The Orchestra's Lost and Found Departments: Syllabus

Coordinator: Jessica Siegel
Winter 2027

WEEK	HOUR 1	HOUR 2
1/7/27	Welcome	It Has How Many Strings? Meet the Harp
PRESENTER:	Jessica Siegel	Jessica Siegel
1/14/27	Woodwinds with Personality Flute and Clarinet Families	Woodwinds with Personality Oboe, Bassoon, English Horn
PRESENTER:		
1/27/27	Why is THAT in the Orchestra? Film clips, unusual instruments, and orchestral surprises	The Low Notes Have It French Horn, Tuba/euphonium and trombone family
PRESENTER:		
1/28/27	The Orchestra's Magical Sounds Celeste, Other Percussion	Instruments that Imitate Animals Fun Music and Film Clips
PRESENTER:		

WEEK	HOUR 1	HOUR 2
2/4/27	When the Orchestra Steals from Jazz Saxophone family and jazz influenced Orchestral music	Yo-Yo Ma's Silkroad Ensemble Unusual Instruments from around the world
PRESENTER:		
2/11/27	Instruments That Got Away! Recorder, serpent, ophicleide, and Other forgotten or revived instruments	Instruments That Composers Love to Torture Film or video viewing and discussion of extraordinary musical challenges
PRESENTER:		

11/5/2026

RESOURCES

FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES

FILM	*SUGGESTED USE*
The Music of Strangers	Yo-Yo Ma's Silkroad Ensemble and unusual instruments from around the world Full-film homework and discussion
The Orchestra: A User's Manual	Individual instrument research
The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T (1953)	

	Dr. Seuss's surreal musical fantasy with wonderfully strange instruments
Fantasia (1940)	Orchestral color and the imaginative possibilities of instrumentation

SHORT VIDEOS

Philharmonia Orchestra Instrument Guides — Professional musicians demonstrate instruments, explain their peculiarities, and describe playing techniques. Excellent for bassoon, oboe, harp, brass, and percussion.

The Orchestra: A User's Manual — Free videos, audio examples, explanations, and information about the capabilities and limitations of instruments.

ENTERTAINING MUSICAL SELECTIONS

Here are specific subjects participants could research and present.

THEME	WHAT TO WATCH OR HEAR
Instruments composers love to torture	Ravel's Boléro — snare drum
Orchestral one-hit wonders	Tchaikovsky's celesta
When jazz invades the orchestra	Saxophone solos in Boléro
The orchestra's comic instruments	P. D. Q. Bach's Grand Serenade
Why is THAT in the orchestra?	Leroy Anderson's The Typewriter
Instruments that nearly disappeared	Serpent and ophicleide demonstrations
Unusual virtuosity	Flight of the Bumblebee on tuba
Instruments that imitate animals	The bassoon in Peter and the Wolf

ARTICLES AND READING SUGGESTIONS

Metropolitan Museum of Art Musical Instruments Collection —
Search for harp, serpent, ophicleide, bassoon, and other instruments. Particularly useful or instrument history, makers, and unusual designs.

Victoria and Albert Museum Musical Instruments — Historical instruments and their craftsmanship.

Encyclopedia Britannica: Orchestration — An introduction to how composers combine instrumental sounds.

Classic FM Instrument Articles — Accessible articles about unusual instruments, musical history, and interesting performers.

SUGGESTED INSTRUMENTS THAT GOT AWAY

Instrument	**Why it belongs in this session**
Serpent	A winding, snake-shaped bass wind instrument that eventually lost its place to newer brass instruments.
Ophicleide	A keyed brass instrument used by Berlioz and others before the tuba largely replaced it.

Arpeggione	A six-stringed, bowed instrument resembling a guitar; Schubert wrote a famous sonata for it, but the instrument soon faded away.
Glass harmonica	Invented by Benjamin Franklin, admired by Mozart, and surrounded by strange stories about its supposedly unsettling effects.
Heckelphone	A powerful, low-pitched relative of the oboe, featured in works by Richard Strauss but never widely adopted.
Octobass	An enormous, bowed string instrument producing extraordinarily low notes, more often encountered as a curiosity than in conventional orchestras.
Sarrusophone	A family of metal, double-reed instruments intended partly as alternatives to oboes and bassoons, but never widely established.