

LESSON 2

THE ORCHESTRA

Humans have been playing instruments and grouping them together in various combinations for as long as, for as long as instruments have existed but the orchestra as we know it is a recent invention.

Medieval Period

Prior to the early 1600s, music was not written for any particular instrument, rather, it was meant for whatever instruments happened to be available. The word "consort" was used to mean a group of instrumentalists, and sometimes singers too, making music together or "in concert".



Renaissance Period

Around 1600 in Italy, the composer Claudio Monteverdi was one of the first composers who stated clearly which instruments to accompany his opera Orfeo (1607) fifteen viols of different sizes; two violins; four flutes, two large and two medium; two oboes, two cornets (small wooden trumpets), four trumpets, five trombones, a harp, two harpsichords, and three small organs.

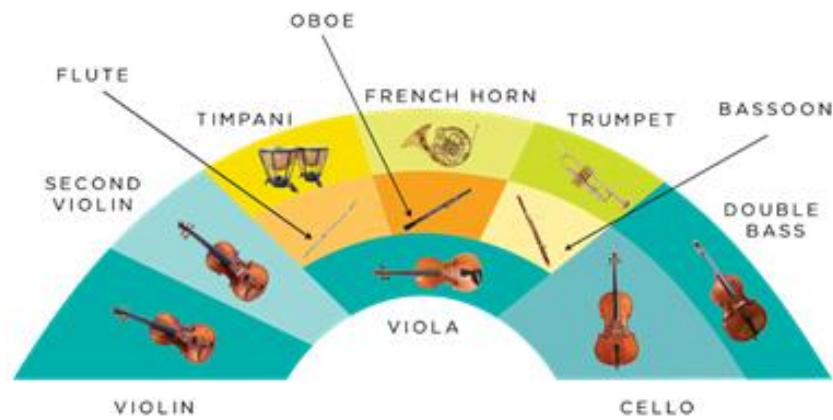
Baroque Period

In the **Baroque period**, (Johann Sebastian Bach's time) the orchestra developed still further. The violin family, violin, viola, cello, and double bass replaced the viols. Musical leadership in the Baroque orchestra came from the keyboard instruments, the harpsichordist, or sometimes the organist, acting as conductor and a musical director occasionally stood and conducted, but not in the way we're used to seeing.



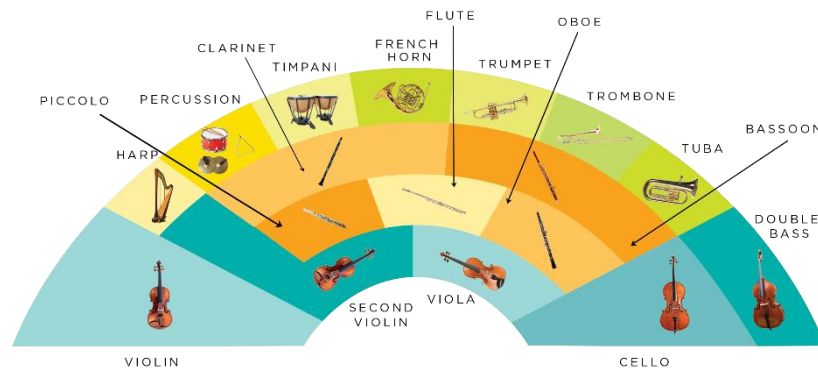
Classical Period

In the 1800s, which is Joseph Haydn's and Ludwig van Beethoven's time, the strings were more important than ever. Composers began to write parts for specific instruments. The first violinist, or concertmaster, led the orchestra's performance from his chair, but sometimes, a music director would lead a performance with gestures, using a rolled-up piece of white paper. This led to the baton that conductors use today. Composers such as Carl Maria von Weber and Felix Mendelssohn actually began to stand up on a podium and conduct from front and center.



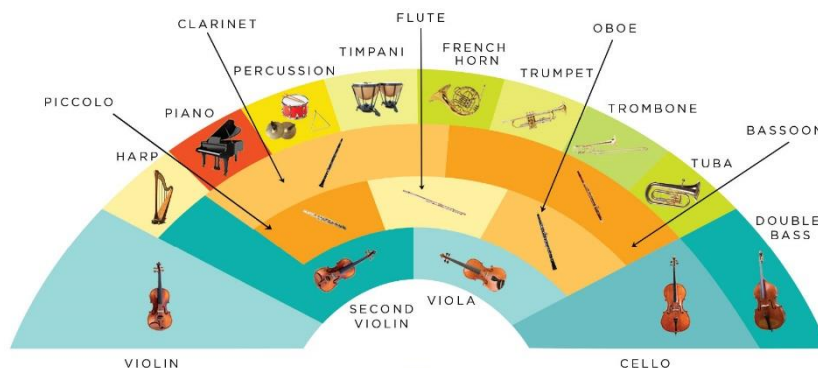
Romantic Period

As orchestras were getting bigger and bigger and later in the 1800s, the orchestra reached the size and proportions we know today and even went beyond that size. Instrument design and construction got better and better, making new instruments such as the piccolo and the tuba available for orchestras. Richard Wagner went so far as to have a new instrument, the Wagner Tuba, designed and built to create a certain special sound in his opera orchestra.



Modern Period

The 20th century has been a century of freedom and experimentation with the orchestra. The "basic" 19th-century orchestra is still around, and composers sometimes add or subtract instruments, depending on the effect they want to get. Sometimes the percussion section hugely expanded, or lots and lots of woodwind and brass instruments. But the orchestra still has the same form: string section, with brass section, woodwind section, percussion section, harps, and keyboard instruments.



ORCHESTRA TEST

1. Name the six musical periods:

2. Name one composer of the Renaissance period: _____

3. Name one composer of the Baroque period: _____

4. Name four composers of the Classical period:

5. Name one composers of the Romantic period: _____

6. Which new instrument did Richard Wagner design during the Romantic period, to create a certain special sound in his opera orchestra: _____

7. Which word was used to mean a group of instrumentalists, and sometimes singers too, making music together or "in concert prior to the early 1600s (Medieval)?
- _____

8. Which composer was one of the first composers who stated clearly which instruments to accompany his opera Orfeo? _____

Which instruments replaced the viols during the Baroque period, (Johann Sebastian Bach's time)?

_____, _____, _____, and _____

9. Musical leadership in the Baroque orchestra came from the _____ instruments.

10. During the Classical period the _____, or concertmaster, led the orchestra's performance from his chair.

11. The modern orchestra consists of the _____ section, the _____ section, the _____ section, the _____ section, harps, and keyboard instruments.