

Listening Examples

1. *Skylife*

Turtle Island String Quartet

- 4:28 (Total)
- Turtle Island String Quartet Album, *A Windham Hill Retrospective*

This piece would be a great introduction to jazz from the strings perspective. This chart is particularly groovy and could be danced to very easily. There are very strong syncopations in this piece that I could write out and have the students count along with the recording.

2. Second movement from *Symphony No. 8 in G Major* (Excerpt)

- Antonin Dvorak
- 10:06
- *Cleveland Orchestra with George Szell*

This great romantic movement from my favorite symphony has some of the biggest dynamic swells and valleys of its genre. I would focus on the last couple of minutes, with the buildup from nothingness to deafening loudness, full of gripping harmonic tension.

3. *Yesterday*

- The Beatles
- 2:05
- The Beatles Compilation Album, *One*

It could be argued that the Beatles were the most successful rock band ever. Their songs are timeless and essential to students's learning. The melody, harmony, and orchestration of "Yesterday" exhibit songwriting at its best.

4. *Milord*

- Edith Piaf
- 4:29
- *The Very Best of Edith Piaf*

Edith Piaf has a great way of letting you know what she's singing about, even if you don't speak French. There are basically two tempos to this song, and the latter, faster tempo would be great to can-can to.

5. Third movement from Tre *notturmi brillanti*

- Salvatore Sciarrino
- 1:56
- *Works for solo viola, Garth Knox*

This contemporary piece for solo viola uses only harmonies on the instrument. This piece would be good to open a class on contemporary music, and also to question what music really is. There is no melody to this piece, simply an atmosphere it creates.

6. *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune* (Excerpt)

- Debussy
- 9:30
- *Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra*

Students tend to associate Impressionistic music with dreams or fantasy. With this piece, they would experience pentatonic and whole tone scales. They would see how these scales bring out an idea of floating around without a specified tonal center. This would also be a great piece for students to draw what they are hearing.

7. *Fung Yang Song*

- Chinese Folk Song
- 2:33
- McGraw Hill: Share the Music, Grade 6

The “Fung Yang Song” would be a great introduction to the pentatonic scale in Chinese folk music. The students could sing along, learning the phonetic sounds of Chinese. They would also benefit from learning about the musical background and time period of the “Fung Yang Song.”

8. *Taos Round Dance*

- Native American Folk Song
- 1:41
- McGraw Hill: Share the Music, Grade 6

This folk song would teach the students a bit about the Native American culture and how they incorporate music in their social gatherings. Although this piece sounds major, the students would learn that Native American music does not always stick to the major and minor modes. They would learn that the “rules” of western harmony, rhythm, and melody do not always apply to other cultures.

9. *A Zing-a Za*

- Brazilian folk song
- 1:48
- McGraw Hill: Share the Music, Grade 6

This song has a definite bossa nova sound to it. The syncopation would be great to teach students. There is also a counter melody for the students to listen for.

10. “O Mio Babbino Caro”

- *Gianni Schicchi*
- 3:06
- McGraw Hill: Share the Music, Grade 6

“O Mio Babbino Caro” is a great example of Italian opera. Varying tempos, dramatic swells and lyrical phrasing tells the story even without the English translation.

Summary

This list of examples varies greatly in genre and style. I realized very quickly that finding a list of songs from every time period and function would be impossible. So, I tried to pick and choose music from different cultures and backgrounds. From jazz, rock, and native folk songs, to symphonies, tone poems, and operas, I feel like my list has a wide selection of styles and genres.

As for individual songs, I tried to choose some pieces the students may already know, as well as some they hadn't hear of before. For the pieces longer than three minutes, I decided to take excerpts that gave the gist of the piece. I believe that every one of these pieces has a certain degree of musical value to them. Between learning about other cultures or history and learning about modern composers and songwriters, this list should inspire students to continue to enjoy music.

Performing Examples

1. *Rosin Eating Zombies from Outer Space*

- Richard Meyer
- Alfred Publishing Co.
- This piece for string orchestra incorporates special effects on the instruments, screams, and a haunting melody that would be great for a Halloween performance.

2. *Viva Violas*

- Richard Meyer
- Alfred Publishing Co.

To give the violas a good challenge, I would assign this piece. It has a definite Spanish feel to it and includes a castanet part.

3. *Capriol Suite*

- Peter Warlock
- G. Schirmer Inc.

This piece for strings provides insight to the cultures of Eastern Europe. Heavy articulations and harmonic minor passages create an exotic atmosphere.

4. “In the Hall of the Mountain King” from *Peer Gynt*

- Edvard Grieg, Arranged by Monday
- Wynn Music Publishers

This arrangement of Grieg’s classic is in the key of A minor. A little more accessible to middle school students, I chose this piece because it really helps students learn to use a minor scale expressively, as well as chromatics. Expansive dynamics are essential as well as tight articulations.

5. *Orange Blossom Special*

- Rouse/Custer
- Warner Bros Publication

A great introduction to the fiddle style, this piece can be taken at any tempo. I would like to play this with different levels of string players. The beginners could play the melody slowly, then backup the advanced players as they whiz through the tune.

6. *Mood Indigo*

- Duke Ellington/Stephan
- Kendor Music, Inc.

This ballad would provide a great experience for middle school students. The music includes three solo parts for violin, viola, and cello. The students could also learn to improvise their solos. The piece incorporates swing and uses certain jazz chords that the students would have fun with.

7. “Sleepers Wake”

- JS Bach/Brubaker
- Warner Bros. Publications

The students should be familiar with this melody. Bach’s structured harmonies will help them listen to each other better and help them learn about chord progressions.

8. *Stars and Stripes Forever*

- Sousa/Story
- Warner Bros. Publications

The students would love to play this piece that everyone knows. This patriotic march is always great to end concerts with, and to get the students and parents excited about music.

9. *Ala Tchaikovsky*

- Richard Meyer
- Alfred Publishing Co.

This piece takes 22 melodies from various works of Tchaikovsky. This is a great piece for students learning about Tchaikovsky’s style and background.

10. *Follow the Drinking Gourd*

- Carrie Lane Gruselle
- Alfred Publishing Co.

This African American spiritual was passed down through the time of slavery. This piece would help students understand the slave culture, the oral transmission of songs, and the journey the slaves took to gain their freedom.

Summary

Being a string player, I've listed a wide variety of selections for string orchestra. All of these pieces are at about the middle school level. I've tried to include pieces from various cultures and backgrounds. Some of the pieces are newer compositions, and I think that is good. New music can be very exciting for the students to play. And it is especially useful if the composer has written the pieces with specific instrumental techniques in mind. Some of the pieces I have already played with junior high students. They have worked very well so I decided to list them here.