

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS 11

Oboe



The oboe is a double reed, woodwind instrument. It is a descendant of the shawm, whose powerful sound made it

popular in military bands. The shawm first appeared in the 1650s. It had a wider bore and reed than the modern instrument.

The oboe has a range of about two and a half octaves, from the Bb below middle C to the G an octave above the treble clef. Its nasal and reedy tones gave the oboe a prominent position in the orchestra, where it can easily be heard over the accompanying strings. The modern oboe is rarely used outside of western classical music.

The oboe d'amour and the cor anglais are close relations of the oboe. They are larger and therefore have a lower pitch. They also have a slightly more mellow tone. Unlike the oboe, these are transposing instruments. The oboe d'amour sounds a minor third lower than the oboe and the cor anglais a perfect fifth lower.

Keyless folk versions of the oboe (such as the French musette) have appeared in Europe. These instruments are more related to the shawm than the modern oboe.

Bassoon



The bassoon is the lowest pitched member of the woodwind family. Like the oboe, it is a double reed instrument. It was developed from an instrument called the dulcian.

The bassoon is approximately 134cm in length, but when extended it can reach about 254cm. The body of the bassoon is made from a conical piece of wood, doubled back on itself. It has four sections - the wing, the butt, the joint and the bell. A piece called the crook joins the main body of the instrument to the reed.

The bassoon has a range of about three and a half octaves, from the B below the bass clef to the D in the

treble clef. Orchestras normally use two bassoons. If a third instrument is required, then a contra bassoon (also known as a double bassoon) is used. This has sounds an octave lower than the common variety.

Modern professional bassoons are made of maple. Cheaper models are made from polypropylene and ebonite.

Composers who wrote for the bassoon include Verdi, Vivaldi, Bach and Mozart.

QUESTIONS

1. How many reeds are used on an oboe?
2. Name 3 instruments that are similar to the oboe.
3. Why is the oboe used frequently in orchestral music?
4. What is the French, keyless version of the oboe called?
5. Name the four parts of the bassoon.
6. What materials are bassoons made from?
7. Compare the ranges of the oboe and bassoon.
8. How does the pitch of the bassoon compare to other woodwind instruments?

Extension

9. Compare and contrast the oboe and clarinet.

WORD PUZZLE

Find the words from the list in the following find-a-word.

R	E	T	S	I	G	E	R	U	M	<i>Bassoon</i>
M	G	S	A	F	L	U	T	E	E	<i>Boehm</i>
C	J	L	R	B	A	E	H	P	W	<i>Clarinet</i>
O	V	H	O	E	N	L	R	B	O	<i>Flute</i>
L	B	E	Y	I	E	G	O	N	L	<i>Key</i>
K	H	O	R	J	J	D	Q	O	O	<i>Oboe</i>
M	U	A	E	G	K	C	M	H	C	<i>Piccolo</i>
W	L	J	I	Y	V	Y	E	K	C	<i>Reed</i>
C	F	N	O	O	S	S	A	B	I	<i>Register</i>
B	B	Q	J	I	L	X	O	Y	P	

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS 11 - ANSWERS

QUESTIONS

- How many reeds are used on an oboe?
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- Name 3 instruments that are similar to the oboe.
Oboe d'amour, cor anglais, musette
- Why is the oboe used frequently in orchestral music?
It can easily be heard over the accompanying strings.
- What is the French, keyless version of the oboe called?
Musette
- Name the four parts of the bassoon.
Wing, butt, joint, bell.
- What materials are bassoons made from?
Maple or polypropylene and ebonite.
- Compare the ranges of the oboe and bassoon.
*Oboe – 2 ½ octaves, from the Bb below middle C to the G an octave above the treble clef.
Bassoon - 3½ octaves, from the B below the bass clef to the D in the treble clef.*
- How does the pitch of the bassoon compare to other woodwind instruments?
It is the lowest pitched member of the woodwind family.

Extension

- Compare and contrast the oboe and clarinet.
*Similarities - Both are woodwind instruments (although cheaper models are made from resonite). Both use reeds (the oboe has two and the clarinet one). Both use Boehm's key system.
Differences – Clarinet has larger range of notes. Oboe has nasal and reedy tones.
There are many other relevant points.*

WORD PUZZLE

R	E	T	S	I	G	E	R	U	M	Bassoon
M	G	S	A	F	L	U	T	E	E	Boehm
C	J	L	R	B	A	E	H	P	W	Clarinet
O	V	H	O	E	N	L	R	B	O	Flute
L	B	E	Y	I	E	G	O	N	I	Key
K	H	O	R	J	J	D	Q	O	O	Oboe
M	U	A	E	G	K	C	M	H	C	Piccolo
W	L	J	I	Y	V	Y	E	K	C	Reed
C	F	N	O	O	S	S	A	B	I	Register
B	B	Q	J	I	L	X	O	Y	P	