

String Musical Instrument

Humans discovered a long time ago that music could be made from vibrating strings. A string musical instrument such as the lute or mandolin was the means by which traveling minstrels would entertain the crowd. Even today, there is interest in these early forms. Rock star Sting has recently released an album of 16th century lute music and American band REM has often featured a mandolin. The Rod Stewart hit, Maggie May also featured the distinctive sound of the mandolin.

Every culture has produced their forerunner of the modern guitar. Africa and Asia have several versions of string musical instrument, often with only three strings. In America, the banjo became popular in country and folk music. The guitar was used for jazz and blues before becoming the backbone of rock and roll. Western rock music has also incorporated the Sitar, an instrument used in Indian music, first heard in a pop song performed by The Beatles with Norwegian Wood.

Many of the greatest pieces of classical music have been written for a string orchestra or string quartet. The violin, viola and cello are wonderful for solo string musical instrument compositions and to blend together. These are the bowed instruments; the violin is sometimes plucked with a technique called pizzicato. The double bass is very versatile and can be found in jazz bands, orchestras and for rockabilly groups. The violin too is versatile and often used in rock and folk music. The fiddle is a staple of Irish, jigs and reels. Jazz violinists such as Darryl Way and Jean Luc Ponty are very accomplished performers. Jimmy Page, flamboyant guitarist from Led Zeppelin, even took a bow to his electric guitar to produce an experimental sound. Most string instruments can be fitted with electric pickups to amplify the sound, to fit in with any genre.

Technically speaking, keyboard instruments such as the piano, clavichord and harpsichord are categorized as a string musical instrument as they have strings, which are struck by hammers. The piano however, is sometimes classed as a percussion instrument.

Whatever genre all these instruments are employed in, they bring a range of sound that is unequalled. A fiddle can make you want to get up and dance and a cello solo can make you reach for the tissues. Music is very often programmed these days with instruments being simulated through a computer, but there is nothing to equal the sound of a live violin in an echoing hall.