

## What is a Concert Band?

A concert band is a group of musicians who perform together on woodwind, brass and percussion instruments. Some other names for a concert band are: wind band, symphonic band, symphonic winds, wind orchestra, wind symphony, and wind ensemble.

### MILITARY BANDS

Wind and brass ensembles have a long history. Concert bands as we know them today grew out of a military band tradition, and in fact some of the most wonderful bands are our nation's military bands, including these:

*"The President's Own" Marine Band*

*The US Military Band at West Point*

*The Air Force Band*

### PROFESSIONAL BANDS

Concert bands became popular during the late 1800's and early 1900's. This time is often referred to as the "Golden Age of Bands." Famous composers and conductors of that time included John Philip Sousa, Henry Fillmore, and Karl King. These men and several others wrote music for and led very successful professional bands, touring the nation and sometimes, the world. This made the concert band a very popular performing group in our country. In every American town, people would come out in droves to hear the Sousa Band in concert, or to attend a performance of the Fillmore Band. Today, there are a few well-known professional bands in our country, such as:

*The Dallas Wind Symphony*

*Cleveland Symphonic Winds*

*Knoxville Wind Symphony*

### COMMUNITY BANDS

In the early part of last century, continuing through the 1970's, community bands also became very plentiful. Almost every town had a band, and almost every family in town had a family member in the band! Sometimes the bands were organized by businesses, and included workers from that business. The Allentown (PA) Community Band is reported to be the oldest community band in existence in America today.



*Rome Community Concert Band, July 4, 2007, Capitol Theater, Rome.*

### THE ROME COMMUNITY CONCERT BAND

In Rome, NY a professional ensemble of wind, brass and percussion players have formed to present outstanding band concerts for our community. During the last two summers, the Rome Community Concert Band has entertained audiences with free outdoor pops concerts. The RCCB is made up of professional musicians who provide family friendly concerts of very high musical quality, free of charge to all in our local community.

## INSTRUMENTS OF THE CONCERT BAND

At a band concert, you would hear three families of instruments: woodwinds, brass and percussion.

### Woodwinds

Piccolo  
Flute  
Oboe  
Bb Clarinet  
Bass Clarinet  
Bassoon  
Alto Saxophone  
Tenor Saxophone  
Baritone Saxophone

### Brass

Trumpet  
Horn  
Trombone  
Euphonium  
Tuba

### Percussion

Snare Drum  
Bass Drum  
Bells  
Xylophone  
Marimba  
Timpani

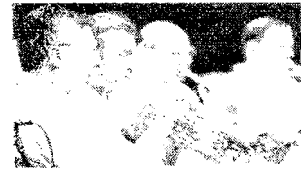
*Some members of the Rome Community Concert Band performing last summer:*



Bassoonist Judy Marchione



Piccolo players Jennifer Tillotson, Kim Marscher, Becki Watson, Beth Evans



Trumpeters Tim Ischia, Scott Rutledge, Rich DeLutis, Chris O'Neil

Sometimes piano and string bass join the group, as well as other members of the instrument families, such as contrabassoon and English horn. As for percussion, there are so many instruments to list!

## THE BAND CONDUCTOR

The conductor is a very important member of the concert band! Like in a symphony orchestra, the conductor leads the group through the music. He or she helps the musicians to play together, and to understand all of the parts of the music they are performing.



Michael Cirno conducting the RCCB on August 1, 2007.  
Norin Lavender in the foreground playing bass drum.

## MORE ABOUT WOODWINDS

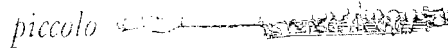
A woodwind instrument is an instrument in which the sound is produced by blowing against an edge, or by using air to vibrate a thin piece of wood called a reed.



*flute*

### FLUTE

Flutes produce sound when air is blown across the lip plate on the headjoint. Today's flutes are usually made out of pure metal or a combination of metals including nickel, silver, and gold. Other members of the flute family: *piccolo, alto flute, bass flute, whistles, recorders.*



*piccolo*

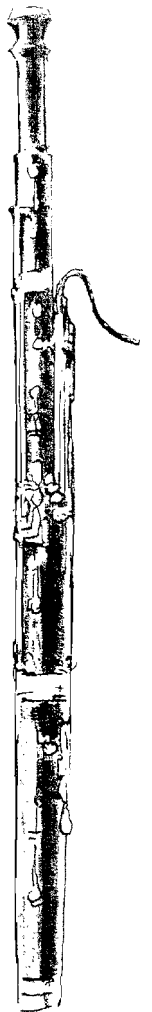
### OBOE and BASSOON

Oboe and bassoon are woodwind instruments that use double reeds. Double reeds are reeds made of two pieces of cane that are joined together at the bottom. The reed goes between the player's lips, and air is blown to vibrate the reeds and create the sound. Other double reed instruments are the *English horn and the contrabassoon.*

*oboe*



*bassoon*



### CLARINET AND SAXOPHONE

These are single reed instruments. They use a thin piece of cane, attached to a mouthpiece. When air is blown, the vibration of the reed against the mouthpiece creates the sound. The clarinet family includes *Eb, Bb and A soprano clarinets, Eb alto and Bb bass clarinets, Eb and Bb contrabass clarinets*; the saxophone family includes *soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass saxophones.*

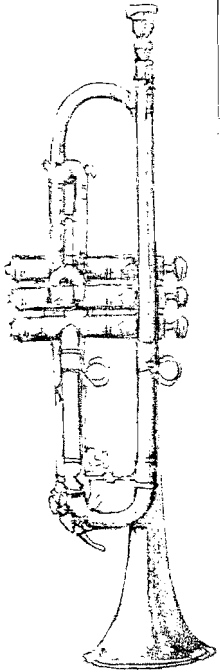
*clarinet*



*saxophone*

## MORE ABOUT BRASS INSTRUMENTS

Players of brass instruments produce sound by vibrating their lips against the mouthpiece of the horn as they blow air into the horn. Brass instruments are long pieces of tubing, wound around several times. Most brass instruments use valves to help change the pitch; one brass instrument uses a long slide to change pitch. The pressing of the valves, or the changes in slide position, lengthen or shorten the tubing in which the air is blowing through, helping to create the higher and lower notes.



*trumpet*

### TRUMPET

The trumpet is a valved instrument. A trumpet player presses the valves in different combinations, and changes the vibration of his or her lips, to make the different pitches. The mouthpiece of the trumpet is cup-shaped. Other members of the modern-day trumpet family are the *cornet and flugelhorn*.

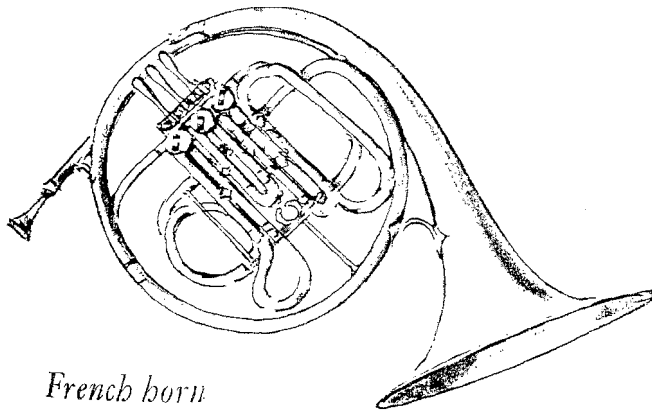
### TROMBONE

Most trombones use slides, and the players lip settings, to change pitches. Some trombones use valves instead of slides. Changes in the slide position along with different lip vibrations, create the different pitches on trombone. Trombone mouthpieces are cup-shaped. Both *tenor and bass trombones* are commonly used today.

*trombone*

### FRENCH HORN

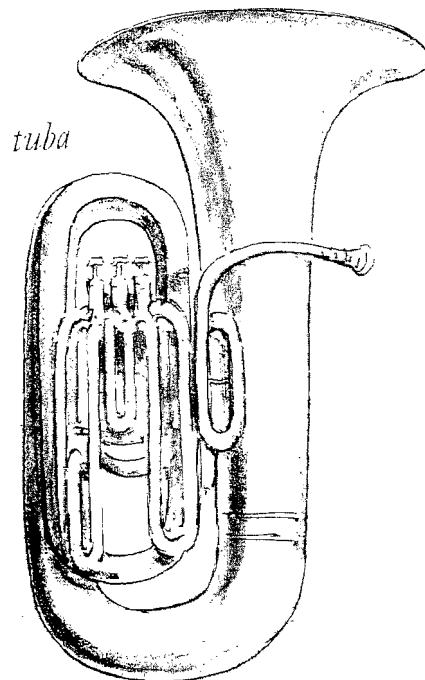
French horn is a valved brass instrument, and is the only one with a funnel-shaped mouthpiece. If the French horn were uncoiled, the tubing would measure about twelve feet in length! Some school musicians who play French horn double on *mellophone* in marching band.



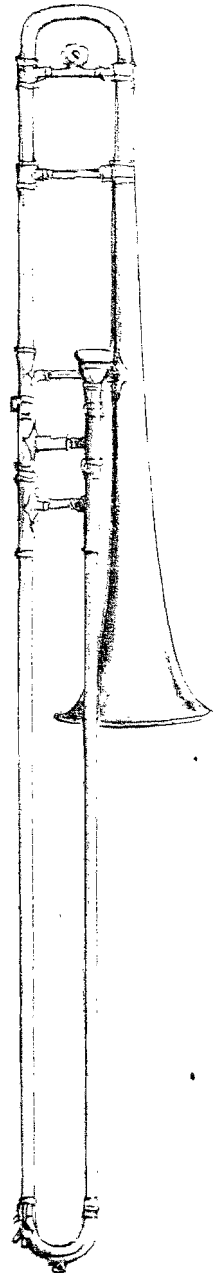
*French horn*

### TUBA and EUPHONIUM/BARITONE

These are the largest members of the brass family. They are also the lowest sounding. They are both valved instruments that use cup-shaped mouthpieces. A relative of the tuba is the *Sousaphone*.



*tuba*

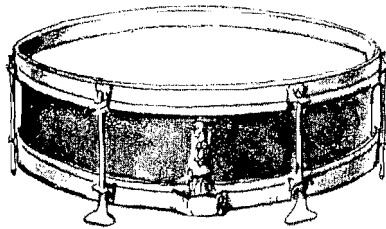


## MORE ABOUT PERCUSSION

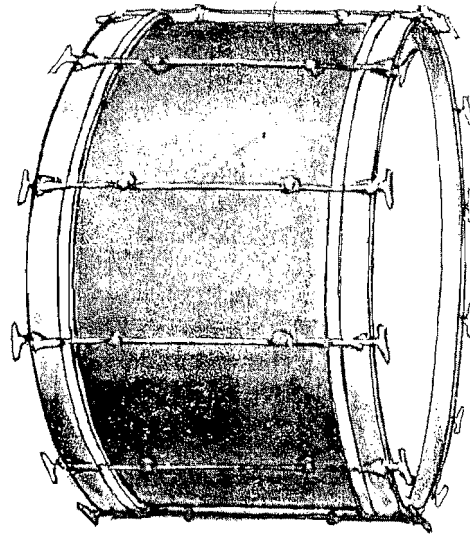
A percussion instrument is any object that produces a sound by being hit, struck, shaken, rubbed, scraped, or by any other action that causes the object to vibrate. Brief descriptions of some common percussion instruments are below.

### Drums

There are lots of different drums! Snare drum, bass drum, bongos, congas, tom-tom, etc... The head of a drum is struck with a stick or a hand, causing the head to vibrate and create the sound. Timpani (also called kettle drums sometimes) are large drums that can be adjusted to change pitch.



*snare drum*



*bass drum*

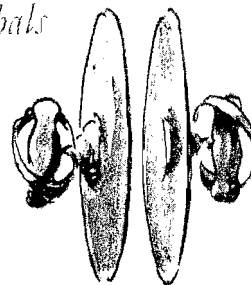
### Cymbals, triangle, wood block

These are percussion instruments that produce sound through the vibration of their entire body. For example, when two cymbals are crashed together, they each vibrate. When a triangle is struck with its beater, the entire triangle vibrates.



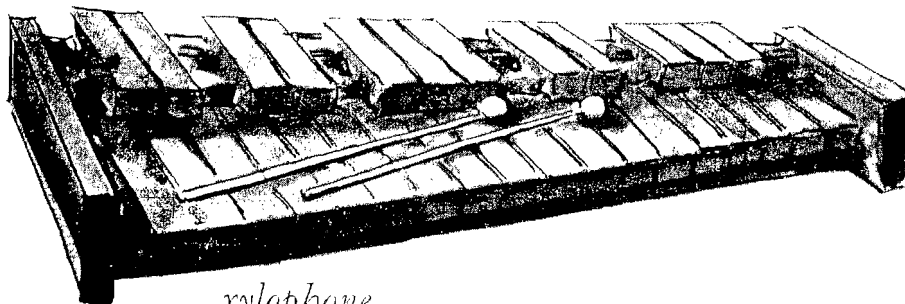
*tambourine*

*cymbals*



### Bells, xylophone, marimba, chimes

These pitched instruments are sounded when struck with mallets.



*xylophone*

## Class Activity: FUN WITH PERCUSSION

For fun, have the class experiment with some homemade percussion instruments, such as the easy examples listed below, or by designing and creating their own instruments. If time allows, have students compose, notate, publish and/or record a short piece of music for percussion ensemble, incorporating the instruments they've made, along with "real" percussion instruments, if available.

### CHIMES

*You'll need: a ruler or stick; washers; nail polish; string; mixing spoon.*

Hang the washers from the ruler or stick with pieces of string by wrapping the string around the ruler or stick and securing. Strike the washers with the mixing spoon to play. (If desired, make this craft colorful by first painting the washers with colorful, glittery nail polishes.)

### XYLOPHONE

*You'll need: tall glasses or jars; water; mixing spoon.*

Fill the glasses or jars with different amounts of water. The more water in the glass, the lower the pitch will be; having less water will raise the pitch. To play, gently strike the glasses with a mixing spoon.

### TAMBOURINE

*You'll need: 2 paper plates; stapler or glue; hole punch; string; jingle bells; crayons/markers.*

Staple or glue two paper plates together, facing each other. Using a hole punch, make holes around the plates and tie jingle bells to the holes with string. Decorate the tambourine with crayons or markers.

### DRUM

*You'll need: empty oatmeal box with cover; yarn; pen; 2 pencils; 2 spools; construction paper; crayons/markers.*

Before beginning, decorate the oatmeal box with the construction paper and crayons/markers, if desired. Place the cover on the box. Use a pen to make a hole in the center of the cover and in the center of the bottom of the box. Through these holes, pull a piece of yarn long enough to hang around a child's neck and down to their waist. For the drumsticks, place the spools at the end of the pencils; secure with glue if necessary. Beat to play.

### HAND BELLS

*You'll need: 2 paper towel rolls; hole punch; 4 jingle bells; string or yarn.*

Punch a hole in the end of each of the paper towel rolls. Tie two jingle bells to each side of the paper towel rolls by running string or yarn through the holes and carefully tying off. Shake to play.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Band Instrument Search

N Y T P O C T O O O O N R N U E O O A R A O R F  
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 B B C G R O O O D E X T U O O O R H P Y T M E G  
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 C R C T E M Y E A T I O M E O H E E M B E A N H  
 L E N R N B L S H X L O N M E T R U Y B E N B B  
 A A E N S F N W L L R S D I C S O T M D A F I N E

flute

clarinet

oboe

saxophone

trumpet

trombone

French horn

euphonium

tuba

snare drum

bass drum

timpani

cymbals

triangle

woodblock

bassoon

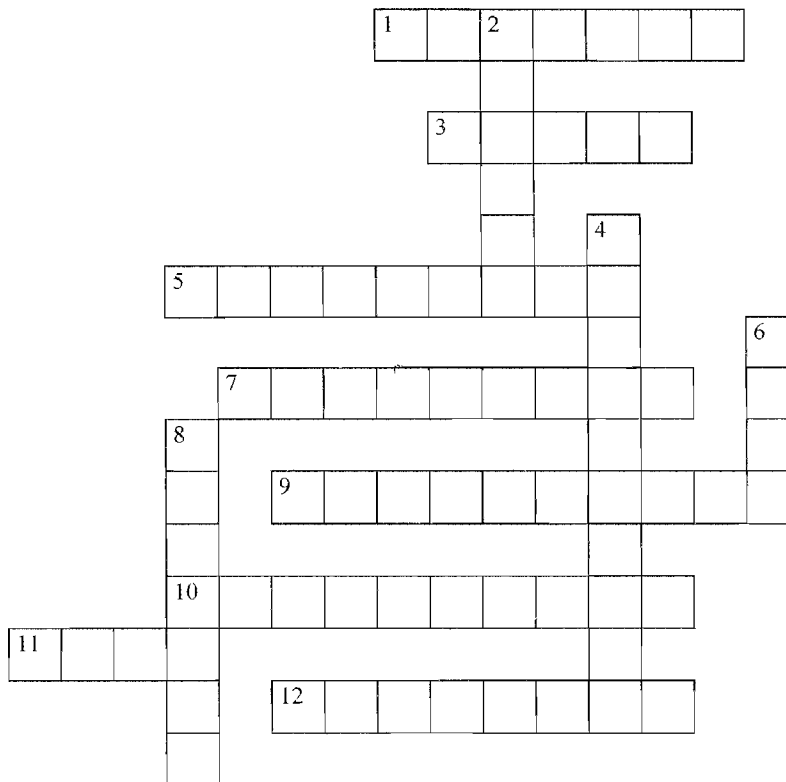
English horn

cornet

piccolo

xylophone

# Test Your Knowledge of Band Instruments



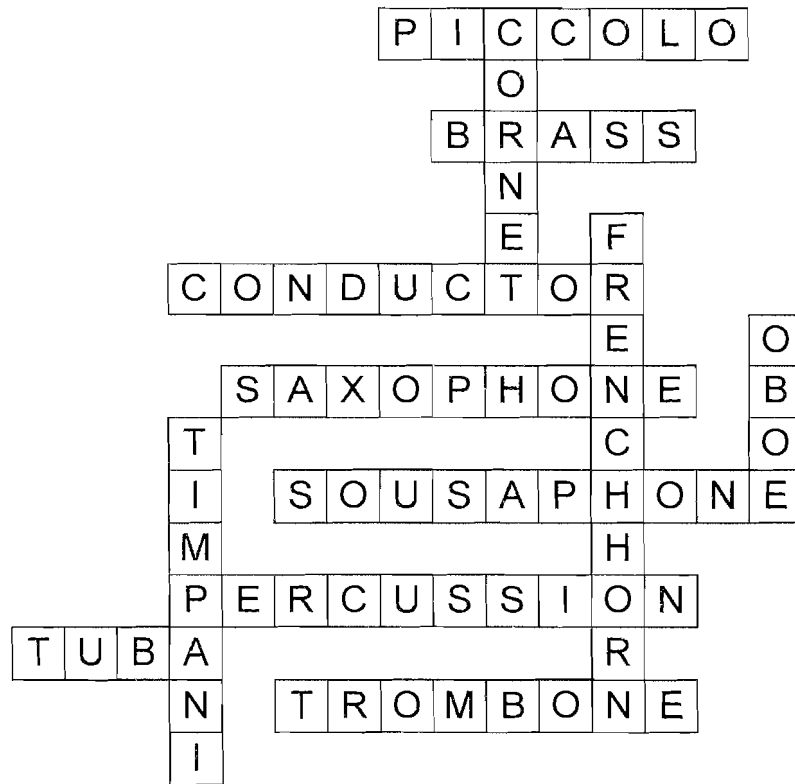
## ACROSS

- 1 A woodwind instrument related to the flute
- 3 The instrument family whose players create the sound by vibrating their lips against a mouthpiece
- 5 The musician who leads the band
- 7 A single-reed woodwind instrument
- 9 A relative of the tuba
- 10 Instruments that are shaken, struck, or scraped to create the sound
- 11 The largest brass instrument
- 12 A brass instrument that is made with either valves or a slide

## DOWN

- 2 A relative of the trumpet
- 4 The only brass instrument to use a funnel-shaped mouthpiece
- 6 A double-reed woodwind instrument
- 8 A large drum that whose pitch can be adjusted

# Test Your Knowledge of Band Instruments



**The Concert Band**  
A Mini-Study Guide

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**The Concert Band – A Mini-Study Guide** was created using the following resources:

All About the Symphony Orchestra and What it Plays by Dorothy Berliner Commins

Wikipedia.com

Kinderarte.com

FamilyCorner.com

Search.teach-nology.com

Variety-games.com

Various websites of the US Military Bands

dsw.org (website of the Dallas Wind Symphony)

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*Rome Community Concert Band, Inc.*  
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