

The Orchestra at Work



Meet the Musicians

Research Project

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO) is made up of talented musicians from all kinds of backgrounds. Each of them has a unique story about how they got to their job at Heinz Hall. In this project, you will choose one musician from the PSO to research. You will learn about their life, listen to them play, and imagine what you would like to hear them perform next!

Step 1: Research Your Musician

Start by visiting the PSO website to choose a musician to research. You can pick a musician from your favorite section, a musician you have seen perform, or someone you would just like to learn more about!

Once you have chosen a musician, read their biography. Look around for any interviews, photos, or media clips about them.

As you research, take notes to answer these questions:

- When did they start to play their instrument?
- Where did they go to school or study music?
- When did they join the Pittsburgh Symphony?
- What else do they do in Pittsburgh? Do they teach or coach music anywhere?
- With what other groups or ensembles do they perform (either now or previously)?
- What is something interesting or surprising about them?

Step 2: Listen to Them Play

Next, head to YouTube and look for video or audio of your musician performing. Try to find at least two examples. The examples could be of your musician playing solo, in a small group, or within a larger ensemble. Take notes as you listen:

- What does your musician's playing sound like? For example, is it smooth, bright, powerful, emotional?
- How does your musician sound across the different examples? Do you notice any differences in their playing in any of the pieces? Be as specific as possible.
- Overall, what stands out to you about how your musician plays their instrument? Why is it notable?

Step 3: Choose Their Next Piece

Now that you have heard how your musician sounds on their instrument, imagine what else they could play!

Pick a different piece of music you would love to hear them perform. You can:

- Let YouTube recommend something
- Search for famous music written for their instrument
- Choose one of your personal favorite pieces, even if it is not written for their instrument. Your personal favorite could be any style of music!

Then answer these questions:

- Why did you choose this piece for them?
- What do you think your musician will enjoy about the piece? The melody, the level of difficulty, what the piece is about, something else?
- Are there any aspects of the piece that you think might be challenging for your musician? Why or why not?
- What do you think would most interest or excite your musician about the piece you selected? Why?

Step 4: Share What You Learned

Put together a short presentation to teach your classmates or small group about your musician. Choose a method to share your results:

- Google Slides / PowerPoint
- Poster
- Short video or recorded voiceover
- Written report with pictures

Make sure to include:

- A short biography of your musician
- What piece(s) you listened to and what you noticed about their playing
- The piece you would like to hear them play and why

Optional Extension Activities

- Compare two musicians who play the same instrument
- Create a playlist of other music for your musician's instrument
- Compile all the suggested repertoire for one instrument into a massive playlist