

**Title:** Avoiding Gender Stereotypes in Instrument Selection

**Level:** Grade 9 Instrumental Music

**Connection to a Culminating Activity:**

This lesson will help students assess prior biases about certain instruments and their associated stereotypes. It will also encourage reflection on the representation of musicians in their communities and across the globe.

**Overall Expectation:**

Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing: Music and Society - Students will learn about the representation of professional musicians in relation to their gender identity.

**Specific Expectation:**

B2.3: Identify and describe ways in which art music reflects the society in which it was created and how it has affected that culture or community.

C3.2: Demonstrate an understanding of conventions related to music performance, with reference to both performers and audience members.

**Learning Objectives:**

Students will reflect on representation of different gender identities with respect to professional musicians. They will have the opportunity to discuss the gendering of instruments, and why these sorts of stereotypes exist. They will also research professional musicians and compare their understanding to the representation within their communities.

**Success Criteria:**

Students will demonstrate their learning through

1. Assessing held biases of certain instruments and gender stereotypes associated through instrument descriptions
2. Reflecting on the representation of musicians in their communities and across the globe by analysing research done in class
3. Responding to a story from a university music major who experienced bullying due to their instrument choice

**Prior Student Knowledge Required:**

In advance of the lesson, students must have a general understanding of the instruments available to play in class. Students do not require any instrument playing these instruments, but rather an understanding of representation and musicians who play these instruments.

**Required Materials:**

- Access to individual or group technology (eg. Chromebooks, computers, etc)
- Whiteboard and markers for each students
- Instrument selection survey (dependent on instruments available in class)

**Universal Design for Learning** is built into this lesson as it incorporates content that enables students from multiple intelligences to succeed, including:

- Discussions in class, in groups with peers, and understanding a story from a musician experiencing bullying in music education (to help students with strong **linguistic** intelligence skills)
- Characteristics of instruments written underneath/surrounding the term (to help students with strong **spatial** intelligence skills)
- Research on professional musicians to represent a variety of gender identities (to help students with strong **logical-mathematical** intelligence skills)
- Variety to their reflection assignment, including multiliteracy and multimedia expressions (to help students with strong **bodily-kinesthetic** intelligence)
- Using an online platform such as Jamboard, text-to-speech or speech-to-text software (to help students require **accommodation**, or to teach this lesson virtually)

## Outline of Lesson

**Total Instruction Length:** 70 minutes

**Minds On:** (5 minutes)

1. Welcome students to the class, explain that you are looking for a general understanding of their previous experience with instruments.
2. Explain that we will be asking for that information, as well as a choice for instrument to play this year. It can be one you have experience with, or a brand new instrument.
3. Discuss with the students that there are no limitations – anyone can select any instrument. Whether they've had experience before or not, whether there are already other students selecting this instrument or not, all students are encouraged to select any instrument they'd like.

**Activity 1:** (20 minutes)

4. On the whiteboard, write the names of different instruments you have available to choose. Give each of the students a whiteboard marker, and ask them to write qualities they think of when thinking of those instruments. Students will approach the board and write words that describe the instruments listed.
5. Take the tuba and the flute for example. Words to describe the tuba are probably low, bass, loud, big. Words to describe the flute are probably high pitched, quiet, small. Ask the students if they can think of other ways to describe those instruments. If the words “feminine” and “masculine” are brought up, discuss the ways those instruments “represent” those identities.
6. Explain how some students choose to select instruments they feel they won't be made fun of for playing due to their gender identity. Today's lesson is going to focus on the stereotypes and gendering of different instruments.

**Activity 2:** (30 minutes)

7. Give each student a Chromebook. Ask students to select one instrument from the board, and research popular professional musicians who play that instrument. Ask the students to try and find male, female, and non-binary representation.
8. As a class, discuss their findings. Encourage discussion about the ways this research challenged their previous ideas of connections between gender identity and instrument.

**Consolidation:** (10 minutes)

9. After having researched famous musicians and representation of gender identity, have the students reflect on their learning process. Students must share their answers in a way that feels comfortable; a written reflection, a video/audio response, multiliteracy incorporation to represent answers, etc.
  - a. What ideas or beliefs did you hold before doing this activity? What beliefs changed? Which stayed the same? Do you feel someone's gender identity has any impact on their musical ability or skills to play any instrument? Why or why not? Do you think musicians should be bullied because of the instrument they play? What was the key moment that your thinking changed?
10. Facilitate a discussion about bullying in music. Share the story of Kristen from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322159662\\_Bullying\\_in\\_the\\_Music\\_Classroom](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322159662_Bullying_in_the_Music_Classroom), and ask students how they feel about her story.
11. Ask the class to create a list of classroom expectations about bullying. Make sure to include any bullying based on the gendering of instruments.

**Selection of Instruments:** (5 minutes)

12. Share the survey for students to fill out anonymously to select their instrument. Remind them they have the freedom to select any instrument they'd like.

*This lesson plan was written by Emma Barret (BMus, B.Ed) with Bandology Canada, Inc.*

*Edited by Alexander Wright (BMus, MA<sup>2</sup>) Music and Education Co-ordinator*

[www.bandology.ca](http://www.bandology.ca)

*For comments or inquiries, please reach out to [info@bandology.ca](mailto:info@bandology.ca)*