The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra: Activity 6
Families of Instruments Listening Maps

STRING FAMILY

VIOLIN

VIOLA

CELLO

BASS

HARP
The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra: Activity 6
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WOODWIND FAMILY

PICCOLO

FLUTE

OBOE

CLARINET

BASSOON
The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra: Activity 6
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BRASS FAMILY

TRUMPET

HORN

TROMBONE

TUBA
PERCUSSION FAMILY

CYMBALS

SNARE

TRIANGLE

XYLOPHONE

BASS DRUM

TYMPANI
Families of Instruments Listening Maps

Original Theme

Family 1:_________

Family 2:_________

Family 3:_________

Family 4:_________
The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra: Activity 7

Listen! What do you Hear?

Teaching Objective
Students will practice active directed listening and develop an understanding of theme and variations.

Resources
- Accompanying Youth Concert CD, Tracks 8-22

Pre-Assessment
Teacher note – consider reading this short explanation of The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra (taken from Wikipedia). If you choose not to read it aloud, you should be sure and familiarize yourself with it as it explains how the piece is put together.

In the introduction, the theme is initially played by the entire orchestra, then by each major family of instruments of the orchestra: first the woodwinds, then the brass, then the strings, and finally by the percussion. Each variation then features a particular instrument in depth, in the same family order, and generally moving through each family from high to low. So, for example, the first variation features the piccolo and flutes; each member of the woodwind family then gets a variation, ending with the bassoon; and so on, through the strings, brass, and finally the percussion. After the whole orchestra has been effectively “taken to pieces” in this way, it is reassembled using an original fugue which starts with the piccolo, followed by all the woodwinds, strings, brass and percussion in turn. Once everyone has entered, the brass are re-introduced (with a strike on the tam tam) playing Purcell’s original melody.

Teaching Sequence
1. Tell students that at the upcoming youth concert they are planning to attend they will hear a piece of music written to introduce them to all the instruments of the orchestra. The piece of music is written in a form called theme and variations. First they will hear the whole orchestra (theme), then each of the instrument families (woodwinds, brass, strings and percussion), then each instrument individually (variations). In order to understand the concept of theme and variations, as you play the piece one track at a time, tell them the following story:

2. Track 8 Theme – In a large room where four families are gathered for a party, an important announcement is made. They are so amazed by the announcement that each family repeats the announcement one group at a time – first the Woodwind family, then the Brass family, followed by the String family and then the Percussion family. As they ‘speak’, each family’s unique sound, or timbre can be discerned.

3. Track 9-21 Variations A thru M – After each family has repeated the announcement, the members start to restate the announcement one at a time, but this time in their own words. Some say it more simply while others elaborate, using more flowery language as the others listen and consider what they think about it. (For the order in which each individual instrument comes in, consult the CD track list on page 3 of this Guide.)

4. Track 22 Fugue – After each individual has had a chance to speak, one individual decides to tell the others what he thinks about it. As soon as he is finished, another starts to give her opinion. One by one all the individuals chime in with an opinion. It turns out that they are all saying the exact same thing. The only difference is that they each say it in their own unique voice, or timbre. As each one chimes in, the sound in the room gets more and more chaotic. It is decided that maybe the announcement needs to be made again, this time slowly so that everyone can hear it over the activity. As the party concludes, the announcement can be heard loud and slow over the rest of the talking.

Culminating Activity
On a different day, either remind the students of the fictional story or read the explanation from the pre-assessment and listen to the entire piece without stopping. Have a discussion about the experience, asking the students which way they prefer to think about the piece and why. Explain to them that in this piece the ‘theme’ was the announcement in the story, and the variations were the different versions from the individual instruments as they repeated the announcement.

Evaluation
Did students practice active directed listening and develop an understanding of theme and variations.

TEKS Connections
Music: 117.112(1A-C,6A); 117.115(1A-C,6A); 117.118(1,6); 117.208(1A-D,5A)