

Orchestra Instruments

An orchestra is a group of musicians who play together.

There are about 100 musicians in a symphony orchestra. A symphony orchestra usually plays long pieces of classical music.

The instruments they play can be divided into four "families":

Strings, Brass, Woodwinds and Percussion.

The String Family

Made from wood, with four strings made of sheep gut, nylon or wire, tuned by turning pegs at the top, and stroked by bows made of horsehair.

Violin



Smallest of the strings, with pitch higher than other strings. Warm, singing sound, held under the chin.

Viola



Slightly larger than a violin and has thicker strings and a lower, deeper pitch. Held under the chin.

Cello



Has rich, mellow tones thought to be closest to the sound of a human voice. Played with instrument tucked between the knees.

Contra-bass



Has deep, powerful tones. Player must stand or sit on a stool to play this tall instrument, also called the double bass.



The Percussion Family

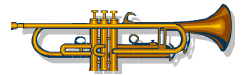
These are instruments which make a sound by being struck. They include instruments like drums, cymbals, bells, xylophones and pianos.



The Brass Family

Made of metal tubing curled in different shapes and lengths. The longer the tube, the lower the tone.

Trumpet



Has a bold, high-pitched tone. Three valves can be pushed to open length and give wider range of sounds.



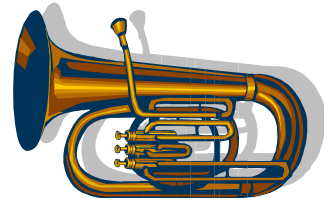
Trombone

Has a grand and lovely tone than can be soft or loud. The loudest instrument in the orchestra, it has no valves but a slide that is moved back and forth to give different pitches.



French Horn

A 12- to 17-foot tube wound around and around, ending in a big bell. Pressing its valves changes the pitch



Tuba

Has powerful, deep sounds that can be funny or scary. The largest of the brasses, it has the lowest tone with 18 to 35 feet of tubing ending in a flaring bell.

The Woodwind Family

Woodwinds are hollow tubes played by blowing and pressing keys that open and close holes along the tubes that produce notes. Originally made of wood, today they are either wood or metal.

Flute



Two feet long with bright, birdlike tones. The player blows across the tube just like blowing over the top of a bottle.



Piccolo

Half the length of a flute, it sounds the highest note in the orchestra, a brilliant and piercing tone.

Clarinet



Same length as a flute and has tones that are more piercing than other woodwinds. It is blown by passing air over a mouthpiece to which a single piece of cane called a "reed" is attached.

Bass Clarinet



Twice as long as the clarinet, it plays lower tones, has a curved neck and bell-shaped end. Its sound is often described as "sad."

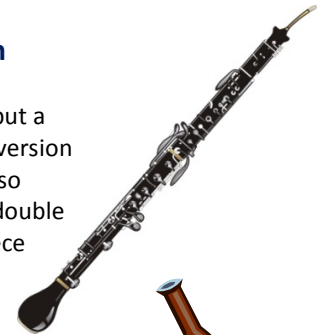
Oboe



Two-foot long wood tube that widens into a bell. It has a mouthpieces made of two pieces of cane fastened together, called a double reed, and has a smooth and beautiful tone.

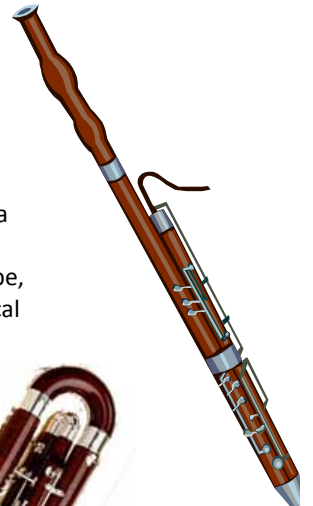
English Horn

Not a "horn," but a deeper-toned version of the oboe, also played with a double reed mouthpiece



Bassoon

An 8- to 9-foot tube that doubles back on itself, has a mouthpiece (with double reed) attached to a long pipe, and can make heavy, comical sounds.



Contra-bassoon



About twice as long as a bassoon, with its tube folded over four to six times. Also played with a double reed, it sounds the lowest note in the orchestra.



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Symphony Word Find

Symphony words are hidden in the block below. See if you can find:

SYMPHONY, CONDUCTOR, INSTRUMENTS, MUSIC, VIOLIN,
 DRUMS, HARP, BASS, COMPOSER, TROMBONE, LISTEN, VIOLA,
 LOUD, SOFT, PIANO, XYLOPHONE, HORN, BATON, TUBA,
 OBOE, BELL

A	C	I	N	S	T	R	U	M	E	N	T	S	P	C
B	O	Q	H	A	R	P	D	H	L	H	T	V	M	M
T	N	C	S	L	I	S	T	E	N	O	U	I	U	B
R	D	P	I	A	N	O	E	U	E	R	B	O	S	A
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SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

