

Instruments of the Orchestra

Strings

Stringed instruments make up more than half of the symphony orchestra. Except for the harp, they are all shaped alike, but they come in different sizes. The violin is the smallest, and it is held under the chin when played. The viola, also held under the chin, is somewhat larger than the violin. The cello and the double bass are so large that they must rest on the floor. These four instruments are made of wood. They are hollow, with strings stretched from top to bottom across the front piece of wood. To produce sound, a player draws a bow across the strings. (A bow is a wooden stick with horsehair attached to either end.) A player can also pluck the strings with his fingers. The harp is another kind of stringed instrument. It is different in shape from the violin, and the harp is never played with a bow – it is always plucked.

