

Nancy Hair:
The Talking Cello
Educational Guide, Grades PreK-3



About the Performance

This unique classical music program for kids, originally developed by teaching artist Sandy Kiefer, introduces one classroom at a time to the cello as storyteller, as a tale is told first with musical accompaniment and then with the cello as the sole narrator. Students also create their own story as a group which is then performed by Nancy and her cello to their delight. During this interactive program, students use finger math, writing, and drawing skills.



About the Artist

Nancy is an accomplished cellist who has performed with Arte Chamber Orchestra, New Hampshire Symphony, Opera Company of Boston, and Rhode Island Philharmonic. She a faculty member in early childhood education at the New England Conservatory of Music and has also taught at the Longy School of Music, The Powers Music School, The Hart School and the All Newton Music School.

Program Learning Goals

1. To introduce a string instrument
2. To see how sounds “talk”, convey emotion, and can be used to create stories
3. To equate sounds with emotion and action

Essential Questions

1. How can music tell a story?
2. How does music connect to your emotions?
3. How can music help us to express ourselves?



Nancy Hair:
The Talking Cello
Educational Guide, Grades PreK-3

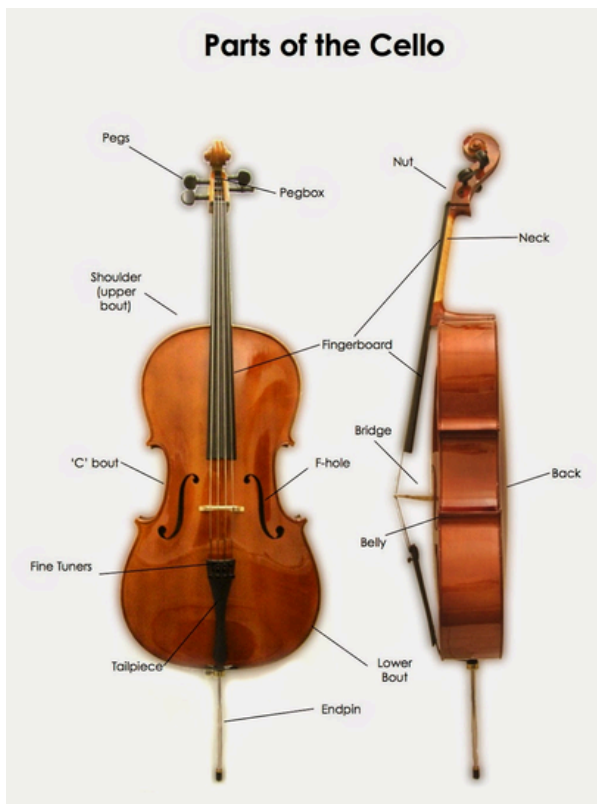
Vocabulary

- **String instruments:** musical instruments sounded by plucking, striking, or moving a bow across a string
- **Suite:** an organized set of instrumental pieces normally performed in a single sitting
- **Movement:** a piece of music that makes up a larger composition

Key Facts and Context for Students

What is classical music?

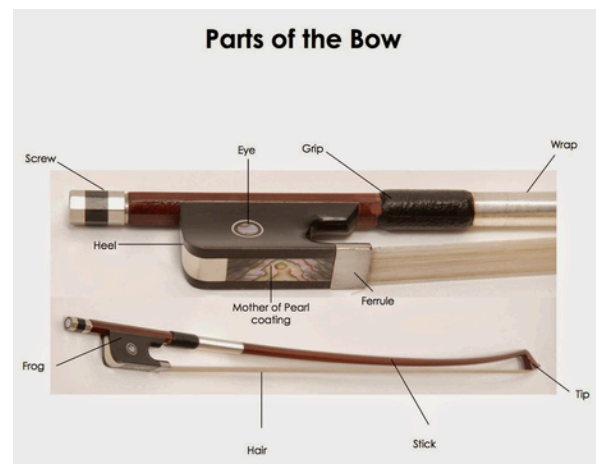
Classical music is a very broad term. It includes music originally written, or **composed**, in **Europe** over many hundreds of years, but is now played all over the world. Classical music is performed with instruments, voices, or both! Usually musicians read music written on pages of **sheet music** which tells them what to play and how to play it. Some of the most famous **composers** of classical music include Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.



Images from the Suzuki Cello School of Austin

What is a cello?

A cello ("chel-oh", rhymes with "hello") is a member of the **string instrument family**. It has four strings and is usually played with a **bow** (rhymes with "go"). It has a deep, low sound and can be played alone, in small groups, or with large orchestras. A person who plays the cello is called a **cellist**.



Nancy Hair:
The Talking Cello
Educational Guide, Grades PreK-3

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

- What string instruments do you know? How are they played?
- What do you know about the cello? What would you like to know? How could you find out more?
- How does music make you feel?

Pre-Performance Activity: Drawing Music

Learning Goal:

To explore how sounds convey emotion and can be used to create stories

Materials:

J.S. Bach's Cello Suite #1 video, drawing paper, coloring supplies



[YouTube: Nature at Play: J.S. Bach's Cello Suite No. 1](#)
[\(Live from the Great Smoky Mountains\)](#)
[by Yo-Yo Ma](#)

Note for the Teacher:

Johann Sebastian Bach wrote six suites for unaccompanied cello, and they are among the most popular pieces of music performed on the instrument. Each contains six movements with different characters and feels.

...continued on next page

Nancy Hair:
The Talking Cello
Educational Guide, Grades PreK-3

Pre-Performance Activity, continued

Directions:

1. Watch J.S. Bach's Cello Suite #1 video and discuss what students see and hear.
2. Replay the Minuets movement (video timestamp: 10:00-12:30).
3. Talk about the mood of that movement. Ask students for a few words that describe it.
Does it sound like a kangaroo that hops? Does it sound like raindrops? Does it sound sad?
4. Have students draw a picture of what they heard or write a sentence about it.
5. Share the pictures with the class and discuss the similarities and differences between them. Assure students that all of their interpretations are welcome!

Extension:

Many classical music works depict stories, characters, and emotions. Listen to any of these recordings and discuss what you hear and feel:

- “*Carnival of the Animals*” by Camille Saint-Saëns
- “*Peter & Wolf*” by Sergei Prokofiev
- “*La Mer*” by Claude Debussy
- “*Danse Macabre*” (Halloween) by Camille Saint-Saëns



Nancy Hair:
The Talking Cello
Educational Guide, Grades PreK-3

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What instrument did Nancy use in her performance? How was it played?
- What did you notice in the performance? What did you see and hear?
- How is hearing a story told out loud with music different from reading a book or watching a movie?

Post-Performance Activity: Carnival of the Animals

Learning Goals:

- To understand how sounds convey emotion and can be used to create stories
- To develop listening skills

Materials:

"Carnival of the Animals" Virtual OrKidstra Concert video, drawing paper, coloring supplies



[YouTube: Carnival of the Animals Virtual OrKidstra Concert
by the Redlands Symphony](#)

Note for the Teacher:

Camille Saint-Saëns's "*Carnival of the Animals*" is a set of orchestral character pieces. Each one is meant to describe a particular animal, usually by mimicking the sounds it makes or characterizing the way it moves or carries itself.

...continued on next page

Nancy Hair:
The Talking Cello
Educational Guide, Grades PreK-3



Post-Performance Activity, continued

Directions:

1. Watch the Redlands Symphony performance of "*Carnival of the Animals*" by Camille Saint-Saëns.
2. Discuss the music with your students.
 - Did you like it?
 - What did/didn't you like?
 - Which animal's music was your favorite?
 - How did each animal's music make you feel?
3. Ask students to write a story and/or draw something inspired by the performance.
4. Share the stories or drawings with the class.

Extension:

Play the "*Carnival of the Animals*" video again and then ask students to move their bodies freely in a way that expresses the animals in the piece.



Nancy Hair:
The Talking Cello
Educational Guide, Grades PreK-3



Further Resources

- [The Kennedy Center's Digital Classical Music Collection](#)
- [J.S. Bach's Cello Suites \(Wikipedia\)](#)
- [Camille Saint-Saëns's "Carnival of the Animals" \(Wikipedia\)](#)
- Ho, Joanna: *Playing at the Border: A Story of Yo-Yo Ma*, HarperCollins (2021)
- Hood, Susan: *Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay*, Simon & Schuster Books For Young Readers (2016)
- Levine, Robert: *A Child's Introduction to the Orchestra*, Black Dog & Leventhal (2019)
- Prelutsky, Jack: *The Carnival of the Animals*, Knopf Books for Young Readers (2010)



Curricular Connections

Arts Standards: Music

Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (M.R.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (M.R.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (M.R.09)

Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (M.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (M.Co.11)

English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards

Speaking and Listening

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

...continued on next page

Curricular Connections, continued

History and Social Science

PreK

- Topic 1: Civics: fairness, friendship, responsibility, and respect (HSS.Pre-K.T1)
- Topic 3: History: personal experiences and memories (HSS.Pre-K.T3)

K

- Topic 1: Civics: classroom citizenship (HSS.K.T1)

Science and Technology/Engineering

Physical Science

- Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions (PreK.PS.2, K.PS.2, 3.PS.2)
- Waves and Their Applications in Technologies for Information Transfer (PreK.PS.4, 1.PS.4)
- Matter and Its Interactions (2.PS.1)

