

ORCHESTRATION AND INSTRUMENTATION: MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE ERAS

MEDIEVAL INSTRUMENTS

The Medieval era saw the very early and very basic instrumentation and instrument ensembles. Ensembles were made on the limited instruments available. Some music was made with the performer self-accompanied themselves; other times music was in parts. Instruments were divided into outdoor, louder sounding and quieter and more intimate. Instruments of this era included:

1. **Woodwinds:** Wood flute and recorder
2. **Strings:** Plucked, such as the lute, as well as the fiddle (or vielle)
3. **Brass:** Trombone (called the sackbut)

RENAISSANCE AND BEGINNING OF MODERN INSTRUMENTATION

Although the Renaissance era saw the improvements of many instruments used in the Medieval era, many of today's modern instrumentation was found in this era. Not only was this an important era in regards to the instruments themselves, but also the instrumental or orchestral groupings which we find in orchestras today. These groupings are:

1. Woodwinds
2. Brass
3. Strings
4. Percussion

Renaissance instruments found in each of these groupings include:

1. **Woodwinds (or Winds):** Double reed shawm, the reed pipe, the bagpipe, the transverse flute and the recorder
2. **Brass:** Slide trumpet, the wooden cornet, the valveless trumpet, and the trombone (sackbut)
3. **Strings:** Viol, the harp-like lyre, the hurdy-gurdy, the cittern and the lute
4. **Percussion:** Triangle, the Jew's harp, the tambourine, the bells, the rumble-pot, and various kinds of drums
5. **Keyboards:** Although keyboards are generally included in the stringed section of an orchestra, they can also be a fifth section on their own (not common though in music texts). These instruments included: harpsichord and the virginal (keyboard instrument of the harpsichord family).