

Instruments of the Concert Band

If you need to purchase or rent a band instrument, I highly recommend Music & Arts, formerly The Horn Section in Melbourne. You can visit their website at www.musicarts.com Rentals can be arranged online and instruments will be ready to pick up at the Melbourne location. If you are purchasing an instrument, please consult Mr. Murray. There are many knockoff instruments out there that are of poor construction and will not tune correctly or last under extended use.

Flute: Highest of all the band instruments. The flute comes ready to play without any other accessory. In a band of 30, two or three flute players are needed for good balance. An advanced flute player may also choose to play a piccolo when the music calls for it.

Oboe: An oboe is a very delicate instruments that demands a high level of skill to play accurately. Oboe players are encouraged to arrange for private lessons due to its unique challenges. This is a double reed instrument. One reed for an oboe costs about \$20 and may need to be replaced monthly. Oboe players are highly sought by college and university music programs. In a band of 30, one oboe player is sufficient.

Clarinet: This is a single reed instrument. Beginner clarinet players will start on a size 2 ½ reed. Reeds cost about \$3.00 each and, if taken care of, will last about a month. Reeds are cheaper if bought by the box of 10. Beginner level clarinets can be made of a plastic or composite material. Better clarinets are made of wood. The most common clarinet is the soprano clarinet. Most bands also have one or two bass clarinet players depending on the size of the group. A bass clarinet is not an instrument that can be rented and usually provided by the band program. In a band of 30 four to five clarinets are needed. One bass clarinet is sufficient.

Saxophone: This is a single reed instrument. Beginner sax players will start on a size 2 ½ reed. Reeds cost about \$4.00 and, if taken care of, will last about a month. Reeds are cheaper if bought by the box of 10. All students will begin on an alto sax. Most band programs also have one or two tenor saxophones and one baritone saxophone. Tenor saxes can be rented and are a little more expensive. Baritone saxes usually cannot be rented and are usually provided by the band program. In a band of 30, two or three alto saxes, one tenor sax, and one baritone sax is a good mix.

French Horn: This is a more difficult instrument to master than other brass instruments. Because of some of the special characteristics of this instrument, it is recommended that students arrange for private lessons. Horn players are highly sought by college and university music programs. When shopping for a french horn, please do not settle for a single horn. A double horn is much easier to play. In a band of 30, two french horn players are needed.

Trumpet. This is the most common brass instrument and usually takes the lead, or melody, in band arrangements. Many people who want to move to a larger brass instrument will start on trumpet and convert later to baritone or tuba. In a band of 30, four trumpets are needed.

Trombone: The trombone is a very recognizable instrument because of its unique feature, the slide. There are no keys or buttons. All notes are reached by moving the slide to one of 7 different positions. Because of its size, the player must have the ability to reach the lowest position, position 7. In a band of 30, two to three trombones are preferred.

Baritone/Euphonium: This is often called a “baby tuba”. Baritones have a beautiful mellow tone that is about the same range of a trombone. It is a three-valve instrument similar to a trumpet. In a band of 30, one or two baritones are needed.

Tuba: I often refer to tuba players as “my heros” because of their low bass sound produced by the instrument. It’s almost like throwing velvet over the band. Unfortunately, tubas cannot be rented and are usually provided by the band. The cost of a student line tuba can run from \$2K to \$4K. If we have students who desire to play tuba, we will do what we can to make it happen. You may need to start on a baritone. In a band of 30, there should be two tubas.

Percussion: No one just plays drums in a concert band. Let me say it this way, we do not recruit drummers. A concert band percussionist will start by learning bells. Bells are configured like a piano keyboard and are pitched like a piano. Students with some piano background usually do very well in the percussion section. After proving themselves on bells, a percussionist will start learning snare drum. Rudiments, rhythm patterns, and special techniques are taught. All percussion music is learned by reading music, not by listening to patterns. Some of the other instruments in the percussion section that will be taught are crash cymbals, suspended cymbals, triangle, claves, wood block, castanets, wind chimes, gong, bass drum, timpani, chimes, and much more. When it comes to concert percussion, anything can show up in the music. We even could see music that calls for a brake drum...yeah, the kind that comes off a used car. There are no limits here. The percussionist becomes a master of many instruments. Oh, and let me say this too...a percussionist almost never sits. He/she will often shift to several different instruments during one song. If you choose this option, have good running shoes. In a band of 30, we can use two to three percussionists.