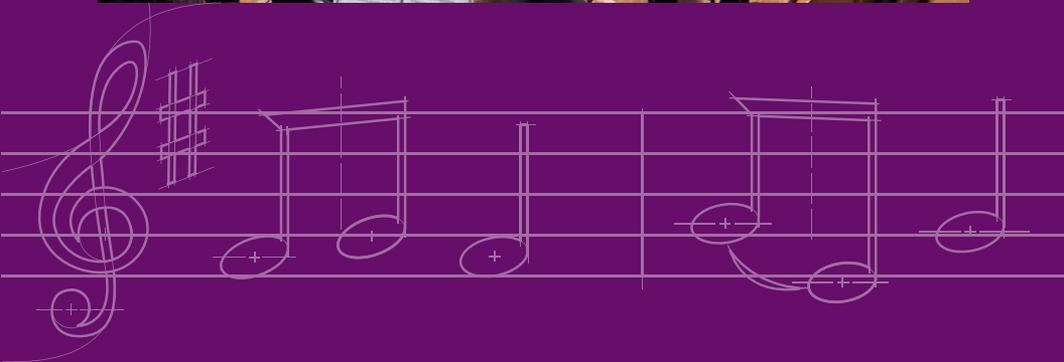


THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

WHAT IS AN ORCHESTRA?



Overview

WELCOME!

We are excited to share with you **What is an Orchestra?** - a new web-series of learning modules from The Cleveland Orchestra!

So... what exactly *is* an orchestra?



You may have lots of other questions too...

- *What kind of music does an orchestra play?*
- *Where does an orchestra play?*
- *How many people are in an orchestra?*
- *What does a conductor do?*
- *How many instruments are in the Orchestra?*
- *Which instruments are in the String Family?
The Woodwind Family? The Brass Family?
The Percussion Family?*
- *What do the instruments sound like?*
- *How do they make their sound?*
- *How does someone become an orchestra musician?*
- *Are there other types of jobs/careers in orchestra?*

You'll learn the answers to all of these questions and more in our 5-part web-series, "What is an Orchestra?"

- Episode 1 Overview
- Episode 2 The String Family
- Episode 3 The Woodwind Family
- Episode 4 The Brass Family
- Episode 5 The Percussion Family

Each learning module contains a video episode hosted by our Associate Conductor, Vinay Parameswaran and features musicians of The Cleveland Orchestra; a Student Guide (like this one), and interactive quizzes on Google Drive. And there is a Teacher/Parent Guide as well.



Vinay Parameswaran

You can find more online resources from The Cleveland Orchestra at www.clevelandorchestra.com/learn.

And we'd love to hear from you! Tell us what you think about the videos, the Student Guides and quizzes, or ask us more questions about the orchestra. You can write to us at education@clevelandorchestra.com

Enjoy!

Your friends at The Cleveland Orchestra



What is an Orchestra?

An **orchestra** is a large group of musicians who come together to play music. Think about a sports team! Each member of a team has a special role or position to play in order for a team to achieve its goal of winning a game. Musicians each have a special role to play in the orchestra, so that when they come together they produce a beautiful piece of music.

Orchestras come in all shapes and sizes. For example, [Chamber Orchestras](#) feature a smaller collection of musicians, maybe only 15 players. But orchestras like The Cleveland Orchestra have as many as 100 musicians. There are lots of paths to becoming a musician in an orchestra, but the first and most important one is to practice your instrument! Maybe even your school has an orchestra? The Cleveland Orchestra has a Youth Orchestra, too! Playing in a community youth orchestra or your school orchestra is a great stepping stone to performing in a professional orchestra like The Cleveland Orchestra.



What is a symphony orchestra and what does it play?

A **symphony orchestra**, like The Cleveland Orchestra, plays all kinds of music but primarily [classical music](#) that is written specifically for the collection of instruments in a symphony orchestra. An orchestra plays music that was written all the way back 300 years ago to music written today. There are four different “families” of instruments in an orchestra: strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion. Composers of music for symphony orchestra’s use these four instrument families to bring their music alive.



Photo: Roger Mastroianni

What is a conductor?

If an orchestra is like a team, the **conductor** is like a coach. Because there are about 100 musicians in an orchestra like The Cleveland Orchestra, someone needs to direct all of the players so that they play their parts at the right time with the right feeling. The conductor brings a composer’s vision to life and usually holds a [baton](#) so all of the musicians can see the conductor’s hands. The conductor shows many things all at once, such as [dynamics](#), [tempo](#), and the emotions and characters in the music.

Where does an orchestra play?

The Cleveland Orchestra **plays in a concert hall** that is large enough for all of the musicians to perform together on one stage for an audience of more than 2,000 people. The Cleveland Orchestra's concert hall is called Severance Hall, named for John L. Severance and his wife Elisabeth, who donated the money for the hall's construction.



How is an orchestra organized?

An orchestra is organized into four main sections or instrument “families.” Each family plays a unique role in the orchestra:

- The **Strings** are the “**singers**” of the orchestra and they are often found singing beautiful melodies.
- The **Woodwinds** are the “**actors**” of the orchestra. They portray all kinds of characters like birds chirping or your silly uncle laughing!
- The **Brass** instruments are the “**heroes**” of the orchestra. Their bold, regal sounds get your attention and tell you something important is happening. Think of the brass fanfares played at the Olympic games or the brass bands that march in a parade.
- The **Percussion** section is the “**heartbeat**” of the orchestra. They drive or accentuate the rhythm or beat of the music.



How do you become an orchestral musician?

Practice, practice, practice! Being a musician in an orchestra means that you are at the very top of your “game.” You are really good at playing your instrument! To earn a spot in any symphony orchestra, a musician must first go through a number of challenging auditions. It’s like trying out to be on a sports team and there are a lot of players who want to participate, but only a few open positions. Once you earn your spot, you rehearse with the orchestra for at least 10 hours every week and also practice at home on your own, in order to get ready for the concerts that will be performed that week.

One of the best parts of a job as an orchestral musician is working with world-class musicians and making beautiful music together. You also may have an opportunity to travel to other cities or countries. But best of all is that you have a job doing something you’re passionate about!

What if you don’t play an instrument, but are still interested in working for an orchestra? We’ve got you covered! While there are about 100 musicians who perform in the orchestra on stage, there are at least that many people and even more who work behind the scenes to make the concerts and all of the other activities of an orchestra possible.



Here are a few examples of important jobs at an orchestra:

Stage Crew - Behind-the-scenes staff who set up the stage, control the lighting and sound, and move and transport instruments wherever they need to go - including when the orchestra goes on tour!

Digital Designer - This person creates and runs an orchestra's digital platforms, like the website, and manages the orchestra's online or social media.

Director of Fundraising - The primary purpose of an orchestra is to provide outstanding musical experiences, but the money earned from selling tickets to concerts does not cover all of the costs to run an orchestra. This person seeks additional financial support from individuals, companies, foundations and government sources who make donations to keep the orchestra playing.

Music Librarian - This person performs a job that is similar to the librarian in your library! The music librarian acquires, organizes and maintains the music performed by the orchestra and makes sure every player on stage has their correct part. And just like other librarians, the music librarian helps with research about pieces of music, such as the music's history and the instruments required for its performance.



Other sample job titles at an orchestra include:

Accounting Manager

Building Engineer

Chief Artistic Officer

Chief Brand Officer

Chief Executive Officer

Chief Philanthropy and Advancement Officer

Chorus Manager

Communications Director

Digital Designer

Driver (for Music Director & Guest Artists)

Education & Community Programs Director

Events Manager

Executive Secretary

Facilities Director

Finance Director

Graphic Production Artist

Guest Experience Director

Human Resources Director

Information Systems Manager

Mail Room Supervisor

Marketing Director

Orchestra Personnel Director

Program Book Editor

Ticket Services Director

Youth Orchestra Manager



How can I learn to play an instrument?

If you want to be in an orchestra, the earlier you get started learning a musical instrument the better! There are many ways to learn to play an instrument, and your school music program is a great place to start. Your school may provide music lessons on specific instruments, or work with an outside group who comes in to provide music instruction. Ask your music teacher or classroom teacher about what is available at your school.

A local music store is also a great resource. They sell and rent musical instruments and can often refer you to a suitable teacher. Other community arts and music organizations also provide individual and group musical instrument instruction for learners of all ages. Here are a few in the Cleveland area:

[Aurora School of Music](#) - Students of all ages, backgrounds, and skill levels are offered a diverse array of performance and learning opportunities at this community music school.

[Broadway School of Music and the Arts](#) - A community arts learning center featuring instrumental music instruction and group arts classes.

[City Strings](#) - City Strings & Piano provides access to string and piano teachers who come to your home for private lessons.

Cleveland Institute of Music - The community division of this college-level music school offers private lessons and group classes for students starting as young as three years old.

Fairmount Center for the Arts - People of all ages and interests come together to discover, learn, and develop new skills in a variety of arts disciplines, including music.

The Fine Arts Association (formerly known as Willoughby Fine Arts) - A gathering place for individuals of all ages to learn, create, enjoy and appreciate the arts, including music performances and music instruction.

Lafayette Carthon Conservatory - Learn elements of music theory and composition along with music instruction at this community music organization.

The Music Settlement (formerly the Cleveland Music School Settlement) - From children as young as three years old to adults, retirees and beyond, this organization helps their students achieve their music goals in a variety of settings on the east and west sides of Cleveland.

Musicologie (formerly the Fairmount School of Music) - Private lessons for kids and adults on almost any instrument is at the heart of this organization, along with group classes, summer camps, and workshops.

The Rainey Institute - This organization provides children and adults individual music instruction on the instrument of their choice, in addition to orchestral instruction for students in grades 2-8.

Tri-C Creative Arts Academy - A division of this community college, the Creative Arts Academy offers private and group lessons to students of all experience levels and backgrounds.

Western Reserve Suzuki School - Utilizing the Suzuki approach to teaching music to young children, this organization offers weekly private lessons and opportunities for students to rehearse and perform together.



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