

OPERA  
NORTH

The  
Magic Flute

LITE

MOZART

SCHOOLS RESOURCE PACK  
KEY STAGE 2, 3 AND 4

# **A SHORTENED VERSION OF MOZART'S OPERA THE MAGIC FLUTE, SPECIALLY ADAPTED FOR A SCHOOLS AUDIENCE**

**Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**  
**Libretto by Emanuel Schikaneder**  
(English translation by Jeremy Sams)

**Prince Tamino is sent on a quest by the Queen of the Night to rescue her daughter Pamina from Sarastro's palace...**

**Whilst on his mission, Tamino meets Papageno and together they seek to rescue the Queen of the Night's daughter. Tamino and Papageno are given the gifts of a magic flute and magic bells to guard them on their mission...**

**In order to secure the safe release of Pamina, Sarastro issues Tamino and Papageno with a series of trials...**

**If Papageno and Tamino successfully pass the trials, Pamina will be set free and the characters will be deemed worthy of joining Sarastro's brotherhood...**

**But what if the characters fail their quest, and who, really, is the Queen of the Night...?**

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# INTRODUCTION AND 'WHAT IS OPERA?'

This learning pack offers teachers and pupils in KS2, 3 and 4 an introduction to Opera North's production of *The Magic Flute* by the German **composer** Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

The pack includes information about the composer and librettist, the world of opera, and an introduction to the opera *The Magic Flute*, including: the plot synopsis, an introduction to the characters and key themes. Interesting facts and activity ideas are dispersed throughout this pack for use in the classroom which can inspire further ideas for discussion. Feel free to get creative and adapt these activities to suit the needs of your class! Also included is an introduction to the instruments of the orchestra and how they feature within the opera.

Definitions for highlighted words can be found in the glossary.

## What is Opera?

Opera is about people, emotions and their stories told through a **hybrid** of music, text, drama, and design elements. It is an art form in which singers and orchestral musicians perform a dramatic work combining text (called a **libretto**) and **score**, usually in a theatre setting. In opera you can find some of the most extraordinary music ever written for the human voice.

The term 'opera' comes from the Latin word 'opus' meaning work. Opera has a musical accompaniment throughout, performed by an **orchestra** and singers. The main characters within an opera are sung by professional singers - some operas also include spoken word and dance. Sometimes an opera will include a part for an **opera chorus**, performed by a group of professional singers; the chorus will often represent a large group or crowd of people within the opera. In *The Magic Flute* the chorus represents the Priests, Slaves and Attendants.

Opera in Mozart's time was a social occasion, where audience members would drink, talk and even play card games during the performance! Audience members would be known to stand on the side of the stage if they couldn't afford a ticket. The themes in Mozart's operas often reflected political and cultural ideas of the time.

## The Magic Flute

*The Magic Flute* is a two act opera by the German composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; the opera was written in the form of a **Singspiel** (a piece which includes both singing and spoken dialogue). The libretto (or text) was written by the Austrian theatrical producer Emanuel Schikaneder.

The opera was premiered on 30 September 1791 (shortly before Mozart's untimely death) at the Theater auf der Wieden (or Freihaustheater) in Vienna.

### KS3–4

*The Magic Flute* is an opera from the Classical period (c.1750-c.1830). Mozart was one of the most prolific composers of the Classical period, alongside Haydn. This musical period coincided with the Age of Enlightenment which saw great social changes including a focus on human rights and freedom of religion. The music of this period saw the introduction of **sonata form, the symphony, piano sonatas and string quartets**. New instruments were added to the orchestra including the clarinet (introduced by Haydn), whilst trumpets were given their own independent melodic lines (rather than doubling the horns) and cellos were also given independent lines from the double basses.

# THE WORLD OF THE OPERA: THE COMPOSER AND THE LIBRETTIST

## THE COMPOSER: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



The composer is a person who writes music.

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was the composer of *The Magic Flute*
- He was born in Salzburg, Austria on 27 January 1756
- Mozart was a child prodigy and composed some of his first pieces of music at the age of five
- Mozart gave his first public performance at Salzburg University in September 1761 at the age of five
- Mozart started his musical career as a performer of the piano, touring around Europe between ages 6-8 with his father. When he returned home, he composed his first opera when he was only 11 years old, and it was written in Latin
- When Mozart was 14 it is believed that he wrote down an entire piece from memory, after hearing it performed just once in the Vatican in Rome! The piece is Allegri's *Miserere* and has five different voice parts in the choir
- When Mozart was 26 he married Constanze Weber. They had six children together, but only two survived
- Mozart died very young from kidney failure only a few months after the premiere of *The Magic Flute*. He was only 35 years old.

### Did you know?

Mozart's nickname was 'Wolfie' but his real name was Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart. He composed over 600 works, and had a fierce rivalry with the composer Antonio Salieri, who wrote more than 40 operas. When Mozart died, many people thought Salieri had poisoned him!

When Mozart was 10 years old, scientists of the Royal Society put him through a series of tests to prove he was a child and not a skilled dwarf.

## THE LIBRETTIST: Emanuel Schikaneder



The librettist is a person who writes the text for an opera. A libretto is very similar to a film script – it contains all the information needed to tell a story.

- Emmanuel Schikaneder was born to a very poor family in 1751 in the state of Bavaria, Germany
- Schikaneder trained in his local cathedral as a singer, and as he grew up began to work in the theatre, performing opera and ballet
- When he was only 22 his first opera was performed in Innsbruck
- By 1780 he had set up his own theatre company in Vienna
- In Autumn 1780 Schikaneder became a friend of the Mozart family. Mozart and his parents often played darts together with Schikaneder
- Schikaneder performed the role of Papageno in the first performance of *The Magic Flute*
- By 1804, Schikaneder's career was on the decline; his concerts were not selling well so he sold the company and left to live in the countryside
- He died very poor in 1812 aged 61.

For further information on the composer and librettist for KS3–4, please see the further reading list - **CLICK TO VIEW**

# TIMELINE

## Colour Code

Mozart and Schikaneder / Music history / General history

- |         |  |      |   |
|---------|--|------|---|
| 1751    | Emmanuel Schikaneder is born in Bavaria  | 1775 | Mozart's <i>La Finta Giardiniera (The Pretend Garden Girl)</i> is written and performed in Munich, Germany  |
| 1756    | The French and Indian War begins between Britain and France  | 1776 | United States issues Declaration of Independence  |
| 1756    | Mozart is born on January 27, only one of two surviving children of Leopold Mozart, a composer for the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg | 1778 | Teatro alla Scala, a very famous opera house, opens in Milan, Italy   |
| 1758    | English Baroque composer George Frideric Handel dies   | 1781 | Mozart relocates to Vienna to make his career as a composer   |
| 1762    | Mozart performs for Empress Maria Theresia in the Viennese Imperial Court and begins his career as a child prodigy and composer      | 1782 | Mozart marries Constanze Weber  |
| 1763    | Treaty of Paris ends French and Indian War. Mason-Dixon Line is drawn  | 1783 | Mozart composes the <i>Mass in C Minor</i>  |
| 1763-66 | Wolfgang and his sister Maria tour Europe with their parents as child prodigies  | 1786 | Mozart completes <i>Le Nozze di Figaro</i> , which premieres in Vienna and is a big success in Prague the following year  |
| 1764    | Mozart composes his first symphony at the age of 8   | 1787 | Mozart's father Leopold Mozart dies. <i>Don Giovanni</i> is premiered in Prague   |
| 1765    | First paved sidewalks appear in London   | 1787 | Beethoven arrives in Vienna to study with Mozart  |
| 1767    | Mozart completes his first opera <i>Apollo et Hyacinthus</i> . It is first performed in Salzburg in May                              | 1787 | German poet Christoph Wieland publishes a collection of stories which inspire the plot of <i>The Magic Flute</i>  |
| 1768    | Premiere of Mozart's first opera in Vienna: <i>Bastien un Bastienne</i>  | 1787 | First fleet of convicts sails to Australia  |
| 1770    | Mozart begins working as a court musician with the Archbishop of Salzburg  | 1788 | First edition of <i>The Times of London</i> is published  |
| 1770    | Beethoven (another important Classical period composer) is born in Bonn, Germany   | 1790 | <i>Così fan tutte</i> premieres in Vienna without success, Mozart falls on hard financial times   |
| 1770    | Captain James Cook claims the east coast of Australia for Great Britain  | 1791 | Schikaneder and Mozart come together to write <i>The Magic Flute</i> after increasing involvement together in Schikaneder's theatrical troupe. <i>The Magic Flute</i> premieres at Schikaneder's Theater auf der Wieden in Vienna on 30th September. Mozart is the conductor and Schikaneder plays the role of Papageno |
| 1771    | First volume of the <i>Encyclopedia Britannica</i> is published  | 1791 | Mozart dies three months after the premiere of <i>The Magic Flute</i> at the age of 35  |
| 1772    | Flight and Kelley, organ makers in London produce the first barrel organ   | 1791 | Haydn's 'Surprise' Symphony (No. 94) in G premieres.  |
| 1772    | Slavery is effectively outlawed in England   | 1792 | November: <i>The Magic Flute</i> receives its 100th performance   |
| 1773    | Boston Tea Party   | 1798 | The Bastille is stormed in Paris, which starts the French Revolution  |
| 1773    | Schikaneder's first opera is performed in Innsbruck  |      |   |

# SYNOPSIS

The opera is written in two **acts** (or chapters), which each tell a different part of the story.

## Act 1

Prince Tamino is being chased by a large serpent, but Three Ladies (attendants to the Queen of the Night) come to his rescue. Papageno the bird-catcher arrives on the scene and meets Tamino.

The Queen of the Night arrives and promises her daughter Pamina's hand in marriage to Tamino if he can rescue her from the wicked Sarastro.

Papageno is given magic bells and Tamino is given a magic flute to protect them on their quest.

Tamino arrives at Sarastro's temple and an old priest explains that Sarastro is kind and the Queen of the Night is evil.

Pamina and Tamino see each other for the first time and fall in love.

Sarastro arrives and tells Tamino that, if he wants to marry Pamina and join his brotherhood, he must go through three tests of wisdom to prove his worth. Papageno will also be rewarded with a partner. Both agree to undergo the trials.

## Act 2

Tamino and Papageno begin their first test: they are not allowed to speak. Papageno cannot keep quiet but Tamino passes the test.

The Queen of the Night appears and gives Pamina a knife, telling her daughter she must kill Sarastro; she sings her famous aria  **'The Wrath of Hell is Burning in My Bosom'** at this moment\*

Pamina is torn between her love for Tamino, and her duty to her mother. Tamino and Papageno face their second test: still they must remain silent, and they are not allowed to drink. An Old Woman appears and offers a glass of water. Tamino refuses, but Papageno accepts and begins to talk to the Old Woman. Pamina appears but Tamino refuses to speak to her, in order to pass the test. Pamina thinks that Tamino does not love her anymore.

Next Papageno faces a challenge alone – he meets the same Old Woman who offered him water. She tells him he must commit to love her forever, otherwise he will be alone forever... Papageno accepts and the Old Woman turns into a beautiful young woman: Papagena.

Meanwhile, Pamina is so upset at the thought that Tamino does not love her anymore, that she tries to kill herself, but three spirits intervene and bring her to Tamino. Tamino is about to face his final two tests: walking through fire and water. Tamino and Pamina complete the final tests together and are protected by Tamino's magic flute.

Monostatos has switched sides from Sarastro to the Queen of the Night. They arrive with the Three Ladies in an attempt to destroy Sarastro's palace...

**What will become of our characters and how will the opera end...? All will be revealed in the Schools' Matinee performance.**

\* Queen of the Night: Diana Damrau, taken from The Royal Opera House's 2003 production of *The Magic Flute*

For further information on the Synopsis for KS3–4, please see the further reading list - **CLICK TO VIEW**

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## ACTIVITY IDEA – KS2

### Freezeframes (Music & Drama)

This activity helps pupils understand the story and characters in *The Magic Flute*, whilst developing their teamwork, verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

Divide your class into small groups and allocate each group a section of the opera to act out; the challenge is to act out sections silently, without words. Encourage pupils to think about dramatic movement to ensure they communicate their scene clearly to the rest of the class.

For example:

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#### Act 1

- 1 Prince Tamino is about to be killed by the serpent, but is then rescued by the Three Ladies
  - 2 Papageno arrives on the scene and meets Tamino. Tamino thinks that Papageno killed the serpent & Papageno pretends this was the case
  - 3 The Queen of the Night promises Tamino that he can marry her daughter, Pamina, if he can rescue her from Sarastro
  - 4 The Three Ladies gift Prince Tamino and Papageno with a magic flute and magic bells to protect them on their rescue mission
- 

Use the above idea or other scenes from Act 1 or Act 2 of the opera to devise new freezeframe activities.

Why not try adding in props, simple costumes, and musical sound effects?

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## ACTIVITY IDEA – KS3–4

### Freezeframes (Music & Drama)

This activity is intended to help pupils develop their understanding of the story, alongside gaining a greater insight into the lives of each of the characters. The activity helps pupils to develop their teamwork skills alongside both verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

Divide your class up into small groups and allocate each group a section of the opera to act out; the challenge is to act out sections silently, without spoken word. Encourage the groups to think about physicality and dramatic movement to ensure they communicate their scene effectively to the rest of the class.

For example:

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#### Act 1

- 1 Prince Tamino is about to be killed by the serpent, but then the Three Ladies (the Queen of the Night's Attendants) come to his rescue
- 2 Papageno the bird-catcher arrives on the scene and meets Tamino. Tamino thinks that Papageno killed the serpent & Papageno pretends this was the case
- 3 The Queen of the Night arrives on the scene and persuades Tamino to rescue her daughter Pamina who has been imprisoned by Sarastro
- 4 The Queen of the Night promises Tamino that he can marry her daughter, Pamina, if he can rescue her
- 5 The Three Ladies gift Prince Tamino and Papageno with a magic flute and magic bells to protect them on their rescue mission

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You can use the above ideas or take inspiration from other acts within the opera to create as many freezeframes as you like.

Why not try adding in props, simple costumes, and musical sound effects to help recreate a scene, conjure up a specific atmosphere or to use as a transition from each frame to the next.

Try taking the idea even further: encourage one group to act out the story, whilst another group write and perform their own musical accompaniment to the piece.

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## ACTIVITY IDEA – KS2 (ENGLISH)

### *The Magic Flute Summary*

Write a summary of the story in no more than 100 words

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## ACTIVITY IDEA – KS3–4 (ENGLISH)

### *The Magic Flute Tweets*

Summarise the story of *The Magic Flute* in the form of a tweet  
– use no more than 140 characters

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## ACTIVITY IDEA – KS2-4 (ENGLISH)

### Be an opera critic!

Try your hand at opera criticism. Answer the following questions (feel free to bring these questions with you to the Schools' Matinee performance and ask pupils to give their responses at the end of the opera).

**Name of the opera:**

Most exciting moment:

Funniest moment:

Saddest moment:

Strongest character:

The singer who you think performed the best and why:

Overall review:

# MEET THE CHARACTERS

## TAMINO

Voice part: Tenor



Prince Tamino is the hero of the opera and the first character we meet as we discover him being attacked by a serpent at the beginning of the opera. The Queen of the Night issues Prince Tamino with a challenge to rescue her daughter (Pamina) from the evil Sarastro (Priest of Isis and Osiris); in return for rescuing Pamina, the Queen of the Night offers her daughter's hand in marriage as the prince's reward. Tamino must prove his love for Pamina by undergoing a series of trials issued by Sarastro. By successfully completing the trials, Tamino will also be considered worthy of joining Sarastro's brotherhood (a brotherhood was, at the time, a gathering of men who united together due to their shared interests and beliefs).

This is the aria Prince Tamino sings when he first sees a picture of Pamina in Act 1, Scene 3:

*'Such loveliness beyond compare.  
I've never seen a face so fair.  
It fills me, it fills me  
With such happiness,  
my heart beats faster in my breast  
My heart beats faster in my breast'*

 **LISTEN**

## PAPAGENO

Voice part: Baritone



Papageno is a bird-catcher, employed by the Queen of the Night. He is a cheeky, likeable and down to earth character who frequently expresses his desire to find a girlfriend or wife. He is chastised by the Queen of the Night's Attendants (the First, Second & Third Ladies) for lying and pretending to kill the serpent which attacked Prince Tamino at the beginning of the opera. Papageno accompanies Prince Tamino on his quest to rescue Pamina; whilst on their mission, Papageno meets and falls in love with Papagena. In order to prove his love for Papagena, Papageno must undergo a series of tests issued by Sarastro. By successfully completing the trials, Papageno will also be considered worthy of joining Sarastro's brotherhood.

This is Papageno's opening aria from Act 1, Scene 2; it has a simple folk like **melody** which helps to portray Papageno's simple character. It is easily recognised by the flute flourish which accompanies it:

*'I'm sure that there could never be  
a more contented man than me.  
I earn my living as I please,  
I charm the birds from out the trees'*

 **LISTEN**

# MEET THE CHARACTERS

## FIRST LADY / SECOND LADY / THIRD LADY

Voice parts: Soprano



The First, Second and Third Lady are the loyal attendants of the Queen of the Night. They serve her dutifully and bestow gifts of the magic flute and magic bells to guard Tamino and Papageno and keep them safe on their quest to rescue the Queen of the Night's daughter. They are mystical, magical characters who often precipitate the arrival of the Queen of the Night.

*This trio section is performed by the First, Second and Third Ladies in Act 1, Scene 1 when they first meet Tamino and save him from danger:*

*'If I were free to love and kiss,  
I'd choose a youth who looked like this.  
Let's tell the Queen about this stranger  
and how we rescued him from danger.  
Perhaps this handsome youth may find  
the way to soothe her troubled mind.'*

**▶ LISTEN FROM 2:16**

## QUEEN OF THE NIGHT

Voice part: Coloratura Soprano



The Queen of the Night is Pamina's mother. She is a mysterious, terrifying character who often appears at sudden moments within the opera. At the start of the opera she appears to be good and innocent and she persuades Prince Tamino that it is Sarastro who is the evil one who stole her daughter, Pamina. It soon becomes apparent that the cunning Queen of the Night is, in fact, the character to be feared; we learn this when she sings one of the most famous (and fiendishly difficult) opera arias of all time 'The Wrath of Hell is Burning in My Bosom'. In this aria (taken from Act 2, Scene 8), the Queen of the Night tells her daughter Pamina that she will disown her if she doesn't agree to kill Sarastro:

*'The wrath of hell is burning in my bosom  
Death and destruction,  
Death and destruction blaze about my head.  
If you refuse, refuse to kill Sarastro  
Refuse to kill Sarastro  
Then I will deem my daughter good as dead'*

**▶ LISTEN**

### Did you know?

A coloratura soprano is an operatic soprano who specialises in performing music that is very high in the voice and includes difficult melodic runs, trills and leaps.

Mozart's sister-in-law, Josepha Hofer, sung the role of the Queen of the Night for the opera's premiere performance.

# MEET THE CHARACTERS

## MONOSTATOS

Voice part: Tenor



Monostatos is the Overseer of Sarastro's Temple and an untrustworthy character who tries to pursue Pamina. He is only concerned with getting what he wants using fear and intimidation in order to achieve this. Monostatos tries to abuse the power that Sarastro has given him; thankfully Sarastro remains in control and punishes Monostatos for his threatening tactics and behaviour.

## PAMINA

Voice part: Soprano



Pamina is the daughter of the Queen of the Night. At the start of the opera we are told that she has been imprisoned by Sarastro. She is the subject of Monostatos' unwanted attention and we later learn of her difficult, tormented relationship with her mother. Pamina is the character who suffers most throughout the opera; not only has her mother (the Queen of the Night) turned against her, but she is led to believe that Prince Tamino no longer loves her either.

This aria is performed by Pamina in Act 2, Scene 17 as she laments Prince Tamino, thinking he no longer loves her for he will not speak to her. Pamina is unaware that Sarastro has issued Tamino with the Trial of Silence meaning he is forbidden to speak with Pamina. Pamina assumes her love has been lost. The **minor key** of the melody helps to reflect Pamina's sadness:

*'Now I know that love has vanished  
now I know that love brings pain  
now I know that love brings pain  
Now all joy, all hope is banished;  
I have loved and loved in vain'*

 **LISTEN**

# MEET THE CHARACTERS

## SARASTRO

Voice part: Bass



Sarastro is the High Priest of the Sun (Isis and Osiris). He leads a brotherhood of priests and is initially portrayed by the Queen of the Night and her Attendants as an evil character. We soon find out that Sarastro is an honest, good and noble character and a person of great integrity. Prince Tamino realises this too and seeks to join Sarastro's brotherhood (and, in doing so, prove himself worthy of Pamina). In order to join the brotherhood, Tamino (along with Papageno and Pamina) must undergo and successfully pass a series of trials.

Sarastro's majestic and noble character is portrayed in his aria 'O Isis and Osiris' from Act 2, Scene 1. Sarastro's aria is made up of long melodic lines which reinforce his sense of grandeur.

Listen out for a **call & response** between Sarastro and the tenors and basses from the chorus (reinforcing the respect that the people have for Sarastro) during this aria.

 **LISTEN**

## OLD WOMAN / PAPAGENA

Voice part: Soprano



Papagena is initially disguised as the 'Old Woman'. When she first meets Papageno (in her disguise), she asks Papageno to swear that he will love her and be faithful to her. If he doesn't agree to her terms, he will be locked up forever with only bread to eat and water to drink. When Papageno (reluctantly) agrees, suddenly the Old Woman turns into Papagena: a beautiful woman whom Papageno truly falls in love with.

Listen to this **duet** which Papageno and Papagena sing to one another in Act 2, Scene 29. They have finally been reunited and sing of their delight and happiness. Listen to the call and response singing between the two characters: one person sings, and the other person sings in response - this makes it sound like they are two love birds having a conversation:

*Papageno: 'Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-pa-pa-ge-na'*

*Papagena: 'Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-pa-pa-ge-no'*

*Papageno: 'Will you stay with me forever?'*

*Papagena: 'Yes, I'll stay with you forever'*

*Papageno: 'Now at last we'll be together'*

*Papagena: 'Two little love birds of one feather'*

*Together: 'Yes, now at last we will be together'*

 **LISTEN**

# VOICE PARTS

<b>Soprano</b>	Female singing voice with the highest vocal range
<b>Mezzo Soprano</b>	Female singing voice pitched between soprano and alto
<b>Alto</b>	Female singing voice, pitched below soprano and above tenor
<b>Contralto</b>	The lowest female singing voice, lower than an alto and almost identical to the range of a countertenor
<b>Countertenor</b>	The male equivalent to a contralto. Male singers use their ' <b>head voice</b> ' to sing beyond their ' <b>chest voice</b> '
<b>Tenor</b>	A singing voice between baritone and alto or countertenor
<b>Baritone</b>	Male singing voice between tenor and bass
<b>Bass</b>	Male singing voice with the lowest vocal range

 [Listen to this example of the different voice types](#)

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## ACTIVITY IDEA – KS2 (ENGLISH)

### Characterisation in *The Magic Flute*

- Divide your class up into 8 groups
- Allocate one character from the opera to each group:  
Prince Tamino / Papageno / Pamina / Queen of the Night /  
First, Second & Third Ladies / Papagena (or Old Woman) /  
Monostatos / Sarastro
- Ask each group to produce bullet points for each character;  
think about what makes them unique / how they interact /  
whether any of the characters change during the opera?
- Ask each group to share their findings with the rest of the class

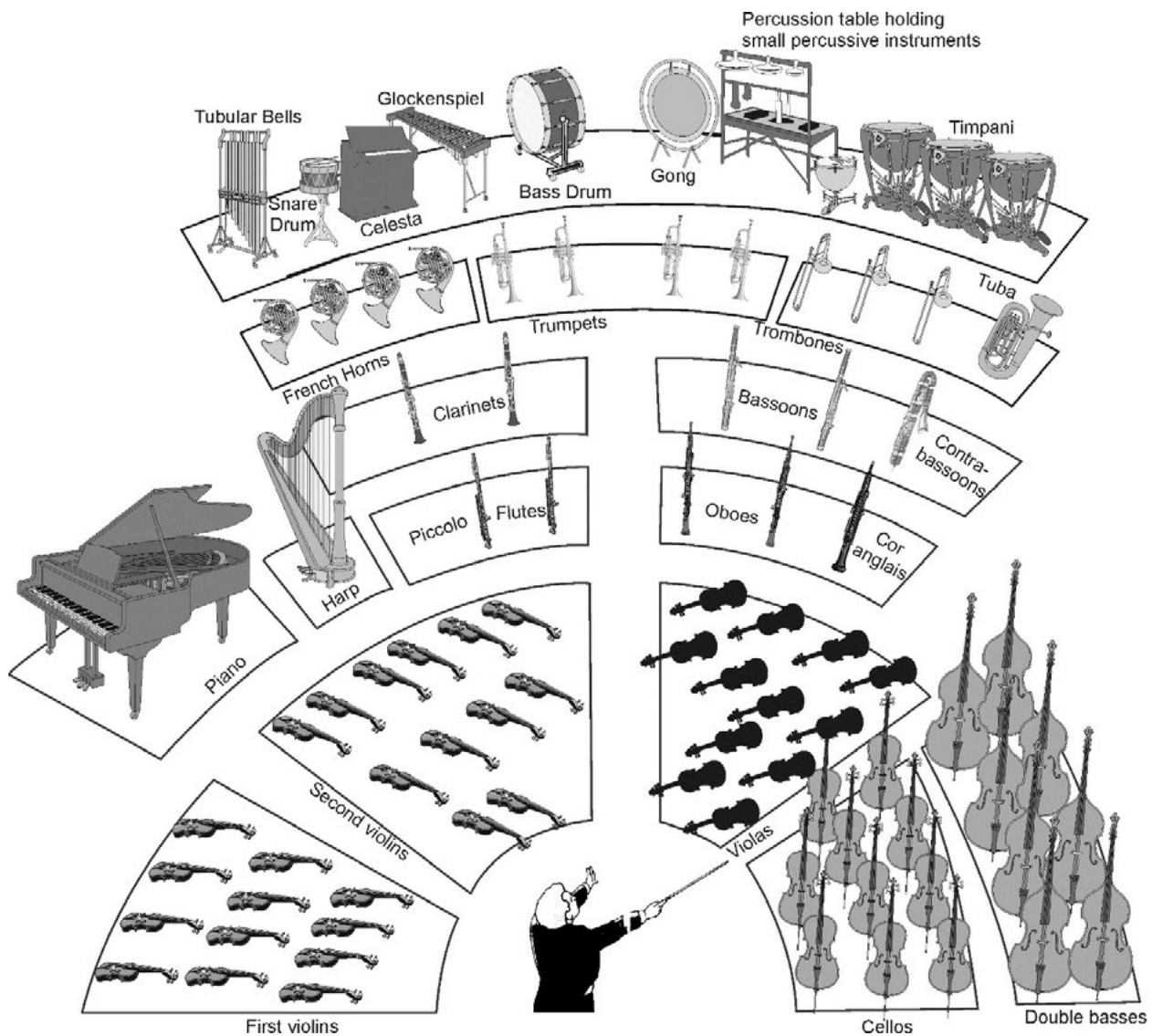
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## ACTIVITY IDEA – KS3–4 (ENGLISH)

### Characterisation in *The Magic Flute*

- Think about how each character is presented in the opera
- Do the characters conform to the stereotype of:
  - A Prince (Prince Tamino)
  - A Mother (Queen of the Night)
  - A Child (Pamina)
  - A Leader (Sarastro) – this could be a religious leader  
or a political leader
- How are they similar and in what ways are they different?  
Compare and contrast
- If you were going to play a particular character in the opera,  
how would you prepare to get into the role of that character?

# MEET THE ORCHESTRA



The orchestra is made up of a group of approximately 60 professional musicians, each of whom belong to a section (or family) within the orchestra, dependant on the instrument they play. The role of the orchestra in an opera production is to play the musical accompaniment to the opera. The orchestra also has its own **solo** moments within the opera where it plays on its own.

These parts of the opera are known as:

- The **orchestral overture** - this is the introduction to the opera which helps to set the scene for the audience. The overture is kind of like the trailer for what's to come, often including famous musical themes which the audience will then hear later on in the production. For Opera North's *The Magic Flute for Schools* matinee performance, the orchestral overture will not be played.
- **Interlude** – the orchestral interlude is played during a scene change or between acts to mark a change in mood or atmosphere.

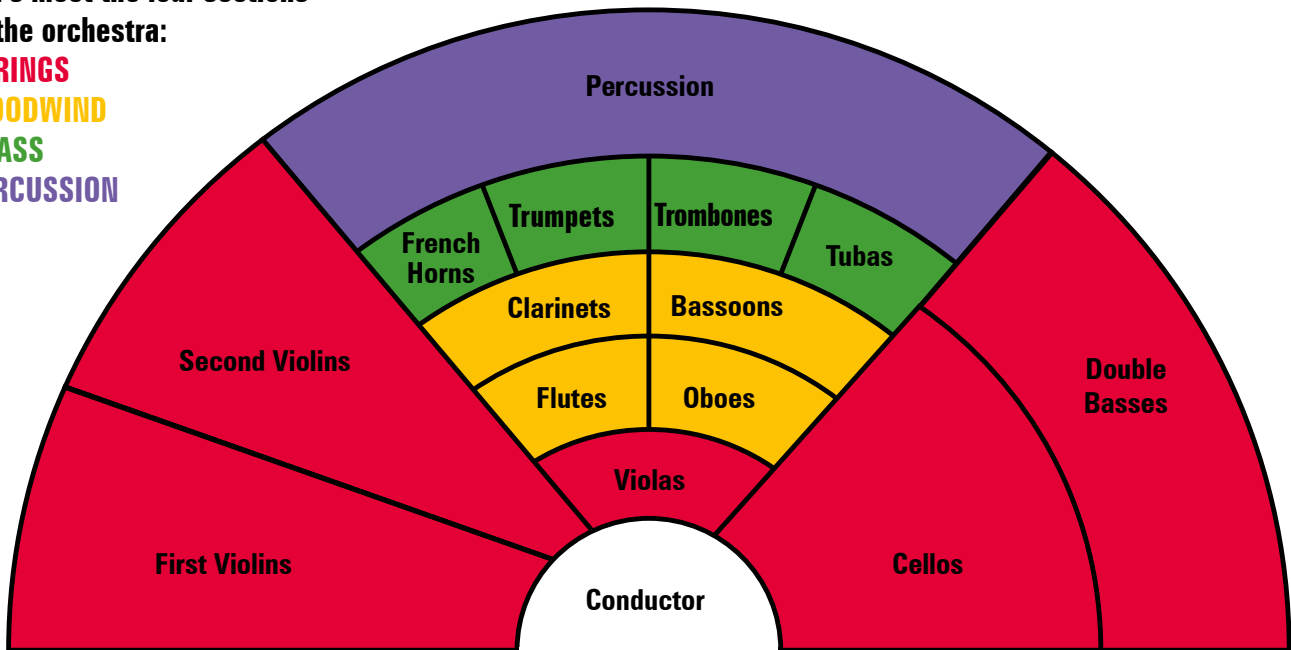
Let's meet the four sections  
of the orchestra:

**STRINGS**

**WOODWIND**

**BRASS**

**PERCUSSION**



We will learn more about how each section of the orchestra features in *The Magic Flute* below. For further information on the orchestra for KS3–4, please see the further reading list – **Meet the Orchestra**

## STRINGS

The string section is made up of four instruments: violin, viola, cello, double bass.

### The String Section

Listen to the upper strings as they set the scene for the Queen of the Night's infamous aria 'The Wrath of Hell'; the upper strings build a sense of fear and tension by playing a **tremolo** before the Queen of the Night starts to sing. A tremolo (an Italian word which means 'to shake') is when a stringed instrument produces a wavering effect in a musical tone, either by rapid repetition of a note, or rapid repetition of alternating tones.

#### ▶ LISTEN RIGHT AT THE BEGINNING

Listen out for the upper strings as they play an ascending and descending melody line, following the Queen of the Night's 'The Wrath of Hell' aria. It is as though the strings are continuing the Queen of the Night's vocal phrase as it rises and falls:

#### ▶ LISTEN FROM 1:19-1:26

Queen of the Night: Diana Damrau, taken from The Royal Opera House's 2003 production of *The Magic Flute*

### Fugue

In Act 2, Scene 28 you will hear a fugal **staccato** passage; this scene represents the start of the trials that Tamino and Papageno are due to undergo. The fugal passage starts in the Second Violins, then moves to the First Violins, then Viola and Cello, then finally the Double Bass joins:

#### ▶ LISTEN FROM 0:30

### Activity Idea – KS3–4 (Music)

Before looking at the instruments used in the fugue, can you ask pupils to guess which string instrument starts the fugue, then which instruments take over?



## WOODWIND

The woodwind section is made up of eight instruments: piccolo, flute, oboe, cor anglais, clarinet (also Eb clarinet), bass clarinet, bassoon and contrabassoon.

### Flute

Owing to the opera's title alone, the flute plays a key role within the opera. Listen to this solo flute melody which is played by Tamino and interspersed with his aria *'How soft, how strong your magic sound, sing so sweetly as your music echoes all around, savage nature is tamed completely'*; during this aria (taken from Act 1, Scene 15) Tamino is singing of the power of the magic flute. Listen to how the melody rises and falls and has a dance like quality to it. Listen out to see whether Tamino's aria sounds similar to the flute melody:

▶ LISTEN

### Activity Idea – KS2-4

Whilst listening to the flute melody, ask pupils to explain what gives the melody its dance like quality. Ask them to think about tempo, dynamics, timbre, articulation.

### Oboe

Listen to this beautiful solo oboe melody which accompanies Pamina as she sings to Tamino of the magic flute's power and the connection to her father (taken from Act 2, Scene 28) *'Whilst you are by my side our love will be our guide. Our pain with patience must be borne, for every rose must have a thorn. This Magic Flute will ease our pain and lead us safely back again'*

The oboe melody has a sad, mournful quality, which perhaps reflects Pamina's sadness as she remembers the connection the magic flute had to her father:

▶ LISTEN FROM 1:31

### Bassoon

The bassoon is used to accompany Papageno as he hums his way through an aria (following a spell the Three Ladies have put on Papageno to silence him). The aria is from Act 1, Scene 7 and the bassoon mirrors Papageno's hums to comical dramatic effect, using light **staccato** articulation:

▶ LISTEN

### The Woodwind & Brass Section (Horns)

Listen to how the clarinet and bassoon (from the woodwind section) can blend so beautifully with the horns (from the brass section). The clarinet begins by playing a pastoral melody with bassoon melodic accompaniment; listen out for the horns as they join in to add a warmth and depth of tone. All the instruments combined help to reflect the nature of the garden scene (taken from Act 2, Scene 26)

▶ LISTEN



## BRASS

The brass section is made up of six instruments: horn, trumpet, alto trombone (less common), tenor trombone, bass trombone and tuba. All of these instruments are played with brass mouthpieces; in order to make a sound out of the instrument, you have to 'buzz' on the mouthpiece (in other words, blow a raspberry!)

### Lower Brass

Mozart writes a wonderfully regal, majestic orchestral adagio opening to Act 2, Scene 28 to set the scene for the trials that Tamino and Papageno are to undergo. The scene opens with trombones, accompanied by strings playing **forte** (loud). This is followed by a call and response between the trombones and strings, and the woodwind and cellos:

#### ▶ LISTEN

### Trumpet & Timpani

Mozart uses the trumpets to play a short **fanfare** (accompanied by timpani) to announce the arrival of Sarastro (Act 1, Scene 17). A fanfare is traditionally played by trumpets and is used to announce the arrival of an important person:

#### ▶ LISTEN

### Activity Idea – KS2-4

Using this fanfare as a starting point, ask pupils to get into small groups and create their own fanfare. This could be played using any classroom instruments you have to hand. Remember that the key is to create something short and striking that will capture people's attention. Why not use your newly composed fanfare at the beginning of a freezeframe activity?

### Did you know?

Have you noticed there are no tubas in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*? The tuba is a relatively new instrument and was introduced to the orchestra over 50 years after *The Magic Flute* was written!



## PERCUSSION

The percussion section has a huge range of instruments which means it can vary greatly in size, depending on what the composer writes for. The percussion section falls into two main areas: **tuned** percussion and **untuned** percussion. In most pieces of orchestral music the composer will write for Timpani (tuned) plus a selection of other percussion instruments (tuned and untuned).

The percussion instruments featured in *The Magic Flute* are: timpani and keyed glockenspiel.

### Timpani

Mozart uses timpani to help signify the dramatic arrival of the Queen of the Night 'She comes, she comes!': this helps the audience feel that they are about to meet a significant character (Act 1, Scene 5):

▶ **LISTEN FROM 1:03**

### Keyed glockenspiel

Mozart uses the keyed glockenspiel to represent the magic bells that are given to Papageno. The keyed glockenspiel is played every time the magic bells are used throughout the opera. This example is taken from Act 2, Scene 23 as we hear Papageno singing of his wish for a wife:

▶ **LISTEN**

### Orchestra Pit

In opera productions, you will notice that the orchestra do not play on the performance stage itself, they play in an **orchestra pit**. This is a specially sunken stage for the orchestra that sits below and just in front of the main stage where the production takes place. The orchestra pit is often dark and you might notice that the orchestra plays with lights on their music stands to help them see their music.

### Conductor

The **conductor** stands at the front of the orchestra pit (usually on a platform box to help them see across the large orchestra). The conductor's job is to keep the orchestra playing in time with one another and with the soloists and chorus on stage. The conductor also carefully balances the sound made by each performer, to ensure that no part dominates another. A conductor will either use a **baton** or their hands to conduct (direct) the orchestra and performers on stage. The conductor reads from a very large **conducting score**; this large book contains music **notation** for each instrument in the orchestra and the singers, together with special performance markings from the composer.

# KEY THEMES

## MAGIC



The theme of magic runs throughout the entire opera, including both magical characters and magical objects. We meet magical characters from the beginning: the Three Ladies (the Queen of the Night's Attendants) suddenly arrive on the scene to kill the serpent and rescue Tamino, alongside the mysterious (and sudden) arrival of the Queen of the Night as she uses her cunning charm and provocative threat on Tamino and Pamina respectively. Papagena is also a magical character as she transforms herself from an Old Woman into a beautiful young woman.

Arguably the most magical objects in the opera are the gifts of the magic bells and the magic flute, gifted to Tamino (magic flute) and Papageno (magic bells) from the Three Ladies. The instruments have magical qualities which, when played, protect the bearer from harm and danger:

*'Oh Prince, receive this gift I bear,  
the Queen consigns it to your care.  
Whatever dangers fate may send you,  
This magic flute will now defend you.  
For when it plays it sings so sweetly  
That evil ways are changed completely  
The man of vice will sin no more  
And hearts of ice begin to thaw'*

**First Lady / Second Lady / Third Lady – Act 1, Scene 5**

## ENLIGHTENMENT



Mozart's opera is often described as being an Enlightenment metaphor. The Enlightenment was a philosophical and intellectual movement which dominated Europe during the time of the 18th Century (the time that Mozart composed *The Magic Flute*). Enlightenment ideals and themes can be found in *The Magic Flute*: liberty of the individual and fraternity are key themes here which we see predominantly in the characters of Tamino and Sarastro. Tamino learns the ideals of Sarastro's brotherhood, and, in seeing his goodness and wisdom, seeks to join the brotherhood by undergoing a series of trials:

*'No fear of death will over-awe me;  
the path of virtue lies before me  
I fight for truth and I shall win  
now let my last ordeal begin'*

**Tamino – Act 2, Scene 28**

# KEY THEMES

## FREEMASONRY



Freemasonry was, at the time of Mozart's opera, a secret male-only organisation. Originating from the guilds of stonemasons and cathedral builders of the Middle Ages, the secret society was set up to promote morality, charity and obedience to the law of the land. As both Mozart and Schikaneder were Freemasons, the opera's libretto includes symbols and references to the rituals of the Freemasons: the number three (the Three Ladies as Attendants of the Queen of the Night) as just one example; the importance of nature, wisdom and reason (Sarastro), along with political symbolism. At the time that Mozart wrote his opera, the Viennese public recognised the political symbolism in *The Magic Flute*; comparisons were drawn between the Queen of the Night and the Austrian Empress Maria Theresa; Tamino was likened to Emperor Joseph (seen as a good figure) and Pamina represented the Austrian people.

### Did you know?

Mozart spent 7 years as a Freemason (during which time he became known as a 'Master Mason'); he would often compose pieces of music for the Freemasons which they still use today.

Other famous Freemasons include George Washington, First President of the United States; Sir Winston Churchill; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; Rudyard Kipling and Oscar Wilde.

## POWER



The desire for power is most frequently seen in Monostatos and the Queen of the Night. The Queen of the Night is a very cunning and deceptive figure and is quick to use other characters to service her own desire for power:

*Alone, abandoned and forsaken  
how I recall that dreadful day  
the day I saw my daughter taken  
An evil man, an evil man stole her away  
In waking, in sleeping, I still hear her weeping  
her trembling, her shaking, her poor heart was breaking.  
I saw her sorrow all too plainly  
'Ah help, ah help!' I heard my daughter say.  
Alas she pleased with me vainly  
For all my power had drained away'*

**Queen of the Night – Act 1, Scene 6**

## BEHIND THE SCENES



In addition to the Conductor, Director, Soloists, Orchestra and Chorus, did you know that there is a vast team working hard behind the scenes for every single opera production that Opera North stages each season?



This is what the team looks like:

### Technical Team

- Stage Managers
- Stage Technicians
- Stage Wingmen
- Flymen
- Sound & Video Engineers/Manager
- Lighting Crew
- Electricians

### Wardrobe Team

- Costume Supervisors
- Wigs/Make-up Supervisor
- Wig Supervisors/Assistants
- Sewing Assistants

For each opera production, a team is assembled to work alongside the Director to ensure that their overall vision for the opera comes to fruition in the form of the set, costumes, lighting and sometimes supplementary video or sound. The team for *The Magic Flute* for Schools is as follows:

**Conductor** David Cowan

**Set & Costume Designer** Colin Richmond

**Lighting Designer** Chris Davey

**Video Designer** Douglas O'Connell

The Opera North Technical and Wardrobe Teams work closely with the Director to ensure their designs for the set and costumes are in keeping with the Director's overall vision for the opera.

## ACTIVITY IDEA – KS2-4 (ART & DESIGN)

### Costumes

- Using *The Magic Flute* costume sketches interspersed in the pack (and below) as inspiration, have a go at designing and making your own costumes for the main characters in the opera
- Costume changes are often used within the opera to represent a different scene setting or a development in the character's emotion, mood or story. Tamino is one example of this: in the sketches below, you can see he is wearing a different costume during the scene of the serpent attack, compared to the scenes where he is in Sarastro's palace. Why not have a go at designing your own costume changes for characters in the opera?
- Present your ideas to the rest of the class, explaining the inspiration and your ideas behind your design
- Why not come dressed in your costume to the matinee performance?



Tamino's costume following the serpent attack (Act 1, Scene 1)

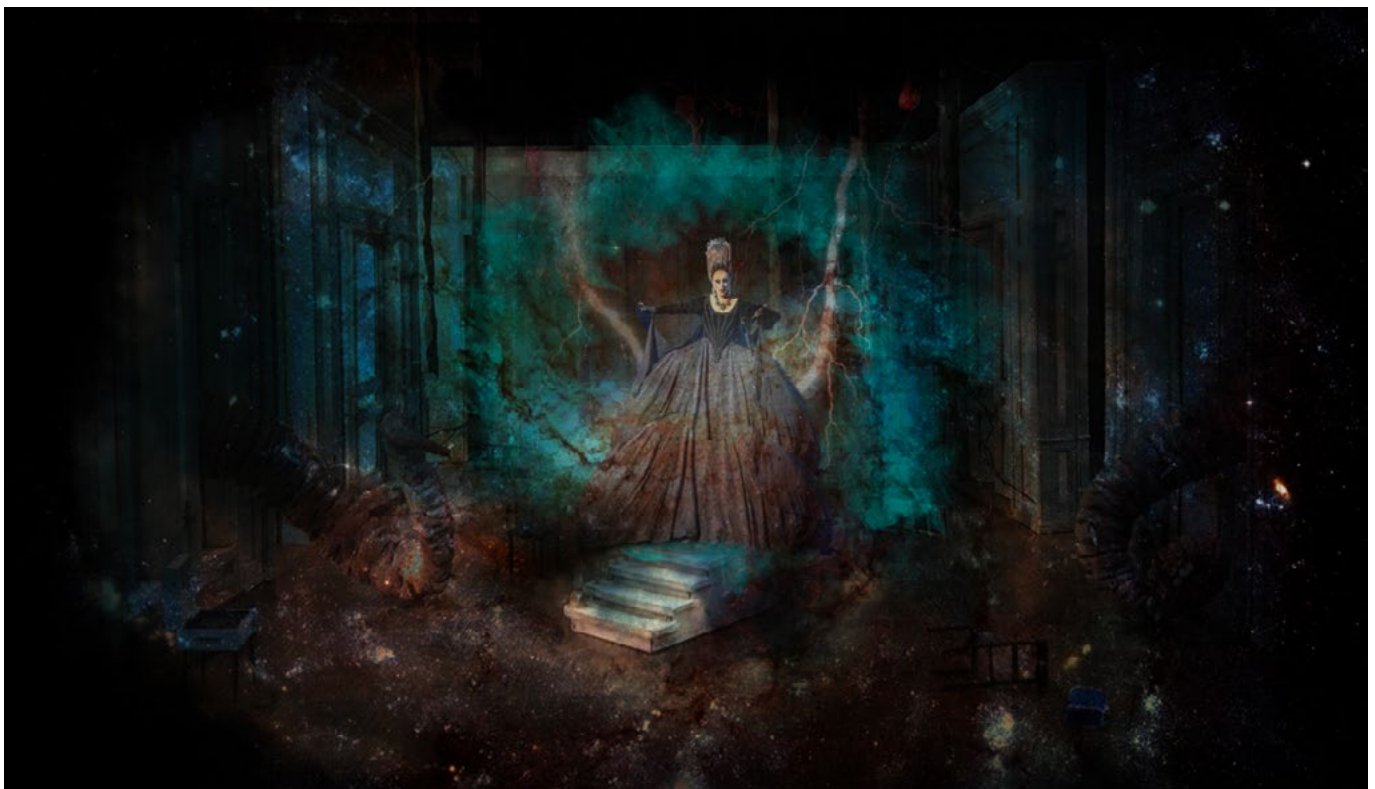


Tamino's costume during the scenes set in Sarastro's palace (Act 1, Scene 15 onwards)

## ACTIVITY IDEA – KS2-4 (ART & DESIGN)

### Surroundings

- Using the set design below for the Queen of the Night as inspiration, have a go at designing your own set for a scene from the opera (e.g. – when Tamino meets Papageno in Act 1, Scene 2)
- Think about whether you want to portray a specific character within that scene (e.g. – Papageno) and how that might influence your design choices (perhaps the inclusion of feathers, empty bird cages etc)
- Think also about the feeling you want your scene to create... do you want to make the audience feel happy/sad/fearful? How might you create this feeling within your scene... think about choice of colour, lighting and sound.
- Your challenge is to only use existing props and materials in your classroom, so be creative! You might want to think about using:
  - Elements of film or photos as a backdrop
  - Recorded or live sound to help create an atmosphere – use live musical instruments where possible
  - The use of light to create shadows
  - Create simple props to help set the scene



# GLOSSARY

**Act** – The main division of an opera i.e. Act I, Act II etc.

**Aria** – A long accompanied song for solo voice

**Baton** – A thin stick used by a conductor to direct an orchestra

**Call & Response** – A style of singing in which a melody sung by one singer is responded to or echoed by one or more singers

**Chest Voice** – Denoting notes which are sung in the voice's lower register

**Composer** – A person who creates music, either by musical notation or oral tradition. Literally 'one who puts together'

**Conducting Score** – A book of musical notation used by the conductor containing all of the music for the instrumental parts, chorus and vocal soloists

**Conductor** – The person who directs the performance of the orchestra and the musical performance of the singers

**Duet** – A performance by two singers (or instrumentalists)

**Fanfare** – A short ceremonial melody or flourish played on brass instruments, typically to introduce something or someone important

**Flymen** – People who are in charge of raising and lowering scenery during the opera performance

**Fugue** – A piece of music with several different melody lines. One melody enters first and the others join in later

**Harmony** – Harmony is created when two or more notes are sung or played at the same time

**Head Voice** – Denoting notes which are sung in the voice's higher register

**Homophony** – Music played in block chords

**Hybrid** – Something made by combining two or more different elements

**Librettist** – The person who writes the libretto for an opera

**Libretto** – The text of the opera, like the script in a film or a play. Literally 'little book'

**Melody** – The main tune of a piece of music

**Minor Key** – Typically based on the accidentals of the natural minor scale. A minor key often lends a sad or darker tone to the music

**Notation** – The written symbols in a score that performers read to perform a piece of music

**Opera Chorus** – A group of singers who sing together in the opera

**Orchestra** – The group of instruments (strings, woodwind, brass, percussion) that play the musical accompaniment in an opera

**Orchestral Interlude** – A short piece of music played between the longer sections of the opera

**Orchestral Overture** – A piece played by the orchestra at the beginning of an opera

**Orchestra Pit** – The lowered area in front of the stage in a theatre where the orchestra performs

**Piano Sonata** – A solo piece for piano. Often written in three or four movements

**Score** – A book of musical notation showing all of the music of the opera, including the instrumental parts, chorus and vocal soloists

**Solo** – A song or piece of music sung or played by just one performer

**Singspiel** – A form of German light opera, typically with spoken dialogue, popular especially in the late 18th century

**Sonata Form** – A musical structure consisting of three main sections: an exposition, a development, and a recapitulation

**Staccato** – A note which is to be played or sung in a sharply detached way

**Stage Managers** – In charge of organising a production. Organises both the people and practical elements of an opera

**Stage Technicians** – In charge of light and sound

**Stage Wingmen** – Work on set-building and get-outs

**String Quartet** – One of the most popular chamber ensembles in Classical music. A musical ensemble consisting of four string instruments: two violins, viola, cello

**Symphony** – A work written for orchestra, mainly consisting of four movements (the first movement written in sonata form)

**Timbre** – The character of a musical sound or voice as distinct from its pitch and intensity

**Tremolo** – When a stringed instrument produces a wavering effect in a musical tone, either by rapid repetition of a note, or rapid repetition of alternating tones

**Tuned percussion** – Instruments that, when struck, produce an audible note

**Untuned percussion** – Instruments that are struck and produce no clear note

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## FURTHER READING FOR KS3–4

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### Composer & Librettist

#### Biography

**Mozart Hub on Classic FM**

**Did Mozart really transcribe Allegri's Miserere?**

**Mozart and his eccentric letter writing - some stand out quotes**

**The world of the opera: The composer and the librettist for KS3–4**

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### Synopsis

**Animated Plot Summary**

**Freemasonry and *The Magic Flute***

**Synopsis for KS3–4**

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### Meet the Orchestra

**For more information about the instruments of the orchestra, refer to this helpful guide from the Philharmonia Orchestra**

**Orchestra for KS3–4**

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## FURTHER READING FOR KS3–4

# THE WORLD OF THE OPERA: THE COMPOSER AND THE LIBRETTIST

### THE COMPOSER: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



The composer is a person who writes music.

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was the composer of *The Magic Flute*
- He was born in Salzburg, Austria on 27 January 1756
- Mozart was a child prodigy and composed some of his first pieces of music at the age of five
- Mozart gave his first public performance at Salzburg University in September 1761 at the age of five
- Mozart started his musical career as a performer of the piano, touring around Europe between ages 6-8 with his father. When he returned home, he composed his first opera when he was only 11 years old, and it was written in Latin
- When Mozart was 14 it is believed that he wrote down an entire piece from memory, after hearing it performed just once in the Vatican in Rome! The piece is Allegri's *Miserere* and has five different voice parts in the choir. It's said he went back to hear the piece again, to compare his own score with what the choir was singing.
- When Mozart was 26 he married Constanze Weber. They had six children together, but only two survived.
- Mozart was known for being very bad with his money. He became rich and famous from his new operas very quickly, but was known for his extravagant spending
- Mozart died very young from kidney failure only a few months after the premiere of *The Magic Flute*. He was only 35 years old.

#### Did you know?

Mozart's nickname was 'Wolfie' but his real name was Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart. He composed over 600 works, and had a fierce rivalry with the composer Antonio Salieri, who wrote more than 40 operas. When Mozart died, many people thought Salieri had poisoned him!

When Mozart was 10 years old, scientists of the Royal Society put him through a series of tests to prove he was a child and not a skilled dwarf.

### THE LIBRETTIST: Emanuel Schikaneder



The librettist is a person who writes the text for an opera. A libretto is very similar to a film script – it contains all the information needed to tell a story.

- Emmanuel Schikaneder was born to a very poor family in 1751 in the state of Bavaria, Germany.
- Schikaneder trained in his local cathedral as a singer, and as he grew up began to work in the theatre, performing opera and ballet.
- When he was only 22 his first opera was performed in Innsbruck. It was a Singspiel, which is known as a type of opera. In the first performance Schikaneder was the librettist, composer and principal singer.
- By 1780 he had set up his own theatre company in Vienna.
- In Autumn 1780 Schikaneder became a friend of the Mozart family. Mozart and his parents often played darts together with Schikaneder.
- While in Vienna, Schikaneder became more interested in opera, and sometimes asked composers to write music to his own stories.
- Schikaneder wrote the libretto for *The Magic Flute* after Mozart became involved in his theatre company. Schikaneder performed the role of Papageno in the first performance.
- The libretto of *The Magic Flute* is believed to have come from a number of sources and is agreed to be a continuation of a series of fairy tale operas produced by Schikaneder's theatre group.
- Schikaneder wrote many works where he starred as the leading role, including performing many of Mozart's operas.
- The performances at his theatre (Theater auf der Wieden) were very expensive and the company was in a lot of debt, until Schikaneder made a new wealthy business partner and the company was saved.
- Beethoven lived for a while at the Theater auf der Wieden whilst he composed his opera *Fidelio* which premiered in the theatre.
- By 1804, Schikaneder's career was on the decline; his concerts were not selling well so he sold the company and left to live in the countryside. He lost a lot of his money in this time following an 1811 currency devaluation
- He died very poor in 1912 aged 61, after being stricken with what doctors called 'insanity'.

# FURTHER READING FOR KS3–4

## SYNOPSIS

The opera is written in two **acts** (or chapters), which each tell a different part of the story.

### Act 1

Tamino, a prince, lost in a far away land, is being chased by a large serpent. Three Ladies appear just in time and kill the serpent, before returning back to their leader, the Queen of the Night. The colourful bird-catcher Papageno arrives and tells Tamino he killed the snake himself. The Three Ladies return and show Tamino a picture of the Queen's daughter, Pamina who Tamino falls in love with instantly. The Queen of the Night arrives and promises Pamina's hand in marriage to Tamino if he can rescue her from the wicked Sarastro. They give Papageno some magic bells and to Tamino a magic flute which will protect them on their quest.

Papageno goes ahead to Sarastro's temple and frightens away Sarastro's slave Monostatos who is guarding Pamina in chains. Papageno tells Pamina he is there to save her and that Tamino is in love with her.

Tamino has been guided to Sarastro's temple by three spirits. On the third try, he is let in by an old priest who explains that Sarastro is kind and the Queen of the Night is evil. Tamino is excited to meet Pamina and plays his magic flute, which charms the animals in the surrounding forests.

Papageno and Pamina hear the magic flute and hurry to find Tamino, but Monostatos stops them. Papageno rings his magic bells and Monostatos and his slaves dance away from them. Pamina and Tamino see each other first time and fall in love. Sarastro arrives, promising Pamina that he will eventually free her. He believes that Tamino could be a good leader in the priesthood, and tells Tamino that, if he wants to marry her, he must go through three tests of wisdom (or trials) to prove he is good enough to be her husband, and Papageno will also be rewarded with a partner. Both agree.

### Act 2

Tamino and Papageno begin their first test: they are not allowed to speak. The Three Ladies arrive to test them. Papageno cannot keep quiet but Tamino passes the test.

The Queen of the Night appears in Pamina's room and gives her daughter a knife instructing her she must murder Sarastro, singing her famous aria *Der Hölle Rache* (‘**The Wrath of Hell is Burning in My Bosom**’).<sup>\*</sup> Pamina is torn between her love for Tamino, and her duty to her mother.

Back in the temple, Tamino and Papageno face their second test: still they must remain silent, but this time they are not allowed to drink. An Old Woman appears and offers them a glass of water. Again, Tamino refuses, but Papageno cannot help himself, accepting the water and striking up a conversation. The three boy spirits appear reminding the pair to remain silent as they take them to the next tasks. Pamina appears but Tamino refuses to speak to her, determined to pass the tests so he can save and marry her. Pamina does not know of his challenge and leaves with sadness, feeling that Tamino does not love her anymore.

Next Papageno faces a challenge alone – he meets the same Old Woman who offered him water, who tells him he must commit his love to her or he will be alone forever. All Papageno wants is to spend his life with someone else so he agrees to marry the Old Woman. Like a fairytale, she turns into a beautiful young woman called Papagena.

In another room, Pamina is so upset at the thought that Tamino does not love her anymore, that she tries to kill herself, but the three spirits intervene and bring her to Tamino. Tamino is about to face his final two tests: walking through fire and water. Pamina and Tamino agree to complete the final tests together, and are protected from the elements by Tamino's magic flute.

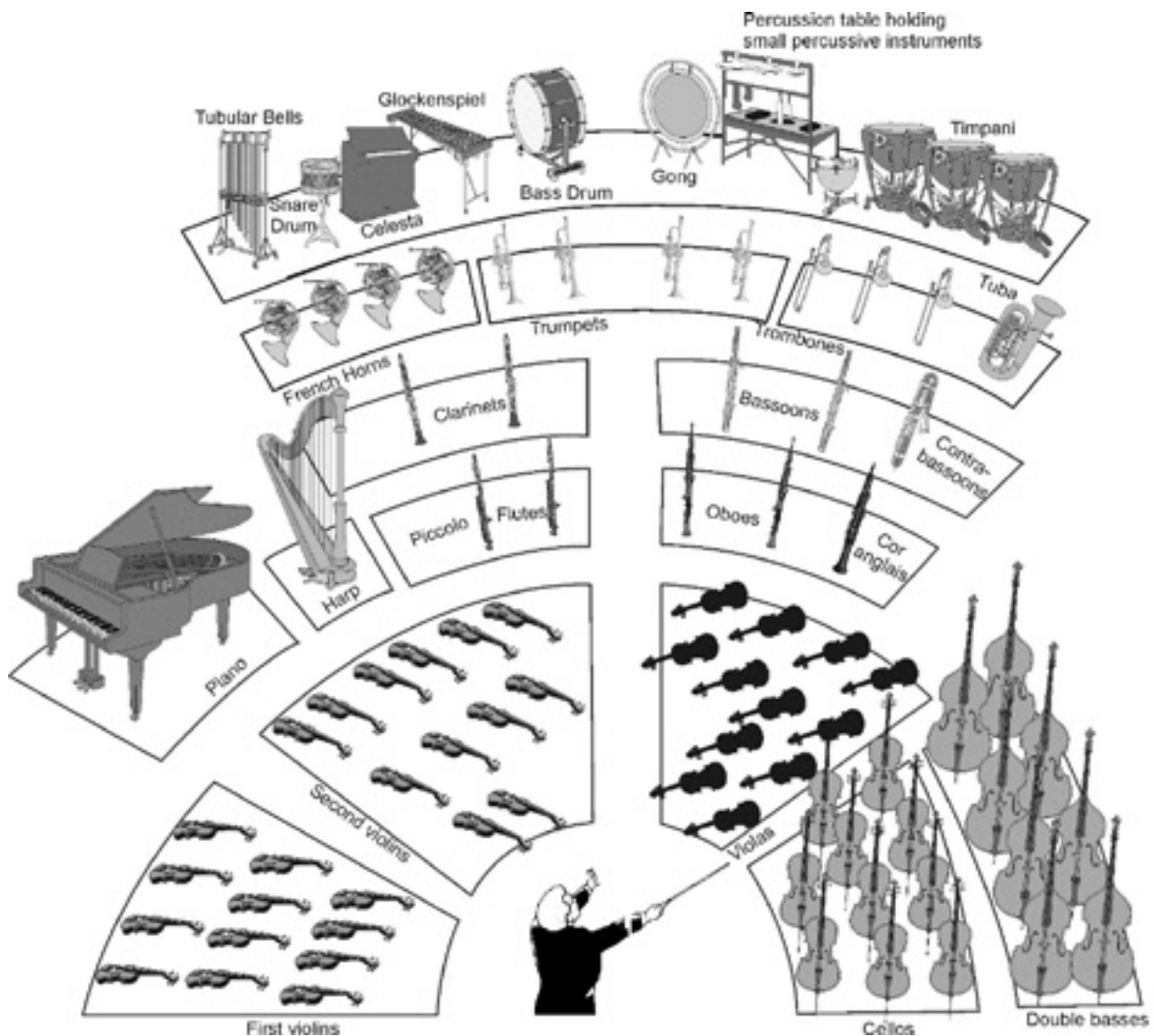
Monostatos has switched sides from Sarastro to the Queen of the Night. They arrive with the Three Ladies in an attempt to destroy Sarastro's palace...

**What will become of our characters and how will the opera end...? All will be revealed in the Schools' Matinee performance.**

<sup>\*</sup> Queen of the Night: Diana Damrau, taken from The Royal Opera House's 2003 production of *The Magic Flute*

# MEET THE ORCHESTRA

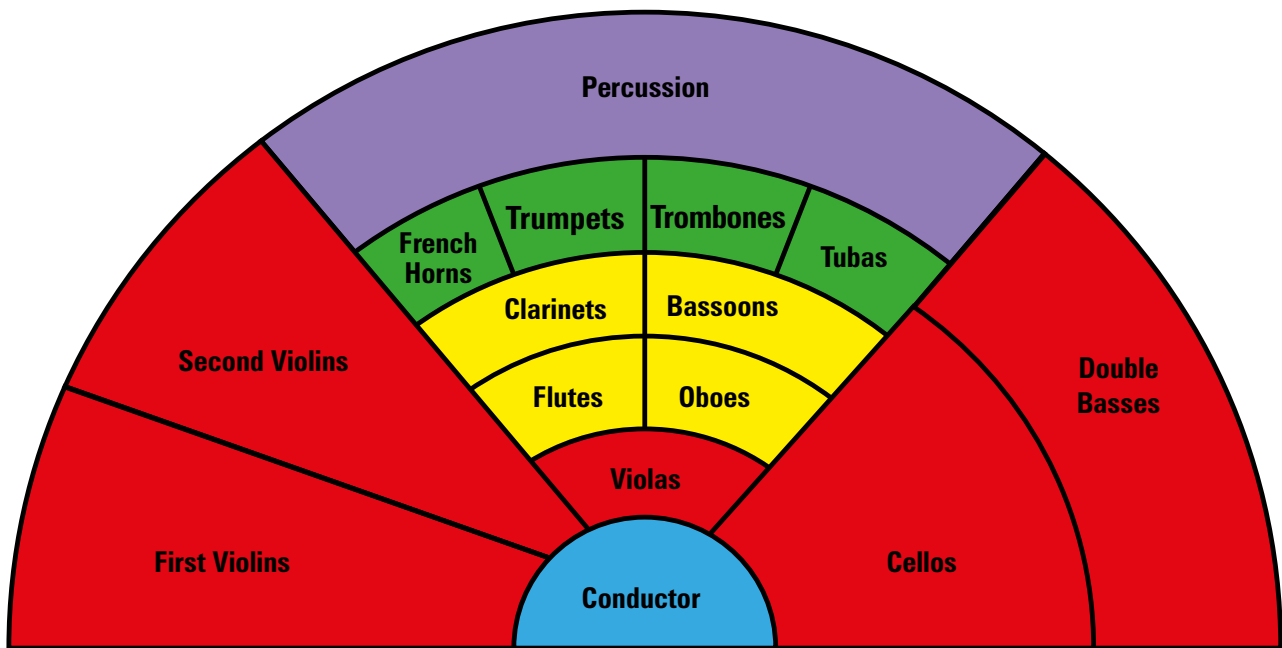
## KS3 – 4 FURTHER READING



The Opera North Orchestra is made up of a group of approximately 54 professional musicians, each of whom belong to a section (or family) within the orchestra, dependant on the instrument they play. The role of the orchestra in an opera production is to play the musical accompaniment to the opera. The orchestra also has its own **solo** moments within the opera where it plays on its own. These parts of the opera are known as:

- The **orchestral overture** - this is the introduction to the opera which helps to set the scene for the audience. The overture will often include famous musical themes which the audience will then hear later on in the production
- **Interlude** – the orchestral interlude is played during a scene change or between acts to mark a change in mood or atmosphere

# LET'S MEET THE FOUR SECTIONS OF THE ORCHESTRA:



**Strings**

**Woodwind**

**Brass**

**Percussion**

# STRINGS

The string section is made up of four instruments: violin, viola, cello, double bass.

## Let's find out more about each instrument

### Violin

- The violin is the smallest member of the string family.
- It is made of wood and has four strings (G D A E) which can be played with a bow made of horse hair (producing a smooth legato sound) or by being plucked with a finger (producing a detached staccato sound)
- The range of notes that the violin can play is from G to G; it can play higher than any other string instrument. Its music is notated (written in) the treble clef
- In the orchestra, the violins are divided up into two sections: First Violins & Second Violins. The First Violins usually play the melody whilst the Second Violins often play the harmony

### Viola

- The viola is slightly larger and can play lower notes than the violin; it has a rich, warm sound.
- It has four strings (C G D A) and its note range is from C to A.
- Some of its lower music is notated in the alto clef, whilst its higher music is notated in the treble clef
- It can also be played legato with a bow, or staccato by being plucked

### Cello

- The cello is much larger than the viola – so large, in fact, that it cannot be rested on a shoulder to be played; it has a large spike at the base so it can balance on the floor and it rests in between the cellist's legs to keep it in place whilst playing
- The cello is known as the 'tenor' voice in the string section; it has a beautiful rich, melancholic tone and is able to play expressive melodies and bass lines
- The cello has four strings (C G D A) and its note range is from C to C. It can play all the way from the bass clef through to the treble clef
- It can be played legato with a bow, or staccato by being plucked

### Double Bass

- The Double Bass is the largest member of the string family and it can play the lowest notes
- It has four strings (E A D G) and its note range is from D to G, played in the bass clef
- The double bass generally plays rhythmic notes, supporting the bass line or harmonies within an orchestra. Occasionally the double bass will have its own solo moment
- It can be played legato with a bow, or staccato by being plucked
- Double Bases also feature heavily in jazz music – you will often hear them playing staccato notes

# WOODWIND

The woodwind section is made up of eight instruments: piccolo, flute, oboe, Cor Anglais, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon and contrabassoon

## Let's find out more about each instrument

### Piccolo

- The piccolo is the smallest member of the woodwind family
- The name is taken from the Italian word piccolo which means 'small'. It is half the size of a flute and can play an octave (8 notes) higher. Its note range is from D to B and it plays in the treble clef
- Flute players will often alternate between playing the flute and the piccolo
- It has a high-pitched sound which adds real clarity and brightness to the orchestra
- Most piccolos are made out of wood

### Flute

- The flute is one of the most well known instruments of the orchestra
- It is made out of metal and is the oldest known instrument
- Its note range is from C to C and it plays in the treble clef
- Composers often write beautiful solo melodies for the flute - listen to how the flute opens and features throughout Debussy's Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune <https://youtu.be/jlLoXvamfZw?si=PibnXMDpB8WGiG40>

### Oboe

- The oboe is known as the soprano voice of the double reed family
- It is made out of wood and is played with a double reed – it is called double reed because it consists of two pieces of cane which vibrate against each other to produce a sound
- The sounds of an oboe is often described as 'pastoral' because in the past double reed instruments were used in folk music
- Its note range is from Bb to G, played in the treble clef
- The instrument has a haunting, melancholic sound; it often has solo moments within the orchestra, such as this example from Richard Strauss's tone poem Don Juan <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzOerbppbb8> (LISTEN FROM 7:32-9:05)

### Cor Anglais

- The cor anglais (also referred to as the English Horn) is closely connected to the oboe. It is also a double reed instrument but is much larger than the oboe and has a deeper, richer tone, and is therefore known as the alto voice of the double reed family
- Its note range is from A to Bb, played in the treble clef
- The cor anglais is given some of the most beautiful solo melodies ever written for orchestra. Listen to this famous solo line from Dvorak's Symphony No.9, Movement 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqVljsX-aEc> (LISTEN FROM 0:55-2:16)

# WOODWIND

## Clarinet

- The clarinet is made out of wood and is played with a single reed attached to a mouthpiece
- Its note range is from D to Bb, played in the treble clef
- It has an incredible range and is an extremely versatile instrument, able to play both romantic legato melodies alongside short staccato rhythms, ranging from pianissimo (very quietly) to forte (loud). The clarinet also features heavily in jazz music.
- Listen to this solo clarinet passage from Rachmaninov's Symphony No.2, Movement 3  
[https://youtu.be/QBy\\_AChvEJs?t=1804](https://youtu.be/QBy_AChvEJs?t=1804) (LISTEN FROM 30:06)

## Bass Clarinet

- The bass clarinet is related to the clarinet but is much larger and can play much lower notes. Its body is made out of wood but it has a metal upturned bell at the end and the top of the instrument is bent into a crook shape to which the single reed is attached to the mouthpiece
- Its note range is from Bb to C, played in the bass clef
- Listen to a bass clarinet solo from Shostakovich's Symphony No.8, 5th Movement  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtTU77w9Ing>

## Bassoon

- The bassoon is part of the double reed family and is one of the lowest sounding instruments of the woodwind section
- It is a versatile and expressive instrument with a warm tone which blends seamlessly with the rest of the orchestra
- Its note range is from Bb to D, played in the bass clef & tenor clef
- Listen to the beginning of Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring* which features the solo bassoon  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xfg9IIXhcPk>

## Contrabassoon

- The contrabassoon is also referred to as a 'double bassoon' as it is twice the size of a standard bassoon. The instrument is doubled over to account for its length
- The instrument plays an octave (8 notes) lower than the bassoon, and it can play some of the lowest notes in the orchestra. Its note range is from Bb to A, played in the bass clef
- Ludwig van Beethoven was the first composer to include a contrabassoon in symphonic repertoire in his Symphony No.5
- The contrabassoon often doubles the bass line within the orchestra, but occasionally it has more exposed moments. Listen to how the contrabassoon features as a solo instrument at the beginning of Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu9KcFsB84I> (LISTEN FROM 0:40-1:18)

# BRASS

The brass section is made up of five instruments: horn, trumpet, tenor trombone, bass trombone and tuba. All of these instruments are played with brass mouthpieces; in order to make a sound out of the instrument, you have to 'buzz' on the mouthpiece (in other words, blow a raspberry!)

## Let's find out more about each instrument

### Horn

- The horn is a brass instrument made of tubing wrapped into a coil with a flared bell.
- Its note range is from D to F, played in the bass clef
- The horn is very versatile and is played with valves which help to produce different notes. It can play very softly piano or very loudly forte, either as a solo instrument or as part of the wider horn section; Gustav Mahler was one of the composers who wrote some wonderful melodies for the horn within the orchestra.

### Trumpet

- The trumpet is the soprano voice of the brass family
- Its note range is from E to E, played in the treble clef
- Valves were developed for the trumpet in 1814 by Heinrich Stölzel, which meant the instrument could be used in a much more versatile way within the orchestra
- Historically, the trumpet has been used as a means to attract attention or send messages and is therefore known for playing loudly. One such example would be in the form of a fanfare – listen to Copland's Fanfare for the Common Man to hear what a fanfare sounds like: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdqjcMmjeaA>

### Tenor Trombone

- The tenor trombone one of the lower instruments of the brass family. It is different from the horn and trumpet – it doesn't have any valves, so the pitch is changed by using seven chromatic slide positions, with each position lowering the pitch
- Its note range is from E to C, played in the bass clef (sometimes also in the tenor clef)
- Historically, the trombone was always associated with the supernatural; listen to how Richard Wagner used the trombones to play the leitmotif (or short recurring musical phrase) of the Walkürenritt (Ride of the Valkyries) at the beginning of Act 3 of Wagner's opera *Die Walküre*.

### Bass Trombone

- The bass trombone is similar to the tenor trombone but with a longer slide and double tubing
- It can play as one of the loudest instruments of the orchestra; its note range is from E to B, played in the bass clef
- Listen to just how low the bass trombone can play underpinning the bass line in the finale of Scene 4 - Entrance of the Gods into Valhalla from Wagner's opera *Das Rheingold* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b80Jw8MuZxo> (LISTEN FROM 5:40-6:31)

# BRASS

## Tuba

- The tuba is the largest bass instrument of the brass section
- The tuba has valves which means it can play chromatically and it is coiled up into a tube shape
- Its note range is from E to C, played in the bass clef. It can play as low as the contrabassoon or the double bass
- Often overlooked as simply playing the bass line, the tuba can be used to great emotional and powerful effect – not only within the brass section, but as part of the whole orchestra. The tuba adds a depth and richness in tone that cannot be equalled.
- Listen to Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's Flight of the Bumblebee in an arrangement for tuba – listen to how fast the tuba player is required to play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-NVMsj6IXA>

# PERCUSSION

The percussion section has a huge range of instruments which means it can vary greatly in size, depending on what the composer writes for. The percussion section falls into two main areas: tuned percussion and untuned percussion. In most pieces of orchestral music, the composer will write for timpani (tuned) plus a selection of other percussion instruments (tuned and untuned).

## Let's find out more about each instrument

### Timpani

- Timpani are very large types of drums. Made out of a copper bowl, they have a large calfskin drumhead stretched over the top. This is hit with a timpani stick to produce a sound
- Its note range is from D to G, played in the bass clef
- Foot pedals are used to change the pitch
- Timpani will often play bass notes of chords to enhance the bass section of the orchestra
- You will often hear something called a timpani roll within the orchestra – this is when the timpanist rapidly strikes the drum, alternating between left and right sticks

### Bass Drum

- The bass drum is the largest unpitched drum in the orchestra and it has two heads

### Cymbals

- Metal cymbals are generally used in orchestral music for effect. They can create a huge sound which cuts through the orchestra

# PERCUSSION

## Triangle

- The triangle is a bar of metal bent into a triangular shape. It is played with a thin metal beater

## Tambourine

- The tambourine is a hand held hoop drum. It has metal plates around the edge called jingles

## Tam-Tam

- The tam-tam is another name for a gong – it can produce a very loud sound when hit with a beater

## Castanets

- The castanet consists of two pieces of wood joined on one edge by a string. They are held in the hand and used to produce clicks for rhythmic accents or a rattling sound consisting of a rapid series of clicks. Castanets often symbolize dance music

## Xylophone

- The name xylophone is Greek for 'wood sound'
- The xylophone is made up of wooden bars (or keys) which are hit with a beater (either hard or soft to change the sound)
- Its note range is from F to A, played in the treble clef
- The xylophone started to be used in the orchestra from 1860

## Glockenspiel

- The glockenspiel features a set of metal bars (or keys), which is hit with metal beaters
- It produces a very clear, bright sound
- Its note range is from G to Bb, played in the treble clef

## Thunder Sheet

- The thunder sheet (a huge piece of very thin metal, often suspended on a frame and shaken vigorously by the percussionist to produce a thunderous sound) is used to great effect to depict the explosion of the Gingerbread House in Humperdink's opera *Hansel & Gretel* towards the end of Act 3.

## ORCHESTRA PIT

In opera productions, you will notice that the orchestra do not play on the performance stage itself; they play in an orchestra pit. This is a specially sunken stage for the orchestra that sits below and just in front of the main stage where the production takes place. The orchestra pit is often dark and you might notice that the orchestra plays with lights on their music stands to help them see their music.

## CONDUCTOR

The conductor stands at the front of the orchestra pit (usually stood on a platform box to help them see across the whole of the orchestra). The conductor's job is to keep the orchestra playing in time with one another and with the soloists and chorus on stage. The conductor also carefully balances the sound made by each performer, to ensure that no part dominates another. A conductor will either use a baton or their hands to conduct (direct) the orchestra and performers on stage. The conductor reads from a very large conducting score; this large book contains music notation for each instrument in the orchestra and the singers, together with special performance markings from the composer.

# GLOSSARY

## Alto Clef

A musical symbol in a piece of music that indicates the pitch of the notes. Alto clef is lower than the treble clef but higher than the tenor clef and is used for some viola and cello music

## Arpeggio

A musical technique where notes in a chord are sung one after another rather than together

## Bass Clef

A musical symbol in a piece of music that indicates the pitch of the notes. Bass clef is used for the lowest notes, it is used by instruments such as the cello, double bass, bassoon and many more

## Baton

A thin stick used by a conductor to direct an orchestra

## Chord

When more than one note is played at the same time a chord is formed

## Chromatic

A musical scale which uses every note as it goes up or down

## Conducting Score

A book of musical notation used by the conductor containing all of the music for the instrumental parts, chorus and vocal soloists

## Conductor

The person who directs the performance of the orchestra and the musical performance of the singers

## Forte

An Italian word meaning the music must be played loudly

## Glissando

A musical technique where the instrumentalist or singer 'slides' between notes

## Legato

An Italian word meaning the music must be played smoothly

## Leitmotif

A short recurring musical phrase usually linked to a specific character or theme

## Notated

Music that is written down

## Notation

The written symbols in a score that performers read to perform a piece of music

## Octave

A series of eight notes where the top and bottom note will be same pitch but one will be higher than the other

## Orchestra

The group of instruments (strings, woodwind, brass, percussion) that play the musical accompaniment in an opera

## Orchestral Interlude

A short piece of music played between the longer sections of the opera

## Orchestral Overture

A piece played by the orchestra at the beginning of an opera

## Orchestra Pit

The lowered area in front of the stage in a theatre where the orchestra performs

## Pianissimo

An Italian word meaning the music must be played very quietly

## Rhythmic

Music that is played in a particular rhythm

## Solo

A song or piece of music sung or played by just one performer

## Staccato

An Italian word meaning the music must be played short and detached

## Tenor Clef

A musical symbol in a piece of music that indicates the pitch of the notes. Tenor clef is higher than the Bass clef but lower than the Alto clef. It is used for some bassoon and trombone music

## Treble Clef

A musical symbol in a piece of music that indicates the pitch of the notes. Treble clef is higher than the Alto clef and is used for higher notes. It is used for many instruments including Violin, Flute and Clarinet

## Tuned

A tuned instrument produces notes of a specific pitch

## Untuned

An untuned instrument, such as some percussion, produces no clear pitch when played

## Valve

Added to some brass instruments, such as the trumpet, in the 1800s to allow them to produce a greater range of notes

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