

Introduction to the Orchestra

Objectives

Students will

- Define the words musician, orchestra, and conductor
- Explain and demonstrate teamwork as it relates to playing in an orchestra
- Identify the four instrument families that make up an orchestra
- Explain how instruments produce sound

Total Run Time: 45 minutes

Materials

[Colored floor dots](#), [PowerPoint visuals with audio examples](#), a computer hooked up to a Smartboard or projector with PowerPoint, internet, and speakers, and up to 3 conducting batons

Essential Questions

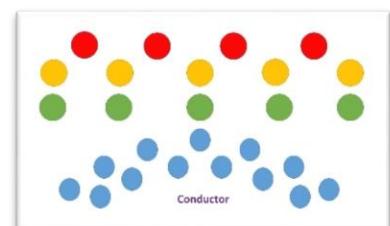
- What is an orchestra?
- What is a musician?
- What is a conductor?
- What are the four instrument families in an orchestra?
- What is always needed for an instrument to make sound?
- What must all the musicians in an orchestra do to make music together?
- If the musicians didn't work together, would the music sound the same? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

- Orchestra
- Musician
- Conductor
- String Family
- Woodwind Family
- Brass Family
- Percussion Family
- Vibration
- Teamwork
- Melody

Pre-Class Procedures

- Set up colored floor dots in the orchestra seating chart (red = percussion, yellow = brass, green = woodwinds, and blue = strings)
- Set up PowerPoint visuals and check sound levels
- Instruct students to sit on a colored dot as they enter the room



Procedures

- **(5 minutes) Introduce students to the orchestra**
 - (Slide 2) Listen to the first few minutes of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* as a class. Ask students if they recognize the piece of music and if they know what we call the group of musicians playing the music. Allow time as needed to discuss the student's observations and other places they might hear similar music.
 - (Slide 3) Discuss what an orchestra is and introduce the students to the SLSO (Slides 4 & 5 have pictures of the SLSO and St. Louis Symphony Chorus).
 - (Slide 6) Discuss what a musician is and how each one of us is a musician.

- **(2 minute) Explore how sound is created**
 - (Slide 7) Explore vibration and how it is needed to produce sound on an instrument.

- **(8 minutes) Introduce students to the four instrument families**
 - (Slides 8-15) Explore the four different families of instruments based on how they produce sound or vibrate, because for a sound to occur, something must vibrate!
 - Each of the four colored floor dots represents a different instrument family and where they sit in the orchestra. See if the students can determine what family of instruments they belong to based on their dot color.
 - Slides 8 & 9 – String family
 - Slides 10 & 11 – Woodwind family
 - Slides 12 & 13 – Brass family
 - Slides 14 & 15 – Percussion family
 - (Slide 16) Musicians in all four instrument families must work together to create music, just like the players on a baseball or hockey team work together to win games. It's called teamwork. Have students brainstorm different ways musicians might work together.

- **(15 minutes) Teamwork in the orchestra – *I Can***
 - (Slide 17) Discuss what a melody is.
 - Play a short 30 second excerpt of *Für Elise* (embedded on slide 17). Ask students to listen and identify what instrument is playing the melody. Allow students to hum along with the melody, if they choose.
 - (Slide 18) Play the short excerpt of *I Can* (embedded on slide 18) and ask students to raise their hands if they recognize the melody. Ask students to give you similarities and differences between the two excerpts. Students should realize they have the same melody.
 - (Slide 19) Read aloud to students: A rapper named NAS loved Beethoven's melody so much that he decided to compose his own song borrowing Beethoven's melody.

Beethoven's *Für Elise* was composed in 1810 and NAS composed his song called, *I Can*, using Beethoven's melody in 2003. That's almost 200 years later!

- Explain to students that they are all going to work together like the musicians in an orchestra to make some music of their own.
- (Slides 20-24 = standard notation/Slides 25-29 = stem notation) Teach the rhythmic ostinato patterns for each instrument family. For example, students sitting on a red dot are in the percussion family and therefore will be responsible for performing the percussion ostinato. Start playing *I Can* and begin to layer in each section starting with percussion (pat), then strings (clap), then woodwinds (pat/clap), followed by brass (clap). You can use body percussion or non-pitched percussion instruments.

- **(5 minutes) The Conductor**
 - Once all four parts are being performed, begin conducting in a four-beat pattern with a baton and cut students off at an appropriate time.
 - (Slide 30) Discuss what a conductor is and his/her role in the orchestra team.
 - Demonstrate a four-beat pattern and invite students to conduct with you. Once all students are demonstrating a four-beat pattern, select one or two students to come up and assist you in conducting the orchestra. Give the students each a baton and ask them to stand on a purple floor dot. (This can also be done with a two-beat pattern to make the exercise simpler). Repeat with another student conductor if time allows.
 - (Slide 31/32) Perform all the parts one more time, together.

- **(5 minutes) Review - questions are on slide 33**
 - What is an orchestra?
 - What is a musician?
 - What is a conductor?
 - What are the four instrument families in an orchestra?
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Creative Extensions

- Expand the learning with a science of sound unit, exploring soundwaves and the difference between noise and music.
- Add a composition element by allowing students to create their own body percussion or non-pitched percussion parts for each instrument family.