

A Young Person's Guide to the North Bay Symphony Orchestra

After viewing the 12-minute video, students should be able to answer the following:

Questions

Q1. Once all of the orchestra players are seated on the stage, what is the title of the person that enters prior to the Conductor?

Q2: What instrument does this person play, what special role do they have before the concert begins, and where does she or he sit during the performance?

Q3: In tuning the orchestra, which musician does the Concertmaster always ask to play the special tuning note and why is it this particular instrument used for this?

Q4: What is the actual note that is played, and why is this note the one that is traditionally used by orchestras for fine tuning the instruments prior to a concert?

Q5: The Concertmaster, with assistance from the oboe player, usually fine tunes the orchestra in three (or sometimes four) different groups of players at a time. What are these common tuning groups and in what order to they usually occur?

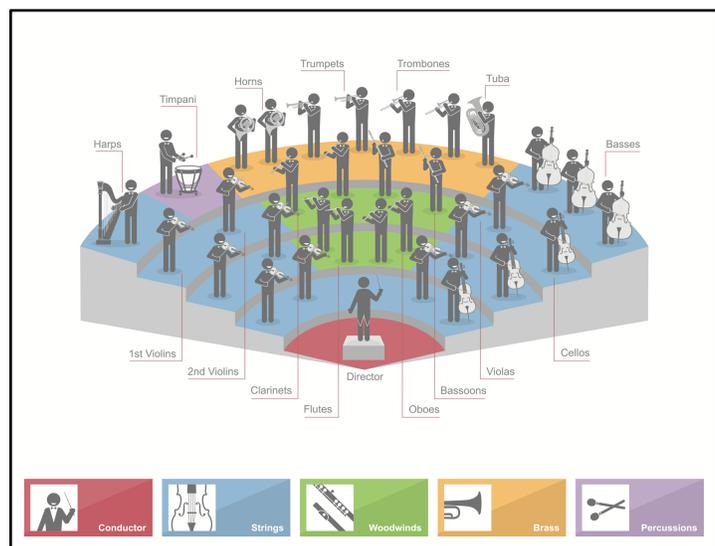
Q6: What is the name of the last person to come on stage prior to the performance, and what is the name of the stick that is used by this person to keep proper time?

Q7: What are the four main parts or sections of a modern orchestra, and where are these sections usually positioned on an average stage?

Q8: How is the Conductor's full score of printed music arranged in terms of the instruments?

Q9: How often does our volunteer North Bay Symphony Orchestra practice, and how many concerts does it perform each year?

Q10: What is the North Bay String School, and how does it relate to the North Bay Youth Orchestra?



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Answers

A1: The title of this orchestra member is the Concertmaster.

A2: The Concertmaster is a very talented first violin player, has the special role of tuning the orchestra prior to the concert, and sits in the first seat directly beside the podium.

A3: In the modern orchestra, the oboe player is usually asked to sound the tuning note (sometimes with a digital device, but often with the instrument) since the oboe is less susceptible to changes in climate (no strings) and provides a clear tone that all can hear.

A4: The note is known as A440, and it is the first "A" note above the middle C note. A440 is one of the few notes that all of the string instruments have as an open note (i.e., without having to depress a string on the fret), and the 440 Hertz is a measurement of its frequency (i.e., the speed of the vibration of the string).

A5: The tuning order is usually the woodwinds, followed by the brass, and then the strings.

A6: The Conductor is the last person to come on stage and uses a baton to help keep time.

A7: The four main sections are the strings section (musicians scrape or pluck the instruments); the woodwind and brass sections (musicians blow into the instruments); and the percussion section (musicians strike the instruments). The first violin players (who usually play the melody line) sit to the left of the conductor along the front of the stage; the second violins (who play harmonies) sit behind them; the violas, which are larger instruments with lower sounds, often sit directly in front of the Conductor; the cellos sit to his right, and behind them the very large double basses. The woodwinds sit in the centre in front of the Conductor, with the brass instruments behind them. The various percussion instruments are often located in the far back left area of the stage.

A8: The musical score is arranged by section and also by pitch (degree of highness or lowness of a tone). The woodwinds appear first at the top (flutes > oboes > clarinets > bassoons), followed by the brass instruments (French horns > trumpets > trombones > tuba), and then percussion (drums, bells, cymbals, triangles, etc.). Finally, the string section appears at the bottom of the score (first violin > second violin > cello > double bass).

A9: The North Bay Symphony Orchestra (<http://www.northbaysymphony.org/>) practices every week and then has a few extra practices, which include any guest (paid) musicians, just prior to each of the four main annual concert performances.

A10: The North Bay String School offers lessons for a variety of stringed instruments, and a number of these students take part, by invitation, in the North Bay Youth Orchestra which practices weekly and performs at community events.

