**DELPHIA CELLO QUARTET**  
**KINDERGARTEN LESSON**

**LEARN** about the cello

- Create a cue card for the cello. (See PRINT PAGES at the end of this guide for pictures to use in your classroom.)
- Using this visual, introduce the instrument and explain how sound is produced. Use the text and pictures from the “Meet the Instrument” section of this curriculum for sample language.
- Spend time noticing features of the instrument. Compare and contrast the related instruments, such as violin, viola, double bass, and guitar. Ask guiding questions, such as:
  - What is the body of the cello made out of?
  - All instruments make sound through some kind of vibration. What vibrates on a cello? (Hint: there is more than one answer!)
  - How many different ways can you get the string on a cello to vibrate?
  - Talk about and notice the bow. Think about how moving the bow in different ways would make different sounds.
  - Use three words to describe the cello.
- Explain that every instrument has its own unique sound. We call this *timbre* (TAM-ber) or tone color. Explain that we will learn to recognize the special timbre of the cello. For an in-depth exploration of timbre and tone color, watch the Class Notes video [Color in Music: Germaine Tailleferre](#).

**LISTEN**

- To the cello!
  - **Yo Yo Ma** playing J.S. Bach's famous cello suites
  - **Jacqueline du Pré** playing part of Elgar's famous cello concerto
  - Minnesota's own young cello superstar, **Nygel Witherspoon**
- To the [Delphia Cello Quartet playlist](#). They will pay a visit to your school for a Class Notes Artists concert.
**PLAY**

- **Good vibrations**
  
  1. Explain that sound is created through *vibration*. When a vibration occurs, it sends invisible waves through the air, and those waves bump up against your ears, and you hear a sound.
  
  2. Collect a wide variety of rubber bands (find as many sizes and thicknesses as possible). Together with students, explore stretching them with different amounts of tension, plucking, and listening. Use push pins and cork board to stretch bands at different lengths. Listen, compare, adjust, and analyze.
  
  3. You will notice that the rubber bands alone are quiet. Stretching across boxes and other materials adds the component of resonance, just like on a cello, where the string’s vibration makes the wooden body of the instrument resonate. For some ideas on how to add resonators to rubber bands, watch [this video](#).

- **Cello, or not cello??**
  
  1. Print two cello cue cards (see PRINT PAGES), and put a giant “X” through one.
2. Ask for an “expert listener” volunteer to distinguish whether the music is played by the cello, or NOT the cello, then hold up the corresponding cue card. Use some of the following clips or curate your own.

› CELLO
   › Bach Cello Suites
   › “The Swan” from Carnival of the Animals by Camille Saint-Saens
   › The first movement of Ligeti’s Sonata for Cello

› NOT CELLO
   › Excerpts from Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet by Igor Stravinsky
   › Tristórosa by Heitor Villa-Lobos
   › Hilary Hahn performing some music by J.S. Bach

• Cello Dance Party!

1. Listen to a wide variety of cello. Include music with loud/soft and fast/slow contrasts. Use manipulatives such as scarves, ribbon wands, or a parachute to structure, contain, and guide movement. Here are some suggestions of music to use:

› G.F. Handel’s Sonata for two cellos in g minor, Op. 2, Nr. 8.
› 2 Cellos performing a mash-up of Beethoven and Led Zeppelin
› The Prague Cello Quartet performing Coldplay’s “Viva la Vida”
› “Waltz No. 2” from Jazz Suite No. 2 by Shostakovich

LEARNING CHECKLIST

☐ I can identify a cello by sight and sound.
☐ I can explain how a musician makes sound on a cello.
☐ I can move fast and slow to cello music.

KEY WORDS quartet, vibration, string instrument, bow, timbre
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- Using this visual, introduce the instrument and explain how sound is produced. Use the text and pictures from the “Meet the Instrument” section of this curriculum for sample language.
- Spend time noticing features of the instrument. Compare and contrast the related instruments, such as violin, viola, double bass, and guitar. Ask guiding questions, such as:
  - What is the body of the cello made out of?
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  - Use three words to describe the cello.
- Explain that every instrument has its own unique sound. We call this **timbre** (TAM-ber) or tone color. Explain that we will learn to recognize the special timbre of the cello. For an in-depth exploration of timbre and tone color, watch the Class Notes video [Color in Music: Germaine Tailleferre](https://example.com/color-in-music).

**LISTEN**

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DYNAMICS!

1. Explain or review the music vocabulary word *dynamics*. Dynamics means how loud or soft musicians play. Remember or explain that the four musicians in the Delphia Cello Quartet must listen to one another so their dynamic levels all fit together. If one player has the melody, she might play *forte*, while the other parts might play a little softer, or more *piano*.

2. Create cue cards for several dynamic levels: piano, mezzo piano, mezzo forte, and forte (see PRINT PAGES). Practice flashing each card and saying the term for each level. Use the cards to practice favorite classroom songs at various dynamic levels.

3. Using a classroom instrument, such as a xylophone or tambourine, ask students to echo back a pattern at various levels. Use dynamic cue cards as visual prompts.

4. Arrange students in groups of four. Give each group a set of cue cards with four dynamic levels. Ask them to rehearse a song or a rhythmic ostinato in a variety of ways. Begin with everyone singing/playing at the same dynamic level. Try again with each person playing at a different dynamic level. Encourage as many variations as possible. Promote experimentation, creativity, and active listening by asking guiding questions, such as:
   - Does it sound more balanced when you all play the same dynamic level, or at different dynamic levels?
   - Are there any other ways you could do this?
   - Why do you think composers use dynamic markings in their music?
   - Do you think forte music has a certain affect? Why might a composer choose to tell musicians to play forte?

**LEARNING CHECKLIST**

- I can sing or play instruments at different dynamic levels.
- I can use active listening skills to blend my sounds with other musicians.

**KEY WORDS** dynamics, piano, mezzo piano, mezzo forte, forte, melody, cello, timbre
DELPHIA CELLO QUARTET
THIRD AND FOURTH GRADE LESSON

LEARN about the cello.

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• Spend time noticing features of the instrument. Compare and contrast the related instruments, such as violin, viola, double bass, and guitar. Ask guiding questions, such as:
  › What is the body of the cello made out of?
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  › How many different ways can you get the string on a cello to vibrate?
  › Talk about and notice the bow. Think about how moving the bow in different ways would make different sounds.
  › Use three words to describe the cello.

• Explain that every instrument has its own unique sound. We call this *timbre* (TAM-ber) or tone color. Explain that we will learn to recognize the special timbre of the cello. For an in-depth exploration of timbre and tone color, watch the Class Notes video *Color in Music: Germaine Tailleferre*.

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1. Explain that when musicians perform together, they must give signals, or cues, to each other so that they start together and stay together throughout a performance. It's a way of communicating and working together. The process of cueing might include an exaggerated nod of the head, a sharp, audible inhale, and/or deliberate eye contact. The Delphia Cello Quartet may describe this process as LOOK, LISTEN, and BREATHE.

2. Watch some video of string quartets with students. Observe the performers’ body language and eye contact. Sometimes you will see very obvious examples of cueing.
   - Brooklyn Rider playing the *String Quartet* by Claude Debussy
   - Parker Quartet playing *String Quartet No. 1* by Bela Bartok

   It’s easier to notice obvious cues in the Brooklyn Rider performance. The Parker Quartet’s cues are more subtle. Every string quartet has their own style and habits.

3. Integrate cueing into classroom performance. Group students into quartets and ask them to choose a favorite classroom piece to perform. They may choose to sing, play on classroom instruments, or combine the two. Remind them that they must be able to start together on their own. Circulate among the groups during rehearsal time and help each quartet refine their cueing technique. Complete the activity by asking each group to perform for the class. Give feedback regarding cueing.

**LEARNING CHECKLIST**

- I understand that musicians in a small ensemble must communicate by giving cues.
- I can give and follow cues in a classroom performance.

**KEY WORDS** cello, ensemble, cues, vibration, timbre
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STRING STUFF

1. Remind students that the cello is just one of many stringed instruments. Explain that you will conduct a deep investigation into the unique sounds of string instruments.
2. Begin by using adjectives to describe the sound of individual instruments—not necessarily stringed instruments. Connect with language arts teachers to incorporate and reinforce content from literacy units. Create a chart to structure and organize this activity. Use this as an opportunity to introduce unfamiliar instruments. Select instruments for the chart to suit your own needs. Feel free to customize and create one for each instrument family. Here is an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cello</th>
<th>Oboe</th>
<th>Horn</th>
<th>Glockenspiel</th>
<th>Cymbals</th>
<th>Flute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>resonant</td>
<td>mysterious</td>
<td>buttery</td>
<td>glistening</td>
<td>splashy</td>
<td>airy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Listen to a wide variety of music played by stringed instruments. Continue to use adjectives in classroom discussions before, after, and during viewing/listening. Here is a curated list—adjust, modify, and add to according to your own needs.

› **Lyre**
› **Zither**
› Violin
  › Here is an example of *lyrical playing*.
  › And the same violinist, Joshua Bell, playing something *more aggressive*.
› **Viola**
  › As with many of these examples, the featured instrument plays with others, but we can clearly see and hear the unique features and qualities of the instrument.
› **Cello**
  › And for something a little different, *a multi-cello arrangement of Michael Jackson*
› **Double bass**
› Harp
  › The unique sound of *Alice Coltrane*
  › Or the indie rock stylings of *Joanna Newsom*
  › Or something a little more *traditional*.

Continue and extend this exercise by finding combinations of string instruments playing together, or additional string instruments that fall outside the traditional symphony orchestra, such as the mandolin, banjo, or guitar.
4. Have a pizzicato and double stops listening party. Students will see and hear Delphia Cello Quartet use a variety of techniques to make sounds on their cellos. Explain that string instruments can perform a special technique called **pizzicato**, which means that they pluck their strings instead of using the bow. Introduce the double stop technique, which is when string players play two strings simultaneously. Play random examples from the list below and ask students to indicate what they hear—pizzicato, or double stops.

- **Pizzicato**
  - *Pizzicato Polka*, Johann and Josef Strauss
  - “*Humming Chorus*” from Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*
  - The **Largo** movement of “Winter” from the *Four Seasons* by Vivaldi. This one is sort of a trick question because the melody is bowed (arco) but the accompaniment is pizzicato. Take note of who is playing what.
  - And the very fun “*Plink, Plank, Plunk*” by Leroy Anderson.

- **Double Stops**
  - *Partita no. 3*, “Gavotte en rondeau”, J.S. Bach
  - *Chaconne for Solo Violin*, J.S. Bach
  - Fiddle music and bluegrass uses a lot of double stops. Sometimes the music goes so fast it’s hard to pick out the double stops, but this version of “*Wayfaring Stranger*” by Alison Krauss starts out with a couple of obvious, easy-to-hear double stops.

5. Explore with rubber bands. Find a wide variety of rubber bands of various thickness and size. Use a piece of cardboard and line up some push pins so that you can stretch the bands to various lengths and levels of tautness. Pluck the bands and listen to the sounds. Adjust the lengths/tautness of the bands, pluck again, and compare.

6. Extend this by finding a cardboard with all four sides closed off. Cut a hole in the top and “string” the rubber bands across the hole. Pluck and listen to the sound now that a resonator box is in place. Introduce vocabulary words such as **resonate** and **amplify** and use these terms when watching and listening to string instruments.

**LEARNING CHECKLIST**

- I can use active listening to identify, compare, and contrast the various timbres of string instruments.
- I can identify and explain string techniques, such as **pizzicato** and **double stops**.

**KEY WORDS** timbre, pizzicato, double stops, resonate, amplify
DELPHIA CELLO QUINTET

PRINT PAGES
DYNAMICS CUE CARDS

p
DYNAMICS CUE CARDS

mp
DYNAMICS CUE CARDS

mf