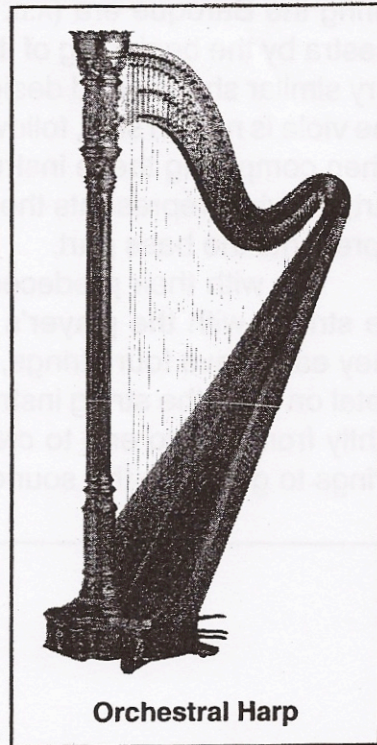


Chapter 9: All in the Family—The Strings

Let's take a closer look at the European group of chordophones known as the **string family**. The oldest member of ... a string family is the harp. It dates back to ancient Greece and to the Biblical times of King David. Early harps were designed to be portable, so they could be held on a lap when seated or could be carried in one arm and played with the other hand while standing or walking. Sound is generated on a harp by plucking or strumming one or several strings at a time, causing them to vibrate. Different pitches are represented on a harp by having shorter or longer strings stretched tightly.

Until the nineteenth century, the harp was meant to be used as an accompaniment instrument, but more and more solo music for the harp has been written. Today's orchestral harp is quite large, usually at least six feet tall at its highest point, with as many as forty-seven strings and seven pedals representing each of the seven notes of the major scale (*A* through *G*). The string and pedals enable the harpist to play a specific note sharp, flat, or in its natural position. Changing the pedals alters the tension on the string, causing it to tighten or loosen, allowing the harpist to play all of the chromatic pitches in western European music.

The violin family, also known as the *vio*/family, includes the violin, viola, violoncello, and the double bass, and had its beginnings around the end of the fifteenth century. Viols typically have five to seven strings. Occasionally, additional resonating strings are added on a level below the primary strings, as in a *viola d'amore*. Originally, string instruments were different in shape from modern instruments; nonetheless, all string instruments produce sound the same way, through a resonating chamber and by either plucking or bowing the strings. Some of the early instruments were known as the *viola da gamba*, *viola da spala*, *viola di bordone*, *viola d'amore*, and *viola pomposa*. All were popular until the beginning of the eighteenth century, when they were replaced by the modern string instruments as we know them today.



Orchestral Harp



Violin



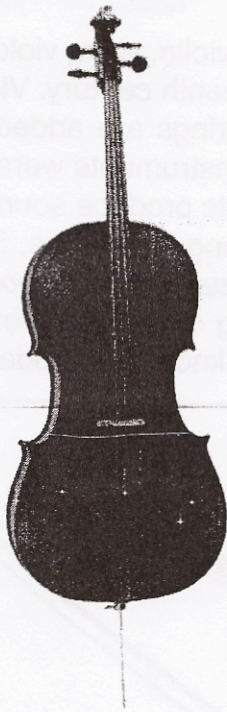
Viola



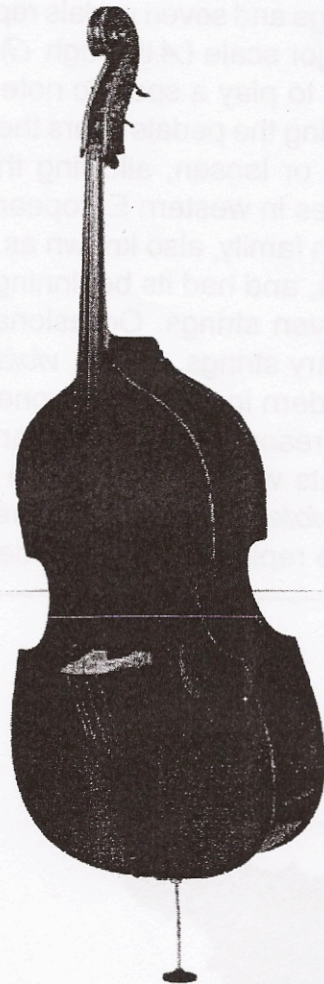
Chapter 9: All in the Family—The Strings (cont.)

All of the current string instruments found in a symphony orchestra became popular during the Baroque era (A.D. 1600–1750) and became firmly established in the symphony orchestra by the beginning of the Classic era (A.D. 1750–1820). The modern instruments all have very similar shapes and designs. The violin is the smallest, thus producing the highest sounds. The viola is next in size, followed by the violoncello (or *cello*), and the double bass is the largest. When comparing these instruments to voice parts in a choir, the violin represents the soprano part, the viola represents the alto part, the cello represents the tenor part, and the double bass represents the bass part.

As with their predecessors, these four instruments produce sounds by either plucking the strings with the player's fingers (called *pizzicato*), or drawing a bow across the strings. They each have four strings, tuned in intervals of fourths. The strings are typically made out of metal on all of the string instruments, and the bows are made from wood with horse hair strung tightly from end to end to create the bow. That is the portion that is usually drawn across the strings to generate the sound.



Cello



Double Bass

Word Scramble

Unscramble the words listed below to coincide with the terms that were used and discussed in Chapter 9.

1. RHAP _____

2. EPBATROL _____

3. UGICLNPK _____

4. SLEPDA _____

5. LIVOIN _____

6. AVOIL _____

7. OOOLLVINCE _____

8. GRINTSS _____

9. TONSERGAIN BREMCAH _____

10. AQBEOUR _____

11. CAZZOITPI _____

12. OWB _____

13. SONYYPHM SHORCERTA _____

14. STFORUH _____

15. LOBDUE SASB _____

Name: _____ Date: _____



Chapter 9: Questions

1. What is the oldest member of the string family? _____

2. Early harps were designed to be this way so that they could be held on a lap when seated or carried in one arm when standing or walking.

3. How is sound generated on a harp? _____

4. The violin family is also known as the _____
5. How is sound produced on string instruments? _____

6. What were the years of the Baroque Era? _____
7. What were the years of the Classic Era? _____
8. This instrument is the smallest and produces the highest sounds.

9. How many strings do modern string instruments have? _____
10. What material are the strings made of? _____

11. When did the modern string instruments replace the earlier members of the viol family?

12. What is it called when a player plucks the strings?
