



ORCHESTRA

String



In an orchestra, the String Family is made up of five instruments: Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, and Harp. Each instrument has a very different sound from the other, and each plays its own role in the group.

Violin



Unaltered for centuries, the violin is perhaps the most widely recognized orchestral instrument. Whether you call it a violin or a fiddle, it is the string family's soprano or highest voice. High pitched, beautifully toned, the violin is often used as a lead or solo instrument, particularly in music

Viola



Played under the chin in much the same manner as the violin, the viola is slightly larger and tuned differently than its sister instrument. A larger tone chamber gives the viola its mellow qualities and enables it to produce somber, moody tones. The alto voice of the string family, the viola adds depth and richness and is vital for string ensembles and quartets.

Cello



Officially known as the violincello, the cello represents the tenor voice of the string section. Tuned a full octave lower than the viola, the cello produces deep lower registers and subdued higher tones. Unlike either the violin or the viola, the cello is supported on the floor by an endpin while the seated performer steadies the instrument with his or her knees.

Double Bass



The string family's largest instrument, the string or double bass may be played with a bow or plucked by hand in either sitting or standing positions. The bass is the deepest voice of the string family and can function as a rhythmic accompaniment or as a solo instrument. The deep response of the bass gives foundation and "bottom" to the orchestra.

Harp



The string family also includes the harp, which is played by plucking the strings. Harpists, like pianists, read treble and bass clef. There are two types of harps—lever and pedal. The lever harp is usually smaller, but the pedal harp is more convenient for altering pitches to sharp or flat as the music requires. The pedal harp has a six and a half octave range, and the C and F strings are colored red and black.