

String Family

Violins

Violas

Cellos

Double Basses

This is the biggest family in the orchestra. The instruments all look alike but they are different sizes. Each is made of top-quality wood and has four strings.

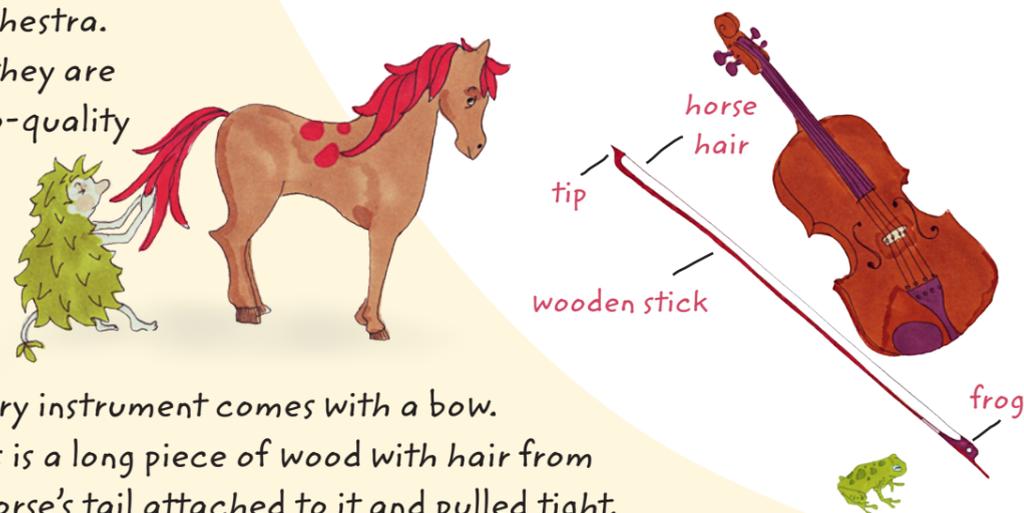
It's not the sort of bow you tie, or put in your hair. Not that I put bows anywhere at all. I'm a troll!



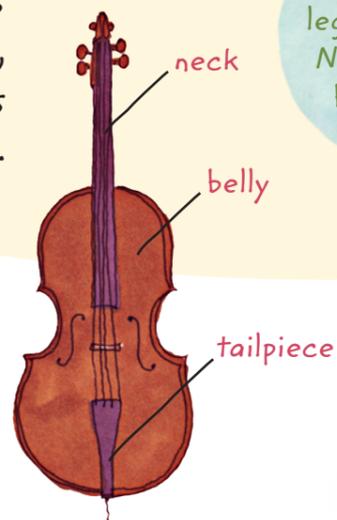
Every instrument comes with a bow. This is a long piece of wood with hair from a horse's tail attached to it and pulled tight.

When the hair of the bow is dragged across the strings, the instrument makes a sound.

The shape of the instruments is a bit like the shape of a female human body. Parts of them have the same names: neck, back and belly.



No arms or legs though. Not even a bottom!



'Pitch' means how high or low the instruments sound. Each instrument in the String Family has its own, clear range of pitch.

So all the string instruments are like one big tree, and together they make a big sound!

The range of pitch in the string family is very wide: the instruments go from a very high sound to a very low sound.



STRING FAMILY TOGETHER — BOWED

Felix Mendelssohn
String Symphony No. 2
I. Allegro (extract)
String instruments together playing cheerful music!

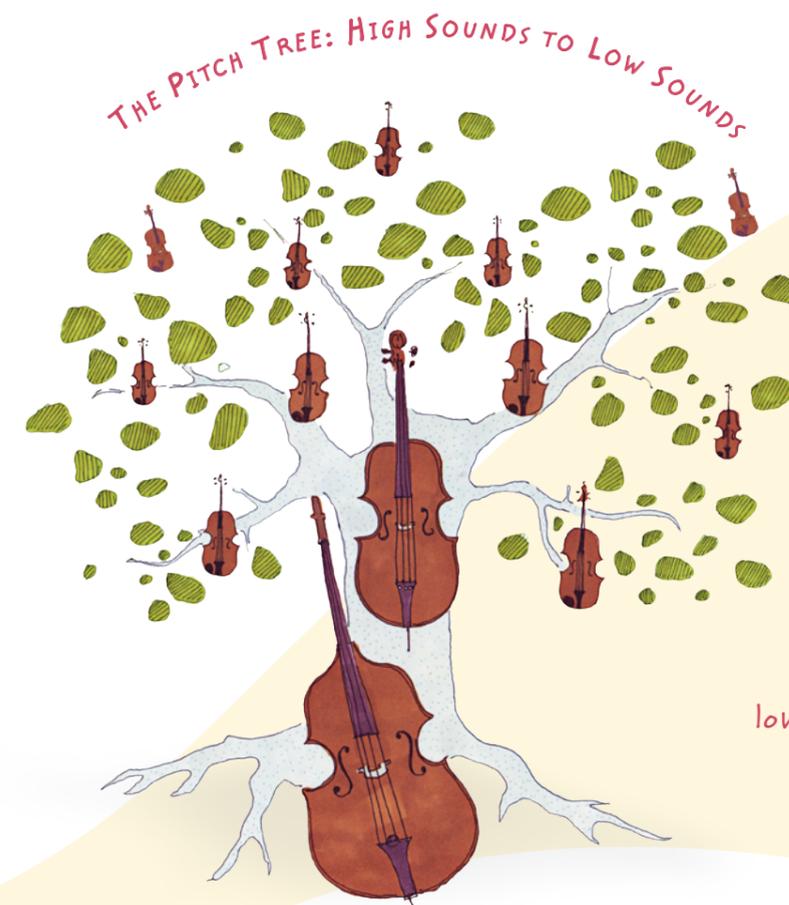


You can pluck the strings too — I like doing that! It's like pinging a piece of elastic.

STRING FAMILY TOGETHER — PIZZICATO

Johann Strauss II
Pizzicato Polka (extract)

Instead of using their bows, the players are all plucking the strings: it is 'pizzicato'. Bouncy!

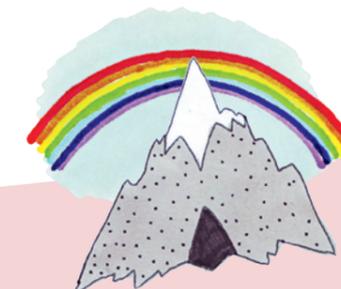


Violins: high, at the top

Violas: a bit further down

Cellos: lower and supportive

Double basses: low, right at the bottom



Trumpet



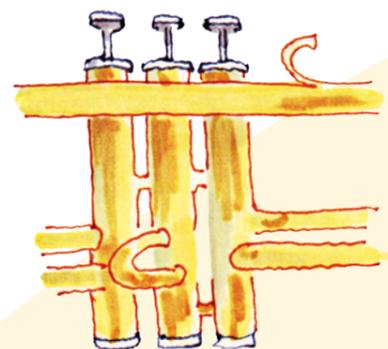
Trumpets are bold and bossy. Their sound is clear and bright.

There are often three trumpets in the orchestra. When they play together, with their brass bells in the air, it's an exciting sound!

Pom, pom, pom, pommm...



The trumpet is so shiny, I can see myself in it!



The trumpet has three 'piston' valves. You press these down to make different notes sound, but you have to use your lips and diaphragm as well.

Shiny, bossy... and loud! I love trumpets!



TRUMPET SOLO

The bold trumpet is the solo instrument, and sounds a bit cheeky here!

Johann Nepomuk Hummel
Trumpet Concerto
III. Rondo

THE COMPOSER



JOHANN NEPOMUK HUMMEL
Hummel came from Vienna and was friends with the great Beethoven.

Oh, I dream of home... I can hear my favourite music in my head but I can't find it here...



TRUMPETS TOGETHER

You can hear the strong trumpets clearly in this exciting music by the film composer John Williams.

John Williams
Raiders of the Lost Ark
Main Title Theme (extract)



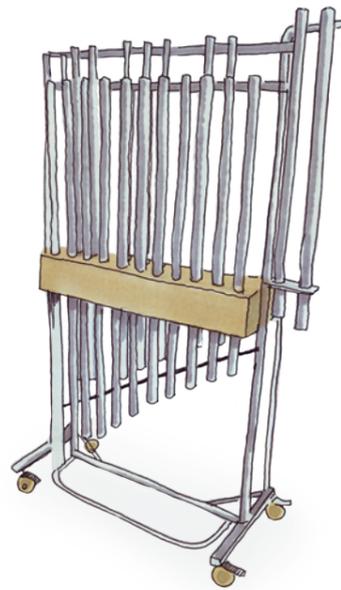
TUNED — PRODUCE DIFFERENT NOTES



Celesta (or 'Celeste')



Xylophone



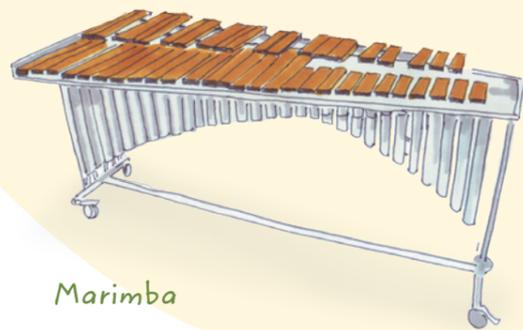
Tubular bells (or 'Chimes')



Timpani (or 'Kettledrums')



Vibraphone



Marimba



Glockenspiel



TUNED PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS

Listen to a quick example of each tuned percussion instrument.

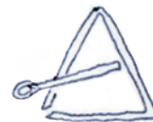
UNTUNED — PRODUCE ONE SOUND ONLY



Tambourine



Cymbals



Triangle



Wood block



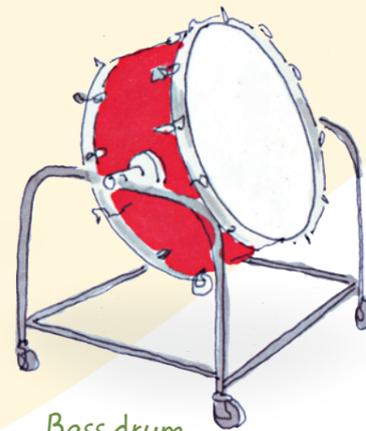
Maracas



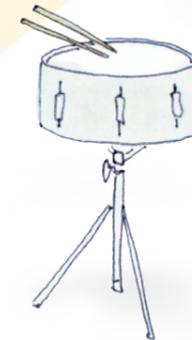
Bongos



Castanets



Bass drum



Snare drum (or 'Side drum')



Tam-tam



Tom-toms

Actually the percussion section could include anything — even Tormod's head if it's loud enough when you hit it — but it's very unusual to have instruments that are not the 'normal' ones.



UNTUNED PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS

Listen to a quick example of each untuned percussion instrument.

So if I hit my head, is my head percussion? Owwww!



PERCUSSION TOGETHER

Here are just a few of the percussion instruments playing together in a fierce and fiery dance.

Aram Il'yich Khachaturian
Gayane
Sabre Dance (extract)

