

MUSIC APPRECIATION SECTION**THE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

By BERT PAUL OSBON *

*(Continued from the June number)***VII. THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE WOODWIND SECTION***Contra-
bassoon**Bassoon**Bass
clarinet**Clarinet**English
horn**Oboe**Flute**Piccolo*

IN the woodwind section of the symphony orchestra the four "voices" (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) are represented roughly by the flute, the oboe, the clarinet, and the bassoon. Of course these instruments do not sound like the voices singing in a chorus, but they are something like it. When the woodwind section of the orchestra is heard without other instruments, it sounds quite similar to a pipe organ. Now let us examine each instrument of this section.

The Flute

In the illustration at the top of this page you will see the picture of the flute. The flute is the coloratura soprano of the woodwind family of the orchestra. (Coloratura means capable of performing

runs, trills, etc.) It is an instrument of great antiquity. Its origin may be traced to some of the instruments of ancient Greek mythology. Sculptures and paintings of ancient Egypt and Greece show that the instrument was used and liked by those peoples.

Ability to play the flute was a required part in the education of a boy of ancient Greece. It was used to accompany the chorus in the Greek theatre, and skillful performers received high pay. The Romans adopted it in later times. Most of the flutes of those times were vertical instruments blown from the end.

The present flute is a transverse instrument—that is, it is held sideways while being played. (See the illustration on this page.) It is a pipe, one end of which is closed, and is made of metal or wood. Although made of metal, it is

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still called a woodwind instrument. The player of the flute blows across, not into, a hole in the side called the mouthpiece or embouchure (pronounced om-boo-shur).

The remarkable agility and "speaking" powers of the flute bring it into constant use as a melodic instrument. It is often given the melody in unison with the violins. Its upper tones are brilliant and birdlike, well suited to light, delicate passages. The effects of tenderness and melancholy are also within the powers of this instrument. Three flutes are generally used in a modern symphony orchestra, although one of them is sometimes replaced by the piccolo.

The Piccolo

The piccolo is a little flute. It is often called the octave flute because it sounds an octave higher since it is only half as long as a flute. (See the illustration on page 243.) The tone of the piccolo is shrill and piercing, and far above the range of the human voice.

The Oboe

The oboe, English horn, bassoon, and contrabassoon are often referred to as the oboe family, since the method of playing and producing tone is the same in all four. The tone is produced by the vibration of two very thin pieces of bamboo or cane which are called a double-reed. These instruments are more difficult to play than other wind instruments, but players who can manage them are always in demand.

Reed instruments of the oboe type have been found in the tombs of ancient Egypt, and are shown in ancient Greek sculptures and paintings. The oboe is

one of the oldest instruments of the orchestra.

The modern oboe (pronounced o-bo) is a double-reed instrument which is used as the lyric soprano of the woodwind family. The oboe is especially valuable in the orchestra as a solo instrument, and its thin, nasal, penetrating but fascinating tones are suggestive of outdoor simplicity of country life. (See the illustration on page 243.)

Only a very light breath pressure is required to play the oboe, so the player must partially hold his breath. This causes him to tire quickly. Therefore the music for this instrument must be written so as to give the player an occasional chance to rest.

In the orchestra the oboe may often be heard in duets, speaking to and answering the flute, clarinet, bassoon, or another oboe. The modern symphony orchestra uses two or three oboes.

This instrument always sounds the A from which the other instruments in the orchestra tune.

The English Horn

Compare the picture of the English horn (page 243) with that of the oboe. Notice that the English horn is much longer. It is really a large oboe; it has a double-reed; and is played like the oboe. In fact, it is one of the oboe players in the orchestra who plays the English horn.

The name English horn is not a correct name; this instrument is not a horn at all, but is an alto oboe.

The English horn often plays melancholy (sad) music, and sometimes suggests suffering to the listener. The rich tone quality of this instrument is well

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suiting to dreamy, melancholy music. It has all the reediness and tender expressiveness of the oboe. While it is sometimes used to express the joys of the pastoral life, there is always a suggestion of sadness and loneliness in its voice.

While playing the English horn, the player must hold his breath under great control. This produces considerable tension in the lips, lungs, and chest. Therefore the English horn, like the oboe, is a difficult instrument to play.

The Clarinet

The clarinet (illustrated on page 243) has been called "the queen of the woodwind" because it is capable of doing many things.

It is a single-reed instrument about two feet long.

Much has been said in praise of the tone quality of the clarinet, which has been described as noble, refined, mellow, lonely, weird, and somber. It is the dramatic soprano of the woodwind section.

The modern symphony orchestra usually employs two clarinets, although more are sometimes used.

The Bass Clarinet

By looking carefully at the picture of the bass clarinet (page 243) you will notice that it is larger than the clarinet. For this reason it can play lower tones than the clarinet can play.

The bass clarinet looks something like a saxophone, which is made of metal and does not have such a good tone as the bass clarinet has.

The bass clarinet is made of wood, and its voice is powerful and reedy. It sounds like the lower tones of a pipe organ.

The Bassoon

The bassoon (illustrated on page 243) is a double-reed instrument which plays the bass (the lowest part) for the woodwind choir. It is a large instrument. It has been called "the clown" of the orchestra, because it can play in a grotesque manner.

There are usually two bassoons in the orchestra, but sometimes more are used.

The Contrabassoon

By looking at the picture of the contrabassoon (page 243) you will notice that it is larger than the bassoon. Because it is larger, it can play lower tones. Al-

COFFEE

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fee was cultivated in other tropical countries of Asia and South America.

The varieties of coffee which have been permitted to grow wild are 20 feet or more in height, but the cultivated bushes are kept trimmed to 6 or 10 feet, so the berries may be picked more readily.

The leaves of the coffee plant are green and glossy on the upper surface. The flowers are white and sweet-scented. The fruit is of an oval shape and of a dark-red color when ripe. Each fruit contains two cells, and each cell has a single seed which is the coffee as we see it before it is roasted. (See the illustration on page 246.)

Great attention is paid to the culture of coffee, especially in Arabia. The
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though it has a different appearance, it is played like the bassoon. A bassoon player in the orchestra usually plays the contrabassoon when it is needed.

Next month we shall discuss each of the instruments of the brasswind section.

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WHEN SCOUTS WENT

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gan to scrape the clay off. "I wonder what kind of a stone this is. It's so shiny. Guess I'll show it to our high school principal."

A few days later Esteban showed his rock specimen to Mr. Diaz, the principal of their school, who knew something of geology. Mr. Diaz examined it carefully.

"Come with me, Esteban. We are going to have it examined by an expert," said Mr. Diaz in a few minutes.

Soon they were at an assayer's office. The head assayer looked at it. Then he made some tests.

"Where did you find this, my boy?" the assayer asked. Esteban told him.

"Do you know what this is?"

"No, sir," said Esteban. "What is it?"

"Well, young man, you found a gold nugget—a fairly large one. This nugget is worth, I should judge, about two thousand pesos. Leave this with me and we shall soon find exactly what it is worth."

Esteban could hardly believe his ears. Two thousand pesos! That would put him through college.

The news soon spread, and everybody was con-

gratulating the boy upon his discovery. One of the first was Rolando.

"That afternoon we went hiking I was not so unlucky after all," said Esteban. "Coy found a flower, Fil found a bug—no, I mean a beetle, Jo found a chrysalis, and Art found a feather. But I found a college education!"

"Anything can happen when a scout goes hiking," answered Rolando.

REVIEW

1. Did you find this story interesting? Why?
2. Tell something about orchids.
3. Tell something about the hercules beetle.
4. What is a chrysalis?
5. Tell something about the giant moth.
6. Tell something about the bleeding-heart pigeon.
7. What is a legend?
8. Tell the legend of the bleeding-heart pigeon.
9. Has gold ever been mined in the Philippines? (Yes, and some gold nuggets have been found.—*The Editor*.)
10. What did Esteban mean when he said, "I found a college education"?

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REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you name the instruments of the woodwind section?
2. Have you examined the picture of each instrument? (See page 243.)
3. Can you tell about each of the following instruments: (a) flute, (b) piccolo, (c) oboe, (d) English horn, (e) clarinet, (f) bass clarinet, (g) bassoon, (h) contrabassoon?
4. What is a reed?
5. Can you name the single-reed instruments of the woodwind section? The double-reed instruments?
6. Which ones have no reed?
7. Which is the smallest woodwind instrument?
8. Which is largest woodwind instrument?
9. Which woodwind instruments have you seen and heard?
10. Which woodwind instruments can play a solo? (All except the contrabassoon.)
11. What are the most ancient types of woodwind instruments? (Flute, oboe)
12. What ancient nations had instruments of the oboe type?
13. How was the flute regarded by the ancient Greeks?