

instrument playground online

featuring
ann choomack
flute & piccolo

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[Interview with Ann Choomack, SLSO Flutist and Piccoloist](#) [Flute and Piccolo Demonstration](#)

The flute (a.) is a woodwind instrument. Flutes used to be made of wood, but today most flutes are made of metal—usually silver, but sometimes gold or platinum. To make sound, the flutist blows air across a small hole in the head joint, which is a lot like blowing air across a soda bottle.

Piccolos (b.) are very similar to flutes, but half the size and even higher in pitch. Ann's piccolo is made of grenadilla wood from Africa. Piccolos can be made of wood, metal, or a combination of both.

Hear the Difference

Ann says that “piccolo” means “small” in Italian. Ann's piccolo is made of wood, and her flute is made of silver. Do you notice any other differences between how the flute and the piccolo look? What about how they sound?

Play Along

The melody Ann plays on her piccolo is from Ravel's *Bolero*. When played with an orchestra, this melody is played over a repetitive rhythm on the drums called an ostinato. Try this: Write your own short (4-beat) rhythm and perform it by clapping or playing it on a non-pitched percussion instrument while Ann plays the piccolo melody.

Bottle Flute

The flute takes a lot of air to play. Ann says half of the air goes into the flute and half goes over the flute. Try this:

- Find a plastic or glass bottle, remove the cap and empty it.
- Hold it in front of you with your lower lip on the edge of the bottle that is closest to you.
- Make a small opening with your mouth and blow gently across the top of the bottle. It can be hard to play a note at first. Keep trying by putting your lower lip in slightly different places, or trying to make the opening in your lips smaller or bigger. (The opening should be about the size it would be if you were drinking through a straw).
- Fill the bottle with an inch or so of water and play it again. Did the sound change? Try adding and removing water to change the pitch.

One Step at a Time

Ann says when she is learning a hard piece of music, she starts by listening to it and playing it slowly. Every step seems hard, but she keeps moving forward. Have you ever tried to do something that you thought was difficult by breaking it down into smaller steps until it got easier? Describe that experience and how you felt.

Choosing an Instrument

Ann says that we should all pick an instrument we “feel super excited about.” Which instrument makes you super-excited? Why?



s|s|o

**St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra**

stéphane denève : music director