

The Mirandola Ensemble

Supporting Materials Packet



Mirandola Ensemble (Nick Chalmers, Jenny Ubl, Erik Krohg, Alyssa Anderson)
Photo Credit: Jenny Cvek

About the Performers:

The Mirandola [mih-RAN-doh-lah] Ensemble is an early music group, which means they perform music from the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque eras. They also perform contemporary music, some written right here in Minnesota, as well as music from non-Western traditions. They usually perform a cappella, without instrumental accompaniment. They often include repertoire from around the world and often sing in many different languages.

Learning Goals May Include:

1. Healthy vocal production: techniques, including airflow, vowel formation, and creating proper resonant space
2. Balance and blend within a choir section, between sections, or throughout the choir
3. Pronouncing foreign languages
4. General diction coaching
5. Phrasing/shaping instruction
6. Stylistic considerations: how to adapt/modify voice and sound to fit different genres of music
7. Developing singing habits with and without a conductor
8. Performance considerations and etiquette

Preparing for your Class Notes Residency

Thank you for signing up for a Class Notes Residency, brought to you by YourClassical MPR!

The Class Notes team has created two resources to help prepare for and extend the Class Notes Residencies experience:

1. **Meet the Artist PowerPoint.** Build excitement for the residency by introducing the ensemble in advance. Students will learn key information like instrumentation and style of music.
2. **Supporting Materials Packet.** The lessons in this packet come from the [Class Notes Lesson Library](#). All lessons align with learning objectives for this artist. Use these before the residency to introduce an important musical concept or after the experience to reinforce learning. Every classroom is different. Teachers should customize all content to fit student needs.

After your Class Notes Residency, please fill out our teacher survey and have your students complete our student survey. Class Notes staff will send a link with instructions after your residency.

PACKET CONTENTS

- 1) What are VOICE TYPES?
- 2) What are ENSEMBLE SKILLS?



What are VOICE TYPES?

Age Range: Elementary, Grades K-6

Learning Objective: Students will be able to identify four voice types: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.

Total Video Time: 22:36

ENGAGE students through singing

1. Say to students, "On the count of three, let me hear your voice. One, two three."
2. Put your hand to your ear to give a clear visual cue, followed by a palm outstretched for a STOP sign.
3. Ask, "What did you notice?" (*Allow students to share a few observations.*)
4. Ask, "What if we hear just one person's voice?" (*Cue one student with the same start and stop signals.*)

LEARN ABOUT the voice

1. Explain that everyone has their own unique voice. No two voices sound exactly the same. But, all voices fall into a *range*. This means some voices can sing very high notes, some sing low notes, and some sing in-between. Today we will learn about four main voice types.
2. "This song features four voice types. Notice whose voice is highest, lowest, and in the middle." (*Show [El Grillo](#), performed by the Mirandola Ensemble.*)
3. "Now we'll meet each voice type, one by one. We'll start with the highest voice- the soprano." (*Show [Soprano Demonstration](#).*)
4. "Next, Alyssa will explain her voice type, alto." (*Show [Alto Demonstration](#).*)
5. "Nick sings tenor." (*Show [Tenor Demonstration](#).*)
6. "Matthew has the lowest voice type, bass." (*Show [Bass Demonstration](#).*)
7. "Can you list the four voice types, in order, from high to low?"

EXTEND learning about the voice

Choose one or more activities to extend learning.

1. Listen to the Mirandola Ensemble sing [another piece](#) together.
2. [Class Notes: How to Sing Well](#) discusses voice types and gives tips on how to sing using good technique.
3. Check out [this curriculum](#) for additional ideas.



What are ENSEMBLE SKILLS?

Age Range: Elementary, Grades K-5

Learning Objective: Students will demonstrate ensemble skills through performance. Students will utilize multiple rehearsal strategies to refine performance.

Total Video Time: 18:37

DISCUSS ensemble skills

1. “When musicians play together, how do they start at the same time? How can they be sure to play at the same speed, or *tempo*, so that they can stay together?”
2. Listen to students’ responses. If they answer that this is the job of the conductor, acknowledge that this is correct, but then ask further.
3. “What if it’s a small group that doesn’t have a conductor?”

PRACTICE ensemble skills

1. Remind students that when musicians play together but don’t have a conductor to lead them, they must give signals, or *cues*, so that they start together and stay together through a performance. It’s a way of communication and working together.
2. “Here are four ways musicians give cues so that they play well together.” (Briefly explain and demonstrate each technique for students.)
 - A. Eye Contact
 - B. Head nod and/or body movement
 - C. Sharp in-breath, or inhale
 - D. Constant listening.
3. Instruct students to watch for eye contact and body movement in [this video](#) featuring a string quartet. (3:30 min.)
4. Place students into small groups and ask them to choose a favorite classroom piece to perform. They may choose to sing, play on classroom instruments, or both.
5. Remind them that they must be able to start together on their own.
6. Circulate among the groups during rehearsal time and help each group refine their cueing technique.
7. Ask each group to perform for the class. Give feedback regarding cueing.

OBSERVE ensemble skills

Choose one or more performances to watch. Notice and discuss ensemble skills.

- [Lux String Quartet](#) performing music by Gyorgy Ligeti (5 min.)
- [Mill City String Quartet](#) performing music by Samuel Coleridge Taylor (4 min.)
- [Imani Winds](#) performing music by Valerie Coleman (3 min.)
- [Mill City String Quartet](#) performing music by DBR (3:30 min.)