

Music of the World

Chordophones: Early European Bowed Instruments

The 8th century **rebab** from Central Asia is accredited to be the ancestor of the European violin family. It could be a spiked fiddle like the Erhu, boat-shaped or pear-shaped.



The Italian **lira da braccio**, (braccio meaning shoulder) was the Renaissance seven stringed early violin of the 15th and 16th centuries. It had a wider fingerboard and a lower bridge than the modern violin and sometimes had frets. The bows were curved. The carving of the backs were often of mythological characters. The **lira** could be played with triple or quadruple stops (meaning playing several strings at once) to create chords.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVtXsekolpM>

Artist, Leonardo da Vinci, notably played the lira. His paintings showed this **viola da braccio**.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGHILuBRSUE>



The **viol** family or the **Viola da Gamba**, which originated in Spain, were also played during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. They have frets, use a bow and are played while being held between the knees like a modern cello. They are **not** a direct ancestor of the violin family. Unlike the violin, viola and cello, which are tuned in fifths, the **Viola da Gamba** typically has six strings which are tuned in fourths with a third in the middle. The bow is held underhand. The modern string bass viol is a descendant.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BO2JeKiwbvQ>

