



## Music of the World

### Chordophones -

#### The modern string family: Violin

The **Violin, Viola and Cello** were developed from earlier

European bowed stringed instruments but began to come into their own around the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They were not descendants of the viola da gamba.



Emanating from Milan, the **Violin** became quite popular in Italy when it came to Nice at the conclusion of a war. The name began around 1538—*violino*—and was played popularly by both nobility and street musicians. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, French King Charles IX commissioned many kinds of violins, the oldest surviving instrument is dated 1564 made by Andrea Amati in Cremona although historians are unsure the label is authentic. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has an Amati dated possibly 1558. (It is interesting to note that many student violins today copy the names “Amati” or “Cremona” inside the label.) Oxford has the oldest violin made by Antonio Stradavari (pictured left) in 1716 known as the *Messiah Stradivarius* or *Salabue* but is seldom played.



The most sought-after 300-year-old violins are made by Stadavari and Guarneri del Gesu. It is said that no violin sounds as beautiful as a 300-year-old Stradivarius.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRIG4QhHVG4>

For reading:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/solved-the-mystery-of-why-stradivarius-violins-a-re-best-858329.html>

There have been numerous makers or *luthers* throughout the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The fingerboard was lengthened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to extend the range and the neck was tilted to improve the projection of sound. Thankfully, the chinrest was added by Louis Spohr in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The violin is tuned in perfect 5ths lowest to highest: G-D-A-E

Here is violinist, Joshua Bell, playing the Dvorak *Violin Concerto in A minor*:

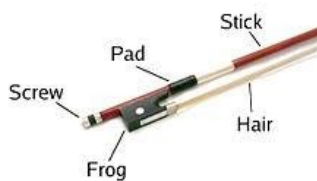
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_qcTrYPTgn8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qcTrYPTgn8)

To learn more about how the wood grain of a stringed instrument affects the sound:

<https://stringsmagazine.com/with-the-grain-learn-how-to-look-at-wood-like-a-violin-maker/>

*For the adults who enjoy blindfold tests, the following video compares a 10 million-dollar (\$10,000,000) violin to one that is valued at \$1,000.*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_3ZlqNTAPtU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3ZlqNTAPtU)



**Bows:** Instruments of the violin family use several techniques to vibrate the strings. One can strum, pluck (*pizzicato*) or bow. The bow is made of wood and horsehair, essentially. Tension is made using the screw at the end of the frog. Rosin is applied to the horsehair to grip the string. There are



numerous techniques and playing styles using the bow which take much practice and mastery.

Bows can be quite ornate sometimes embellished or inlaid with mother of pearl, silver, gold, or other ornamentation. Rare bows can be priced in the tens of thousands of dollars.



Choosing a bow can be as essential as choosing the instrument:

<https://stringsmagazine.com/a-guide-to-buying-a-bow/>

Right, the frogs are shown of the violin (top), viola (middle), and cello (bottom). Note that the violin bow is squared but the viola and cello bows are rounded.

