

Anatomy of a SYMPHONY



It takes 84 musicians – almost more than you can shake a baton at – to produce the KSO’s great sound. You’ll often see more or fewer people on stage at a given performance, depending on what instruments the piece calls for.

Just like athletes, musicians wear uniforms and “play” for a living – and it can be hard to tell who’s who without a scorecard. Here’s a quick guide to your KSO, along with some classic jokes from the musicians.

Q. What’s the range of a violin?
A. About twenty yards, if you have a good arm.

There are more violins in the orchestra than any other single instrument. The violins play in two different groups, with the first violins playing the highest-pitched part and the second violins playing the second-highest.

Violin strings were originally made of catgut, but now are made of metal.

In the 1600s, some conductors kept the beat by banging a large wooden staff against the ground. Now, conductors use a light, wooden baton.

A xylophone is made of wood. If it’s metal, it’s a Glockenspiel.

Q. What’s the difference between a jet airplane and a trumpet?
A. About three decibels.

Q. What’s the difference between an oboe and a bassoon?
A. You can hit a baseball farther with a bassoon.

A tuba weighs about 25 lbs.

The largest double bass that ever existed was almost 16 feet tall and was built to celebrate the Cincinnati Music Festival in 1889.

Q. What’s the difference between a bass and a cello?
A. The bass burns longer.



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