

Strings Extravaganza

Lensic Performing Arts Center
The Santa Fe Pro Musica Orchestra
Mei-Ann Chen, conductor
Bella Hristova, violin

Here you will find information that supplements the **Strings Extravaganza** Youth Concert video. At this concert you will hear music written for an orchestra (a large group) of string instruments.



THE VIOLIN FAMILY of musical instruments developed in Italy during the 1500s. There were earlier families of string instruments such as the violes (from the 1400s) and rebecs (from the 1200s) that led to the development of the violin-style instruments that we know today.

All **string instruments** share similar construction, including wood bodies enclosing an air space (like a guitar) and strings that enable the player to create different pitches. There are differences between the shapes and the way string instruments are held, and also differences in the number of strings each instrument has. The rebec family uses 1 to 5 strings; the viol family uses at least 6 strings; and the violin family uses 4 strings.

Many string instruments can be played with a **bow**, which is a specially shaped stick that holds thick strands of horse hair. The horse hair is coarse, and as it is pulled across the strings, it grabs them, causing them to vibrate. The strings can also be plucked with the fingers, like a guitar.

The four instruments of the violin family are like the four different voices: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. The violin is the smallest of the family and, like the soprano, plays the highest notes. The viola is larger in size and produces the middle pitches, like the alto singer. The cello is even bigger and plays lower notes and represents the tenor. And the largest instrument is the double bass which plays the very lowest notes and represents the bass singer. The violin and viola are both held up and played under the chin. The cello is played sitting down with the instrument between the player's knees. And the double bass is usually played standing up.

Some of the world's greatest music is written just for string instruments. Listen and watch the Pro Musica Orchestra play a variety of music just for string instruments.

THE CONCERT



Reena Esmail (b. 1983) is an award-winning Indian-American composer who weaves together the worlds of Hindustani and Western classical music traditions. These multicultural influences can be heard in Pro Musica's performance of her piece *Teen Murti* ("Three Figures").



Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) wrote his *Violin Concerto* in the late 1760s for the virtuoso violinist Luigi Tomasini. Pro Musica’s virtuoso violin soloist is Bella Hristova. Please check out her website: <https://www.bellahristova.com>.



Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) wrote his luscious *Serenade for Strings* in 1880. Watch our guest conductor [Mei-Ann Chen](#) bring out Tchaikovsky’s wonderful Russian romanticism.