INSTRUMENT FAMILIES: A Brief Introduction

Roles, Strengths, characteristics, ranges, understanding transpositions

Woodwinds

Flute

Piccolo

Primarily a double of one of the saxists. C flute, alto and bass may be available to you from other students at the School.

Bass Clarinet

Clarinets

Primarily a double of one of the saxists. Typical B♭ clarinet, and bs. Clarinet may be available to you from other students at the School.
Brass

Trumpet

Be careful of over using the high range of any instrument. The trumpet section is responsible for the high end of the ensemble. How dramatic a high note can be will depend not just on the register, but how and when it is used. If you hold off from using any high register and then go up to a loud G on top of the staff, it can have a big impact. Do not write out of the range for any brass player at this stage. Ask the players ahead of time about high notes you are considering and remember that they will lie. They may want to be able to play the note.

There are some color options with trumpet players. They can play with harmon, straight or cup mutes. They can also use a plunger mute. Give them some time to switch between open and mute.

Trumpets can also double on flugelhorn. A flugelhorn is like a trumpet with the same fingerings, but has a wider, conical bore. Its sound is often described as fatter, warmer, and darker than a trumpet. Give them time to switch and blow some air in to the horn.