

Music

Sway prompt sheet: the orchestra

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Only a minute or so of each video within the sway presentation needs to be shown.

1. **The layout of the orchestra.** What family do you think sits in each coloured section? Why do you think they sit in those areas?

» Pink = strings

- Strings are the quietest and therefore largest in number and sit at the front.
- The small pink square is for the harp, however, they are a 'visitor' (not a regular member of the orchestra). The piano is also a visitor.

» Blue = woodwinds

» Green = brass

» Dark blue = percussion

- Brass and percussion the loudest, so they sit at the back.

» The conductor stands in the area at the front, with their back to the audience.

2. **The conductor.** Holds a white baton, does not just 'wave their hands around'. For junior ensembles and amateur orchestras, they need to keep the beat so that everyone plays together.

» Video 1 – Mr Bean. Conductors do not turn up and down an imaginary volume button, they generally raise and lower their left hand. A small group of 4-5 players does not usually have a conductor.

» Video 2 – Saturday Disney and the Sydney Youth Orchestra.

3. **The string family.** First violins often play higher parts than the second violins. String players sit in pairs. The inside player turns the pages so the outside player (and the music) doesn't have to stop.

» Violin video. The strings (from lowest to highest) are G D A E. This player is using a loop pedal so that he can add layers of sound.

- *Vibrato* (0:35sec) is when the player wobbles their left hand to make the tone colour (quality of sound) warmer.
- *Arco* (0:25sec) using the bow to play the instrument
- *Pizzicato* (0:55sec) plucking the strings

» Viola video. The viola is slightly larger than the violin. The strings (lowest to highest) are C G D A. Yes, string instruments can be worth millions of dollars. Handmade string instruments improve with age (unlike other instruments that need to be replaced). The tone colour of the viola is not as bright as the violin, it is a bit darker and warmer.

» Violin and viola video. The man on the left is playing the violin and the lady on the right is playing the viola. Listen to the difference in the tone colour between the two instruments.

» Cello video. This instrument has the same strings as the viola but an octave lower. The vibrato on the cello needs to be 'larger' as the strings are thicker and vibrate at a slower rate than shorter strings. A spike at the bottom of the cello adjusts the height to suit the player.

» Cello video no.2. A mash up between *Lacrimosa* by Mozart and Adele's Hello.

- *Glissando* (0:55sec) is when the player slides their finger up or down the length of the string.

» Double Bass video. Jazz style. Pizzicato and using percussive techniques created by hitting/slapping/knocking the body of the instrument.

4. **The woodwind family.** All the instruments in this family used to be made from wood. Each instrument in the woodwind family has a partner, though they are not always played.

- » Piccolo and flute video. The piccolo is the highest sounding instrument in the orchestra and is a partner to the flute. The flute player also plays the piccolo (though not at the same time, obviously). Notice how shrill and piercing the tone colour of the piccolo is and how much warmer (and lower in pitch) the flute sounds. The player blows across the top of the hole in the mouthpiece to make sound, like blowing across the top of a bottle.
- » Oboe and English horn (also known as cor anglais) video. The oboe is a very important member of the orchestra as all the instruments tune to it's A note. The cor anglais which is lower in pitch, is not a regular member of the orchestra. Both instruments have a double reed (the player blows between two very small reeds, bound together, to make a sound). Notice how nasal and reedy the tone colour sounds.
- » Clarinet and bass clarinet video. These instruments have a single reed in a mouthpiece. The man is playing the bass clarinet, which is lower in pitch. It is not a regular member of the orchestra. Mozart was the first composer to use a clarinet in the orchestra.
 - The saxophone is a reed instrument and is therefore a member of the woodwind family, however, it is not a regular member of the orchestra.
- » Bassoon video. This instrument has a double reed, like the oboe. It has a reedy, nasal tone colour but also sounds quite plaintive. The contrabassoon (not shown) is the lowest sounding instrument in the orchestra.

5. **The brass family.** All the brass instruments are made from coiled brass, have a mouthpiece and a flared bell at the end. Brass instruments are stereotypically played by males which is why most of the following videos are of women playing.

- » Trumpet video. The trumpet is the smallest and highest pitched brass instrument. Valves are pressed with the right hand to change the pitch of the instrument.
- » French horn video. The hunting horn is the predecessor of the French horn.
 - (0:23sec) she is emptying her spit valves. It is not actually spit but a build up of condensation created by warm air blown into cold metal. It needs to be emptied or a gargle sound occurs whilst playing.
- » Trombone video. The trombone is the only brass instrument that uses a slide to change the pitch instead of using valves.
- » Trombone video no.2.
- » Tuba video.