LUX STRING QUARTET

LESSON PLANS

CLASS NOTES®

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LUX STRING QUARTET
LESSON PLANS

The following lessons can be used or adapted for K-6 students. Some activities are advanced and require more skills and are suitable for older students. Adjust as needed, and contact Katie Condon at *kcondon@mpr.org* for ideas or requests for specific modifications.

LEARN about the violin, viola and cello.
Create a cue card for each instrument. (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 INSTRUMENTS section of this curriculum for sample language.
- Spend time noticing features of the instrument individually, then compare and contrast the instruments. Ask guiding questions, such as:
  - The shape of each instrument is basically the same—what's the big difference between them?
  - How does that difference (size) affect the sound?
  - Which is the smallest?
  - Which one is too big to hold under your chin?
  - What *vibrates* on a string instrument? (Hint: there is more than one answer!)
  - How many different ways can you get a string on a string instrument to vibrate?
  - Talk about and notice details about the bow. Think about how moving the bow in different ways would make different sounds.
  - Use three words to describe each instrument.
- 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 timbres of the violin, viola and cello. For an in-depth exploration of timbre and tone color, watch the Class Notes Video Color in Music: Germaine Tailleferre.
- Learn more about the instruments in the Class Notes Video Technique, Virtuosity and Soul.

LISTEN

- To the violin by scrolling down to the VIOLIN section of the Lux String Quartet Lesson Plan Audio playlist.
- To the viola by scrolling down to the VIOLA section of the Lux String Quartet Lesson Plan Audio playlist.
- To the cello by scrolling down to the CELLO section of the Lux String Quartet Lesson Plan Audio playlist.
- To more string quartet music by scrolling down to the STRING QUARTET section of the Lux String Quartet Lesson Plan Audio playlist.
- To the Lux String Quartet performing in the Classical MPR studios. They will pay a visit to your school for a Class Notes Concert.

PLAY

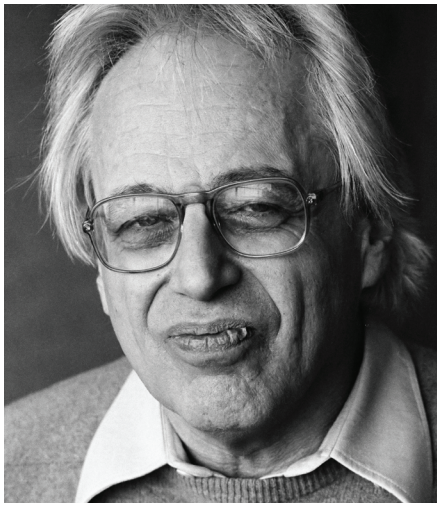
- Violin, Viola or Cello?
  - Print or project violin, viola and cello cue cards (see PRINT PAGES at the end of this lesson).
  - Ask for an "expert listener" volunteer. The listener must distinguish whether the music is played by the violin, viola or cello and then hold up the corresponding cue card. Use some of the clips from the Lux String Quartet Lesson Plan Audio playlist or curate your own.
  - It may be difficult to distinguish between these three closely related instruments. Consider adapting to play "solo instrument or string quartet." In this version, the expert listener must simply determine whether one musician is playing or an ensemble.
- Can You Cue?
  - During their Class Notes Concert, the Lux String Quartet will talk a lot about skills musicians need to play together. Do the following activities in class to promote the idea of starting together, stopping together, and staying together.
  - Explain that when musicians perform together, they must give signals, or cues, to one another so that they start together and stay together throughout a performance. It's a way of communication and working together. The process of cueing can include, for example, an exaggerated nod of the head; a sharp, audible inhalation; or deliberate eye contact.
  - Watch the Lux String Quartet perform in the Classical MPR studios. Observe the performers' body language and eye contact. Sometimes you will see very obvious examples of cueing. Every string quartet has its own cueing style and habits.
  - 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.

LEARN about Beethoven.

- During their Class Notes Concert, the Lux String Quartet will play music by two composers: Ludwig van Beethoven and György Ligeti. Learn a little about each composer. See PRINT PAGES at the end of this curriculum for pictures of each composer.
- Ludwig van Beethoven
  - Chances are that many students will at least know Beethoven's name. Here are a handful of facts to go over together in class:
    - His full name was Ludwig van Beethoven.
    - He was born in Germany in 1770.
    - He died in 1827 at the age of fifty-seven.
    - He began to lose his hearing in his early thirties and was completely deaf by age forty. He could still compose music by hearing it in his head.
    - He wrote nine symphonies.
    - He never married.

ATTRIBUTION

- György Ligeti
  - Chances are that most students will not have heard of Ligeti. Some might consider Beethoven as a very typical or conventional example of a classical composer: popular, well-known, with music that many people recognize. Ligeti is kind of the opposite of that. Here are a handful of facts to go over together in class:
    - György Ligeti was born in Hungary in 1923.
    - Political problems in Hungary forced him to leave the country and move to Vienna, Austria, where he lived until he died in 2006.
    - He is known as an avant-garde composer. Avant-garde composers are those who experiment with new techniques and often try to sound purposefully different from previous traditions.
    - One of his teachers was another Hungarian composer, Zoltán Kodály. Listen to Kodály's amazing cello sonata in this Class Notes Video or learn more about Kodaly's piece Dances of Galanta in this Class Notes Video.
    - Ligeti liked to use mathematical and geometric patterns in his music.
    - Ligeti was married and had one son.



ATTRIBUTION

LISTEN

- To some music by Beethoven by scrolling down to the LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN section of the Artu Duo Lesson Plan Audio playlist. Artu Duo is another ensemble who gives Class Notes Concerts, and this year, they are playing an all-Beethoven concert.
- To some music by Ligeti by scrolling down to the LIGETI section of the Lux String Quartet Lesson Plan Audio playlist.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

- Start by playing a quick game of Beethoven, Ligeti or Neither?
  - Play a short clip of music. Contestants must ring a buzzer (or a bell, or play some finger cymbals, or a triangle) and guess either "Beethoven" if they think he composed the music, "Ligeti" if they think he composed the music, or "NEITHER!" if they think neither composed it. Start with easy, obvious examples, working toward more subtle (and difficult) examples. Extremely obvious examples (throw in some Taylor Swift) will be funny for students—lean into the humor of the game. To add some theatrics, and to reinforce with visuals, ask contestants to flash a picture of Beethoven for a "Beethoven" answer, a Ligeti picture for a "Ligeti" answer and a blank sheet for "NEITHER" answer. See PRINT PAGES at the end of this guide for printable or projectable images of Beethoven and Ligeti.
  - After they answer, ask contestants to describe the elements that informed their answer: what did they hear that made them think it was composed by Beethoven? How did they know if Beethoven didn't compose the piece?

- After listening to several selections by each composer, engage students in a classroom conversation. Here are some possible questions for discussion:
  - Have you heard some of Beethoven's music before? Do you remember when or where?
  - Why do you think Beethoven's music is still played two hundred and fifty years after he was born? What makes it stand the test of time?
  - Have you heard some of Ligeti's music before?
  - Do you think Beethoven and Ligeti have influenced other composers and musicians? In what ways?
  - How would you describe this music to someone who had never heard it before?
  - What do you think it was like for Beethoven to lose his hearing? How would you cope with a setback like that?
  - What do you think it was like for Ligeti to have to leave his homeland? How would you cope with a situation like that?
- Use a listening grid to compare and contrast a work by each composer.

Things I notice in a piece by Beethoven	Things I notice in a piece by Ligeti	Things I notice in both pieces

CREATE a piece inspired by Ligeti.

György Ligeti composed a group of eleven short pieces for piano called *Musica Ricerata*. The first movement uses only one note—A—for the whole piece, and at the very end, the listener hears a D. So the whole movement uses only two notes. In the second movement, he uses just three notes. The pattern continues until the eleventh movement, when all twelve tones are used. Follow the steps below to create classroom improvisations inspired by Ligeti's idea.

1. Explain the concept behind *Musica Ricerata*.
2. Listen to some or all of the piece by scrolling down to the LIGETI section of the Lux String Quartet Lesson Plan Audio playlist. Track #2 begins the work. Observe that even though the pitches, or notes, follow a very straightforward sequential pattern, Ligeti adds color and interest with dynamics, interesting rhythms, tempo and articulation.
3. Ask students to create a piece inspired by this idea. Students do not need to use the same sequence as Ligeti, but simply add a pitch with each movement. Use a grid to organize ideas. Play on a classroom instrument that has all twelve tones in an octave, like a piano or glockenspiel. Ligeti used the pitches in melody and accompaniment. For ease and simplicity, simply ask students to try to play the pitches sequentially or in single-line repetitive patterns. Integrate music vocabulary to reinforce. See a sample below, and a blank grid in the PRINT PAGES at the end of this curriculum.

	Pitches	Tempo	Other details
Movement #1	F, F#	Presto	*accelerando* at the end
Movement #2	F, F#, C	Allegro	*fortissimo*
Movement #3	F, F#, C, C#	Largo	waltz-style
Movement #4	F, F#, C, C#,B	Andante	All *staccato*
Movement #5	F, F#, C, C#,B,A	Moderato	All *legato*
Movement #6	F, F#, C, C#,B,A,G	Vivace	Lots of rests btwn notes
Movement #7	F, F#, C, C#,B,A,G,D	Allegretto	Repeat each note
Movement #8	F, F#, C, C#,B,A,G,D,E	Adagio	*accent* each third note
Movement #9	F, F#, C, C#,B,A,G,D,E,D#	Andante	march-style
Movement #10	F, F#, C, C#,B,A,G,D,E,D#, G#	Moderato	High register
Movement #11	F, F#, C, C#,B,A,G,D,E,D#, G#, Bflat	Lento	*pianissimo*

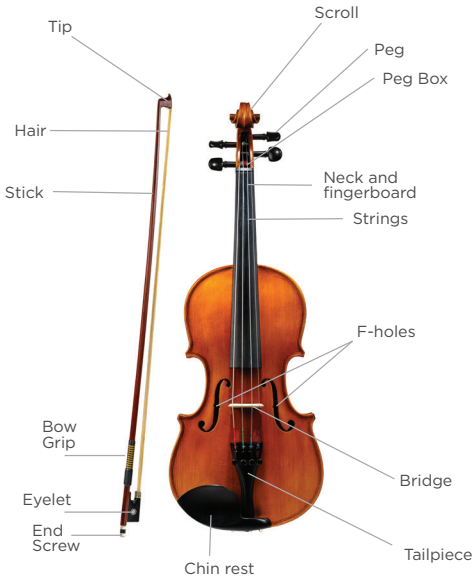
LEARNING CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can identify a violin, viola and cello by sight and sound.
- ☐ I can explain how a musician makes a sound on a violin, viola or cello.
- ☐ I can identify differences between two contrasting musical selections. I can describe elements that make contrasting musical selections different from each other.
- ☐ I can give and respond to cues in a small group setting.
- ☐ I can generate musical ideas using a limited set of pitches. I can create or improvise musical ideas that integrate various expressive elements.

LUX STRING QUARTET

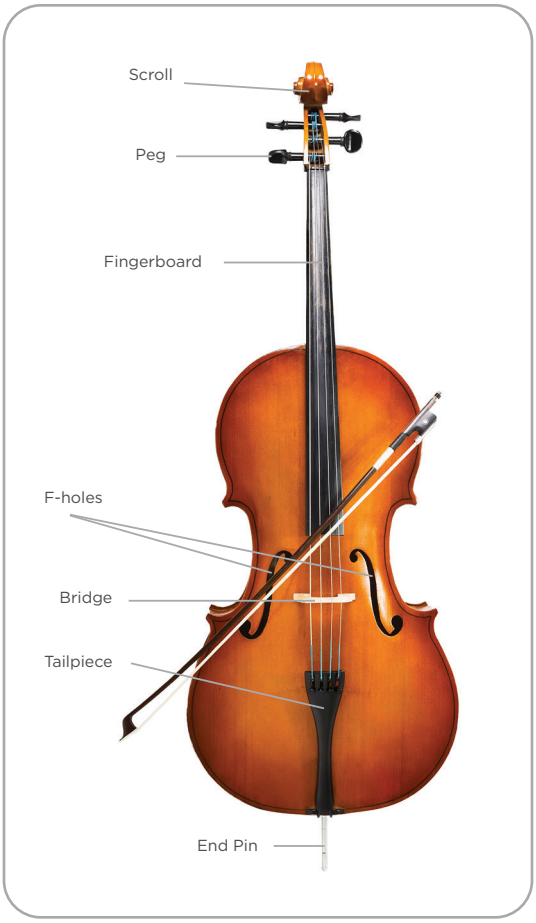
PRINT PAGES

VIOLIN CUE CARD

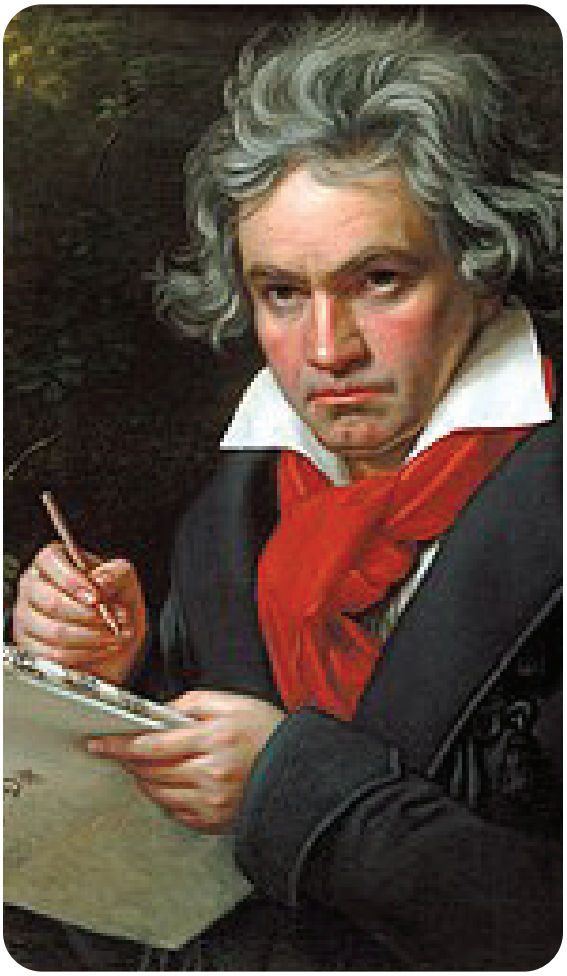


VIOLA CUE CARD

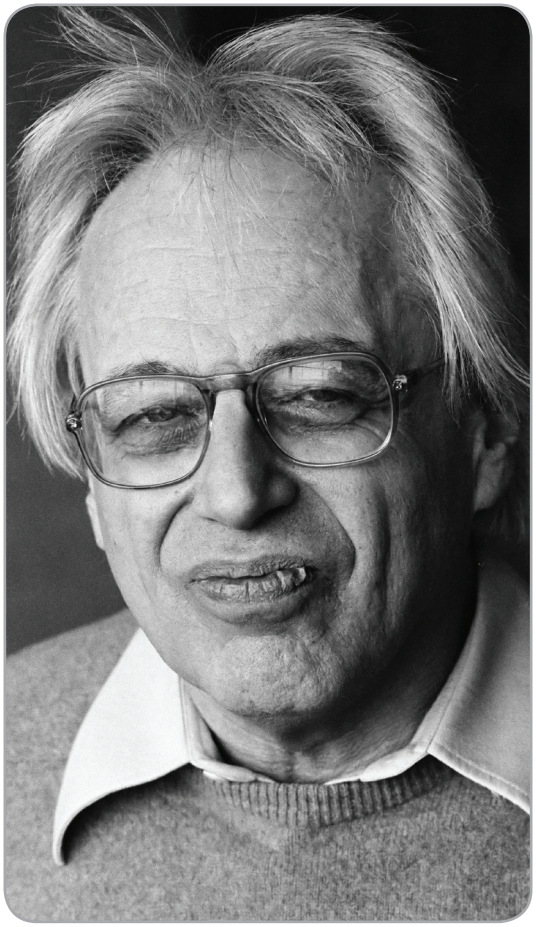
CELLO CUE CARD



BEETHOVEN CUE CARD



LIGETI CUE CARD



RICERATA GRID

Name: _____

	Pitches	**Tempo**	**Other details**
Movement #1			
Movement #2			
Movement #3			
Movement #4			
Movement #5			
Movement #6			
Movement #7			
Movement #8			
Movement #9			
Movement #10			
Movement #11			