

# Hey Kids, IT'S A CELLO



The Cello is one of the bigger instruments in the string family. It plays notes that are lower than the viola, though not as low as the string bass. The strings on the cello are more than twice as long as the strings on the viola, producing rich, and warm lower notes. The symphony orchestra will usually include 8-12 cellists.

## History

The first known maker of the cello was Andrea Amati, the teacher of world famous Italian string instrument builder Antonio Stradivari. Amati's original cello was slightly larger than the modern cello. In 1690 the size was reduced from 31 inches to 29 inches. By the early 1700's string instruments builders were generally using this smaller pattern. Even the older instruments by famous makers were being trimmed down in size. The reason for this smaller size was to reduce the tension in the cellist's left hand.

## How It's Played

The size and weight of the cello make it too heavy to rest on your shoulder as violinists and viola players do, so cellists sit down. In modern orchestras cellists also support most of the weight of the cello with an endpin that extends out from the bottom of the cello. In the 1800's the cello did not have an endpin, so cellists had to squeeze their knees together to keep the instrument from dropping to the floor. The left hand is responsible for fingering the notes, while the right hand plucks (pizzicato) or bows (arco) the strings. Beginning cellists often like to tape the fingerboard to help remind them where to place the fingers of the left hand.

## How It's Made

The cello is typically made of various woods that are chosen to enhance the performance of the instrument. The top is made of spruce, with maple for the back and sides. The neck is made of maple and ebony, the preferred wood for the fingerboard because of its hardness and beauty. These parts are carefully carved



and shaped, and then glued together with a special glue. After the body of the cello is assembled and varnished, the four strings, bridge, tailpiece, endpin, and various smaller pieces are added.

**Fun Fact**

A cello made in 1707 by Matteo Goffriller of Venice, sold at auction on April 22, 2005 for \$620,800, a new record for Goffriller's instruments.