

The Violin!



One of the best known instruments in the orchestra is the violin. It is played with a bow and is the highest pitched instrument in the violin family.

The violin consists of several parts - the front, the ribs, the neck, the fingerboard, the pegbox, the scroll, the bridge, the tailpiece and the f- holes.

The violin has four strings which are fastened to the tailpiece, rest over the fingerboard and run to the pegbox. At the pegbox, the strings are attached to tuning pegs and by turning these pegs, the violin can be tuned to the correct pitch. By the musician changing finger positions on the strings, different notes are made. The bow is drawn across the strings with make the tone.

The violin can be traced back to Italy in the early 1500's. Evolving from two other stringed instruments, the fiddle and the lira da braccio which were both stringed instruments. The known developer of the violin was Andres Amati.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the craft of violin making began. Artists such as Antonio Stradivari, Giuseppe Guarneri and Jacob Stainer made them in their workshops. At this time, the violins had a shorter neck, the bridge was fatter, a shorter fingerboard and the strings were made of gut.

At first, the violin wasn't very popular and considered low status socially. But by the 1800's, well known composers, like Claudio Monteverdi used the violin in operas. The violin began to gain some stature in the Baroque period as more known composers began using the violin in their works. One of these composers was Johann Sebastian Bach. By the mid-18th century, the violin was a vital part in instrumental music. During this time, violins emerged as the leading section in the orchestra. However, it wasn't until the 19th century that violin virtuosos emerged. People such as Giovanni Viotti, Isaac Stern, Mischa Elman and Nathan Milstein became world famous for their skill.

