

Hey Kids, It's a Violin



The Violin, sometimes called a fiddle, is the smallest member of the string family. The orchestra has more violins than any other single instrument. The violin section is divided into first and second violins, with the first violins playing the highest notes, and the second violins playing the next highest notes. The violin is also one of the most popular solo instruments. A distinctive feature of the violin is its hourglass shape.

History

The first violin makers may possibly have borrowed ideas from three types of bowed instruments:

- 1) The Rebec
- 2) The Renaissance Fiddle
- 3) Lira da braccio

The violin began as a three stringed instrument. In 1555, a fourth string was added by Italian violin maker Andrea Amati, though it was his student, Italian string maker Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737) who brought the art of violin making to its height. Stradivari's instruments are regarded as the finest stringed instruments ever built.

How It's Played

The violin rests on the left shoulder, and is kept in place by the players chin. The left hand is responsible for fingering the notes, while the right hand plucks or bows the strings. Beginning violin players often like to tape the fingerboard, to help remind them of left hand finger placement.

How It's Made

A violin is made of many pieces of wood that are chosen to enhance the performance of the instrument. The top is made of spruce, and the back and ribs are made of maple. The neck is made of maple and ebony, the preferred wood for the



fingerboard because of its hardness and beauty. All of these parts are carefully carved and then glued together with a special glue. After the body of the violin is assembled and varnished, the four strings, bridge, tailpiece and various smaller pieces are added. Players can choose to include a chinrest.

Fun Fact

On May 16, 2006, Christie's, a London auction house, auctioned a Stradivarius called The Hammer for a record \$3,544,000. It is the most anyone has ever paid at public auction for a musical instrument.

