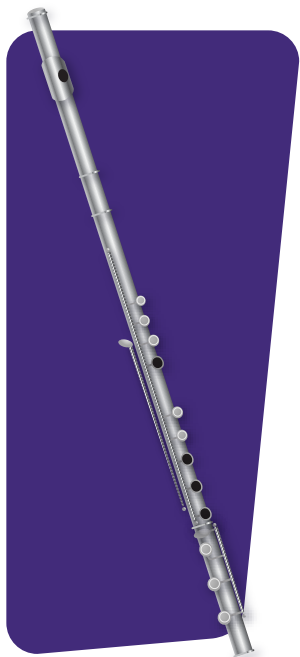


Hey Kids, It's a Flute



The Flute is a member of the woodwind section of the orchestra. Only the piccolo, a member of the flute family, plays higher. The flute produces a sound that is light, clear and penetrating on its highest notes. A flute player may be referred to as a flautist or a flutist.

History

The transverse (side-blown) flutes can be seen in paintings and manuscripts that date back as far as the 14th century, though most flutes were played like the recorder, blowing air in from the end. By about the 15th century the transverse flute had become quite popular and by 1847 the modern orchestral flute had reached its present form.

How It's Played

A symphonic flute player holds the flute horizontally while blowing in the opening just like you blow across the top of a soda pop bottle to make a tone. The flute player holds the flute steady with the lower lip, the base of the left hand index finger, and the right hand thumb. To change notes, the flute player covers various combinations of tone holes. Each change to a different fingering combination determines the length of tubing through which the air will flow before it escapes out of the uncovered holes. Advanced flute-players will also add vibrato to their tone.

How It's Made

Flutes are different than all the other woodwinds in the orchestra, in that they don't have reeds. Flutes are traditionally made of a silver alloy, although some players prefer to have their flutes made of platinum, gold, or even wood. These choices will make the flute play with a brighter, darker or warmer sound. The body of the flute is a long cylinder that is divided into three sections: the headjoint, the body, and the foot joint. On these three sections you will find 16 tone holes that are covered by fingers and key pads when played.



The Flute Family

The standard symphonic flute is pitched in the key of C and has a range of 3 octaves. Other common flute family members include the alto flute and the bass flute.

Fun Fact

The hyperbass flute is the biggest member of the flute family. It is pitched in C, and plays four octaves lower than the standard symphonic flute. The hyperbass flute tubing is over 8 meters long. Its lowest note is one C lower than the lowest C on the piano - lower than what scientists consider the range of human hearing!

