

Why Did You Choose the Instrument You Play? We asked our COT Members.

My older sisters already played the violin and cello, so I got to play the viola to keep sisterly competition at a minimum. ~ *Daphne, viola*

Received help from a public school band director. ~ *Tom, trombone*

When I began orchestra in the 4th grade, my parents had an old violin that my grandpa and great-grandpa had played. That was my first violin. I still have it! ~ *Emily, violin*

My parents bought me a cello in the 5th grade after I started taking school lessons in the 4th grade. We all loved the sound. ~ *Joanna, cello*

I liked the sound of a trumpet.
~ *Jerry, trumpet*

I played violin at first but always loved the bass line of songs and hearing them when watching orchestras. In middle school I asked if I could try switching to string bass. My teacher told me I was too short and my hands were too small. My mentality from then on as a 12 year old was, "No one will tell me what I can't do because of my size." ~ *Jamie, bass*

I love the deep, full, low tones of the bass. I've always heard the bass part as a prominent part in a piece of music. Also, I like the rhythmic and harmonic foundation the bass provides. ~ *Dave, bass*

I loved the idea of a scholarship instrument.
~ *April, bassoon*

I thought it was a cool instrument. I started out on cornet, but liked the French horn better. ~ *Elaine, horn*

I chose the flute because my mom played the flute and because it was small and easy to carry back and forth to school. But now I think it really is the most beautifully sounding instrument of all, so I think that also must have had something to do with my decision.
~ *Dee, flute & piccolo*

I have no idea. My first instrument was the piano; Mom thought it best to learn the basics, which included music theory. Come 5th grade, we could play instrumental music in school. Now at the age of 62, I have long forgotten my thinking back then. ~ *Tim, trombone*

My father brought home a trumpet, after a trip buying and selling textbooks from schools and boards of education in Illinois and Ohio. At the time I was playing sousaphone and tuba in my high school band. After playing trumpet at home, I decided to switch exclusively to trumpet but was afraid to tell my band teacher, so my father called him and I went from first tuba to thirteenth trumpet in my second year of high school. I was first chair during junior and senior years.
~ *Herschel, trumpet (& baton)*

When we lived in Boulder, I had season tickets to the Colorado Music Festival in row 6, directly in front of the cello section. The sound of the instrument captivated me, and eventually I got up the nerve to learn to play it. ~ *Mary, cello*

...because I had to choose between a violin and a piano and my sister was going to be the violin teacher so I wanted her to teach me. ~ *Randall, violin*

...because it was my grandmother's favorite instrument. However, I started orchestra by trying to get out of class and had no clue what orchestra was. ~ *Marcelena, violin*

I played several different instruments in high school, but found I had a knack for the oboe. ~ *Ed, oboe*

...because it looked like a flute-a-phone (black recorder) that I played in 4th grade in Kansas. The clarinet looked like a big version of that. I enjoyed playing that so much that I chose the clarinet when I was able to. ~ *Deon, clarinet*

I fell in love with the violin immediately. I couldn't wait until the third grade, when I was allowed to start taking lessons through school. I continued to grow in my love for the violin when my grandfather took up violin making after retiring. The violin that I play now is one of my most treasured possessions, as it is the last instrument that he had a hand in making. ~ *Amy, violin*

I wanted to be like my aunt who was a marvelous violinist and my teacher, my inspiration and my champion who believed in me. ~ *Judith, violin*

I really liked the unique sound and the complex design of the instrument. ~ *Kevin, bassoon*

I like the sound and stylistic flexibility.
~ *Larry, trumpet*

I was auditioning for the Interlochen Arts Academy, and they said my chances of getting in were better if I auditioned in an orchestral instrument. I'd been fooling around with vibes in my rock band, so I auditioned on xylophone, and got in as a triple minor in drama, composition, and...percussion. Then I had to get serious! ~ *Monica, percussion*

Switched from violin to viola in the 8th grade cuz my orchestra teacher told me to. ~ *Glynn, viola*

I chose to play the violin because I thought it sounded pretty. ~ *Lani, violin*

I thought it was the most feminine of instruments (even though all the flutists in the Philadelphia Orchestra were men). ~ *Fran, flute*

I liked the sound. My childhood heroes were Itzhak Perlman and Shlomo Mintz. ~ *Teresa, violin*

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I watched my mother play violin duets with her friend and I was their page-turner. Playing duets looked like so much fun, I decided to take up the violin, too. I wanted to play duets with my mother. ~ *Lori, violin*

I fell in love with the sound of the horn after hearing recordings of Dennis Brain; when it was time to pick an instrument for band, the horn was my first choice. I love the challenge the instrument gives me as well as the joy of playing. ~ *Janelle, horn*

My great-grandfather was a country violinist and he played for family and locals. My grandfather on the other side came from Russia and would have played there but come to the U.S. with a great love for violin music and from both I wound up playing the violin. I do still play my great-grandfather's violin from time to time. ~ *Chris, violin*

When I saw all of the different parts of the clarinet and the many keys on it I thought it must be really complicated to play. ~ *Chauncey, clarinet*

I began playing saxophone at age 10, and have completed a Bachelor of Music degree in Saxophone Performance at the U of A. My interest in the clarinet began with teaching my cousin the instrument, and the interest continued far beyond the lessons. ~ *Zack Brennan, clarinet & saxophone*

As a child, my 3 sisters and I were directed by our music teacher to form a family quartet. I liked the deep, full tones of the viola, so that is why I have continued with the viola. ~ *Martha, viola*

It allows me to be in both the Orchestral and Jazz worlds on the same instrument. ~ *Bob, bass*

I like stringed instruments. I play cello and piano, too. ~ *Hyun, violin*

I chose to play the cello, because I strongly believe that the sound of the cello is so divine and magical. Since then, with the help of this magic, I experienced the power of reaching out to people and touching their hearts as a cello soloist. ~ *Rahşan, cello*

I was talked into playing crash cymbals in Tchaikovsky's 4th Symphony. I loved hearing how my part fit in with the other parts and had so much fun that I went to Pima College and became a percussion major. Then (age 44) I discovered timpani. Finally. ~ *Barbara, timpani*

When introduced to all the instruments when I was 9, I heard that you had to stand up to practice the violin, so I picked the cello and I liked the sound of the cello better also. I am very glad I pick the cello. I still love the sound. ~ *Barbara Lane, cello*

Given that my job is rather cerebral, I find it relaxing to play drums where I don't have to focus on theory, key signatures, scales, etc :-). ~ *Hoshin, percussion*

...because my mom wouldn't let me play the cello. She thought it would be too big after watching a little girl drag one on and off the school bus. We settled on the trombone, which turned out to be a perfect choice! ~ *Mike, trombone*

I was playing flute in my junior high school band when I heard my first oboe. That was it! I begged my parents until they let me take lessons and I have been playing now for over 50 years! ~ *Marilyn, oboe & English horn*

When I was 10 years old, the only instrument my mother said I couldn't play was violin because she couldn't stand hearing high pitched squeaks from an inexperienced student. After a few years playing the cello, I wanted no other instrument than it. ~ *Amanda, cello*

I have always sung alto in choral groups. When I was asked by my school's music department to choose an instrument, I chose the French horn. However, I broke my front teeth in an auto accident. Because of the ongoing dental work, I took up the viola and have played viola in a number of civic orchestras and ensembles for over 60 years. ~ *Patricia, viola*

I started playing violin in 4th grade. My grandfather had a violin and he gave it to me to play. He was a large animal vet in Iowa and never had time to play it because he was so busy with his practice. He was VERY happy that I did and enjoyed it so much! ~ *Susan, violin*

I started playing the flute in 6th grade, probably because my mother, a long-time Boston Symphony subscriber, loved the sound of Doriot Anthony Dwyer's playing. Much later, I took up the cello, as an orchestra needs just 2 or 3 flutes, but many cellos! (I still sometimes play flute or piccolo when needed.) ~ *Dorothy, cello (& flute/piccolo)*

My first instrument adventure was a little cornet. We have a string of trumpet players in our family, so I was told that's what I would play. I never enjoyed it but liked being in band. In 8th grade, I was told I would not get into HS band on trumpet so I should switch to either French Horn or Euphonium. The horn was prettier and lighter so I picked that. Unfortunately no one ever told me it was keyed differently. So I did not really learn how to play until my mid 20's when I started teaching my son trumpet at age 5. We would practice at the same time and often play duets together. ~ *Mary, horn*

I chose to play the viola when I was in fourth grade because it was different than what everybody else was playing. ~ *Liz, viola*

When I was in elementary school the teacher put on a string instrument demonstration. We picked our top 3 choices, but the teacher warned that we might not get our first choice. I really wanted to play the string bass because it was huge, and thought I'd be clever by putting that second, since the first would probably run out. I put violin first and they didn't run out, so I ended up playing violin. ~ *Rachel Schlesinger*

In fourth grade, we were allowed to join band or orchestra. For me, it was between violin and flute. I'm still not sure what exactly made me choose violin, but I've always been glad I did! ~ *Rose, violin*