

Topic: Orchestration (what kinds of sounds)

Some thoughts on **ORCHESTRATION**:

At its most basic level,

ORCHESTRATION means what kinds of sounds make the music.

Within the context of orchestration, there are two elements for consideration:

TIMBRE: what is the quality of the sound? For example, a flute has a different sound quality than a drum.

TEXTURE: how sounds work alone or together. For example, is one type of sound playing, or three? Are they playing the same thing (unison) or different rhythms or melodies?

Sounds could include vocal, body percussion, or invented or “real” instrument sounds.

1. **Demonstrate different sounds:** Play different instruments. To begin with, and for lower-functioning children, a choice of two different sounds may be plenty. While demonstrating, associate the name of the instrument and/or the (Mayer-Johnson) symbols with the sound.
2. **Offer students a choice of instruments:**
 - a) Set up two switches, one with one instrument sound on it and one with another. Students can choose which sound to play, or choose the sequence in which they play both sounds. Switches can have the (M-J) symbols attached to them, or laminated photos or drawings of the actual instruments. Teachers/paras can reinforce the choice by saying the name of the instrument after the student has made his/her choice.
 - b) The child can choose by pointing to the (M-J) symbol for the instrument of their choice, and teachers/paras can play the appropriate instrument.
 - c) The child can choose the actual instrument, either verbally or by picking up the instrument of their choice.

6. **Using hand signals to orchestrate music (conducting):** In addition to the “go” and “stop” conducting signals discussed elsewhere, conductors can use this signal:

KEEP GOING: one hand, palm facing conductor horizontally, rolling in circles

-- Of course, this may need to be adapted somewhat for those with physical disabilities prohibiting movement in this manner.

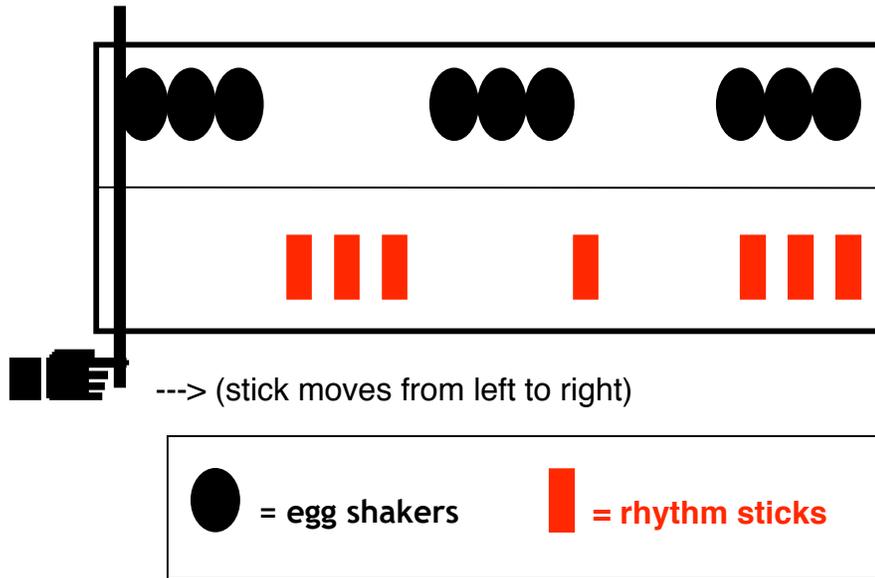
- a) Using at least two different instruments or sounds -- group children together physically who will be performing the same instrument or sound.
 - b) A teacher/para can conduct while other adults assist children in following the conducted orchestration. Generally, the leader conducts one group at a time, turning their body toward them to indicate which group is being conducted. Conductors have the choice to
 - i. use “go” and “stop” with one group, then the other (one sound at a time)
 - ii. use “go” and “keep going” with one group, which continues to play, then “go” with the other group (two sounds together)
 - iii. use any combinations and variations of the above!
 - c) Children can take turns being the conductor. Teachers/paras and/or other students can be the “orchestra.”
7. **Graphically notating pieces with several instruments:** Although there are many ways to graphically notate different instruments playing, the following system works effectively --

A symbol means “sound.” No symbol means no sound.

Create a score by writing symbols horizontally on a paper. Each instrument should have:

- i. its own symbol
- ii. its own color
- iii. its own horizontal line on the score

-- To perform, one person leads by placing a stick (pointer, pencil, rhythm stick, etc.) vertically on the score, starting at the left side. The leader slowly moves the stick from left to right. Each time the stick passes a symbol, the performers play.



-- In the above example, the performers would be divided into two groups: one playing egg shakers, the other playing rhythm sticks. As the leader moves the pointer horizontally across the page, the egg players would watch and play the black ovals in the top line; the rhythm stick players would watch and play the red rectangles in the bottom line. Both groups would be playing at once, but each plays their individual parts.

More instruments can be added (each with its own symbol, color and line on the score) depending on the ability levels of the children.