

The String Quartet

Activity 1– String Instruments and Sound

Students will listen to two instrumental solos and one duo. Teacher will then lead discussion on the different sounds each instrument makes. Because the cello is the largest instrument it plays the lowest notes and has the deepest sound. The violin is the smallest instrument and plays highest notes. The viola is slightly larger than the violin, so plays slightly lower than the violin.

Listen to the solos and duo on the accompanying CD. Notice how each instrument plays with a different character, expressing a different emotion in each solo/duo. Ask the students to comment on each piece. Teacher may make a poster or use a chalkboard/whiteboard that is divided into 3 sections (violin duo, viola solo, cello solo). Give each student 3 stickies and ask them to write on each note a phrase, word or comment about one of the instruments. Invite students to the poster/chalkboard and put each stickie under the appropriate instrument.

Violin Duo: calm sounding, higher notes. A duet is like two friends playing together!

Viola Solo: melancholy, slower

Cello Solo: happy, short notes, faster notes, lower notes



South Carolina State Standards

General Music:

VI.B,C,D, E

VII.A

Materials:

CD of music violin duet, viola solo and cello solo

CD track 1 (violins), 2 (viola) and 3 (cello)

Colored stickie notes

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Activity 2 – String Instruments and Sound

A cellist and violinist of Chamber Music Charleston will visit with smaller classes to introduce the students to the instruments in a more intimate, hands-on setting. The musicians will lead students on a basic scientific inquiry as they introduce their instruments. Students will be asked to classify the instruments and ask the musicians questions (“what if” and “how”) so that they can learn about the instruments. Students will listen to the different instruments, learn about parts of the instruments, and learn about the science (including vibration, pitch and volume) behind various playing techniques including:

Arco – producing sound by bow hairs across string.

Pizzicato – plucking the string with the finger

Col Legno – gently tapping the string with the wooden part of the bow

Harmonics – soft, clear, high-pitched sounds made by lightly touching a string at a particular points rather than pressing down

Students will then direct musicians to perform a pre-selected piece of music using some of the above techniques discussed (ex. Students will ask the cellist to play pizzicato while the violinist plays harmonics, etc.)



South Carolina State Standards

General Music:

VI.C,D,E

Science:

3-1 and 3-5

Materials:

In-class demonstration by violinist and cellist of Chamber Music Charleston