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To You, the Teacher

We hope you and your class enjoy exploring these instruments. The gift of music lights up the world.

This packet of information is intended as a preliminary background of musical knowledge for young students.

We know you will monitor the use of the instruments and stress to the children that they are experimenting with something very special.

Thank you for including the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra and the Saint Louis Symphony Volunteer Association Instrument Playground Music Kit as part of your curriculum. You are the spark that ignites, for which we are eternally grateful.
Instrument Families

Instruments are grouped together in families because those instruments all have things in common, such as how they look or how a sound is made. In a symphony orchestra, four different instrument families combine to make beautiful music together.

We will learn about each instrument family, including the one we have in our school this week. Let's see where this family is on the orchestra seating chart. In a large orchestra, musicians are seated in a semi-circle, facing the conductor and the audience. The orchestra seating chart shows you the area where each musician sits on stage when the instrument families play together as an orchestra. This is one way to seat an orchestra. It sometimes changes, but usually this is how it’s done. Find your favorite instruments so that you will know where to look on stage when you come to Powell Symphony Hall to hear the Saint Louis Symphony.

This is one way to seat an orchestra:
The Brass Family

The brass family includes the trumpet, French horn, trombone, and tuba. They’re called brass instruments because they’re all made out of that same shiny metal. To play these instruments, musicians buzz their lips against the mouthpiece while also blowing air through the horn. Brass instruments can make loud, powerful, important sounds, and are often used to announce kings, queens, and even presidents! Find the brass family on the orchestra seating chart and color it yellow, like brass.
Trumpet/Cornet

The trumpet plays high brassy notes. It is probably the best known of a group of similar instruments including the cornet. The trumpet has a “bright” sound, well suited to military and ceremonial roles—even in ancient Egypt. An optional mute can make the trumpet sound completely different. If it were unwound and stretched out a trumpet would be over 4 feet long. Notice the “bell shape” at the end of the trumpet where the sound comes out.

Assembly:
Gently place the mouthpiece into the windpipe of the instrument and then give it a slight twist. This prevents the mouthpiece from falling out. Be careful not to twist TOO HARD, this would result in a jammed mouthpiece.

Let’s Play:
A trumpet is not easy to play. Can you try it?

French Horn

Isn’t the French Horn pretty, sort of all curled up? Today’s French Horn is a little different from other valved instruments. It has rotary valves that let air into different lengths of tube by being twisted sideways when the player presses the keys. The French Horn is often played with the right hand inside the bell. It is also said to be the most difficult instrument to play. If it were uncurled it would be about 15 feet long, longer than two men stacked on top of one another. Sometimes people describe the sound of a French Horn as “velvet.” If you can think what velvet looks like, you know it is smooth, soft and rich.

Assembly:
See trumpet instructions for inserting the mouthpiece.
Trombone

The trombone is different from other brass instruments because it has no valves. It has a slide which is pulled in and out that gives it the greatest note range out of all the brass. The deep sounds a trombone makes can be played loudly or softly. You need long arms to play a trombone. Hold the trombone in your left hand and the slide in your right hand. Be very careful not to let the slide fall off.

Assembly:
See trumpet instructions for inserting the mouthpiece. With the bell section in the left hand and the slide section in the right hand, connect the sections at a 90 degree angle and tighten the threaded connector.

Tuba

The tuba is the lowest instrument in the whole brass section with a deep, foghorn-like sound. It is used frequently in marches and other compositions where it is important to have a strong beat. The tuba is not as hard to play as some of the other brass instruments, but it’s heavy. If it were uncurled it would be about sixteen feet long. It has a big bell.

So far we do not have a tuba in our Brass Music Kit for you to try, but maybe one day soon we will.
The Conductor

The conductor of the orchestra is very important. He or she has the role of keeping the tempo (or beat) so that the musicians play together, starting and stopping at the same time. He or she must also decide how to make the notes sound beautiful. Both of the conductor’s arms are used to do these two jobs at one time. Each conductor has his or her own way of making each piece special—that is, they interpret it in their own way. To do this the conductor holds a special stick, called a baton, in his or her right hand and keeps the tempo with the right arm. The left arm is used to give the musicians instructions on how to make their parts sound beautiful.

Would you like to try conducting? Okay—get ready. Put on the jacket like the conductor, raise the baton, look at the score—and start the music!
Powell Symphony Hall

Have you been to Powell Hall to hear the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra? Let’s talk about what it’s like.

An orchestra is a large group of musicians with instruments of many types. They play symphonic music that was written by composers from many time periods. These composers live in different countries. When symphony musicians all play together they make many kinds of music. Often there are over 100 instruments in an orchestra, divided into four Instrument Families.

Our Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra is a very special one. It is known all over the world as one of the very best symphony orchestras. When you come to hear the orchestra, you are lucky indeed. We listen, look, and even dream as the music takes us to special, magical places.

Powell Symphony Hall is very beautiful. Once upon a time it was a movie theatre. It’s decorated with red velvet seats and gold leaf to make it look nearly like a palace.

As the concert is about to begin, the musicians come out on stage and take their seats. They then tune their instruments so they are in the same pitch. Finally, the conductor will appear. The audience claps for him or her, and then there is a hush in Powell Symphony Hall as the conductor raises his or her arms and the music begins.
Musical Words–What Do They Mean?

Glissando: a sliding tone.

Slide: to sort of “skid” or “skate” over the notes – just like when you slide with your feet.

Mute: to reduce the volume of a sound made by a brass instrument or make a novel or “different” sound.

Mouthpiece: the part of an instrument that directs the air into it. Mouthpieces vary slightly from instrument to instrument.

Valve: in some brass instruments, valves are used to connect extra pieces of tubing to the main tube, to produce different notes.

Did you know that horns were used in Switzerland and Tibet? People would play them to call to each other across the valleys and high snowy mountaintops. So you see that brass instruments can make loud, piercing sounds.
Included With Brass Instrument Playground Music Kit

Delivered to:

School ________________________
Street Address ________________________
City, State, Zip ________________________
Teacher’s phone number ________________________
Teacher ________________________
Date Delivered: ________________________ Pick-up ________________________

1. Instruments:

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2. Conductor’s Jacket □

3. Complete Musical Score □

4. Baton □

5. Mi-T-Mist sanitizing spray □

6. Orchestra Seating Chart (sample copy) for coloring □

7. Books:
□ Arturo’s Baton
□ A Young Person’s Guide to Music
□ The Story of the Orchestra (with CD)
□ Peter and the Wolf (with CD)

If any instrument needs attention, please note below:

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