






Sonority City

Exploring Instruments of the Orchestra



A. Strings Section/Family	B. Woodwind Section/Family	C. Brass Section/Family	D. Percussion Section/Family
<p>Made from wood and have strings. They are usually played with a BOW (ARCO) – not the Harp (<i>shown right</i>) but can also be PLUCKED (PIZZICATO). The smaller the instrument, the HIGHER PITCHED it is. The bigger the instrument, the LOWER PITCHED it is. However, the Harp has many more strings so can play both high- and low-pitched notes.</p>   <p>Violin Viola Cello Double Bass</p>	<p>A selection of instruments divided into two subsections: FLUTES (create a sound by air passing over a small hole and include the Flute and Piccolo) and REEDS (use a piece of bamboo reed to create a vibration). The Saxophone (<i>shown above right</i>) is not traditionally used in an orchestra. However, some modern composers have included it.</p>   <p>Piccolo Flute Clarinet Oboe Bassoon</p>	<p>There are more brass instruments used in brass bands, but the orchestra normally has four. They are made of metal and the sound is made by blowing into the mouthpiece by buzzing the lips in a similar way to blowing a raspberry! The bigger the instrument, the lower the pitch. The smaller the instrument, the higher the pitch – the Trumpet is the highest.</p> <p>Brass Family</p>  <p>Trumpet Trombone French Horn Tuba</p>	<p>Includes a vast range of instruments which produce sound when <i>hit, struck, scraped or shaken</i>. These fall into two subsections: TUNED PERCUSSION (able to play different pitches) and UNTUNED PERCUSSION (e.g. drums)</p> <p>TUNED PERCUSSION</p>  <p>Piano Xylophone Glockenspiel Timpani</p> <p>UNTUNED PERCUSSION</p>  <p>Bass Drum Snare Drum Cymbals Woodblock Guiro</p>  <p>Triangle Gong Tambourine Cabasa Maracas</p>

E. Key Words

ORCHESTRA – A large **ENSEMBLE** (group of musicians) divided into four **SECTIONS** or **FAMILIES** of musical instruments – **STRINGS, WOODWIND, BRASS** and **PERCUSSION** - led by a **CONDUCTOR** who stands at the front of the orchestra and directs it. They will indicate the main beats in the music using a **BATON** (a “stick” that they hold and beat time with). All musicians look at the conductor whilst playing as they are ultimately in control of the whole piece.

SONORITY (also called **TIMBRE**) – Describes the **unique sound or tone quality** of different instruments and the way we can identify orchestral instruments as being distinct from each other – “each instruments’ own unique sound”. Sonority can be described by many different words including – *velvety, screechy, throaty, rattling, mellow, chirpy, brassy, sharp, heavy, buzzing, crisp, metallic, wooden etc.*

PITCH - The **highness or lowness** of a sound, a musical instrument or musical note (high/low, getting higher/lower, step/leap).

FANFARE – A short, lively, loud piece of music, usually for **BRASS INSTRUMENTS** and sometimes **DRUMS** and other **PERCUSSION**. A Fanfare is usually warlike or victorious in character and can be used to mark the arrival of someone important, give a “signal” e.g. in battles or be used to signal the opening of something e.g. *a large sporting event or similar ceremony*. Fanfares often use only notes of the **HARMONIC SERIES** – a limited range of notes played by bugles and Valveless trumpets.

F. Map/Plan of an Orchestra

