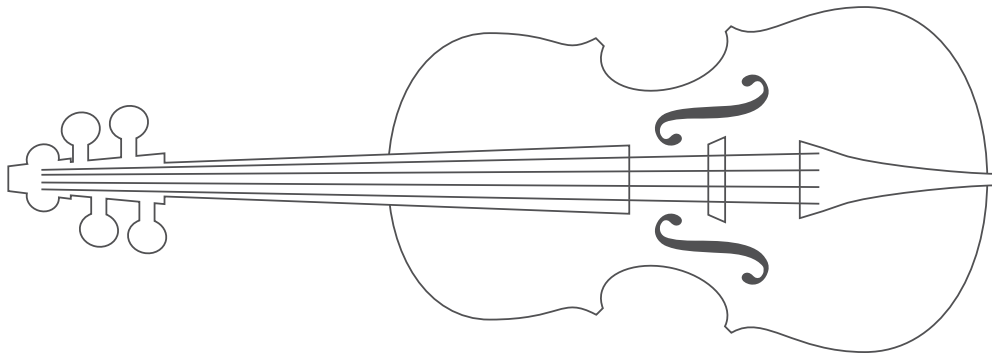


SAINT LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Instrument Playground

STRING FAMILY



Instructions
Information
Activities

Presented by the
SAINT LOUIS
Symphony
VOLUNTEER
ASSOCIATION

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To You, the Teacher

We hope you and your class enjoy exploring these instruments. The gift of music lights up the world.

This packet of information is intended as a preliminary background of musical knowledge for young students.

We know you will monitor the use of the instruments and stress to the children that they are experimenting with something very special.

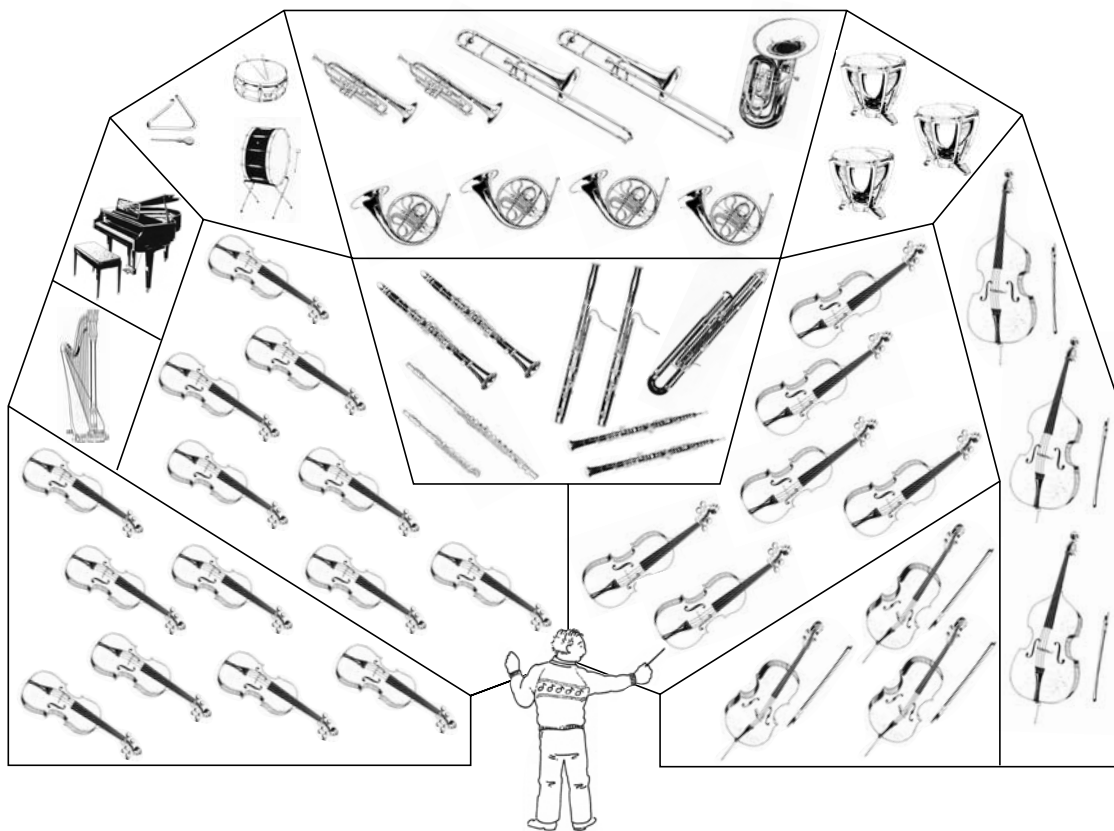
Thank you for including the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra and the Saint Louis Symphony Volunteer Association Instrument Playground Music Kit as part of your curriculum. You are the spark that ignites, for which we are eternally grateful.

Instrument Families

Instruments are grouped together in families because those instruments all have things in common, such as how they look or how a sound is made. In a symphony orchestra, four different instrument families combine to make beautiful music together.

We will learn about each instrument family, including the one we have in our school this week. Let's see where this family is on the orchestra seating chart. In a large orchestra, musicians are seated in a semi-circle, facing the conductor and the audience. The orchestra seating chart shows you the area where each musician sits on stage when the instrument families play together as an orchestra. This is one way to seat an orchestra. It sometimes changes, but usually this is how it's done. Find your favorite instruments so that you will know where to look on stage when you come to Powell Symphony Hall to hear the Saint Louis Symphony.

This is one way to seat an orchestra:



The String Family

The violin, viola, cello, bass, and harp make up the string family. In most orchestras, the strings are the biggest section. String instruments look very much alike, except in size. Which is the smallest and which is the largest? Stringed instruments are made of wood and each instrument has four strings stretched across it. You play them by drawing a bow across or sometimes by plucking. Which stringed instrument do you think plays the higher notes, the lower notes, the next lowest, and the very lowest notes? The bigger the instrument, the lower the pitch. Color the string family on the orchestra seating chart.



Violin



Viola



Cello



Harp



Bass

Violin

The violin is the smallest of all the strings and has the highest pitch. A violinist uses a bow to play the violin. The bow is a wooden stick with hair from a horse's tail tied from end to end.

Assembly:

Tighten the horsehair on the bow by turning the screw in the handle in a clockwise direction while maintaining a slight bend in the stick. Always loosen the horsehair on the bow before placing it back in the case.

Rosin can be found in the case. This should be applied to the bow by running it back and forth over the horsehair. Doing so will create the necessary friction to start the vibration when the bow is drawn across the string. If a bow hair breaks, please use scissors to cut off each end.



The violin strings are tuned from the highest string to the lowest as follows: E-A-D-G. The lowest or thickest string is G. The highest and smallest string is E. If a string breaks please put the instrument back into the case and alert the SLSO Volunteer. Do not attempt to repair it yourself.

Let's Play:

There are two ways to make sounds on string instruments: by drawing a bow across the strings, or by plucking them with your fingertips. The special name for the finger plucking is pizzicato (pits-uh-kah'-toh).

Pick up the violin in the left hand (palm up) and place under your chin with the instrument resting on your left shoulder.

The bow is held in the right hand while the left hand is placed on the neck and presses down on the strings on the fingerboard. Draw the bow across the strings to hear the violin.

Viola

The viola is a little larger than the violin and makes slightly lower sounds.

Assembly:

See the instructions for the violin and bow. The viola strings are tuned to the pitches A-D-G-C.

Let's Play:

Even though string instruments all look very similar, some sound higher or lower than others because they're all different sizes.



Cello

The cello is still bigger than the violin and the viola. It has a beautiful, mellow sound. The cello must rest on the floor because it is too big to be held like the violin and the viola. The instrument rests on a pin on the floor and the cellist holds it between the knees to play. A cello is about 50 inches long including the neck. Is this about as tall as you?

Assembly:

The cello is played from a seated position. A collapsible stand is included in the case. Swing the two curved metal pieces together to create a tripod that supports the instrument. The cello strings are tuned to the pitches of A-D-G-C.



Let's Play:

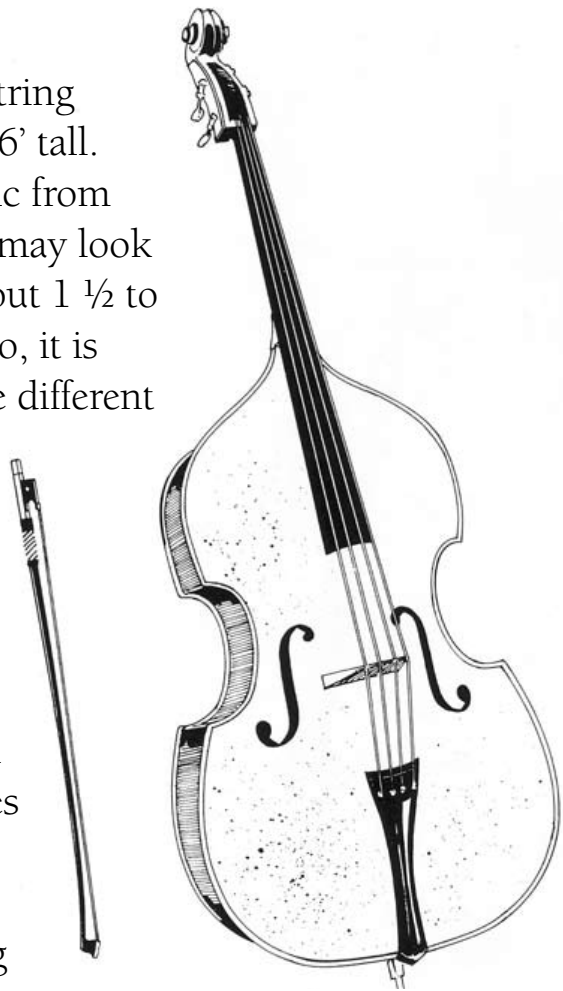
The bow is held much like the violin except that the pinky is in line with the other fingers and the hand is held straight yet relaxed. Let's see if you can make a beautiful, mellow sound by bowing a cello.

Double Bass

The bass is the biggest instrument in the string section. It's about as tall as a man—around 6' tall. It also plays the widest assortment of music from classical to Broadway to jazz. In pictures it may look the same size as the cello, but it's really about 1 ½ to 2 times taller. Like the violin, viola and cello, it is played, or plucked, with a bow. To produce different notes, the musician presses his or her finger on the string.

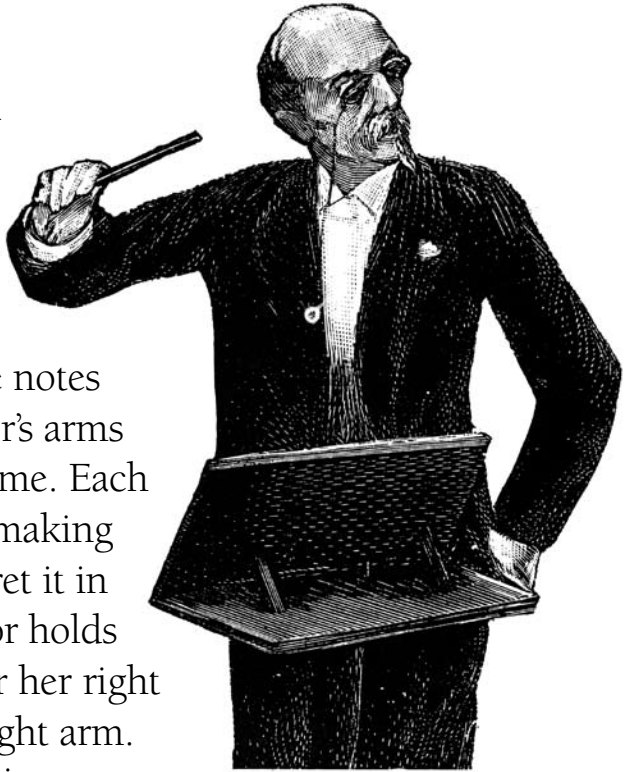
Let's Play:

Because it is so big, the musician playing a double bass usually stands or sits on a high stool with the bass resting on a pin on the floor (much like the cello). He balances the double bass against his body. Double bass strings are tuned to the pitches of G-D-A-E. In this case E is the lowest string and G is the highest. Do you like the big, rich sound a double bass makes?



The Conductor

The conductor of the orchestra is very important. He or she has the role of keeping the tempo (or beat) so that the musicians play together, starting and stopping at the same time. He or she must also decide how to make the notes sound beautiful. Both of the conductor's arms are used to do these two jobs at one time. Each conductor has his or her own way of making each piece special—that is, they interpret it in their own way. To do this the conductor holds a special stick, called a baton, in his or her right hand and keeps the tempo with the right arm. The left arm is used to give the musicians instructions on how to make their parts sound beautiful.

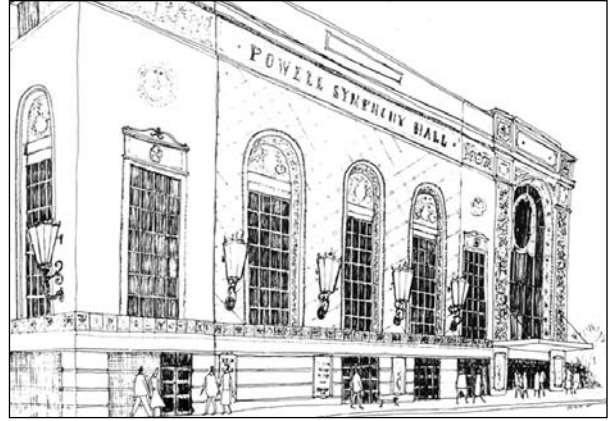


Would you like to try conducting? Okay—get ready. Put on the jacket like the conductor, raise the baton, look at the score—and start the music!

Powell Symphony Hall

Have you been to Powell Hall to hear the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra? Let's talk about what it's like.

An orchestra is a large group of musicians with instruments of many types. They play symphonic music that was written by composers from many time periods. These composers live in different countries. When symphony musicians all play together they make many kinds of music. Often there are over 100 instruments in an orchestra, divided into four Instrument Families.



Our Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra is a very special one. It is known all over the world as one of the very best symphony orchestras. When you come to hear the orchestra, you are lucky indeed. We listen, look, and even dream as the music takes us to special, magical places.

Powell Symphony Hall is very beautiful. Once upon a time it was a movie theatre. It's decorated with red velvet seats and gold leaf to make it look nearly like a palace.

As the concert is about to begin, the musicians come out on stage and take their seats. They then tune their instruments so they are in the same pitch. Finally, the conductor will appear. The audience claps for him or her, and then there is a hush in Powell Symphony Hall as the conductor raises his or her arms and the music begins.

Musical Words–What Do They Mean?

Pitch: the tone at which an instrument is tuned and played.

Conductor: the person who directs the orchestra.

Chamber Music: a kind of music written for small groups of instruments.

Plucking: picking at the strings with your finger.

Vibrate: to shake a very tiny bit, quiver. The frames of most stringed instruments are made of wood because it vibrates well.

Antonio Stradivari: a violin maker who lived hundreds of years ago. His violins are now considered some of the very best in the world and are very expensive.

Composer: a person who writes music. Some very famous composers were Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Handel. Have you heard these names before? A few years ago there was a movie, called *Amadeus*, about Mozart.

Included With String Instrument Playground Music Kit

Delivered to:

School _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Teacher's phone number _____

Teacher _____

Date Delivered: _____ Pick-up _____

1. Instruments:

2. Conductor's Jacket

3. Complete Musical Score

4. Baton

5. Rosin

6. Orchestra Seating Chart (sample copy) for coloring

7. Books:

Arturo's Baton

A Young Person's Guide to Music

The Story of the Orchestra (with CD)

Peter and the Wolf (with CD)

If any instrument needs attention, please note below:
