

Fiddle & Bow

- **Belongs to the String Family**
- **Made of wood with wound metal strings**
- **A lead instrument in Bluegrass**
- **Uses a bow with pine rosin**

The oldest and most basic instrument of rural roots music is not the guitar but the fiddle. For years the fiddle was virtually the only instrument found on the frontier and in the South. It was used widely enough that as early as 1736 we find written accounts of fiddle contests. Though often thought of today as primarily a white instrument - and indeed many tunes and styles came over from Ireland and Scotland - there arose in the 19th century a strong fiddle tradition among blacks. One common characteristic of all members of the fiddle family is the lack of frets on the fingerboard. Any fiddle may be formally called a violin, regardless of the kind of music being played on it. Physically, they are the same instrument. Common distinctions between violins and fiddles reflect the differences in the instruments used to play classical and folk music. However, it is not uncommon for classically trained violinists to play fiddle music, and today many fiddle players have some classical training.



Old-Time master fiddler Carl DePoy.

Historically, the majority of fiddle music was dance music. In the Appalachian tradition the fiddler has always been held in high regard right beside the preacher and the undertaker, who was often the town blacksmith. Though the fiddle was the main instrument in early country music in the 1920's, it was gradually replaced by the steel guitar and electric guitar. It re-emerged in popularity in the 1940's as Bill Monroe, Earl Scruggs and Lester Flatt developed bluegrass.



Eleven year-old Hyla Shooter performs locally in her home state of Maine.