

RENAISSANCE INSTRUMENTATION

A Chronological Evolution: 1400 - 1600

Early 15th Century

STRINGS

The Lute

The central secular instrument of the Renaissance. Characterized by a pear-shaped body and a fretted neck, gaining complex polyphonic capabilities during this period.

Mid 15th Century

WOODWINDS

The Crumhorn

A double-reed instrument with a distinct J-shape. Its capped reed produces a consistent, nasal buzzing timbre essential for outdoor consort performances.

Late 15th Century

BRASS

The Sackbut

The predecessor to the modern trombone. Featuring a telescopic slide, it allowed for chromatic movement, making it ideal for doubling choral lines in cathedrals.

Early 16th Century

KEYBOARD

The Virginal

A smaller, rectangular member of the harpsichord family. Highly popular in England for domestic music-making among the rising merchant class.

Mid 16th Century

BOWED STRINGS

Viola da Gamba

A family of fretted, bowed instruments held between the legs. Known for a delicate, silvery tone that mirrored the human voice in "consort" music.

Late 16th Century

WOODWINDS

The Dulcian

A precursor to the bassoon, carved from a single block of wood. It provided the necessary bass foundation for large wind ensembles during the late Renaissance.