

# Introduction to the Orchestra

## fact sheet

An \_\_\_\_\_ is a large group of instruments playing together. Like a band, an orchestra has many woodwind, brass, and percussion instruments, but an orchestra also has many \_\_\_\_\_ instruments.

The basic make-up of the orchestra was established in the \_\_\_th century, during the \_\_\_\_\_ Period in music. Over time, the orchestra became larger and included a greater variety of instruments. Today, orchestras perform a wide range of both old and new music. People love orchestras for their ability to create beautiful and exciting music.

An orchestra includes four different families of instruments:

S\_\_\_\_\_

W\_\_\_\_\_

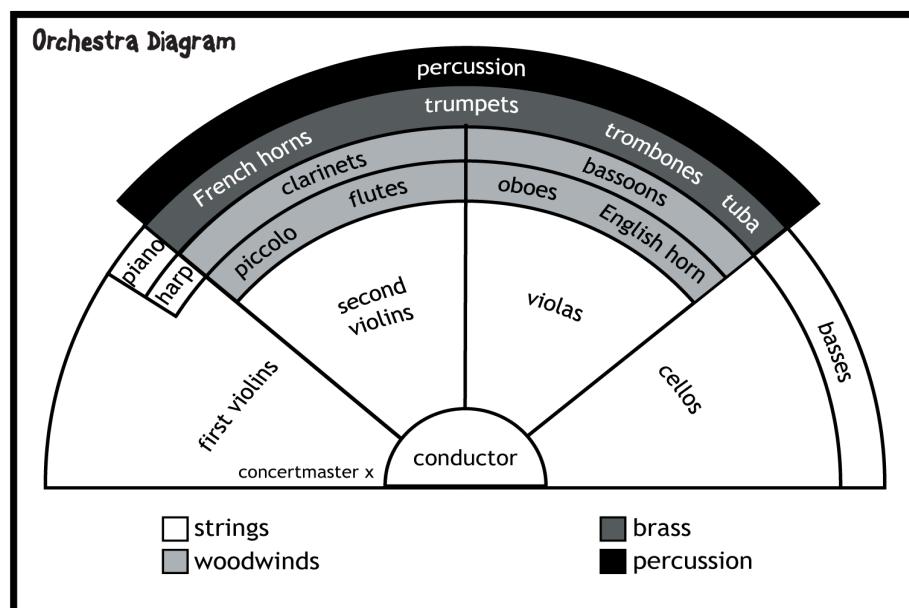
B\_\_\_\_\_

P\_\_\_\_\_

The string instruments, also called c\_\_\_\_\_, produce sounds when their tightly stretched strings are rubbed, plucked or struck.

The woodwind and brass instruments are called a\_\_\_\_\_, because air must be blown through them to make sound. For most woodwinds, players blow air past a reed to make it vibrate. All woodwind instruments were originally made of wood, though today some are made of metal. A brass player must buzz his or her lips while blowing into a mouthpiece to make vibrations. Brass instruments were traditionally made of brass (a mixture of copper and zinc), but today other metals are also used.

Some percussion instruments like the drums are called m\_\_\_\_\_ because a membrane (a natural or artificial skin) is stretched across a resonating chamber. Other percussion instruments like the cymbals are called i\_\_\_\_\_ because the whole body of the instrument vibrates to make sound.



The string instruments are somewhat quiet, so an orchestra contains a larger number of them to balance out the other, louder instruments. Sitting closest to the audience also helps the strings to be heard. Different types of woodwind and brass instruments are grouped together behind the strings.

Behind them all stand the loud percussion instruments.

An essential part of the orchestra is the C\_\_\_\_\_. This person doesn't play an instrument but uses arm and hand gestures to keep all the instruments playing together. The first violinist sitting has the special job of concertmaster. The concertmaster leads the string section and also directs the tuning of all the instruments before the concert begins.