

Integrated Subject Areas:

- English Language Arts
- Fine Arts

Lesson Length: 40 minutes

Instructional objectives:

- Students will work in small groups.
- Students will create an original sound composition.
- Students will perform in front of their peers.
- Students will listen to a piece of orchestral music.

“I can” statements

- I can identify duple, triple and quadruple meters.
- I can lead and follow conducting patterns.
- I can start and stop my classmates when conducting.

Chicago Reading Initiative Integration

- Comprehension
- Word Knowledge
- Fluency

Conduct the Orchestra

DESCRIPTION

This lesson introduces students to musical **meter**. Students will use critical listening skills to identify the meter of various works of orchestral music and reinforce the idea of meter through kinesthetic activities.

Students will learn basic conducting patterns for each meter, practice while listening to recordings of orchestral works, and “conduct” their classmates to convey meaning without using words.

Students will perform a simple rhythmic **ostinato** and respond to the conductor’s non-verbal cues.



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at the CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Music Activity Partnership

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Materials

- Musical examples:
 - Quadruple meter:
 - Vivaldi: *The Four Seasons*, Spring, Movements 3
 - Prokofiev, *Dance of the Knights* from *Romeo and Juliet*
 - Triple meter
 - Schubert Symphony 8, Movement 2
 - Ravel, *Bolero*
 - Duple meter
 - Rossini, *William Tell* Overture
 - Bizet, *March of the Toreadors* from *Carmen*
- Tennis balls
- CD Player

Supplemental Resources:

- To learn more about meter in music, visit [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meter_\(music\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meter_(music))

Say: “Pro-KO-fee-ev”

PROCEDURE

1. Describe to the class that different pieces of music *feel* different. There are stronger beats and weaker beats. The ways that beats are grouped together is called **meter**.

Common meters include groupings of:

- 4 beats (quadruple meter)
 - 3 beats (triple meter)
 - 2 beats (duple meter)
2. Listen to *Dance of the Knights* from Sergei **Prokofiev**'s ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, which is an example of quadruple meter. Count the beats out loud to show the students how and where they are divided.

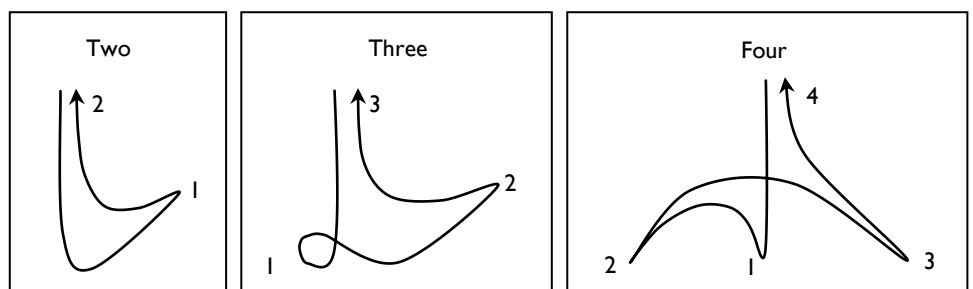
Say: “One – two – three – four. One – two – three – four.”

Use a tennis ball to demonstrate the grouping of beats: bounce the ball on beat one (the **downbeat**) and hold on subsequent beats.

Do the same for duple and triple meter, using musical examples listed at left. Students should begin to *feel* the way the downbeat is emphasized.

3. After students develop the ability to feel music in groups of two, three, and four beats, introduce basic conducting patterns (shown below), starting with duple meter. Practice conducting the same musical examples.

Good posture is very important for conductors to communicate command and authority (conductors *only* communicate with their bodies). If your body says that you are nervous or timid, your orchestra will respond that way.



4. Teach students how to start a group. Begin with arms stretched out in front of your body. This will signal to a group that it is time to begin. Raise your arms, take a deep breath. Begin the conducting pattern and keep a steady tempo. Continue until you are ready to stop.
5. Ask students how they might stop a group. This is also called a **cut-off**. Indicate a cut-off by making a circle with your hands and closing your fingers. Practice the cut-off by itself several times.
6. Add the cut-off to the end of the conducting pattern. The cut-off gesture needs to be big enough so that others will be able to distinguish it from the conducting pattern.
7. Invite students up to the front of the class, one at a time to try conducting their classmates. Give students an **ostinato** to clap or play on classroom instruments. For example:



Variations

- Use an ostinato that is eight beats long instead of four.
- Once students are comfortable with the basic conducting patterns, add **dynamics**, indicating if the music gets louder or softer. The right hand keeps the beat pattern, while the left hand moves up or down to show forte or piano.
- Have your class do a mini performance. Have the conductor leave the room. While he/she is gone, the class should “practice” their parts, or quietly talk to their neighbors, just like at a real orchestra concert. As soon as the conductor walks back in, students must be ready to respond to their conductor.

Extensions

- Discuss the relationships between meter in music and meter as a length of distance.
- Poetry is often composed in meter. Compare meter in music and poetry:
 - The nursery rhyme *Jack and Jill Went Up the Hill* is in duple meter.
 - Examine other poems to identify their meter.
 - Recite these poems to the appropriate conducting pattern.

NOTES

VOCABULARY

Cut-off – A conductor’s gesture that indicates the music should stop.

Downbeat – The first of a group of beats.

Dynamics – Variations in volume of performed music.

Forte – Loud.

Meter – The organization of beats into regular, repetitive groupings.

Ostinato – A rhythmic figure that repeats over and over.

Piano (dynamics) – Soft.

ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS

FINE ARTS

Learning Benchmark 25.B.2: Understand how elements and principles combine within an art form to express ideas.

Learning Benchmark 25.A.2c: Identify elements and expressive qualities such as tone color, harmony, melody, form (rondo, theme and variation), rhythm/meter and dynamics in a variety of musical styles.

Learning Benchmark 26.A.2d: Read and interpret the traditional music notation of note values and letter names.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Learning Benchmark 4.B.2a: Present oral reports to an audience using correct language and nonverbal expressions for the intended purpose and message within a suggested organizational format.

Learning Benchmark 4.B.2c: Identify methods to manage or overcome communication anxiety and apprehension (e.g., topic outlines, repetitive practice).

Learning Benchmark 4.B.2d: Identify main verbal and nonverbal communication elements and strategies to maintain communications and to resolve conflict.



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