

# INSTRUMENT SPOTTER'S GUIDE

There are four instrument families in an orchestra—**strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion.**

You might see some of these instruments when you come to the Kennedy Center.

**Look closely!**  
Which instruments can you spot today? (Use the checkboxes to mark the ones you find.)

## The String Family

The members of this family are made of wood, and have (you guessed it!) *strings!* They share a similar shape, despite their different sizes. They make sound when a bow or finger is used to make their strings vibrate



### ■ VIOLIN

**LOOK FOR:**

The basics: four strings and a long neck. The black chinrest tells you it's held under the player's chin.

**LISTEN FOR:**

The highest notes in the string family

### ■ VIOLA

**LOOK FOR:**

A slightly larger violin (we get them confused, too!)

**LISTEN FOR:**

A cousin to the violin with a deeper, more mellow voice



### ■ CELLO

**LOOK FOR:**

An overgrown violin with an endpin at the bottom—played upright, held between the player's knees

**LISTEN FOR:**

The bigger body allows for lower, richer tones

### ■ DOUBLE BASS

**LOOK FOR:**

The biggest member of the family, often taller than the player standing behind it

**LISTEN FOR:**

Low and rumbly tones



## The Woodwind Family

Woodwinds can be made from different materials—like wood, metal—but they all make their sound when the player blows air across a hole or *reed* (a thin strip of woody grass.)



### ■ FLUTE

**LOOK FOR:**

A silver tube, held sideways against a player's chin

**LISTEN FOR:**

High-pitched, sweet tones

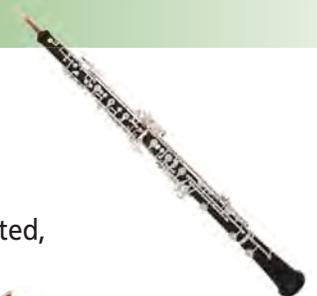
### ■ OBOE

**LOOK FOR:**

A thin black tube covered with shiny metal keys.

**LISTEN FOR:**

A nasal, but very concentrated, rich sound



### ■ CLARINET

**LOOK FOR:**

A black tube with a bell at the bottom and black mouthpiece at the top

**LISTEN FOR:**

Anything from warm low tones to high-pitched sounds

### ■ BASSOON

**LOOK FOR:**

A tall brown tube—the player blows air through the curving pipe sticking off the side.

**LISTEN FOR:**

Low, smooth tones



# The Brass Family

Brass instruments are made of metal and use air to make sound— players “buzz” their lips on the instrument’s mouthpiece to make sounds that can be very loud!

## ■ TRUMPET



**LOOK FOR:**  
A coiled brass horn about a foot and a half long, with 3 keys that are pressed to make different notes

**LISTEN FOR:**  
Loud, clear tones

## ■ FRENCH HORN



**LOOK FOR:**  
Twelve feet of tubing coiled in a circle and ending in a large bell (which most times has the player’s hand in it)

**LISTEN FOR:**  
A more mellow brass sound than the trumpet

## ■ TROMBONE



**LOOK FOR:**  
A long brass instrument with a U-shaped slide that the player pushes forward and back

**LISTEN FOR:**  
*Glissandos*—the effect of gliding from one note to another

## ■ TUBA



**LOOK FOR:**  
You can’t miss it—it’s really big and shiny!

**LISTEN FOR:**  
Loud sounds (melodic and oom-pahs) way down low

# The Percussion Family

Members of this family make sound by being hit, shaken, rubbed or scraped— any action that makes all or parts of the instrument vibrate.

## ■ SNARE DRUM



**LOOK FOR:**  
A drum the size of a large dinner plate

**LISTEN FOR:**  
Rat-a-tat-tat

## ■ XYLOPHONE



**LOOK FOR:**  
A wooden piano-like keyboard, played with a mallet (a stick with a round head at the top)

**LISTEN FOR:**  
Plink-plunk

## ■ CYMBALS



**LOOK FOR:**  
A pair of brass pan lids

**LISTEN FOR:**  
CRASH!

## ■ TIMPANI



**LOOK FOR:**  
Large copper kettles with white drum heads stretched across their tops

**LISTEN FOR:**  
Deep, low pitches