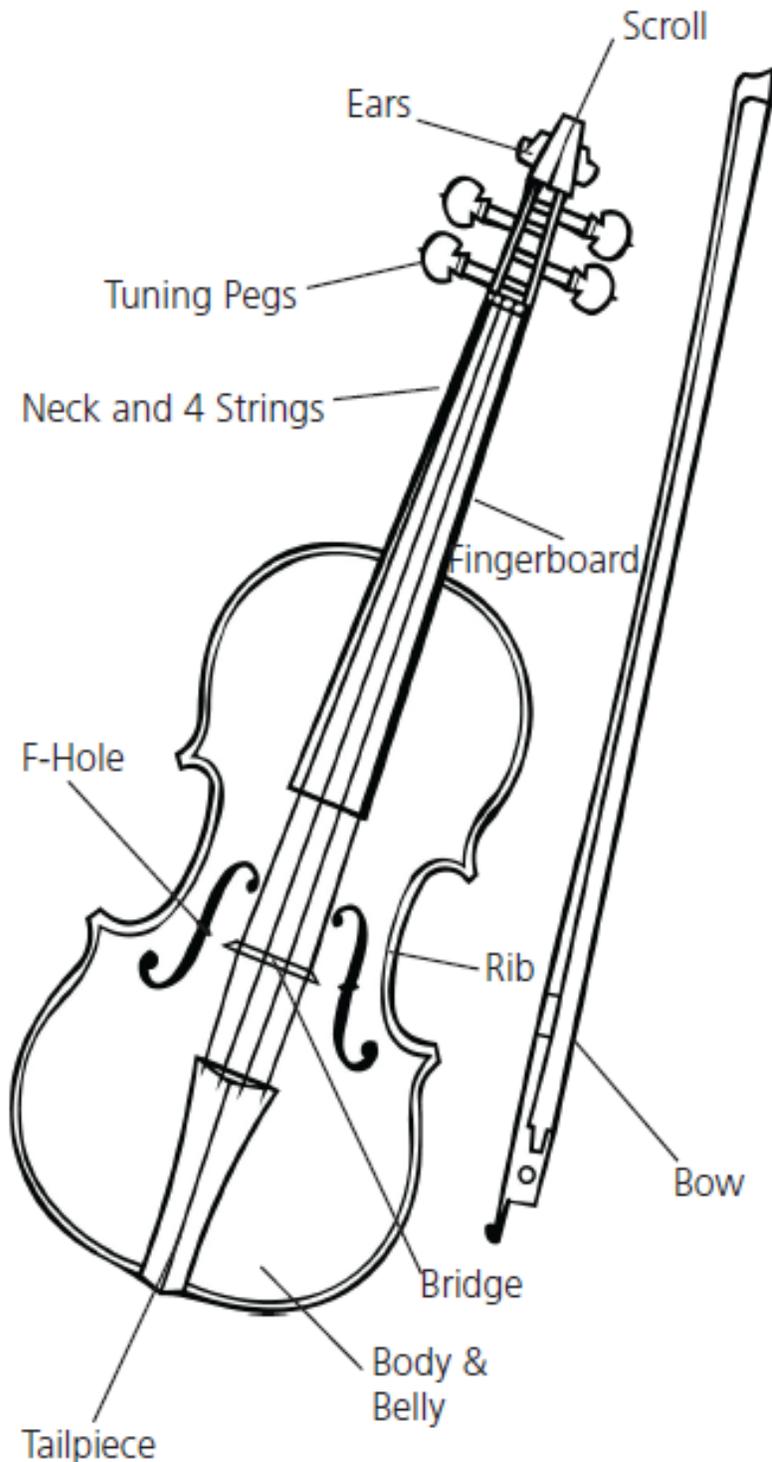




Name: _____

Classroom Concerts: String Quartet

Color each labeled part of the string instrument using different colors.



The four orchestral instruments of the string family are the violin, viola, cello and double bass. All the instruments are made of a hollow wood body. Four strings stretch from the tailpiece, across the bridge, over the fingerboard to the tuning pegs. The string instruments in the orchestra are played with a bow made from wood and horse hair. The A²SO String Quartet is made up of two violins, one viola and one cello.

How to make your own Shoebox String Instrument

You will need:

- Shoebox
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Rubber bands

Procedure:

1. Mark the center of your shoe box. Punch a hole in it with the pencil. Draw a large oval shape around the hole and cut it out.
2. Stretch the rubberbands around the box and adjust them so that they are spread evenly across the hole in the shoe box.
3. Use a pencil to create a bridge. Slide the pencil under the rubber bands, perpendicular to the rubber bands, on one side of the hole. The pencil will be held in place by the rubber bands and will raise the rubber bands up off the surface of the box.
4. You can then make the rubber bands tighter or looser around the box to create higher or lower pitches.
5. Pluck the rubber bands with your fingers, a small stick, or a pencil.

Here is a link to a video that will walk you through all the steps:

<https://youtu.be/i6Iug6cMAq8>

For hundreds of years, composers have been writing music for a group of four musicians playing string instruments. The performing group made up of two violins, one viola and one cello is called a **String Quartet**. And the pieces that are written for them to perform are also called **String Quartets**. The A²SO String Quartet has a program for you that includes examples of **String Quartets** spanning about 200 years! You'll hear how the music has changed, and will probably also notice how it has stayed the same. And you'll hear how each composer tells his story or communicates his ideas using only these four instruments.

String Quartet, Opus 77, No. 1 (1799)

About the Composer

Haydn had a big influence on classical music. His most successful student was Beethoven. Haydn perfected some of the most fundamental genres of classical music, so people call him the “Father of the Symphony” and the “Father of the String Quartet.” He ended up writing 108 symphonies and 68 string quartets during his lifetime.

Activity

Haydn wrote this quartet in 1799. Help students put that in context. Write *Haydn's Quartet, 1799* in the middle of your white board. Challenge students to think of things that happened before and after 1799, and situate them on the board appropriately. The things they come up with could vary widely depending on their grade level and what they might be studying in Social Studies and other areas.

For example, some things that came *before*: dinosaurs; Mona Lisa was painted; Shakespeare; Columbus came to America; the Declaration of Independence.

Some things that came *after*: the Civil War; Michigan became a state; the invention of the telephone, trains, cars and electricity; your grandparents were born.

“American” String Quartet (1893)

About the Composer

Dvorák was a Czech composer known for using folk melodies and rhythms in his music. Dvorák wrote this String Quartet while living in the United States at the end of the 19th century. He took a train from New York City to Spillville, Iowa, where he was inspired by Native American music and Spirituals.

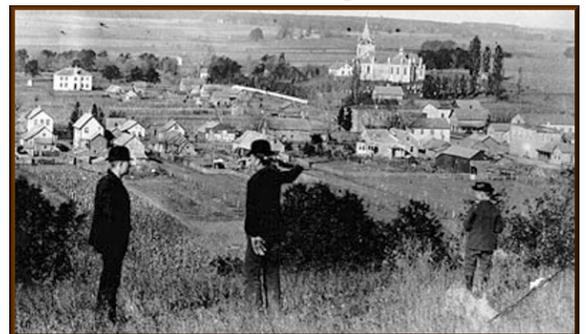
Activity

Set up students to write from Dvorák's perspective: *Imagine it is 120 years ago: before televisions and computers, before most people had phones, let alone cell phones. There were no cars. You are asked to take a job in a country you've never been to. You travel for days by boat across the Atlantic ocean, with just a few suitcases, and arrive in a New York City, where no one speaks your language. You then take a train across the United States to a farm town in Iowa.*

Franz Joseph Haydn



Antonín Leopold Dvorák



Then play the students the first movement of the “American” *String Quartet*: <https://youtu.be/Dx-tAHpYIXdU>. Ask them to write (or draw, for younger students) a postcard home telling their families what they see, what they hear and how they’re feeling about being in this “New World.”

String Quartet (1893)

About the Composer

Debussy was a very creative and original composer. He disliked the strict rules of composition that he was taught at music school. He preferred improvisation and “weird” harmonies and scales. Throughout his career, he wrote pieces outside the mainstream, which confused and fascinated listeners, and even offended some people. During his lifetime, his pieces were often disliked, and he only gained real recognition after his death.



Claude Debussy

Activity

On a piano or other instrument, play the main theme of the second movement of the quartet, notated above. Have students come up with a gesture to accompany this theme. This theme is played *21 times* during the first minute of the movement.

Now play the first minute of the quartet for them: <https://youtu.be/EAMtEqwI7Zs>. Challenge them to do the gesture they came up with every time the theme is played. See if you can count all 21 instances of the theme.

String Quartet No. 3, “Mishima” (1985)

About the Composer

Philip Glass is an American composer who is still living and writing music today. He was born in 1937 in Baltimore, Maryland, to Jewish immigrants from Lithuania. Philip’s father owned a record store and shared his love of music with his son.



Philip Glass

Philip Glass has composed symphonies, operas, songs and chamber music. But people are probably most familiar with his film music. Since the late 1960s, he has composed dozens of soundtracks for movies. Glass’s music is often described as “minimalist”: he writes music that uses only minimal musical materials, like just a few notes, rhythmic patterns or instruments. The result is often music that is very repetitive and changes very slowly.

Activity

Distribute paper and crayons. Listen through the piece: https://youtu.be/_4XMeY1RkWQ

The first time, ask students to listen and share their ideas about the piece. Listen a few more times and have students draw what the music makes them think of or what it makes them feel.

How to be a good audience member

Being a good audience member comes down to respect for the performing musicians and audience members around you. Help your students learn proper concert etiquette with these fun activities:

Discuss and compare the appropriate audience behavior for various settings. For example, would audiences behave differently at a golf tournament or a football game? How does a rock concert compare to a classical concert or a play?

Choose students to act as performers in some of these scenarios. Have them pretend to play a sport or put on a play or perform in a concert. Have the rest of the class pretend to be the audience, using either appropriate or inappropriate audience behaviors you discussed. After the pretend performance is over, ask the performers how the audience's behavior made them feel and how it affected their performance.

After the performance...

After the performance is over, have your students write or draw about their concert experience. Here are some questions to guide the discussion:

- 1.) What was your favorite piece and why?
- 2.) What was your least favorite piece? What didn't you like about it?
- 3.) Describe one thing you learned from today's performance that you didn't already know.
- 4.) How was listening to a live performance different from hearing music on the radio?
- 5.) Was it difficult to be a good audience member?



Please send students' comments and ideas to sarah@a2so.com