

Heliopsis

Supporting Materials Packet



Heliopsis (Mikey Marget, Nyttu Chongo)

Photo Credit: Honeydew Mellen Photography

About the Performers:

Heliopsis [hee-lee-AHP-sihss] performs original music for cello, played by Mikey Marget, and mbira [mm-BEE-rah], played by Nyttu Chongo [NEE-too CHOHN-goh]. Their music ranges from raucous and dance-like to serene and peaceful. Each tune has an element of improvisation, so no two performances are exactly the same.

Learning Goals:

1. Students will learn to identify the cello and mbira by sight and sound.
2. Students will demonstrate understanding of improvisation through active listening and participatory activities.
3. Students will identify musical opposites, such as contrasts in dynamics and pitch.

Preparing for your Class Notes Concert

Thank you for signing up for a Class Notes Concert, brought to you by YourClassical MPR!

The Class Notes team has created two resources to help prepare for and extend the Class Notes Concerts experience:

1. **Meet the Artist PowerPoint.** Build excitement for the concert by introducing the ensemble in advance. Students will learn key information like instrumentation and style of music.
2. **Supporting Materials Packet.** The lessons in this packet come from the [Class Notes Lesson Library](#). The first lesson is designed to be a starting point for discussing audience behavior prior to the concert. All other lessons align with learning objectives for this artist. Use these before the concert to introduce an important musical concept or after the experience to reinforce learning. Every classroom is different. Teachers should customize all content to fit student needs.

After your Class Notes Concert, please fill out our teacher survey and have your students complete our student survey. Class Notes staff will send a link with instructions after your concert.

PACKET CONTENTS

- 1) What is an AUDIENCE?
- 2) What are DYNAMICS?
- 3) Instrument Exploration: Cello
- 4) What is IMPROVISATION?



MUSIC FUNDAMENTALS: What is an AUDIENCE?

Age Range: Elementary

Learning Objective: Students will demonstrate active listening and positive audience behavior in a concert setting.

ENGAGE students

- ASK. "Have you ever been to a concert or performance?"
- SAY. "There are two main jobs at a concert: the job of the *performer*, and the job of the *audience*."
- DISCUSS. "Share with a classmate about a time you watched a performance. What did the performer do? What did the audience do?" (*After some time for students to discuss with each other, encourage students to share out their experiences with the class, supporting and validating the variety of experiences.*) "There are many kinds of audiences, and the type of concert influences how an audience responds!"
- CREATE. As a classroom, create a chart listing positive and respectful audience behavior. [Use the sample chart in the Visuals section](#) as a starting point.

EXPLORE sounds

- SAY. "Sometimes an audience will dance and sing along with a performer. Sometimes it's the job of an audience to listen and notice as many sounds as possible. When we need to notice sounds, our own voices and body wiggles can keep us from hearing the performer. So it can be helpful to let out some wiggles and sounds before listening."
- SING. Sing "[We Are The Audience.](#)" (Score found in the Visuals section.)
- WATCH. Watch our Class Notes Video: [What to do at a Concert.](#)

EXTEND learning

Choose one or more activities to extend learning.

- PRACTICE. Practice audience skills by utilizing one of our [Class Notes Virtual Concerts](#). In these lessons, teachers play the role of Concert Host, and students play the role of the audience.
- PRETEND. Hold your own classroom concert! Assign performers, audience members, and observers. The job of the observers is to notice good audience behavior. (i.e. "I noticed STUDENT was watching the performer and not talking!")



Visuals: What is an AUDIENCE?

We Are the Audience when....

- We **listen** to and **notice** sounds.
- We research in advance: Who is visiting your school? Where are they from? What type of music can you expect?
- We follow directions on where and how to sit so you can see and hear.
- We are curious! What questions would you ask the performer?
- We notice the *timbre*, or unique and special sounds, made by each instrument or voice.
- We make predictions. What do you think will happen next?
- We share your experience with someone at home.
- We show appreciation at the end by clapping.



Visuals: What is an AUDIENCE?

We Are the Audience

K. Condon

Voice

We are the aud - i - ence, it's our job to li - i - sten, Let all your

6

Vo. wi - ggles out be - fore the mu - sic be - e - gins. (WIGGLE!!!) We are the

11

Vo. aud - i - ence, it's our job to li - i - sten. Feel your bo - dy qui - et down,

16

Vo. so sounds can co - ome in.

Suggestion for song usage:

The first time the song is introduced, ask students to watch and listen, and encourage them to keep a steady beat (maybe by rhythmically bouncing one fist on top of another.) Perform just the first half of the song. When you get to the "wiggle" part, ask them to join you. Repeat the first part of the song again- this time they can join you in the singing. After the second wiggle, explain, "This time the song starts the same, but ends differently." Slow down and get considerably quieter on "Feel your body quiet down..." so that you are at a slow whisper by the end of the song.



MUSIC FUNDAMENTALS: What are DYNAMICS?

Age Range: Elementary

Learning Objective: Students will be introduced to the fundamental concept of dynamics in music. Students will learn the terms and symbols for piano (*p*) and forte (*f*) and demonstrate understanding of their meaning through active listening and music making.

EXPLAIN idea

The sample script below introduces the idea of dynamics in music. Feel free to personalize and modify as needed.

"Raise your hand if you've ever heard LOUD music. (*Pause for hands.*) Raise your hand if you've ever heard quiet music. (*Pause for hands.*) I bet we've all heard music that is loud, soft, or somewhere in between.

"Musicians use the word 'dynamics' to describe the volume level of music. Let's practice saying that word together a few times." (*Say it slowly with students two or three times.*) "Today we will talk about two different dynamic levels: forte and piano."

"Musicians use the word forte (for-TAY) to describe loud music. Forte is the Italian word for loud. A fancy letter *f* tells musicians to play loudly, or at a forte dynamic level. When musicians see this symbol (*hold up forte cue card*), they play or sing forte, or loudly.

"Musicians use the word piano (pee-AHN-oh) to describe quiet or soft music. Piano is the Italian word for soft. A fancy letter *p* tells musicians to play softly, or at a piano dynamic level. When musicians see this symbol (*hold up piano cue card*), they play or sing piano, or softly."

"Let's try saying each word when I hold up each card. When I flash the forte card, let's use a forte voice (*demonstrate controlled louder volume on the word forte*) and when I flash the piano card, let's use a soft, piano voice." (*Model softer sounds on the word "piano." Flash each card a few times, saying the matching word at an appropriate dynamic level.*)

EXPLORE sounds

EXPLAIN. "We can play our 'lap drums' (*hands on thighs*) at different dynamic levels- piano and forte." (*Model/demonstrate a steady beat at a forte dynamic level, then piano.*) "If the forte lap drum hurts your legs, it's too loud!"

PRACTICE. Practice each dynamic level using lap drums, then use cue cards to prompt *forte* and *piano* playing. If you notice students slowing down when they play *piano*, encourage them to keep the beat steady - don't slow down! Mix in a blank card that means to STOP. This will help regulate activity and cultivate ensemble skills.

EXPERIMENT. Try the above activity with other forms of body percussion, found objects, and/or classroom instruments as appropriate.



What are DYNAMICS?, cont.

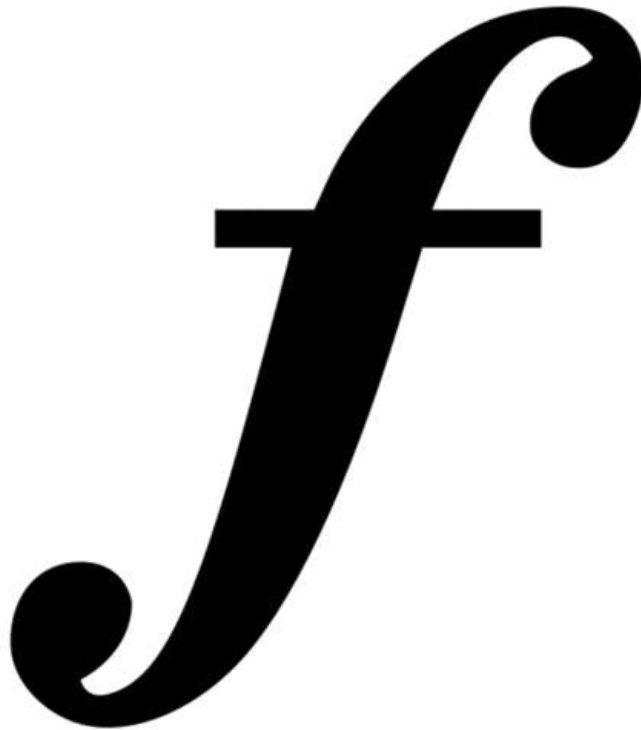

EXTEND learning

Choose one or more activities to extend learning.

- CREATE. Using index cards and markers, ask students to make their own *f* and *p* flash cards.
- LISTEN. With either printed flashcards from the [included printable](#), or from flash cards made by students, invite students to test listening skills with some music that switches back and forth between *piano* and *forte*. Explain to them: "Every time we hear *piano*, flash your *p* card, and when we hear *forte*, flash the *f*!" You may want to repeat the excerpt a few times, since students will have a better understanding of the relational connection of the dynamics after the first listen.

Printable Flash Cards

What are DYNAMICS?

A large, bold, black cursive lowercase letter 'f' is centered within a white rectangular box with a thick black border. The letter features a prominent loop at the top and a smaller loop at the bottom.A large, bold, black cursive lowercase letter 'p' is centered within a white rectangular box with a thick black border. The letter has a thick vertical stem and a large, rounded loop on the right side.



Age Range: Elementary

Learning Objective: Students will learn to identify the cello by sight and sound.

ENGAGE students

ASK. "Have you ever heard of an instrument called the cello? Whisper to a neighbor what you think the cello looks like and which instrument family it belongs in. If you don't know, make a prediction!"

EXPLORE sounds

EXPLAIN. "The cello is a member of the string family. Instruments in the string family make their sound when a string is plucked or pulled by a bow. The cello is much larger than the violin and can make really low sounds."

WATCH. [Listen](#) to Mikey from Heliopsis describe their instrument!

WATCH. Listen to composer and musician Zoë Keating describe and play her original piece for cello, [Escape Artist](#).

REFLECT. Use the following questions to guide discussion or journaling:

- In the beginning of the video, the composer explains the title. Can you think of a time you wanted to escape something?
- Zoë mentions moving between a city and a forest. Where do you want to live? What does it sound like there?
- Did it surprise you that one person could create so many layers of sound? Can you guess how she does it?

EXTEND learning

Choose one or more activities to extend learning.

WATCH. Enjoy [this light-hearted video](#) featuring 2CELLOS playing *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

MOVE. Ask students to move gracefully in a circle, like swans gliding around a pond while listening to "[The Swan](#)" from *Carnival of the Animals*.

WATCH. Continue learning about the cello by watching [Class Notes: Technique, Virtuosity, and Soul](#) featuring cellist Nygel Witherspoon.

LEARN. Learn more about composer and musician [Zoë Keating](#).



MUSIC FUNDAMENTALS: What is IMPROVISATION?

Age Range: Elementary

Learning Objective: Students will learn or review the term “improvisation” and generate musical ideas using musical ideas using a limited set of rhythms or pitches.

EXPLORE sounds

EXPLAIN. “Improvisation is when you make something up on the spot. There are several different ways to improvise. Today we will try one way. The good thing about improvisations is that there is no wrong way to do it.”

SHOW. “I can improvise a rhythm by tapping a pattern on my lap.”
(*Demonstrate a short, improvised rhythm.*)

“I can improvise a melody by singing random notes any way I want.”
(*Sing a short, improvised melody.*)

“If it’s hard to get started, I can pick just a few notes.”
(*Choose two notes on a keyboard or mallet instrument and play them in an improvised sequence.*)

CREATE. Using a keyboard or mallet instruments, ask students to take turns playing “black key music” (*music using only the black keys*). Suggest prompts like “elephant music” (*slow and low*) or “hummingbird music” (*fast and high*). You might identify a pattern of notes and ask students to create a melody using only a few notes, such as C, E, and G. Voices can improvise “elephant” and “hummingbird” music too!

EXTEND learning

Choose one or more activities to extend learning.

WATCH. Watch the artists from [Heliopsis](#) or [Kroehm Duo](#) explain how they improvise.

LISTEN. Listen to [‘There’s No Tellin’](#) by Kroehm Duo. Ask students to show you with a signal (*such as wiggling fingers*) every time they think they hear improvisation.

CREATE. Ask older students to notate their improvisations. Use an ABA grid to structure ideas. Encourage students to consider instrumentation, duration of sound, dynamics and tempo. See the completed gride below as an example.

A	B	A
Tambourine: 10 shakes <i>Allegro and forte</i>	Piano: C-E-G patterns <i>Legato and piano</i>	Tambourine: 10 shakes <i>Allegro and forte</i>