that it was made with real people.



THE CHRISTMAS TREE

For a long time now, people have been decorating their homes with a large fir tree adorned with all kinds of fun figures and folklore characters, or objects depicting traditions from their own countries. It is usual to “illuminate” the tree... a long time ago, actual candles were placed on the branches... nowadays, we use electric bulbs, which are much safer. The Nativity Scene is often placed at the foot of the tree, amid the presents!





Did you know...

One of the oldest English Christmas carols is *The Coventry Carol*. Its origins are thought to date back to the 14th Century.

The carol was traditionally performed in the city of Coventry in England as part of a mystery play called *The Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors*. The exact date of the text is unknown, though there are references to the Coventry guild pageants from 1392 onwards. The single surviving text of the carol and the pageant containing it was edited by one Robert Croo, who dated his manuscript 14 March 1534.



Lul-ly, lul - lay, thou lit-tle ti-ny child, By by, lul - ly lul - lay:

Lul - lay, thou lit - tle ti - ny child, By by, lul - ly, lul - lay.

1. O sis - ters too, how may we do, For to pre - serve this day,
2. Her - od the king in his rag - ing, Charg - ed he hath this day
3. Then woe is me, poor child, for thee, And ev - er mourn and say,

This poor young-ling for whom we sing, By by, lul - ly, lul - lay.
His men of might, in his own sight, All young chil-dren to slay.
For thy part - ing nor say nor sing By by, lul - ly, lul - lay.

repeat refrain after final verse



Suggested activity:

How about learning this Christmas carol with your friends?

You can sing it to your family on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day - you'll be a hit!



→ CHRISTMAS SONGS AROUND THE WORLD

SINCE CHRISTMAS IS CELEBRATED IN MANY COUNTRIES,

IT IS EASY TO IMAGINE THAT IT IS CELEBRATED WITH A VAST NUMBER OF SONGS

IN MANY DIFFERENT STYLES.

There are different ways to call Christmas songs. In English-speaking countries, they are known as carols. In French-speaking countries, they are called *chants* or *cantiques de Noël*. In Spain they call them *Villancicos*, in Russia, *Koliadki*, in Italy, *Canti Natalizi*, and in Germany, *Weihnachtslieder*. In England it is customary for people to go carolling from home to home and to receive sweets in return.



Russian dancers at Christmas

ARE THERE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THESE SONGS?

Actually, there is not much difference, except for the language in which they are sung (English, French, Spanish, Russian, etc.). Musically, since Christmas is a holiday that brings many people together, popular themes tend to be used, often very simple and easy to remember. The songs are often in two parts: a chorus and a number of verses.

The song almost always starts with the chorus. The chorus is made up of words that are repeated several times during the song, on a simple, easy melody. Each chorus is followed by a verse; each song can have several verses. An important detail: unlike the chorus, the words are often different in each verse; this way, the song can tell a story.

Example: choose a well-known Christmas carol with verses and a chorus, and see how the song tells a story.

- Joy to the World
- Angels We Have Heard on High
- It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

In warm countries such as the West Indies and the Caribbean, friends and families get together at Christmas to sing very lively songs called *Nwels*!

Although there are a great number of Christmas songs, one carol is known almost everywhere in the world: *Silent Night, Holy Night* (in German *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht*). It was first sung on December 24, 1818 in St. Nicholas church in Salzburg, Austria.



INSTRUMENTS YOU WILL HEAR



THE HUMAN VOICE

During the performance, you will hear the characters sing several melodies. There are different types of voices... but what are they called?

The register is the range of tones that a voice can cover.

There are three vocal registers for men, and three for women: upper, middle and lower.

REGISTER	UPPER	MIDDLE	LOWER
WOMEN	Soprano	Mezzo-soprano	Contralto
MEN	Tenor	Baritone	Bass

During the concert you will hear two female voices, a soprano (upper register) and a mezzo-soprano (middle register). Male voices also have several sound colours... in the concert the male character will sometimes sing in the baritone register (middle), but also in the counter-tenor register, which is even higher than the tenor range.

MUSIC IN ACTION

Ask different people you know to sing you a little something and try to identify their vocal register. Notice how the voice is a multi-faceted musical instrument. First listen for the height of the register: is it upper, middle or lower? Then, pay attention to the tone. Is it light, rich or darker?

SEVERAL VOICES SINGING TOGETHER

MAKE HARMONY!

Harmony means calm, happiness, peace... harmony also exists in music, when all the voices come together and produce a unified sound.



A chord is what happens when several voices sing different notes together, in their own register.



PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS

Percussion instruments are instruments that are played by hitting or scratching a membrane or material to produce sounds. The first humans attempted to make sounds with anything they could find! They started with their hands, voices and bodies.

Later, they discovered that they could produce sounds by hitting objects together, such as stones, branches and shells. They then tried to create new sounds using anything they could get their hands on. That is how percussion instruments were born!

The percussion instruments we will hear during the concert:



Tambourine



Sleigh bells



Egg shaker

THE RECORDER

A recorder is a wind instrument in which sound is created by the vibration of an air current. The current can be sent through a tube (bocal) or the musician's lips.

Do you remember the different vocal registers? The same applies to recorders: there is a whole family of them.

A recorder's register depends on its size: the smaller the recorder, the higher the register; the bigger the instrument, the lower the register.



THE CHALUMEAU

The ancestor of the clarinet, the chalumeau is also a woodwind instrument. It is played with a single reed that rests against the player's upper lip.





→ THE TRADITION OF CHRISTMAS GIFT-GIVING

Like the little girl in the concert, you probably like receiving presents at Christmas... Presents are given on Christmas Eve, December 24, or on Christmas morning, December 25.

Did you know that in the Christian world, the tradition of giving presents at Christmas goes back to the 18th century? Christmas gifts were exchanged at the time as a reminder of the gifts that the Wise Men brought to the Baby Jesus. This gift-giving custom continues to this day and is the source of much happiness! Exchanging gifts is also a way to open up to others, to share and help each other.



DIFFERENT TRADITIONS...

Through the magic of the performance, you will discover different cultures and traditions... The same goes for gifts, which have different meanings depending on the country...

Christmas presents vary a lot, but they are always given to make someone you love happy! Toys, collectors' items, clothes, games, the possibilities are endless, and even a small thoughtful gift will make someone happy! Presents are usually wrapped up in shiny, colourful paper. In some traditions, the concept of reward is important: gifts are for those who were good throughout the year...

AROUND THE WORLD...

In **Anglo-Saxon countries**, stockings are hung on the chimney on Christmas Eve, and Father Christmas – or Santa Claus – fills them with presents during the night. Children often write to him to tell him what they would like to receive.

In **Spain**, gifts are handed out on January 6, on the Feast of the Epiphany, in memory of the gifts which the Magi brought to the Baby Jesus.

In **Italy**, children receive small gifts from Saint Lucia on December 13. On Christmas day, Father Christmas (Babbo Natale) comes round with larger gifts. The holiday time concludes on January 6, when the Fairy Befana (a deformation of the word "Epiphany") brings candy to children who were nice, and pieces of coal to those who were naughty.

In **Germany**, St. Nicholas brings sweets, apples, mandarins and nuts to children. He usually puts these in boots or stockings which children put at their home's door. This tradition also exists in Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Northern France.

In **Latin America**, Father Christmas is very present during the Christmas period. He is called Papá Noel in Spanish, or Papai Noel in Brazil.

In **Quebec**, Christmas presents are usually placed under a Christmas tree in the living room. Families gradually put their gifts under the tree throughout the month of December, for opening together on Christmas Eve, December 24, or Christmas morning, December 25.

→ THE PROJECT:

The following activity is suggested to help students learn a little more about the Christmas traditions of their own family or of someone they know, or to explore the traditions of another country.

We have just seen a number of Christmas traditions and customs; in fact we almost went all the way around the world! Here is an activity to help you learn even more about this topic and see how Christmas is a universal holiday with a rich folk tradition.

- 1 Choose an older person of your acquaintance (a grandmother or a family friend, for example).
- 2 Ask this person to tell you about his or her best Christmas memory.
- 3 Try to discover why this Christmas was so special and unique... A few ideas to get the conversation going:
 - The folklore and traditions of the person's native country
 - The presents
 - The decorations
 - The Christmas tree
 - The Christmas meal
 - The Christmas song
- 4 Ask the person to sing a Christmas song associated with the memory and record it. If you know the song, sing along!
- 5 Once you have done all this, find an original way to present your chosen person's Christmas memory to your class. This could be a drawing, a collage or a display... Use your imagination! And don't forget to play the song that you recorded!





→ SILENT NIGHT

Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht! (Silent Night)

Harmony by
George Aubanel

Andante

Si - lent night, Ho - ly night All is calm, all is bright Round yon vir - gin,
Stil - le Nacht, Hei - li - ge Nacht Al - les schläft; ein - sam wacht Nur das trau - te

Si - lent night, Ho - ly night All is calm, all is bright Round yon vir - gin,
Stil - le Nacht, Hei - li - ge Nacht Al - les schläft; ein - sam wacht Nur das trau - te

Si - lent night, Ho - ly night All is calm, all is bright Round yon vir - gin,
Stil - le Nacht, Hei - li - ge Nacht Al - les schläft; ein - sam wacht Nur das trau - te

6
mo - ther and child Ho - ly in - fant, so ten - der and mild
hei - li - ge Paar. Hol - der Kna - be im lock - i - gen Haar,

mo - ther and child Ho - ly in - fant, so ten - der and mild
hei - li - ge Paar. Hol - der Kna - be im lock - i - gen Haar,

mo - ther and child Ho - ly in - fant, so ten - der and mild
hei - li - ge Paar. Hol - der Kna - be im lock - i - gen Haar,

9
Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace, — Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace.
Schla - fe in himm - lis - cher Ruh Schla - fe in himm - lis - cher Ruh

Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace, — Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace.
Schla - fe in himm - li - scher/ruh - Schla - fe in himm - li - scher Ruh

Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace, — Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace.
Schla - fe in himm - li - scher Ruh Schlafe in himm - li - scher Ruh

GET READY FOR THE CONCERT



YOU CAN KEEP THIS GUIDE AND REFER TO IT EVERY TIME YOU GO TO AN OPERA OR CONCERT.

It sets out various rules that you must follow before, during and after the concert, and information about applause, an ancient custom that has continued to this day.

Read the guide carefully to become an experienced concertgoer!

CLAP YOUR HANDS

To show your appreciation during a concert, you can clap your hands.

In a concert, it is customary to applaud the performers at the end of each piece. If the piece is in several movements, you should wait for the end of the last movement and leave a moment of silence, just as the musicians leave a moment of silence between movements.

At the opera, a different system applies. The audience often applauds the singers at the end of a well-known or difficult aria, as well as applauding at the end of each Act. At jazz concerts, the audience often applauds the players after each solo improvisation.



1

BEFORE THE CONCERT

To make sure you don't distract the artists and audience, turn off any electronic device (watch, cell phone, etc.)

Make sure you don't arrive late for the concert. It is preferable to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the concert is scheduled to begin. This will give you time to read the program!

2

DURING THE CONCERT

To show your respect for the musicians and the audience, don't talk to the people next to you. Silence is essential to allow the musicians and everybody at the concert to concentrate.

Candies and sweets should only be eaten outside the concert hall. They can make a lot of noise and disturb your neighbours if you unwrap them during the concert.

Unless there's an emergency, never leave the concert hall during the performance. If possible, wait for the intermission.

The musicians on the stage are aware of everything going on in the hall and hear all the sounds made by the members of the audience. By keeping a respectful silence, you will allow the performers to give the best concert possible.

3

AFTER THE CONCERT

Make sure you haven't forgotten anything on or under your seat. Leave the concert hall calmly, without pushing or shoving. Take the time to discuss the concert with your friends.

It is often possible to meet the performers after a concert to congratulate them or ask them questions. Sometimes, the musicians come back on stage to meet the audience members. If this is the case, you just have to go up to them and speak to them. If the musicians do not come back on stage, ask one of the ushers where to go to meet them backstage or in their dressing room.

