

April - Families of Instruments and the Orchestra

submitted by Tiffany Coleman

A great way to allow your child to explore musical instruments and instrument families is with the help of Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf. This classic piece is a children's story told through the narration of text and orchestration. Each character in the story is represented by a different instrument.

Peter is played by the violin (string instrument family);
the bird is played by the flute (woodwind family);
the duck is played by the oboe (woodwind family);
the cat is played by the clarinet (woodwind family),
the Grandfather is played by the bassoon (woodwind family);
the Wolf is played by the French horn (brass family); and
the Hunters are played by the timpani (percussion family).

Play the recording and ask the children to freely move to the music (let the children use scarves or streamers, if desired). It is an amazing sight to watch children moving to Peter and the Wolf. It is an expressive activity that will allow the children time to feel and incorporate the music in their own way. After the movement activity, ask the children how they felt as the music played. Help the children to find words for their movements (skipping, fluttering, prowling, waddling, floating, flying, stomping, crawling, marching, twirling, etc.)

You could also use these [finger puppets](#) from Music Institute of Chicago to have the kids act out the story as well. A great recording of this children's story is found on YouTube at this link : [Sergei Prokofiev: Peter and the Wolf, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra](#). The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra's music director Bramwell Tovey does double duty as conductor and narrator in this entertaining performance. The reason I prefer this recording is because your children will be able to see the performers and the instruments. Have fun!