

Orchestra Seating

Music

Where each section sits, and why it is arranged that way.

Standard modern layout, from the conductor's view.

1

Front arc: strings

First violins on the left, then seconds, violas, cellos; basses behind the cellos.

2

Centre: woodwind

Flutes and oboes in front, clarinets and bassoons behind them.

3

Behind them: brass

Horns to the left, trumpets and trombones to the right, tuba at the end.

4

Back: percussion

Timpani centre-back, other percussion spread across.

5

Sides: harp and keyboard

Usually to the conductor's left, where they can be heard.

WHY

Quiet instruments sit closest to the audience

Loud ones sit furthest back

The leader — first violin — sits nearest the conductor

Some conductors use antiphonal seating: second violins opposite the firsts, so the parts answer across the stage.