



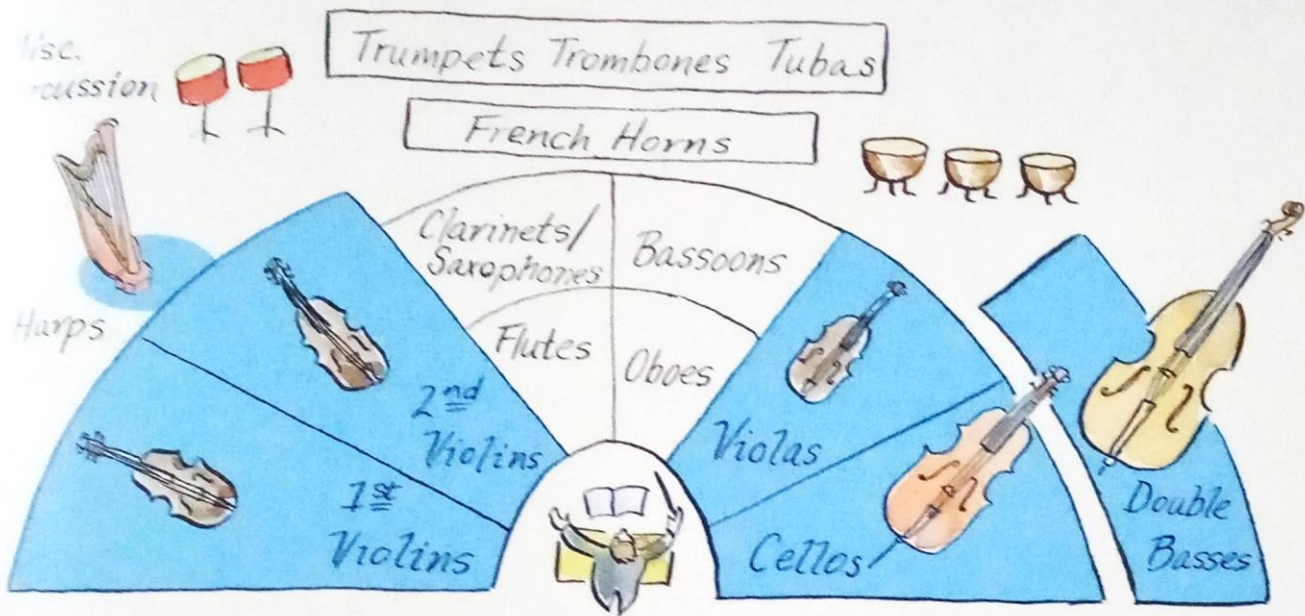
# STRING SECTION

Most of the instruments in the string section look alike. The main difference between them is their size, as they are all played in very much the same way; their strings can be plucked (this is called *pizzicato*) or made to “sound” with a bow. Strings are used to provide a piece of music with a deep, rich body of sound, and they are often used in solo pieces as well.

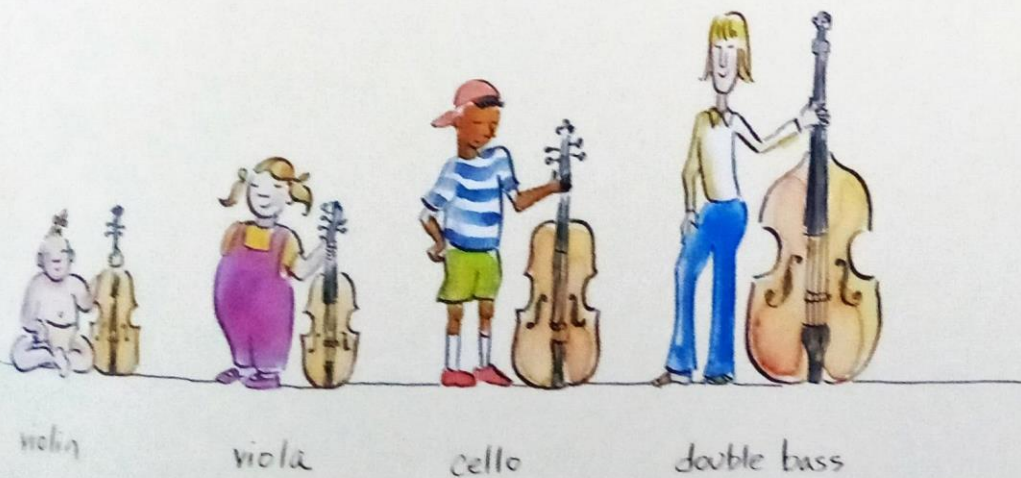
The largest section in the orchestra, the string section uses 60 to 70 musicians to create a good, strong sound.

In the string section there are five groups of players—the first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses—as well as the harp and piano. They are the backbone of the orchestra, and as such, they are so important that they are in the front of the orchestra, nearest to the conductor.





Positioned to the left of the conductor, the first violins sit closest to the audience, and the second violins are right behind them. The violas and cellos are to the right of the conductor, with the cellos in front and the violas behind them, though sometimes this is reversed. The double basses are behind the cellos. Finally, there are rarely more than two harpists in an orchestra, and they sit to the left of the conductor in the back behind the second violins. And if a piano is required for a particular piece of music—say, if there is a piano concerto on the program—it is most often put behind the conductor, between him or her and the audience.



**Play  
Track 13**

to hear the third movement, the scherzo from Pyotr Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4. This is the perfect example of *pizzicato*. The notes are bouncy and quick and quiet. Later an oboe comes in and the woodwinds join in for a few frolicking moments. The woodwinds and the strings have a short conversation—but Tchaikovsky returns to the *pizzicato* again at the end, when the woodwinds return for the buildup to the joyful ending, where they all play together.

