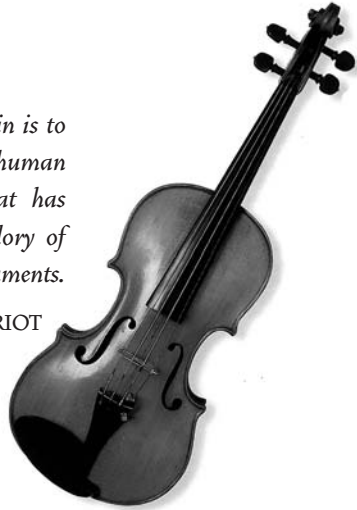


Program Notes



The true mission of the violin is to imitate the accents of the human voice, a noble mission that has earned for the violin the glory of being called the king of instruments.

CHARLES-AUGUSTE DE BÉRIOT
(1802 - 70)



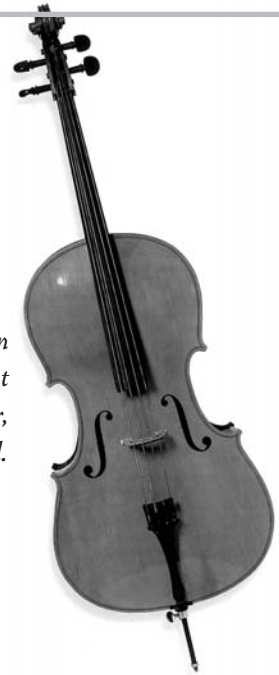
It is believed that the violin originated from Italy in the early 1500s. It evolved from the fiddle and rebec, both were bowed string instruments from the medieval period. The violin also emerged from the *lira da braccio*, a violin-like instrument of the Renaissance period. The viol, which came before the violin, is also closely related. It is Andrea Amati who is the known developer of the violin. Amati apprenticed as a lute maker and in 1525, he became a master instrument maker. The earliest noted violin makers were Gasparo da Salò and Giovanni Maggini, both Italians, but it is during the 17th and early 18th centuries that the art of violin making reached its peak. The Italians Antonio Stradivari and Giuseppe Guarneri as well as the Austrian Jacob Stainer are most noted during this period.

The earliest form of the violin is very different from that of today. The early violins had a neck that was shorter, thicker and less angled. The fingerboard was likewise shorter, the bridge was flatter and the strings were made of gut. At first the violin wasn't popular, in fact, it was considered a musical instrument of low status. But by the 1800s such well-known composers as Claudio Monteverdi used the violin in his operas, thus the violin's status grew. The violin's prestige continued to rise during the Baroque period, made more notable by such celebrated figures in music as Antonio Vivaldi and Johann Sebastian Bach. By the mid-18th century, the violin enjoyed a vital place in instrumental music ensembles. In the 19th century, the violin's rise to fame continued in the hands of virtuoso violinists such as Nicolò Paganini and Pablo de Sarasate. In the 20th century the violin reached new heights both in technical and artistic aspects.



The cello is like a beautiful woman who has not grown older but younger with time, more slender, more subtle and more graceful.

PABLO CASALS (1876 - 1973)



Cellos were made as early as the mid-1500's. The first known maker was Andrea Amati. Only six of his *celli* are still in known existence today, although the exact locations of only three are known. These 16th century cellos were bigger than today's cellos, with bodies of 30 or 31 inches. Today, cellos are around 29 inches, and are proportionately smaller. This smaller cello was originally created in the 1690s, but it wasn't until the early 1700s that most makers began to use this pattern. Many of the earlier cellos by famous makers were later shortened. Antonio Stradivari was initially apprenticed to a cello maker. Though his violins are among the best known and most expensive in the world, he was also a notable cello maker. A Stradivarian cello is worth in the millions today. Even at that time, Italian violinmakers made more money on the cellos.

In the nineteenth century, cellos started to be mass-produced rather than crafted by hand. These instruments were much cheaper and their tone quality was not as good. Cellos are an octave lower than violas (or an octave and a fifth lower than violins). They have a very mellow sound which contributes to the orchestra's bass line. They do get solos from time to time, though the violins take precedence as far as that's concerned. They are the second best known instrument of the orchestra.

Viola

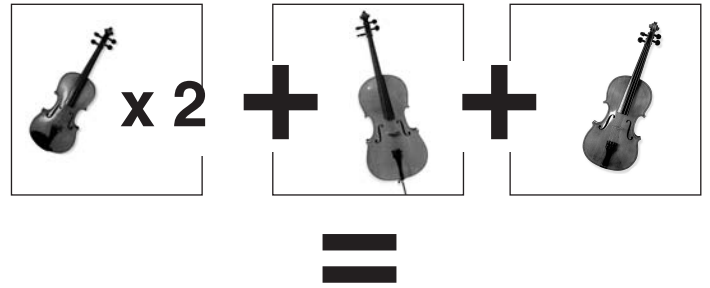
The viola is a philosopher, sad and helpful; always ready to come to the aid of others, but reluctant to call attention to himself.

ALBERT LAVIGNAC (1846 - 1916)



The viola is an instrument in the violin family. It is slightly larger than the violin with a deeper, mellower tone. It's tuned a fifth lower (although it is hard to distinguish from a violin when played in an orchestra, unless it's on the C string). It parallels the human alto voice. Both the violin and the viola evolved directly from the *viola da braccio*. Since the Italian word *violino* is a derivative of *viola*, historians tend to believe that the viola may have actually appeared slightly before the violin. Many violists enjoy believing that they may be at the top of the violin family, at least historically (although nothing has ever been truly proven).

In early orchestra music, the viola's role was merely harmony. It often had the bass line when the composer couldn't think of anything else to write. The melody was left to the brighter, higher violin and more powerful, distinct cello. Into the 20th century, the viola began to get a more prominent role, and is now sometimes featured as a solo instrument. Violas were made as early as the 1500s. Gaspara da Salo, who was a prominent cello maker, also was quite famous for his violas and his double basses. In the early classic period (post-Bach), many composers felt the viola was a source of anxiety. The instrument was regarded as clumsy to play, and uncomfortable to write for. The bass line often had awkward harmonies, being written in three different octaves. The eighteen and nineteen hundreds brought better parts for the viola, as composers started to recognize it more as an instrument with different characteristics than the other stringed instruments in the orchestra.



The String Quartet

Listening to a great string quartet is a paramount musical experience, akin to overhearing an impassioned conversation between four strong-willed but loving siblings. Their views are unique, but the intimacy has created a shared sensibility, the power to finish one another's sentences and complete one another's thoughts. It's easy enough to assemble the forces to perform quartet music: Throw together two violinists, a violist, and a cellist, and put the music in front of them. But it's a far different thing for those four individuals to become a quartet and attain that indefinable quality of oneness.

DAVID WEININGER, *YOUNG STRING QUARTET FINDS HARMONY IN MUSIC AND ONE ANOTHER*, THE BOSTON GLOBE (NOVEMBER 23, 2004)

A string quartet can mean any combination of four-stringed instruments. However, traditionally a string quartet is a group of two violins — with the addition of one cello and one viola. Typically, the first violin will play in a higher note range than the melody line, while the second violin will harmonize on the lower notes. If a composer creates music to include stringed instruments, such as bass, other violins, cello or a guitar, the instrumentation indicates this explicitly. It is the exclusive combination of flexibility and fullness that has contributed to the growth in demand for string quartets in recent years. Quartet music incorporates a great range of notes that have more in common with a full orchestra than any other format. At the same time many string quartet arrangements are easy to play and harmonize with.

A quartet permits its members to play music independently of each other — but in harmony. Members of a quartet are all soloist musicians in their instrument of choice. This provides an

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effective way of dealing with complex musical arrangements - since the players don't need to play in unison or keep in precise timing with the others in the group. Quartet players need only to be concerned with their own parts, and how they merge and harmonize, rather than what the other musicians are playing.

In the mid-18th century, musicians started to use the phrase *string quartet*. The first musical arrangements for quartets by Joseph Haydn were made up of five movements and resembled the *sere-nade* or *divertimento*. This can be compared to the form of the *Opus 9* quartets, written in 1769-70, which are in the accepted standard of Haydn and other composers. These quartets consisted of four movements; a slow movement, fast movement, a trio, minuet - followed by a fast finale. Haydn's style originated with the Baroque suite and developed gradually since then.

There's no disputing the fact that Haydn is the father of the string quartet. Haydn played occasionally as a member of quartets

at social occasions as well as in an impromptu string quartet that also included the classical master, Mozart. The late eighteenth century set the standard of quality string quartets, as the premier form of chamber music and one which was adopted by virtually all future composers of string quartet music worldwide.

The composition of each of the four stringed instruments is normally in four distinct movements within a larger framework, similar to that found in a symphony. Typically, the outer movements are fast, while the inner movements are slow. Also, don't forget the dance style movements such as the *minuet*, *furiant* or *scherzo*, which can be in any order. These later movements provide vitality and variety to string quartet arrangements.

Ever since its inception, the string quartet holds prestige in being a true test in the art of classical composing. This may be because range and variety of sounds are more limited than with orchestral music. String quartets work with stand-alone music rather than leaning on musical palettes and tonal colors as is frequently the case with orchestral compositions.

AN OPUS GLOSSARY

Largo

(It.) Very slowly, broadly.

Often specific movements of classical pieces are identified by their tempo markings; the *Largo ma non tanto* ("Slow, but not too much") is the second movement of Bach's *Double Violin Concerto*.

Molto espressivo

(It.) Very expressive.

Piano

(It.) softly. (The instrument of this name was originally called the "pianoforte," or "loud/soft," because it was the first keyboard instrument capable of dynamic variations.)

Sforzando

(It.) A direction to play a note with sudden emphasis or surprise.

Forte

(It.) Loud, strong; usually written "f".

Hairpins

An informal nickname for either a crescendo (get louder) or decrescendo (get softer).

Adagio

(It.) Slowly.

Ma non troppo

(It.) But not too much.

Allegro Molto Vivace

Fast and very lively.

Poco Ritard

Slow the tempo slightly ("ritard" is short for "ritardando")

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