

ORCHESTRATION AND INSTRUMENTATION: CLASSICAL ERA

INTRODUCTION

Like its precursors, instrumentation in the Classical era saw many changes. The biggest change is that of the standard symphony orchestra. Although the instrument groupings remained the same, such as that of the Renaissance and Baroque eras, the number of instruments in each grouping grew considerably in size, mainly due to the availability of instruments. Instrumentation used in other ensembles in the Classical period were much more standardized as well; for example, the standard Classical string quartet consisted of two violins, a viola and a cello (with very few exceptions), whereas the Baroque string quartet could consist of keyboards, woodwinds and brass, not just the standard stringed instruments.

CHANGES TO BAROQUE INSTRUMENTS

The Classical period saw changes and revisions to many instruments in that of the Baroque period, which are still used today. Three of these instrument changes are: Baroque violin (which became the violin), the Baroque oboe (which became the oboe) and the Baroque trumpet (which became the regular valved trumpet). Although the harpsichord was in use in the mid 18th century, it fell out of use by the turn of the 19th century.

THE CLASSICAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The following chart shows not only the various instrument groupings in a standard symphony orchestra, but also shows the order of instruments on a typical orchestral music score. Instrument groups are shown in **bold** font.

WOODWINDS

2–4 Flutes (one doubling Piccolo)

2–4 Oboes (one doubling Cor Anglais – English Horn)

2–4 Clarinets (one doubling Bass Clarinet)

2–4 Bassoons (one doubling Contrabassoon)

(Saxophone)

BRASS

4–8 French Horns in F

2–6 Trumpets in C, B ♭

2–6 Trombones (one doubling Bass Trombone)

Tuba

(Baritone Horn/Euphonium)

PERCUSSION: UNPITCHED

Timpani
Snare Drum
Tenor Drum
Bass Drum
Cymbals
Tam-Tam
Triangle
Wood Block

PERCUSSION: PITCHED

Tambourine
Glockenspiel
Xylophone
Vibraphone
Tubular Bells
Marimba

STRINGS

1–2 Harps
16–18 Violins 1
14–16 Violins 2
12–14 Violas
10–12 Cellos
8–10 Double Basses
Keyboards
Piano
Celesta

(Pipe Organ)