

Donation of the Month

Fiddle

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Music has been a part of society for centuries, from religious music to folk music, all parts of society listen to and partook in the rhythmic sounds played by skilled and unskilled musicians. Many families throughout the country grew up with music as a source of entertainment. Children learned to play the piano, guitar or other instruments from a very early age. Country music has been defined by this self-taught family inspired playing, which often included a fiddle player.

Most people look at the fiddle and call it a violin. They would not be incorrect. Fiddle is a general term referring to any string instrument, but most often refers to the violin. While the construction and look are the same the art of playing the instrument defines the difference. The term violin, while it refers to a specific instrument, usually refers to the instrument found in orchestras and played by a classically trained musician. Since, we will be talking about the use of this instrument in country or folk music we will call it a fiddle.

Tradition has it that the fiddle actually predates the use of the banjo and certainly the guitar in country music. European settlers brought the instrument with them as they traveled west. And while the root of fiddle playing is derived from British, Irish and Scottish traditions, isolated communities began to create their own unique sounds. These unique sounds created different types of country music. Country music can have a blues, jazz, rock, bluegrass or other type of sound, all depending on the way the fiddle is played. For example, jazz fiddling means taking the notes on the page and adding a swinging style to it.

The musician shortens the notes, or adds notes between the melody, giving the music an energetic feeling.

Today, much of modern country music tends to rely on the guitar and drums instead of the traditional sounds of the banjo and fiddle. However, there has been a resurgence of the traditional style with the New Traditionalist Movement and interest in Western Swing. Music played on the back porch has never lost sight of the fiddle and while it hasn't gotten much airtime the fiddle is still one of the preferred instruments in American folk music.