Musical Vocabulary

Here are some words that you need to know before the concert:

Members of the Orchestra

1. **String Section** – the string section consists of the **Violins, Violas, Cellos** and **Basses**. Stringed instruments are played by drawing a **bow** across the strings or by plucking the strings with the fingers.

2. **Woodwind Section** – the woodwind instruments are the **Flute, Oboe, Clarinet** and **Bassoon**. Woodwind players produce sound by blowing air into a mouthpiece. Most woodwind instruments have **reeds**, which vibrate very quickly to produce the sound of the instrument.

3. **Brass Section** – the brass instruments are the **Trumpet, French Horn, Trombone**, and **Tuba**. Brass players make sound by “buzzing” their lips while blowing into the **mouthpiece**. Brass players change notes with the help of **valves** or **slides**.

4. **Percussion Section** – there are hundreds of different percussion instruments! Some of the most common are the **Tympani, Snare Drum**, and **Cymbals**. Percussion instruments make sound when the percussionist strikes or shakes them.

5. **Conductor** – the conductor tells the musicians when and what to play. The conductor gives the musicians non-verbal signals either with his hands or by using a small stick called a **baton**.

6. **Concertmaster/Concertmistress** – the concertmaster is the best violin player in the orchestra. He/She is the leader of the violin section and will play any **solos** for the violin.
Other Musical Terms

1. **Melody** – a musical line that is the “tune” of the piece. This is the part you will probably be humming when you leave the concert!

2. **Countermelody** – a second musical line that intertwines with the melody.

3. **Accompaniment** – a musical line that is less important than the melody. Accompaniment parts support the melody.

4. **Chord** – two or more notes played at the same time.

5. **Solo** – part of a composition written for a single instrument.

6. **Cadenza** – an extended and embellished solo. Cadenzas are intended to let the soloist “show off”.

7. **Unison** – the sounding of the same note by two or more players. In a unison piece of music, the players do not have different parts, but all play together.

8. **Tuning Note** – the note that the Oboe plays before a concert. All the other players tune their instruments to this exact pitch.

9. **Folk Music** – any music that comes from a common culture. This music is most often passed on orally from generation to generation.

10. **Revista** – the Spanish term for a vaudeville-style musical revue.

11. **Zarzuelas** – a form of Spanish opera that alternates between spoken dialogue and song.

12. **Paso double** – “Double Step”. A lively, march-like style of dance. Paso double originated in France, but it was inspired by the Spanish bullfight.

13. **March** – a piece of music with strong, regular rhythm, written to be marched to.

14. **Prodigy** – a person with uncommon/rare talents.