



## ▶ Watch the following videos:

### [Interview with Shannon Wood, SLSO Timpanist](#) [Timpani Demonstration](#)

Timpani are part of the percussion family. They are made by stretching thin leather or a plastic membrane over a big copper bowl. When the timpanist strikes the stretched material or drumhead, the air inside the bowl vibrates and creates a sound. Timpani come in many different sizes: bigger ones produce a lower range of sounds, and smaller ones produce a higher range of sounds. Each drum has a foot pedal that the timpanist moves up or down to tighten or loosen the drumhead. A tighter drumhead will make a higher pitched sound and a looser drumhead will make a lower pitched sound.



### **Make Your Own Membranophone**

Shannon's instrument, the timpani, is a "membranophone." That means: a membrane (or skin) is stretched across a drum. Try this: Stretch a plastic bag, cling wrap, or a cut up balloon over a large bowl, then strike it with the back of a spoon. What does it sound like? Does the sound change if you use a bigger or smaller bowl?

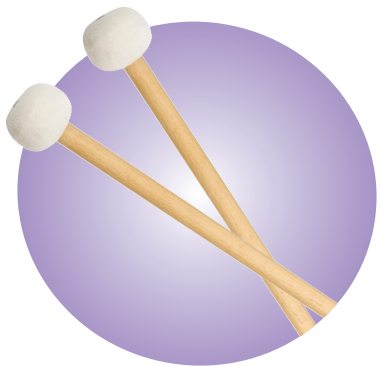


### **Musical Memories**

Shannon remembered his first experience with orchestral music was hearing a performance of *Peter and the Wolf*. Do you remember the first time you heard orchestral music? Did you hear it on the radio or television, in music class, or at a concert? What do you remember about that experience?

### **Be Prepared**

How many different songs do you know? Professional musicians play hundreds of pieces every year, and practice and perform new music every week! Shannon says that if he is better prepared, he will give a better performance. What kind of things are you expected to perform well on? Maybe a school concert or a math test? How does preparation help you?



### **Calming Down**

Shannon stays calm with slow breathing and stretching. Why might that help? Try this: breathe in slowly while you slowly count to four in your head, then breathe out slowly while you slowly count to four in your head. Repeat these slow breaths for a whole minute. What does it feel like? Next, try this: stand tall, stretch your arms high in the air, then move slowly to touch your toes, and repeat ten times. How does your body feel after doing these exercises?



**St. Louis Symphony  
Orchestra**

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