MYTHS AND LEGENDS

The activity addresses PA Academic Standards CC.1.4.5.M, CC.1.4.5.N, CC.1.4.5.R, CC.1.4.5.T

The English Horn

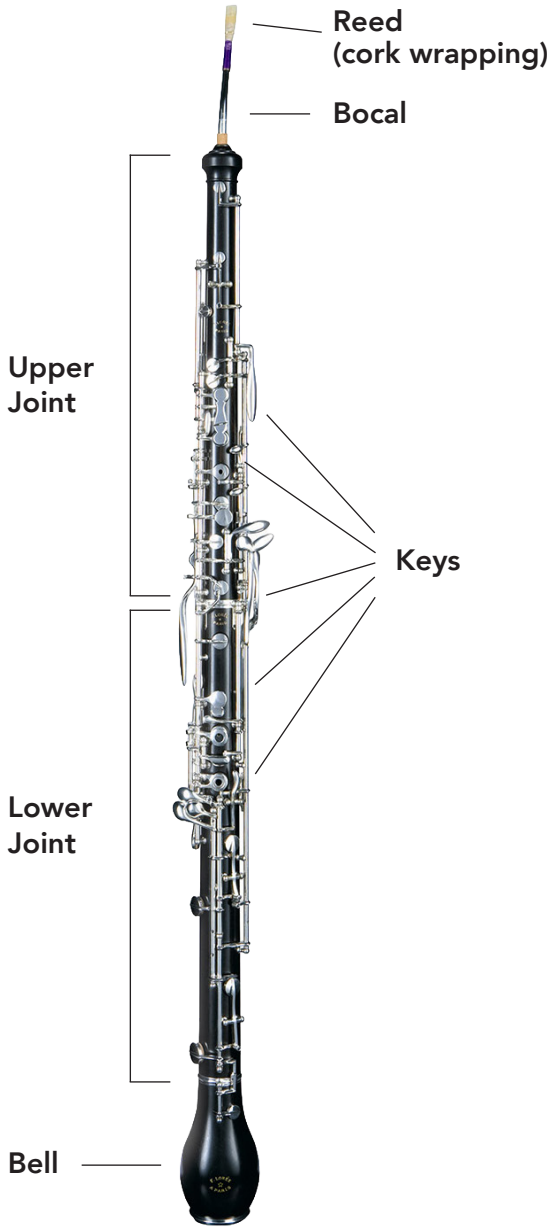
Instrument Profile

The **English horn** is a member of the woodwind family. It is closely related to the oboe: it is played using a **double reed** and most of same fingerings. In the orchestra, the English horn sits at the end of the oboe section. There is usually only one English horn in an orchestra.

The English horn makes sound by blowing air through a double reed that is attached to a **bocal** – a very narrow curved metal tube that connects the reed to the rest of the instrument. The air vibrates against the two thin pieces of the double reed, through the bocal, and down the body of the English horn until it comes out of the **bell** at the bottom.

Pressing different combinations of **keys** changes the amount of space inside the English horn that the air travels through before it comes out of the bell. That changes the pitch of the sound that we hear to be either higher or lower.

The English horn is longer than the oboe and produces lower sounds. It has a rich, deep tone, and is often used to express intense emotions in music.



CONNECT WITH THE MUSIC



Composer Jean Sibelius, c. 1898

Jean Sibelius wrote "The Swan of Tuonela" for solo English horn and orchestra as part of a suite of music depicting myths from the Kalevala, the national epic of Finland. In Finnish mythology, Tuonela is the land of the dead, guarded by a swan that swims along a black river. The hero, Lemminkäinen, meets his death when he attempts to kill the swan.

Listen to "The Swan of Tuonela" (available on YouTube) as you think about the story. Why do you think Sibelius chose the English horn for the swan? Do you agree with his choice? What instrument would you choose?



Artwork by Ben Garrison



Tim Daniels, *Principal English Horn*
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

Want More English Horn? LISTEN HERE!

- Hector Berlioz, Roman Carnival Overture
- Aaron Copland, Quiet City
- Antonín Dvořák, Symphony No. 9
- Ottorino Respighi, Pines of Rome