

Family Fun Concert Program

What is an orchestra?

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Hi, everybody! Thanks for coming to our show! If you haven't been to a show like this before and you look up on the stage, you might wonder: why does that band have so many people in it and what are those instruments they are holding? Well, it's called an orchestra and here is how it got here today.

All those instruments up there were invented a long time ago. People way back then found a way to make sound come out of different kinds of instruments. Then, they found that if they all played together, it made a nice sound. So, now, here they are. The orchestra is a group of people who have found a way to play different kinds of instruments together.

And what are those instruments? You can see people up there holding different kinds of things that make sound in different ways, things you can bang on, things you can blow into, and things you can strum.

Way in the back of the orchestra are things you can bang on, drums and cymbals of many kinds. They are called percussion instruments and the musicians who play them are called the percussion section.

Sitting right in front of the percussion section are musicians who blow into metal horns. This is the brass section. There are small horns called trumpets and big horns called trombones and there is also the tuba, which is the biggest one of all and makes the lowest sounding notes in the whole orchestra.

Sitting in a row right in front of the brass section are wooden instruments you can blow into. This is called the woodwind section and those instruments are called clarinets, flutes and oboes and the biggest and lowest sounding woodwind instruments are the bassoons.

Then, you have a group of instruments that has the most people in it, the string section. These instruments are all the same shape but come in different sizes. The violins are the smallest and play the highest notes, then the larger sizes play lower notes. They are the violas, then the cellos and then, way to the right of the stage, are the string instruments that are so big, you have to stand up to play them. They are the basses and they are the lowest sounding instruments in the string section. All the string instruments make sound when you pull a stick across the strings. The stick is called a bow.

Finally, there is a person called the conductor who comes out and stands in front of the orchestra with a white stick and leads them while they play. Why do they need somebody to do that? It's because the orchestra has so many people in it so spread out on the stage that they can't all hear each other play so well at the same time, so the conductor makes motions in the air with his/her stick to show everyone exactly when to play their notes and also how loud and soft and fast and slow to play them, too. The white stick the conductor has is called a baton. It is a French word and it means: stick.

So, that's is the orchestra. All these instruments have been around for a long time, but they still make beautiful music together. Have fun today, and thanks again for coming to our show!



CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS
