

One system that I have previously considered in my journal is the system of the pit orchestra. The physical boundary of this system, is the boundary of the pit in which the musicians sit and play their instruments. At least, this is the boundary during the show, when the pit is functioning at its highest capacity. During rehearsal, when the pit is polishing its gears so to speak, the boundary could be the band room, the stage itself, or any empty space like a gym or even a hallway. When musicians practice outside of rehearsal, the boundary expands even more, to include each musician's personal house or preferred private practice place. However, the physical boundaries of the system are not the only boundaries. Outside of a high school pit orchestra, where the director might be inclined to let everyone in, or even pressed to encourage participation by convincing students how much fun they'll have, pit orchestras can be very competitive. The director of the musical as a whole, or perhaps the conductor of the orchestra, can set a boundary or a standard of talent to choose who makes the cut. Talent is a very subjective boundary, and can be composed of many different factors. If the five auditioning trumpet players are much more talented than the one oboist, the oboist will still get in above four of the trumpeteers simply because the trumpet cannot play the oboe part. Additionally, if the most talented musician is not available during rehearsals or has a conflict during tech week or a performance (gasp!), their talent alone will not be enough to merit participation.

The temporal and conceptual boundaries of a pit orchestra are even more interesting. After the performance ends, the musicians of the pit orchestra go home and no longer play together until the next night. Does the system of the orchestra still exist between shows? What about when the show closes, and the musicians move on to the next gig? What defines a pit orchestra anyway? In the traditional sense, a pit orchestra would not always fit the definition of "orchestra". All the more, the musicians are not always sitting in pits! Personally, I have been in pits that performed on the stage, behind the curtain in the back, or on the ground squeezed between the front row of seats and the stage. I have also been in orchestras which included electric guitars and a multitude of saxophones, not instruments you'd typically find in your run-of-the-mill orchestral symphony. These instruments would sooner be considered part of a band, however, the strings would not be allowed in this category. The pit orchestra is a whole different animal. Some might also ask, what about the singers? Is the actor who sings a solo while the musicians play part of the orchestra? What about the ensemble? They add to the music that the pit orchestra is making, don't they? Does it matter if they sing in only one song, or the whole time? Or alternatively, is the pit defined by the musicians who take part in playing the completely instrumental overture and entr'acte? Your view of the pit orchestra will change depending on your perspective and your experience.

The formal definition of the pit orchestra was decided years ago at the beginning of the musical theatre tradition. Wikipedia is the only source on the first page of google that defined pit orchestra rather than orchestra pit, the physical pit in which the

orchestra customarily sits. Wikipedia defines the pit orchestra as, “a type of orchestra that accompanies performers in musicals, operas, ballets and other shows involving music.” However, even Wikipedia, and other dictionaries now that I think about it, are written by people with specific opinions, perspectives, and backgrounds. Since most of the dictionary definitions focus on the pit, an orchestra on stage may not fit their definition of pit orchestra. Someone who has never played in a pit orchestra before may not consider the conductor to be a part of it, even though I consider them to be an integral part of the group. Once the show is over, most people probably consider the pit orchestra to be disbanded or to no longer exist, but a musician who made lifelong friends in the orchestra may consider it to live on forever in their memory or in their heart.