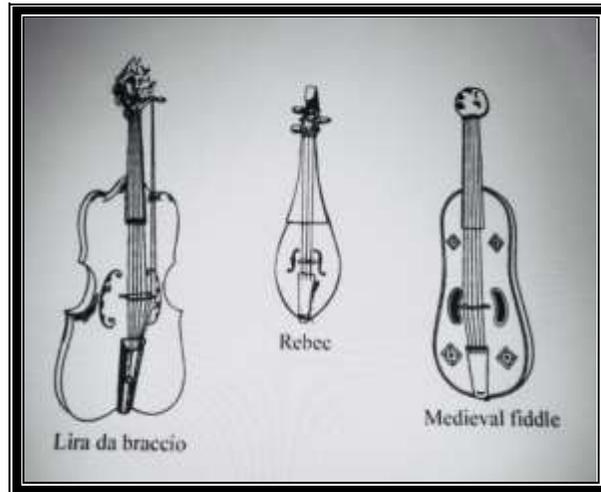


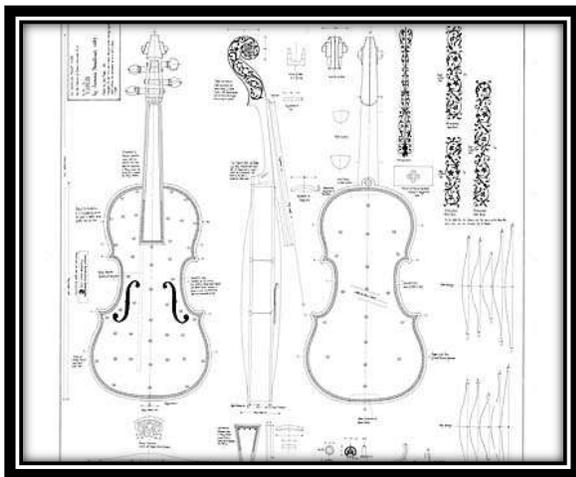
A long journey for Violin: Alps to Himalayas

-by Aditi Seetharaman

The violin, which evolved during the Renaissance period in Italy, is the descendant of Viol. This medieval family of string instruments included the fiddle, Rebec, and Lira da Braccio.

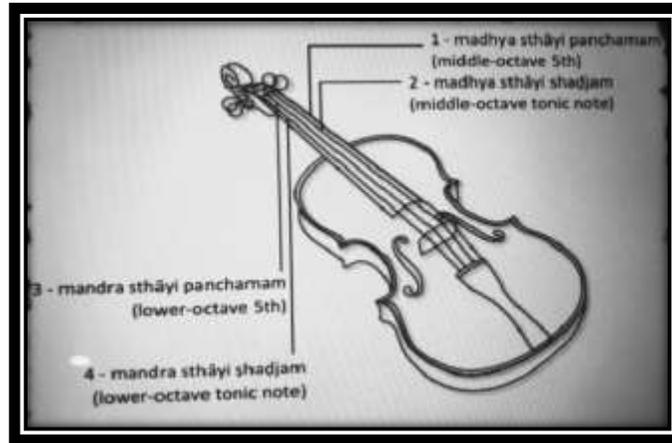


The modern violin, probably the best known and most widely used stringed instrument in the world, was refined by Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737). Stradivari is recognized as the greatest violin maker in history.



He made changes to its design including the bridge height, the arch of the belly, and the neck angle. He started production in 1684. Stradivari created violins whose sound boxes are unmatched even today.

Violin made its entry into the music of Indian subcontinent around 200 years ago. Balaswamy Dikshidar (1786-1859), brother of Muthuswamy Dikshidar, is considered the 'Father of Indian Classical Violin'. Trained in the western fiddle, he introduced and adapted the instrument for Carnatic music. For his contributions he was appointed 'Asthana Vidwan of Ettayapuram' in 1824.



Some of the great artists who developed and popularized the Indian violin (as solo and as an accompaniment to vocal) were –

Vedivelu (1810-1845) of the Tanjore Quartet, the *asthana vidwan* of Maharaja Swati Thirunal

Varahappa Iyer, a minister in the Tanjore Marata court during British Raj

Tirukodikaval Krishna Ayyer (1857-1913)

Valadi Radhakrishna Iyer (1840-1905)

Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu (1893-1964)

Malaikotttai Govindaswamy Pilla (1897-1931)

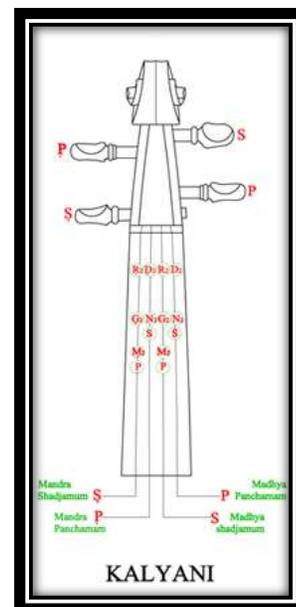
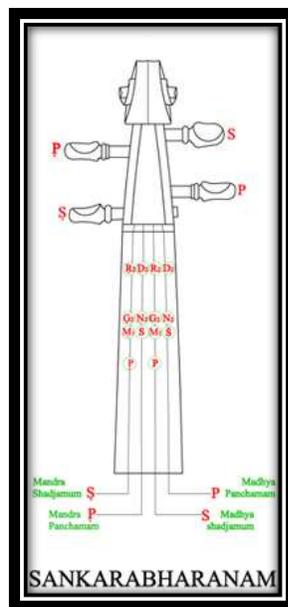
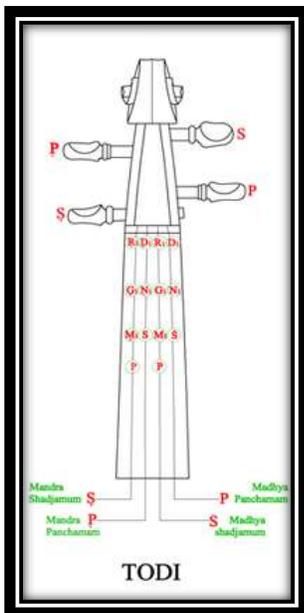
Mysore T Chowdaiha (1895-1967)

Kumbakonam Rajamanikyam Pillai (1898-1970)

The violin posture, fingering, and tuning in Carnatic music is different from western music. In Carnatic music, the artist sits down cross-legged on the floor, just as the other performing artists in the group.



The instrument is lightly balanced between the chest and hollow of the right ankle, where the scroll of the violin rests. This enables the left hand to be free from supporting the instrument, and the artist is able to move with ease over various positions.



The sliding movement of the whole hand including the thumb helps with achieving the *gamakas* needed for Carnatic music, which is similar to the *vibrato* of the western violin.

Though there have been various stringed instruments in Indian Classical and Folk music for thousands of years, the violin evolved to become the principal *pakkavadiam* for South Indian Carnatic music because of its versatility and tonal quality that blends well with the human voice.

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