The History of the Violin.

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The instrument we have here, as we will be invited capable of even approaching the violin in extraordinary power and variety of expression. It is considered the most perfect instrument; for a piano can not be tuned perfectly, and a flute flat will play in tune as all of its keys have been invented. This instrument is more nearly a perfect than an invention.

The word violin is the old French diminutive of Viole and equivalent to Violino. Fiddle as it is often called comes from the Latin "Fides" meaning a string.

Before the appearance of the viol in Europe in the fifteenth century, we find no trace of any large bowed instrument. The gigue, crowd, rebec, and fidel were small enough to be rested on the shoulder during performance and usually smaller than the modern violin. These names were not assigned to any special form of instrument. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, viols were made in great profusion of every style and shape, but the time of the true violin that reigns with the rise of modern music. The violin owes its origin to the lyre and monochord; the latter consisting of a long bar with a bridge fixed at each end, over which a single string was stretched. A movable bridge was employed to divide the monochord so as to produce the intervals of the various scales, and this bridge has survived in all bowed instruments, though its position is now changed. In old representations the monochord was placed horizontally, and played with the fingers and the bow was not employed to make the tone continuous. As the instrument was used to lead the organ and train the voice its efficiency in both respects would be greatly increased by this pro-

longing its sounds. A rosined wheel and handle was substituted for the bow, first applied to the monochord, still used to some extent, but the bow is held as the most convenient means of producing a continuous tone from stringed instruments.

A slight change in the monochord, adapting it so as to be handled vertically changed it into the Marine trumpet or so called "Tromba Marina". This is a portable monochord supposed to have originated in Germany. It was very popular at the time, and used in the service of the church; but was in little use after the beginning of the last century. In its latest form it consisted of a violin head with an iron screw. The body was a resonant box broadening towards the bottom, and resting on the ground. It is the only instrument that did this prior to the fifteenth century. The back was built of staves polygonal in shape. Its average height was six feet. The strong string was stretched over a peculiar bridge, shaped like a shoe. When the string vibrates this shoe rattles on the body like an organ reed.

The lyre was introduced into Celtic Britain by the Romans, and was called by the Brittons, Crwth, In its European use it was limited to England and Wales. In its oldest form it consisted of three strings, had neither bridge nor fingerboard, and was plucked with the fingers. The sound holes were circular, one and one fourth inch in diameter, twenty two and one half in length. The later form mounted six strings, four played with the bow and two lying at the side of the finger board.

The use of corner blocks mark the transition from the Crwth to the viol. They were probably invented to aid in the construction of the larger violins, an invention which proved to be the turning point

in the development of wind instruments, they increased the tension of the resonant top and the transmission of the vibration of the strings, rendered them easier to make and stronger. Whether the single or double blocks were used at first, is not known, but the latter were considered best.

The invention of the waist was also an important step in the development of the viol, and this was only possible in instruments with sides or ribs. In early times the hand of the player had to be kept very stiff, and it was difficult to get at the strings, but the bow-holes or waists made this easy, after getting them proportioned right. At one time they were very large, rendering them conspicuous, but at the beginning of the sixteenth century a single outline, with moderately long and shallow waists, was adopted. The position of the sound holes was constantly changing for more than a century. Sometimes they would be placed in the upper part of the instrument, sometimes between the waists and again near the tail piece, but the now permanent position is from the middle of the waist to a short distance below the waists, and the bridge is fixed in the middle of the sound holes. The bridge, which is the most important part of the structure, was completed last. It is a true reed. The sound bar running obliquely under the left foot of the bridge is called the nervous system of the violin. The sound post is a slender cylindrical block fixed at both ends, and through which pass all vibrations generated; and on its position depend mellowness and fullness of sound. The latest development of the viol was the construction of sympathetic strings of metal, but these were not long in use. They were essentially solo instruments and were seldom employed in the orchestra. The adaptation of four strings tuned by fifths for the violin in its three sizes, really marks the emancipation of

wood instruments from the domination of the lute. This change was a step to musical progress. The diminished number of strings proved resonance, for the greater number of strings in use, the more pressure there is on the bridge which checks vibration and increases resistance to the bow. Fingering was also simplified.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century the treble, tenor, bass and Double Bass were well established in Germany, the Netherlands, and north Italy, but when the model violin appeared in the middle of the sixteenth century it drove out of use all but the Double Bass viol. The substitution of the violin for the viol, is due to the louder tone of the former instrument. It distinguished the Discant viol in Italy and Germany in the seventeenth century and France, and England in the eighteenth. The present violin consists of seventy pieces or parts, all of which are wood except the strings and loops. Fifty seven are glued together for the fixed structure of the instrument, and thirteen movable fittings. Every minute detail has its use and meaning and it does not hold that any sort of resonant box, and any frame, strong enough to hold the strings, would answer the purpose. The whole design of the violin has been settled gradually in strict accordance with the requirements of tone and execution. The tone depends largely upon the quality of the wood. By the old violin makers this was selected with extreme care. At Brescia, pear, lemon, and ash were used. At Cremona, maple, Venice, and Milan from the Swiss Southern Tyrol, unlimited in supply. The makers would choose from this, testing it for intensity and sound. "By striking strips of wood of different kinds, we find that they sing in musical sound" when a good piece was found it was kept for the best work. A good maker will piece and join so as to save every particle of the tested timber.

The most striking power of the instrument may be said to reside in the bow. This, as we have it today is the creation of the genius of Francois Tourte, who was born in Paris, and whose father and elder brother were also bow-makers. He took great pains in selecting the wood and also to give it a permanent and regular bend. He determined the true length of the stick, and the method of spreading the hairs and fastening them.

The violins made by Cremona are said to be the best, and the earliest known maker of these is Andreas Amati. After his time the Cremona violin was carried on to the utmost perfection by his pupil Antonio Stradivari. After Cremona, Venice produced the best; then came Milan and Naples. In South Germany we find some account of the school of violin makers under Klotz and Steiner. The Amati is smaller in size than the violins of today, but recognized by the sweetness of tone. The Stradivari is larger and louder. Violin making is not practiced so much in this country, and the playing has, as a rule, been represented here by foreigners. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Paris became the undisputed center.

The first great master of the violin is Vitali, after which came Corelli, who added a new and important kind of composition, the Concerto. Many of the best makers seldom make new instruments, which can be produced more cheaply by inferior workmen. Their most profitable occupation is the purchase, restoration and sale of old ones, which are preferred by modern purchasers.

The violin as we have it is therefore about three centuries old. Of all musical instruments it is the only one that has survived unchanged throughout modern musical history. The lutes, the universal companions of such instruments, have disappeared. Wind instruments

of all kinds have been completely revolutionized, but the violin has remained, for three hundred years the same. Numberless attempts have been made to improve it, but all have been abandoned. The supreme interest of this instrument lies in its simplicity, beauty, strength, subtility, and indestructibility, but above all in its perfection as a musical instrument.

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