

Mindful Music Moments brings together three Ohio orchestras for new piece inspired by students

by Stephanie Manning



At more than 200 schools across Ohio, students from pre-K to twelfth grade can start their day feeling calm and relaxed thanks to three minutes of classical music. Developed by local non-profit organization The Well, the *Mindful Music Moments* program pairs audio prompts with performances by local orchestras to increase student focus and reduce anxiety. This year, the program

partnered with The Cleveland Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and the Columbus Symphony to create a piece directly inspired by the kids of *Mindful Music Moments* and the cities they call home.

The composer tasked with creating a twelve-minute, four-movement piece for three string quartets was Brian Raphael Nabors. A graduate of the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Nabors incorporated feedback from students in his composition process, asking them to draw or write about what they wanted to hear and how that music makes them feel. The final product, *Ohio Sketches*, delivers a broad variety of styles and musical elements tailored to each orchestra's home city, with a final movement that brings all three groups together.

The students were the first to hear the completed piece back in May, and a recording was released on June 10 via Facebook. The performance was part of a 20-minute documentary titled ["HOME,"](#) produced by local filmmaker Asa Featherstone IV. The film includes an overview of the program as well as an interview with Nabors, who talks through his creative process.

The three ensembles — all masked and distanced — recorded separately in their respective cities, and the audio quality and balance remain consistent between location changes. The four musicians from the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra open the work with "Cincinnati – City Beat," a brisk and playful movement which features rich melodic lines from violist Caterina Longhi. Inspired by the Ohio State University fight song, "Columbus – Buckeye" keeps the motion going with a driving through-line passed

from instrument to instrument, giving each Columbus Symphony player their time in the spotlight.

During the third movement, “Cleveland,” furious bowing and dynamic swells skillfully executed by the Cleveland Orchestra musicians pay homage to the city’s ties to both classical music and rock. Finally, “All Ohio” seamlessly splices performances by all three ensembles, highlighting the trademark qualities of their earlier movements before wrapping up with an energetic conclusion.



At roughly three minutes per movement, the piece practically flies by, and its brief yet engaging approach makes it the perfect companion to what *Mindful Music Moments* represents. “It’s a gift to everyone,” Nabors (*pictured*) told [Cleveland.com](https://www.cleveland.com). “I wish I’d had something like this when I was a kid.”

As the credits roll, so do a few video testimonies from kids in participating schools. Based on how the work depicted her hometown, one student produced a drawing featuring a [flying pig](#) — “I think it’s kinda the symbol of Cincinnati” — as well as colorful lettering that reminded her of the city’s numerous murals. At the end of the day, this kind of creativity is proof that *Mindful Music Moments* is doing it right.

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