

#1 All the instruments in the Musicville symphony were gathered in the orchestra pit to await the conductor baton's announcement. All eyes turned as he stood quietly in his place in front of them, cleared his throat and lightly tapped the podium, which meant he expected their full attention. Immediately the room was quiet.

"As I'm sure you are aware," he began, in his loud and formal voice, "The Musicville symphony has been given the honor of playing at this year's jubilee celebration. Musicville is 50 years old and our performance will highlight the event. There is much work to be done and I expect each of you to be ready to play four weeks from today."

#2 Immediately the instruments began chattering excitedly among themselves.

"I'll never be ready in time," fretted Polly Piano, her ivory keys tinkling lightly as she spoke. "It takes a lot of practice for me to sound my best."

"Four weeks? He's got to be kidding! I couldn't be ready in four months!" fretted Valerie Violin, "I haven't been properly tuned since the last time we played."

Freddie Flute spoke up, his voice high and squeaky, "I know, I haven't been cleaned and polished in so long I've almost forgotten what it feels like."

#3 On and on they went, each instrument trying to talk above the others, each feeling as though they could never be ready in time to do the job that needed to be done. After a few moments the conductor's baton spoke up again. "Okay, listen up everybody," he said, banging himself on the podium. "We've done this before. We all know that what it's gonna take is practice. It's time to stop whining about the situation and begin getting ready. Now each of you prepare yourself. I want all of you to practice every day and then meet back here each Saturday for group practice. If we each do our part, we will be ready. Now come up one at a time and get your music"

#4 Tubby Tuba walked back to his spot and put the music in his case. He didn't much like to practice. He preferred to sit quietly and let the others do the work. He was hoping no one would be able to tell the difference on Saturday.

Valerie Violin gathered all her sisters and went off to one corner. "Okay girls," she sang out, "Let's get with it. We don't have much time. All of Musicville will hear us play and we want to sound our best!" Valerie was like that. She always practiced hard and took her performances very seriously. Sometimes the other instruments thought she was just showing off, but Valerie really only wanted to do her best.

#5 The very next Saturday all the instruments gathered in the orchestra pit. The conductor's baton was already there going over the music. "Oh good, you're all here!" He smiled, "Let's take it from the top and see which pieces we need to work on the most." Off he went, directing one section and then another and then bringing them all together to try and make their sounds blend.

The instruments were all trying and played as well as they could, though it was clear they would need a lot more practice. All except Tubby Tuba, of course who hadn't practiced very much at all and was trying to play softly so none of the others could hear his mistakes, but it's very hard for a tuba to do anything softly.

#6 “Tubby?” The baton began, “It seems like you are having a difficult time with the music. Have you practiced every day like I suggested?”

Tubby’s brass turned red with embarrassment. “Well,” he stammered, “Uh, no, not really, but I was really very busy doing...”

The baton looked directly at Tubby and the poor tuba froze in his seat. Tubby was sure he was in for a lecture, but was relieved when the baton turned to Polly Piano and kindly said, “Polly, would you please go home with Tubby today and help him practice? I really think all he needs is someone to help him along and encourage him, and you practice every day.”

#7 “Well sure,” said Polly, “if Tubby doesn’t mind.”

“Oh no, that would be great,” replied the tuba, feeling relived that he could play with someone who was used to practicing hard. “I think it will help me a lot. I have a hard time getting started sometimes, but once I start I really like playing.”

Just then Kelly Kettle Drum’s voice boomed across the room, “Gee,” he asked, rather shyly for a drum, “Do you think I could come too? I’m really having trouble hitting the beat on that second song.”

“Of course,” replied Tubby, “Why, the more the merrier.”

#8 All of the instruments gathered near Tubby’s case and began to play. Unfortunately, they were all practicing something different. Polly was playing the first page of the second song, Ollie Oboe was playing the last song, Clarence Clarinet was playing with his valves, Valerie and her friends were trying to get tuned and Tubby and Kelly, well, no one was quite sure if they even had the right music.

Finally Polly spoke up and said, “This will only work if we all work together. We can help one another learn the songs but we have to all be in tune and all play the same music. Let’s start at the beginning with the very first piece.”

#9 And so they did. Each one played their part and smiled at the others as they heard the music coming from their individual instruments and the way all of the sounds blended together when each was doing his or her part. They played and played until each one felt sure he was playing his very best.

“That’s great!” Exclaimed Polly, “Now go back to your places and practice what you have learned today then we will meet on Saturday and practice together again. That way we will all be ready for the Jubilee celebration.”

All the instruments were full of excitement now. They had learned the value of practice and of working together to help them become even better and practiced every day.

#10 The day of the Jubilee celebration finally arrived. The instruments sat tall in their chairs all shiny and perfectly tuned as the baton took his place at the podium.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said in a sure tone, “It is my pleasure to present to you the Musicville Symphony Orchestra!” And with that he raised himself up and led the instruments in playing the most beautiful and stirring musical show anyone could remember. All of their hard

practice had paid off. The sound of music in perfect harmony filled the room and there wasn't a person or instrument there that didn't have a smile as wide as their face!