



## The Viola

The viola is a stringed musical instrument. It looks like a violin, but the viola is a little bigger, about 2 to 2 1/2 inches longer. Its four strings are tuned c-g-d'-a', beginning with the C below middle C. The violin doesn't have the lower C string, instead it has a higher E string. This means that the viola can play lower notes than the violin and is the tenor of the string family, sitting in between the violins and cellos, right in the middle of the orchestra. The viola's tone is also considered to be darker, weightier, and more mellow than that of the violin.

Until Christoph Willibald Gluck, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Joseph Haydn gave the viola distinctive parts, the 18th-century orchestra usually had the viola double the cello parts. It has since assumed its independent orchestral role, helped along with a long solo in Hector Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* and playing the theme of Sancho in Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote*.

Sources: Freya Parr, BBC Classical Music Magazine and Encyclopedia Britannica (britannica.com)