

THE FIFER by Edouard Manet (1832-1883)

(Play the flute music) Which instrument do you hear?—Flute. It is called a woodwind instrument. (See page 4 for short description of woodwind instruments.)

Why are these instruments called woodwinds? In the past they were made of wood and they had to have air or wind for them to produce their sounds. Does anyone know the name of an old instrument that is similar to the flute? (Fife).



The fife is a cylindrical, side-blown instrument with six finger holes and no keys. The best woods for the instrument were hardwoods (rosewood, boxwood and cocobolo). It is, though, a limited instrument. Most music for the fife is limited to the keys of D, G, and A, but the high shrill sound of the instrument carries well on the field of battle. It is a spirited and inspirational sound.

In the eighteenth century fifes and drums were the infantry's signal instruments. They relayed the commander's orders to soldiers in camp and on the field of battle.

Over two centuries ago, our country went to war so that it could become free and independent. You all know what that war was. Can anyone tell me? (Revolutionary war). As the participants returned from the historic Boston tea party—they marched to the sounds of the fife. (Dec 1773).

The fifers and drummers marched in front of the soldiers and carried no weapons. The music helped the soldiers keep their minds off the tedious march and energized them. Since they carried no weapons, the fifers and drummers certainly exemplified bravery.

One such fifer was Luther Blanchard from a tiny town of Boxborough, MA. He had joined a company called minutemen and was killed as the British fired the first volley of shots. The town still remembers him and he appears on the official town seal.

Fifers were used in Europe since the early 1500s. I have a painting here of a French fifer. (Display painting). What might you call this painting? -"The Fifer"

It was painted by a French artist Edouard Manet—do not confuse with Monet.

He was born in France into a wealthy family on January 23, 1832. He was well educated but did not excel in the academic environment. He however showed a propensity toward drawing and the arts. His father was a magistrate and had hoped that his son would follow in his footsteps. So when Manet announced his ambition to enter the art world, a naval career was suggested. He embarked on his first voyage at age 16, but returned within 6 months with a stronger resolve to become a painter.

He was registered as a copyist in the Louvre and as a student at Thomas Couture's studio. Making copies of the old masters' works was considered an essential part of a young painter's training. He traveled to Holland and Italy to study and make copies from paintings. For Manet the old works did provide a source of inspiration and he did sometimes copy them and sometimes turned classical subjects into everyday scenes (Luncheon on the grass—Copied from Judgement of Paris or Olympia from Venus of Urbino) He established his own studio in 1856. His first submission "the absinthe drinker" was rejected by the Salon. {Interesting info: rejected paintings were stamped with a big R at the back of the painting and the artist had to paint and cover it to ever be able to sell it}

For over 2 centuries, the French Academy had rated historical paintings including religious and mythological scenes highest, followed by portraits and finally genre paintings, still life and landscapes. The canvas surfaces were satiny smooth, the human figure was flawless like a classical sculpture and varying degrees of light and shade were used to model objects.

Manet is called "the Father of Impressionism". He paved the way because he painted modern life. He used rough patches sometimes applying paint with a palette knife. His paintings were of real people (not Goddesses) with skin tones that showed no modeling. His paintings looked flat.

He painted some very scandalous subjects for the time and was considered a rebel.

He died of a disease that attacks the central nervous system and causes paralysis. He was 51. His last large canvas was "A bar at the Folies-Bergere". He did continue to paint smaller canvases and painted flowers.

"The Fifer" was criticized by a lot by art critics who thought it was like a rudimentary picture on a playing card. The painting is oil on canvas and really simple. The boy stands in a gentle backward S line. The distinctly vertical line is broken only by the horizontal fife and the loop on his sash.

There is only a thin wisp of a shadow between the two feet and around the knees. Manet has applied really thin paint in the background and used a lighter colour so that the boy stands out.

The rich colour on the figure draws attention to it and we notice the lines of his body. He is brightly lit from the front with almost no shadow making it a flat painting. Even the face has almost no shadows except at the far side of his cheeks.

Observe the gentle curves throughout the piece. The lines of the boy's body, his eyebrows, his pants, extended elbow, hat and the sash intended to hold the fife. All are defined by single flat lines with very little shadow.

We talked about another art element in our Paul Klee lesson.

(Colour) Usually before you apply colour what is the first thing you do??

(Make some kind of a line)

We have discussed the flute and the fife today. Our composer used a similar instrument in his compositions.

Woodwind instruments use vibrating air to produce many different musical sounds. Despite their name, they are not all made of wood. They may also be made from metal, bone and ivory. They look like long sticks, and players blow air into them to create sounds. The different shape and materials of each instrument help to create its unique sound. Some woodwind family members that play in the orchestra are the **flute**, the **clarinet**, the **oboe**, and the **bassoon**. Sometimes the **saxophone** also joins the orchestra.

Woodwinds can be played either as flutes or with a reed. Flutes have a hole that the player blows across. The air vibrating through the instrument creates a sound. Something similar happens with instruments that have a reed attached to them - like the oboe, clarinet, and bassoon. A player blows air through the reed, the vibrating reed sets the air inside the instrument in motion, and this creates the sound.

The orchestra often has two, three, or four of each of these kinds of woodwinds. They often play solos in a big piece for the whole orchestra, because woodwind tone carries well and can be heard even when there are many other instruments playing.