

Select the RIGHT instrument

Get to know the options.

1. There are about 20 instruments in a Western Classical Orchestra. Look for the names & lists later in this document.
2. Several instruments are repeated. For example in a 60-piece orchestra you may have as many as 10 1st violins, 10 2nd violins, 8 violas and 6 cellos forming the backbone of the orchestra. You may have 2 double basses. You may have 3 flutes, 3 oboes, 4 clarinets and 2 bassoons. 2 Trumpets, 2 horns, 2 trombones and 2 tubas. A timpani, a xylophone, an English horn and Euphonium.
3. Not part of the Classical Orchestra are many other instruments in the world. Note there is no piano NOR keyboard, nor guitar NOT even the classical guitar.
4. However there are another 20 odd OTHER main OTHER instruments used occasionally. These include piano, the classical guitar, pipe-organ, harp, harpsichord, recorder etc.
5. A key to orchestra instrument choice includes; intonation and range of an instrument; volume of an instrument; grouping of instruments; balance of sound; auditory compatibility etc.
6. Just selecting an instrument is perhaps an easier part. More difficult is the cost. Can you afford it? Cost of its maintenance & repair. Do you have place in your home? How do you carry it around? Can you find a good teacher close to home or work? How expensive will music lessons be over many years? Will you get chances to play & perform your instrument as you learn and once you have reached specific levels of skill & competence.
7. Assuming years of investment & practice – ie. money & time; what is the genre, style & repertoire, solo or ensemble, band or group with music that you would like to achieve? This is an oft neglected first question before you choose a music instrument.

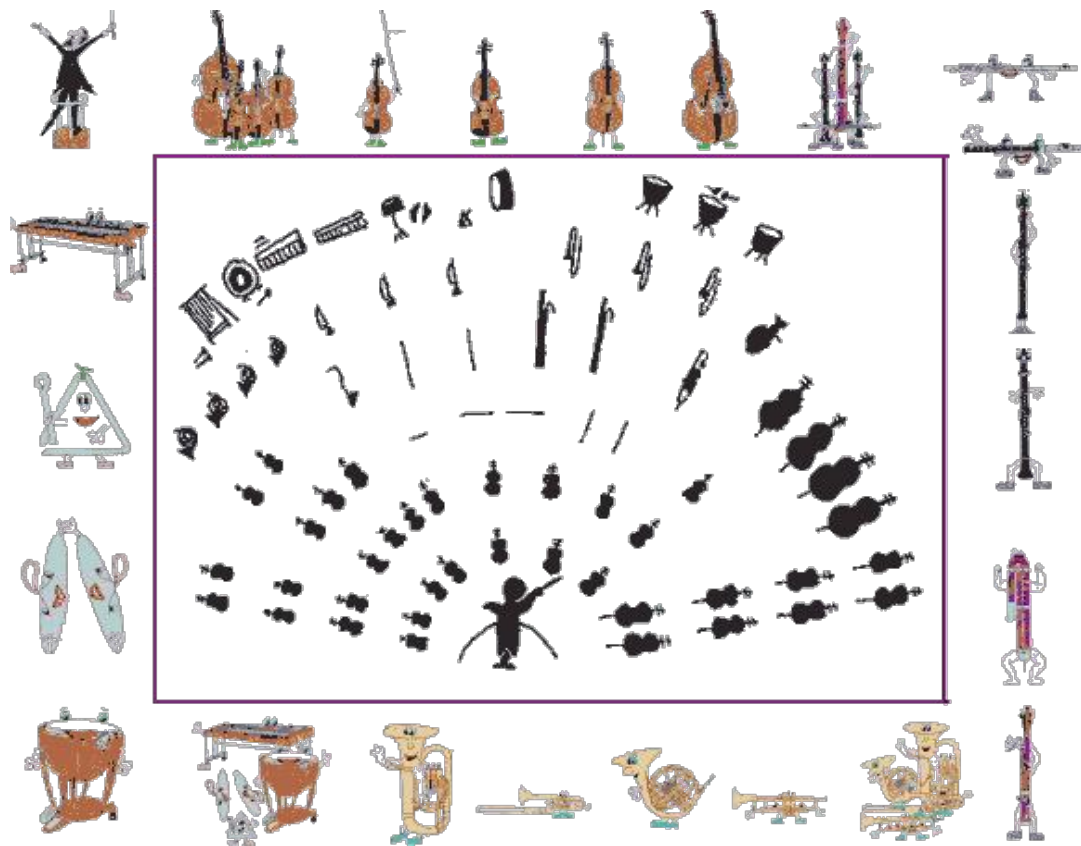


The discipline of a western classical orchestra is "classical". You perform your "works" in an envelope of silences. No mobiles, crying babies, shuffling of feet, creaking of chairs nor audience with colds. No cheering in between.

Each instrument player is one of the best in his or her business. Mostly professional they could be amateurs coming in only for this performance.

Dress code is sacrosanct.

Apart from the manager, event handlers, behind the scenes etc. the CONDUCTOR is a key person. He or she may have chosen the "work" to perform. Decides on the mix and balance and numbers of instruments; the speed and/or tempo of the piece; the volume and many other interpretations of the "work" as he or she, see fit. In many ways it's the Conductors Version of the same old classical piece of "work". It's like drinking and appreciating the same wine, the same caviar. Either you get it or you don't.



The Classical orchestra is essentially grouped into 4 key sections.

1. The strings Section - 1st violins. 2nd violins. Violas. Cellos. Double Bases.
2. The Woodwinds Section – Concert Flutes, Clarinets, Oboes & Bassoons. Also part of this section if and when used are English horns, Saxophones and Recorders.
3. The Brass Section – Trumpets, Horns, Trombones, Tubas. Also when used in this section are Euphoniums, Cornets etc.
4. Rhythm & rhythmic percussion – Timpani, Xylophone & Marimba. Also the piano and classical guitar when used. Rhythmic percussion instruments include the piano, classical guitar, harp, harpsichord, clavier etc.

A 36-piece Marching Band

Your (or your child) could be a part of Marching Band; a Dance Band or an Outdoor Band. The instrument mix and layout could be as follows. NOTE : It's the same set of instruments – keeping outdoor, mobility etc. in mind.



Why are we telling you all this?

The ubiquitous "pop-guitar" and "pop-keyboard" of modern times and its vast, enormous popularity is COMPLETELY based on your understanding of the above and earlier Western Classical Orchestra.

Let us see how.

1. It combines the "notes" of several instruments. Played as chords on a "guitar" or 4 fingers on a "keyboard" (2 fingers on the right hand + 2 fingers on the left hand).
2. The "pop-keyboard" has built-in rhythms. It can have 96-note polyphony – ie. When programmed can play 96 notes a time – more than the 10 fingers on your hand.
3. Both have volume. Electrified and Amplified. One instrument is enough – we don't need 10 of each.
4. The "pop-keyboard" can have the sound completely changed. To sound like any other ALL other instruments. That is NOT the other instrument can be discerned only by a trained ear and sometimes can fool even the best of music experts. Just listen to some recordings.
5. The "pop-guitar" is unique in that with a pickup or electric the sound is passed through phasers, shapers and distortion to provide an infinite number of ANY sound that you want. Unlimited choice for the "player" and "listener".
6. However the combining of a "lead guitar", "bass guitar", "rhythm guitar" and "drums" is EXACTLY that of a western classical orchestra. While they may sound different to a listener. The EXACT same principles of music are happening.
7. After all all music is based on those 5 black keys and 7 white keys ONLY. Repeated again and again as about 10 octaves. The entire world of music is based on that.
8. With a modern high pop-end-keyboard you are a one-man 120 piece orchestra.

Criteria for Selection

1. Listen to each and every instrument. Played by preferably a Professional. Listen to the sound do you like it? Compare this with other Instrument sounds.
2. Carry one. Try it. Feel it. Learn to hold it. Do you like it?
3. Do you like Loud? Soft? Size? Cold? Warm? Big? Small? Muscular? Dainty? Easy? Difficult? Light & easy to carry?
4. Are you left-handed?
5. Are you fit & able-bodied? Any physical challenges? Sight? Hearing? Fingers? Holding arms?
6. Don't mix Singing, Voice and Vocal talent with this. Anyway you can't play the flute and sing at the same time. Nor should you – INITIALLY and to be a good performer – attempt doing this with any other instrument – whether piano nor classical guitar.
7. Now comes affordability. A Recorder can cost Rs. 300/-; a percussion triangle even less. An Orff Instrument 3000/-. A trumpet, clarinet, classical guitar for less than Rs. 10,000/- A euphonium tuba, trombone, flute or cello could become Rs. 40,000/-. A piano Rs. 60,000/-. Double Bass, Bassoon, French Horn starts becoming Rs. 100,000/- +. Easy and cheaper to maintain? Lower-cost consumables?
8. Are you a self-learner? Do you need to be taught.
9. Either way - you have to have access to a good Teacher.
10. You need a good music method book, course-materials and support exercises, music and songs.
11. Do you like to play with others? You like playing alone, leading the music.
12. Look out playing and performing opportunities from the earliest possible instance.
13. If you think you have talent and could even be a professional – think 1,2 and even 3 hours Practice a day. There is an odd saying that it takes 10,000 hours to become a professional at any thing. It's a close truth when it comes to Music Performance.

“Pop-Guitar” OR “Pop-Keyboard”?

STOP THERE.

1. If you want to play the guitar. Acoustic. Electric. Rhythm. Bass. Lead. Finger-style. Plucking or whatever start with the Classical Guitar. It's a 400+ years standard instrument. Learn to read notation; play arpeggios & chords – then you can play and and all other guitar styles including singing with one.
2. If you want to play the keyboard. Start with an 88-key weighted-keys upright or grand piano. (Or equivalent) Learn tactile feedback, touch, feel – its why a manual typewriter / typist can be much faster, more versatile and enjoy typing than a PC-keyboard typist. Again once you have learnt to read music; piano-style and organ-style you can lead, accompany, support, sing-with ...

Selecting an Instrument

The best possible advice is to listen to an instrument and go with your first instincts. If you like the sound of that instrument go for it. If you don't like the sound of an instrument; don't choose that. Given the practical options in Bangalore and India you could select one of the following ...

- i. Piano
- ii. Church Organ
- iii. Violin. (or viola or cello).
- iv. Classical Guitar
- v. Recorder (Alto, Soprano, Tenor and/or Bass)
- vi. Concert Flute.
- vii. Clarinet (and the Saxophone later).
- viii. French Horn.
- ix. Oboe or Bassoon (You could be a part of a Wind Quartet)
- x. Trumpet. (Start with a bugle).

- xi. Brass band. (Trombone, Tuba, Euphonium, Saxophone)
- xii. Double Bass.
- xiii. Western Classical Voice Training.

“Piano” OR “Violin”?

There is a fundamental reason why these 2 instruments should be your FIRST and SECOND choice in instruments. The reasons are many and listed NOT in any order of priority ...

- The piano is the instrument of choice for teaching. Because of its range. Ability to play solo, accompany, speed, technique, even multiple players. Notes range offered by the piano, availability of sheet music, piano copy of almost every music on earth over history is available for this instrument.
- The range of the violin 3 octaves and more, matching and closest to the human voice. Technique, speed, dexterity. Ability to play with other instruments, have many violinists playing the same or harmony, being a part of a string quartet, the violin can play the top line of most available music on earth over history.
- While the piano is essentially a “solo” instrument; the violin is essentially a “group” instrument. Personality aside – potentially - if you learn both you do become right-left brained, introvert & extrovert, behavioural balance, can play the “air” or “accompany”, sing & accompany yourself, teach, lead, follow, be loud, soft & convey an enormous range of music, emotions, genres, styles with either of these 2 instruments.

Other Instrument(s)

There are a whole lot of other instruments. While something is better than nothing as fun – these are best avoided and not-invested in; if you are really serious about music in the first place. Learn these as a third (or other) instrument. These include ...

1. Harmonica or Blues Harp.
2. Accordion. Button Accordion
3. Mandolin. Ukulele. Banjo. Balalaika.
4. Harp.
5. Harpsichord. Clavier.
6. Country fiddle.
7. Acoustic Guitar. Folk singing.
8. Fife. Wood whistle.
9. Electric Guitar. Rhythm Guitar. Bass Guitar. Lead Guitar.
10. Saxophone. (Learn the clarinet and like Jazz first).
11. Keyboard (5-octave Casio and equivalents)

Ask yourself, checklist

- Which instrument do I like the sound of? It's probably a very good yardstick.
- Which instrument I think I will stick with. You'll playing the same instrument over many years.
- I would enjoy playing with others, rather than solo or by myself.
- Can I afford to buy this instrument? Some instruments can be very expensive.
- You may be able to borrow, hire or lease an instrument.

- Do I mind carrying this instrument wherever I go? Some instruments can be very big.
- Am I willing to spend time and money on maintaining this instrument in good playing condition? Some instruments take quite a bit of time, effort and cost in maintenance.
- Take up a different, new or unique instrument so that you stand out in a crowd, or will be easier to accept in a group or when competing for places.
- Do you want to play an instrument only to accompany yourself while singing?
- Where, how and when will I get opportunities around my home, workplace or music school to play my instrument?
- Which instrument will allow me to have fun with people around me. My friends, my colleagues, classmates, fellow-students etc.
- Can I get and be able to afford books, materials, music and everything that goes with sustaining my interest with this instrument?
- Is there a good teacher available to me for this Instrument? Spend the maximum for this - a good teacher is worth his or her weight in gold.

My first love

Amazingly - especially with young children around the age of 6 - their first instrument of choice and what they like is true. Ask any 6 year old. This preference for one particular instrument stays with them over a life time. It is really worth encouraging this in a child at that age (perhaps not earlier than 6).

*To be true to this test - you must allow the 6-year old (or older) to physically see & hear a fuller range of instruments played well. Perhaps the only way is to attend a few symphonic orchestral performances - and talk **BEFORE** and **AFTER** the concert.*

If this were true then anyone older, including in teenagers & adults what they want to play is again distinct and specific. It is worth encouraging & pursuing this "first love" of an instrument of their first choice. We support & endorse this line of thought at Music International.

Music International : Instrument Selection & Ownership Matrix ...

| | | No earning | ROI | Professional | |
|----------|-----------|---|--|---|-----------------------|
| Ability | Very Good | | | Piano Harp Bassoon French Horn Timpani Double Bass | Institute Owned |
| | | | Flute Tuba Euphonium 88-key piano Cello | | Ownership |
| Beginner | | Trumpet Clarinet Classical Guitar Violin - Viola | | | Personal Ownership |
| | | Recorder Orff Instruments | | | |
| | | Affordable | COST | Expensive | |

Contact :

For those still unsure we do offer a paid-for 1 hour of consultancy, advisory online – phone or video – visit us to be assessed and the right appropriate instrument matched for you. Music International – only for this or if a student of ours – will help you procure and maintain your instrument over a lifetime.

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