

INSTRUMENTS IN THE ORCHESTRA:

(15) The Percussion Section

THE fifteenth and final article of a series on the instruments of the National Orchestra, written to help interested listeners towards a more informed appreciation of orchestral music and a better understanding of the resources at the command of the conductor

EXCLUDING the timpani dealt with in last week's issue, there are two types of drum — the bass drum and the snare drum. The bass drum is the familiar large, round species which stands on its edge. Some bass drums have a skin on one side only, some on both, but the former is usually the case in the drum used by the symphony orchestra. The snare, or side drum, is the smallest type and takes its name from the catgut strings which are fastened across its lower skin and vibrate when the upper skin is struck, producing a sharp, rattling sound.

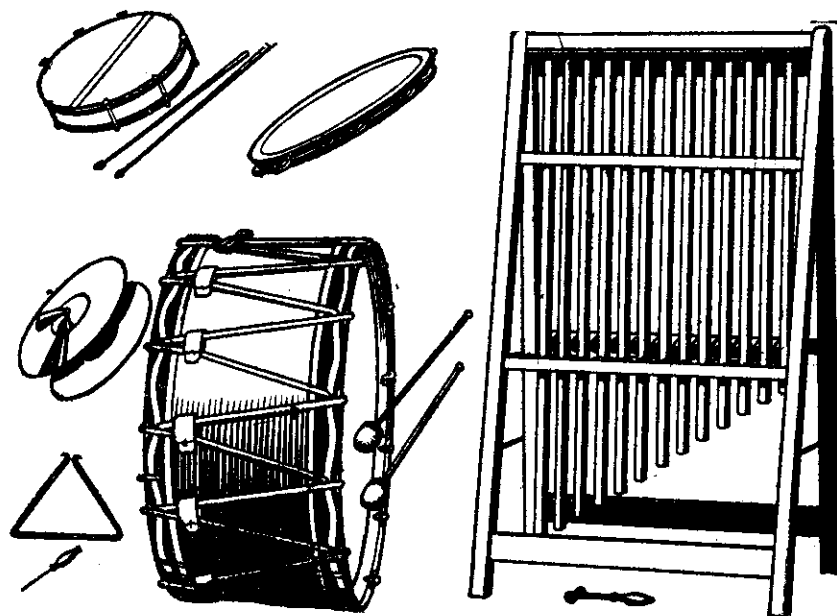
The cymbals, a pair of metal discs, produce a metallic clash when struck, with a glancing motion, against each other.

The percussion section of the orchestra embraces various instruments, all of which, however, are played by being struck with a stick or a mallet or with

the hands, or simply shaken. Some of them produce definite musical tones, but most of them merely make noises. Nevertheless, it is an important part of the orchestra and has a task which is its alone—that of accenting rhythms.

The main types of percussion are drums, bells and cymbals, and there are others which fall into no particular class, being used simply to provide certain effects or atmosphere. They are used very sparingly in symphony orchestras.

Tubular bells (more properly chimes—the long, bright metal tubes which hang from a frame) are, of course, used to imitate the sound of church bells. The tambourine is a little hand drum with a wooden frame and one vellum head and with pairs of "jingles" made of metal inserted loosely round the hoop at intervals. These jingles rattle when the instrument is shaken either by striking it with the hand or by rubbing the head with the thumb and finger, which produces the "roll." It is one of the



PERCUSSION instruments in general use. On the left (from top) are the side-drums or snare, cymbals, and triangle; in the centre, the tambourine and bass-drum; on the right, the tubular bells

traditional Spanish instruments and so is used to lend Spanish atmosphere when required. The triangle consists of a resonant steel rod bent into a triangle but having one angle not joined. It is held in one of the player's hands,

suspended from a string and struck with a piece of steel. It produces a note of uncertain pitch.

For the percussion section of the National Orchestra extra players are engaged from time to time as required.



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