Name _____ Date _____

String and Percussion Instruments: Bowed, Plucked, Pitched and Unpitched

Directions: All the instruments here come from two families, strings and percussion. Ask yourself what vibrates, and how the player sets it moving.

1. Match each instrument to the way a player usually starts its sound.
Write the letter of the matching answer on each line.

1. _____ harp
2. _____ cello
3. _____ snare drum
4. _____ maracas
5. _____ güiro (a notched gourd)

A. shaking them so the seeds or beads inside rattle
B. tapping its strings with small hammers
C. striking it with a pair of sticks
D. plucking its strings with the fingers
E. drawing a bow across its strings
F. rubbing a damp fingertip around the rim of a glass
G. scraping a stick along its notches

2. Harpists pluck their strings, so some people guess that the harp is a percussion instrument. Which family is it really in, and why?

A. string, because its sound comes from vibrating strings
B. brass, because its frame is often gold-colored
C. string, because it is made of wood
D. percussion, because the player's fingers strike it

3. How does a bow make a violin string sound?

A. Its hair grips the string as it is pulled, which makes the string vibrate.
B. It strikes the string like a tiny hammer.
C. It presses the string down so it cannot move.
D. It blows a stream of air across the string.

4. Percussion that can play the notes of a tune is called pitched. In a symphony orchestra, which of these drums is usually tuned to a definite note?

A. concert bass drum
B. tambourine
C. snare drum
D. timpani

5. Sort these percussion instruments into the right groups.

Word bank
pitched • brass • unpitched • string

A marimba and a glockenspiel are _____ percussion, but a triangle and a pair of cymbals are _____.

6. Which of these standard orchestra instruments uses metal bars to play notes?

A. marimba
B. glockenspiel
C. xylophone
D. timpani

7. What gives a snare drum its crisp, buzzing sound?

A. A reed inside the drum vibrates.
B. The player plucks a string inside the shell.
C. Strands called snares, held tight against its lower head, rattle when the drum is struck.
D. Sand inside the shell shifts around.

8. The steel pan was developed in Trinidad and Tobago in the mid-1900s. It is hammered from a metal drum into curved sections, and each one is tuned. Is it pitched or unpitched?

A. pitched, because each tuned section plays its own note
B. unpitched, because it is made of metal
C. unpitched, because all drums are unpitched
D. pitched, because it is very loud

9. Which pair has one pitched and one unpitched instrument?

A. harp and timpani
B. xylophone and maracas
C. cymbals and triangle
D. marimba and glockenspiel

10. Which sentence about percussion instruments is true?

A. They are all drums.
B. Most are struck, but some are shaken or scraped instead.
C. They are all made of metal.
D. They all play definite pitches.