



ŠTĚPÁNKA SEKANINOVÁ & JAKUB CENKL

THE STORIES OF

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS



ALBATROS

# THE STORIES OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

ŠTĚPÁNKA SEKANINOVÁ & JAKUB CENKL



## CHORDOPHONES

# PIANO

## KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS

Attracted by music soft and gentle, then wild and turbulent, Niccolo and Luciano have crept into the concert hall through the window. The notes are being played by a huge shiny black instrument that stands in the middle of the hall. On a stool next to the instrument sits a slim man in a tailcoat, his long fingers racing up and down the black and white keys. The man and the piano make beautiful music together.

### INTRODUCING THE PIANO

The piano is one of the most voluminous musical instruments. It is an acoustic stringed instrument. When it is played, its strings vibrate when struck by wooden hammers attached to its 88 black and white keys. The white keys represent whole tones, the black keys semitones.



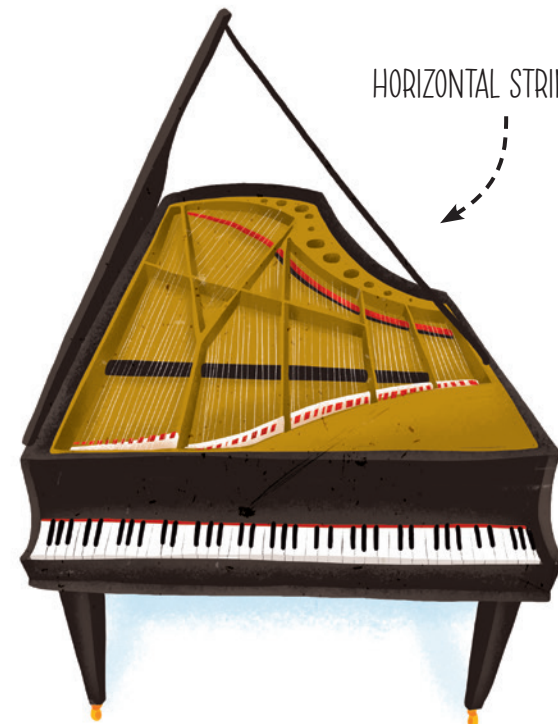
THE STRINGS ARE  
ARRANGED VERTICALLY.



IT WILL EVEN FIT IN  
A SMALL APARTMENT.

### UPRIGHT PIANO

Unlike the magnificent grand piano, you will find an upright piano in many a room and apartment. Standing smartly against a wall, it is the faithful servant of all beginning musicians. Because of its smaller size, the strings of an upright piano are arranged vertically in separate planes in order to fit them all in. The bass strings of an upright piano are thicker and shorter than those of a grand, giving the upright a more booming but narrower and less expansive tone.



HORIZONTAL STRINGS

GRAND PIANO

### GRAND PIANO

In terms of its shape, the grand piano looks like an outstretched bird's wing. This delights Luciano, and he struts around it and preens himself to show how proud he is. Because of its great size, it is more suitable for the concert hall than a small apartment—not just because it wouldn't fit into the apartment, but because its rich sound would be too much for a small space.

## WHERE DOES THE WORD "PIANO" COME FROM?

The original name of the instrument, "pianoforte," makes plain that the whole dynamic scale is available to the player—from piano (soft) to forte (loud). This was not the case with the harpsichord, the forerunner of the piano.



## DISTANT TONES FROM PREHISTORY

Isn't it incredible that the roots of the piano reach all the way back to prehistoric times? But the prehistoric piano was nothing luxurious, nor remotely similar to the modern-day piano. The piano's most distant ancestor was an ordinary stick. More specifically, it was a hollow stem of bamboo with a plant fiber cut into its top. The note produced by this primitive resonating instrument was neither impressive nor long-lasting.



### MEET THE PIANO

Niccolo knows from the first that he must have this instrument in his band. Once again, Luciano's well-tuned voice sings along to the melody without a single wrong note. Children, allow me to present the concert grand piano.

If you like, children,  
you can sing along with  
my playing.

CONCERT  
GRAND PIANO





# SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

An orchestra is a relatively large group of players of string, percussion, woodwind, and brass instruments led by a conductor. An ancestor of the orchestra is the small chamber ensemble, which became widespread in the 18th century.





# RELATIVES OF THE TRUMPET

## WIND INSTRUMENTS

### REED

"All these different trumpets are making me confused," said Niccolo, as he continued his musical pilgrimage. "But what's this?" At his next stop, there are lots more metal objects. Welcome to the world of Miss Trumpet's cousins! These instruments include saxophones, trombones, sousaphones, and helicons. Trum-ta-ta-daa! Too-too-oo!

## FLUGELHORN

At first sight, you might confuse it with a trumpet, but when you look closer, you realize that the flugelhorn is a little larger, has a wider tube, and is more cone-shaped at the end. All this makes its sound softer, fuller, and less sharp than that of the trumpet, its slenderer sister—as we hear clearly in wind orchestras.

## CORNET

Something between a flugelhorn and a trumpet, this instrument has its origins in the posthorn. Although its tone is not as full as the trumpet's, at one time it threatened the latter's existence, as it is more comfortable to play. In appearance, it is like a pocket-sized trumpet.

## TROMBONE

This instrument has quite a long history. Indeed, having been played since the 15th century, it is one of the oldest metal instruments. The slide trombone is composed of two parts. The trombone's tone is changed by moving the slide up and down. There is also a valve trombone, which is somewhat easier to play—to extend the instrument to the required length, the player just presses down on a valve.

FUGELHORN

## TUBA

Playing the tuba requires a lot of strength, so the player must be sitting comfortably to bear its weight. Its deep, bass sound is heard in orchestras accompanying other instruments.

TROMBONE

TUBA

BENT  
TUBE

SOUSAPHONE

## FRENCH HORN

This bent brass instrument is known for its lovely velvety tone. Having started out as a military instrument, it was also used for the playing of fanfares and to give signals at the hunts. Although it is made of metal, its shape continues to resemble a cow horn, out of which it developed. Today, the French horn has been promoted from the hunt to the symphony orchestra and chamber ensemble. Its long tones are also heard in jazz music.

HUNTING  
HORN

I bet the hunt  
is starting!

## SOUSAPHONE

A brother of the helicon, this instrument was named after John Philip Sousa, an American composer and conductor, and is popular with American military bands for its bolder, sharper sound. And its bent tube means that it fits around the player's body, allowing them to march proudly as they blow.

HELICON

## HELICON

A helicon is a kind of tuba modified so that the player can bear its weight comfortably on the shoulder without the need to sit. Indeed, helicon players can march briskly as they blow their horns. In the Balkans, the helicon is a much-loved instrument and, as such, an inseparable part of the folk tradition.





## ADOLPHE SAX

“When I grow up, I’d like to invent and build an instrument that will go down in the history of music,” the Belgian Adolphe Sax (1814–1894) would say to himself in his younger years. He practiced hard to be ready to enjoy his success. When he was only six years old, he started work on a clarinet. “What should my new instrument be like?” he wondered. “Easy to handle, like a woodwind instrument, but with a rich sound, like a brass one.” Which is precisely what he made. The public first heard the new saxophone in 1841. It combined the fingering of the wooden oboe with the solid sound of metal. Where did the name come from? It was named after the inventor Sax, of course!

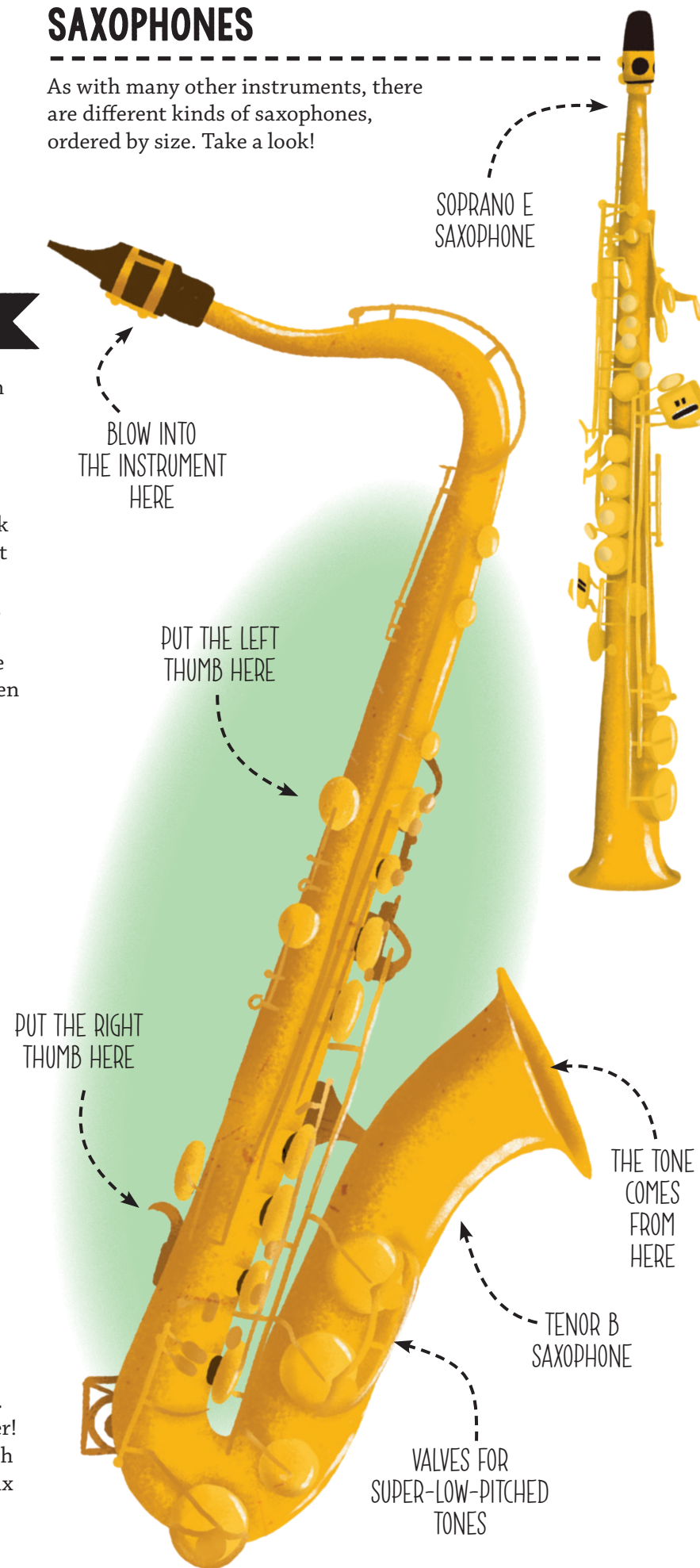


## WHAT A BIG SOUND!

The saxophone didn’t really catch on for the playing of the classics: it was simply too loud to play the gentle melodies of world-famous compositions. But where a powerful sound was needed, it truly shone. In the late 1840s, there was a competition for military bands in France. Just guess which orchestra was the clear winner! That’s right, the one with the saxophones, which outplayed all the others. After that, Adolphe Sax was commissioned to equip all French military bands with his saxophones.

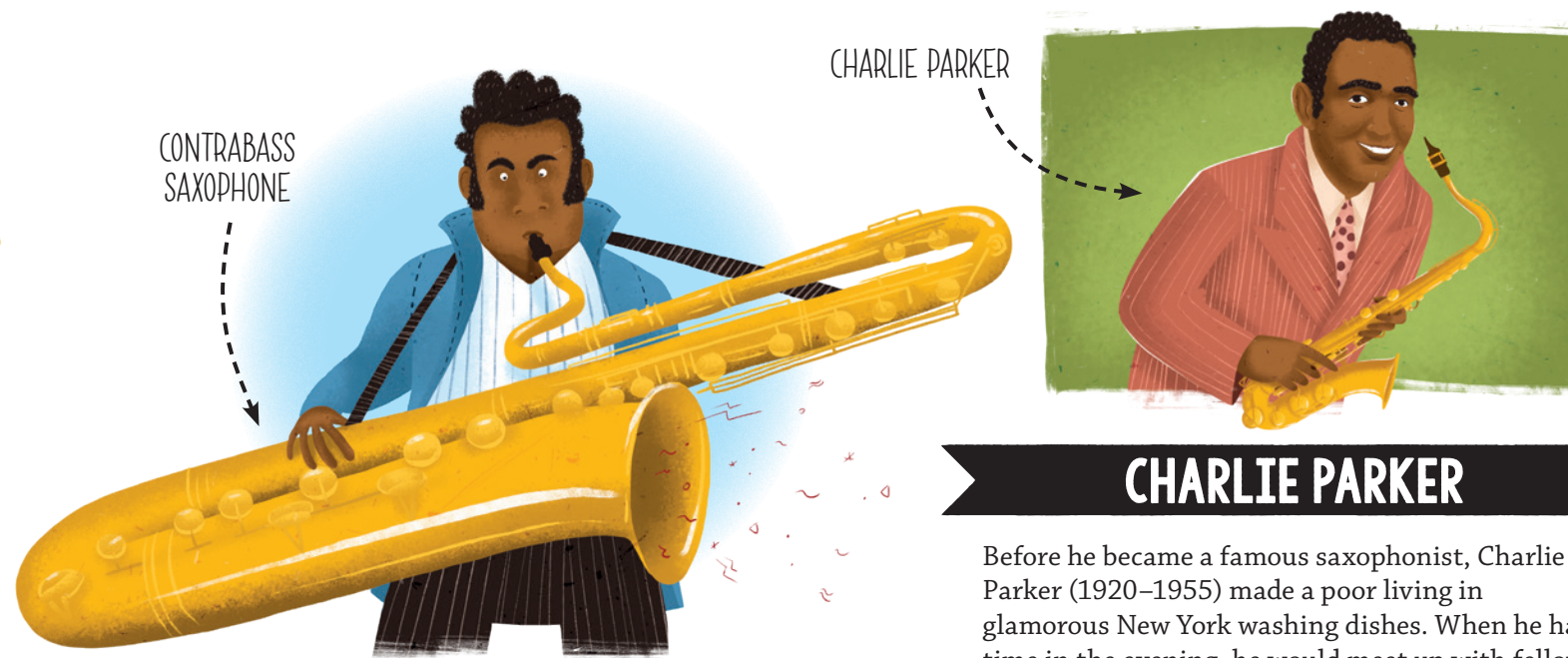
## SAXOPHONES

As with many other instruments, there are different kinds of saxophones, ordered by size. Take a look!



## GOLDEN AGE OF THE SAXOPHONE

In the early 20th century, a new type of music called jazz began to spread across America. The saxophone was as well suited to jazz as it had been to the military band, and it was taken up by many jazz musicians. The popularity of Adolphe Sax’s beautiful instruments grew as jazz blossomed all over the world.



## CHARLIE PARKER

Before he became a famous saxophonist, Charlie Parker (1920–1955) made a poor living in glamorous New York washing dishes. When he had time in the evening, he would meet up with fellow musicians for a jam. It wasn’t long before fate and his incredible talent took him from the dirty pots and pans to the musical heavens. In the 1940s, Parker became one of the best jazzmen in New York. His glory was short-lived, however—Parker’s lifestyle and a lack of acceptance for his music beyond the city brought this brilliant horn player to his knees.



## ANGELA DAVIS

Angela Davis, who was born in Australia in 1985, was so good in her field that she earned a Masters of Music degree in it. Now she appears alongside the very best at the most prestigious jazz festivals.



## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT!

If you want to be a phenomenal saxophonist you must practice very hard. And the sooner you start, the better. Niccolo should grab his shiny saxophone right now and start blowing into it with all his strength every day from morning to evening!

! ALTHOUGH THE **SAXOPHONE** IS MADE OF METAL, IT IS NOT A BRASS INSTRUMENT. **BECAUSE OF ITS CONSTRUCTION, IT IS CONSIDERED A WOODWIND INSTRUMENT.**



# DIXIELAND JAZZ

Unlike a big band, a Dixieland band plays improvised jazz. It is based around a trombone, a trumpet, a saxophone, and a clarinet, supplemented with a rhythm section comprising a piano and drums. Some later Dixieland bands added a sousaphone and replaced the piano with a guitar or a banjo.



DOUBLE BASS

SAXOPHONE

TROMBONE

CLARINET

PIANO

DRUMS

Jenny's — F



# ROCK BAND

A rock band is a group of musicians who play rock music. In the 1980s and 1990s, rock bands played to sell-out crowds in stadiums. No rock band worth its salt can be without an electric guitar, a bass guitar, drums, and keyboards, including a Hammond organ and synthesizers.





# GUITAR & LUTE

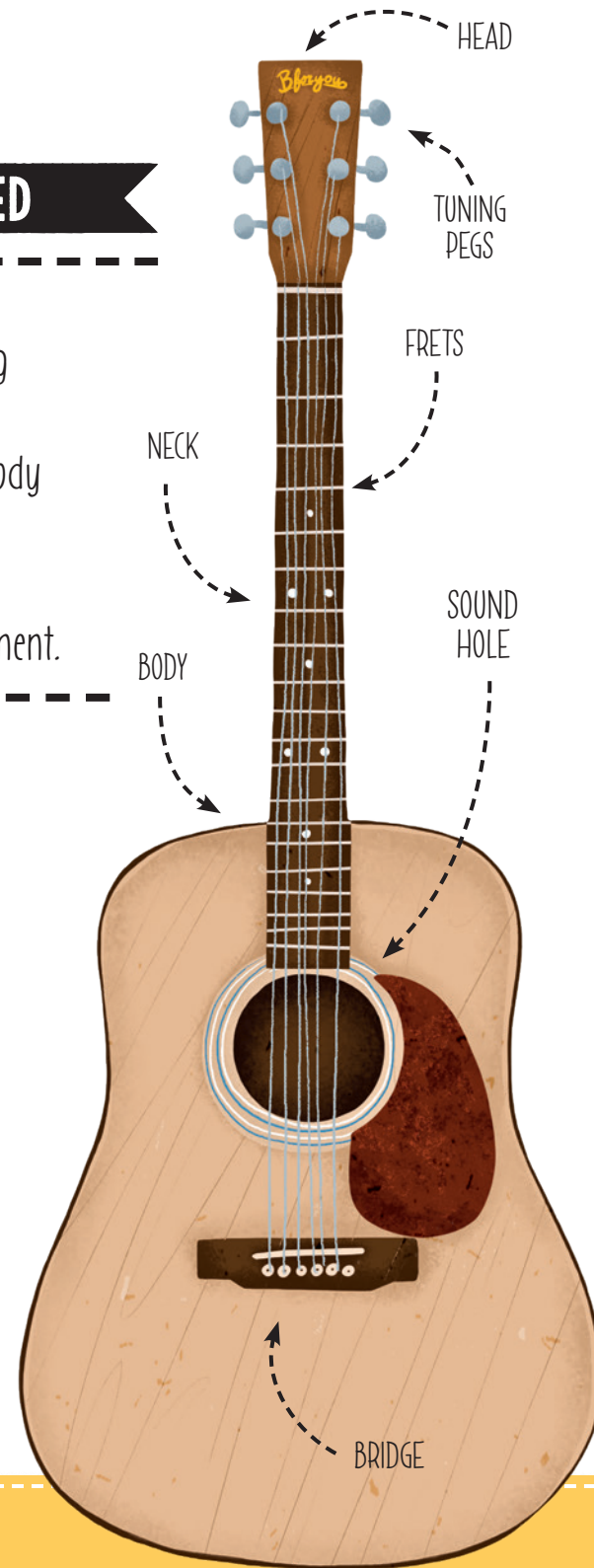
## PLUCKED INSTRUMENTS

### PLUCKED

Strummed and plucked notes from a guitar could be heard all along the street. Eyes closed, brow puckered, and fingers racing up and down the fretboard, this guy was playing as if his life depended on it. As one chord followed another, the catchy melody pleased the musical ears of six-legged Niccolo and two-legged Luciano. "I couldn't do without the guitar," said Niccolo, as he danced to the rhythm and set out in search of another instrument.

## WHAT IS A GUITAR?

A guitar is a stringed instrument for plucking and strumming. These days, most guitars have six strings. The guitar produces notes and chords on the principle of resonance, like a piano. The strings are played with the fingernails or a plectrum so that they vibrate and achieve the desired sound. The vibration characteristics depend on the material of the body of the guitar.



## PARTS OF A GUITAR

### HEAD

This is the place where the strings are attached to the tuning pegs.

### TUNING PEGS

This is used for tuning the strings. Turning a peg

either loosens or tightens the string, thus giving it a lower or higher note

### NECK

The fretboard forms part of the neck; the frets form the fretboard.

### FRETTS

These are metal strips, which divide the fretboard into semitone intervals.

### BODY

This basic part determines the sound of the guitar.

### BRIDGE

This holds the strings fast to the instrument.

### SOUND HOLE

This is in the very center of the guitar.



## THE VERY OLDEST

Like the piano, the guitar has developed into what it is today over many years. In quest of its origins, Niccolo and Luciano went all the way back to ancient times and found themselves in Western Asia in 2500 BCE. On a clay tablet, an artist from the Sumerian city of Nippur produced an image of a musician playing an instrument that looks like a square guitar. Called a kinnor, it is one of the very first plucked instruments and is mentioned in the Bible.

## HITTITE GUITAR

A step closer to the guitar we know today, this long-necked, fretted instrument had a flat body and many sound holes. It was a favorite instrument of the Hittites, an ancient people from Asia Minor. Around 1600 BCE, the Hittites invaded Egypt, and soon their stringed instrument became popular in the mighty empire by the Nile; it was known as the Egyptian lute.



## MUSIC ON THREE STRINGS

The ancient Greeks enjoyed playing a stringed instrument called a cithara. Although this word is very like the modern "guitar," the two instruments are rather different. The cithara of the ancients was more like a lyre than a guitar.

## ROMANCE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Thank goodness for those valiant, chivalrous medieval heroes known as knights! A knight would delight the lady of his heart with a song of love. And if his pleasing voice was accompanied by the melody of quavering strings, the lady might even fall at his feet. In the 12th century, the popularity of the guitar spread to many corners of the world along with troubadours, Minnesänger, and bards.



## THE LATIN GUITAR AT LAST

All these stringed forefathers and -mothers took inspiration from each other. The next few centuries saw the emergence of the beautiful guitarra latina (Latin guitar), whose figure-eight shape made it very like the guitar of today. It was used for accompanying singers and as a solo instrument.



"LUTE" WAS USED UNTIL THE 15TH CENTURY AS A GENERAL TERM FOR A WIDE RANGE OF STRINGED, PLUCKED INSTRUMENTS.



## BASIC GUITAR TYPES

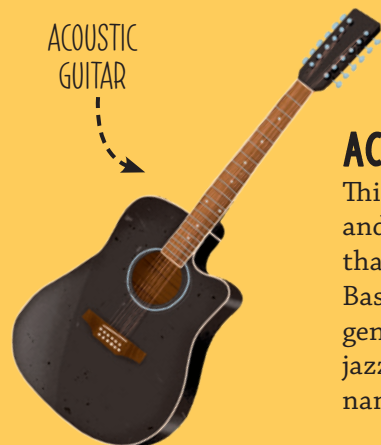
### CLASSICAL (SPANISH)

This is the oldest type in use, usually for the playing of classical music. These days, it is also used in the playing of jazz, country, folk, and popular music.

CLASSICAL GUITAR



ACOUSTIC GUITAR



### ACOUSTIC

This has a narrower fretboard and more powerful sound than the classical guitar. Basically, it is used in all genres of music—pop, rock, jazz, swing, country, folk, you name it!

### HAWAIIAN

You won't find metal frets on its fretboard, which is smooth.

HAWAIIAN GUITAR



SEMI-ACOUSTIC GUITAR



### SEMI-ACOUSTIC

This is a special guitar with pick-ups and a hollow body with F-shaped sound holes, like a violin.

### ELECTRIC

As it does not have a hollow body, the sound of the strings is read by a pick-up connected to an amplifier. A staple in heavy metal, rock, and rock 'n' roll, the electric guitar has real zest.

ELECTRIC GUITAR



## SPAIN AND THE GUITAR

Although Spain is not the birthplace of the guitar, it is in this land on the Iberian Peninsula that its thousand-year evolution reached its zenith. Spain was first the home of an instrument called the vihuela, played with the fingers, a plectrum, or a bow. In Italy, the vihuela was known as the viola. And because the guitar and its like are often connected with merrymaking, it was described as the instrument of Italian commedia dell'arte performers.

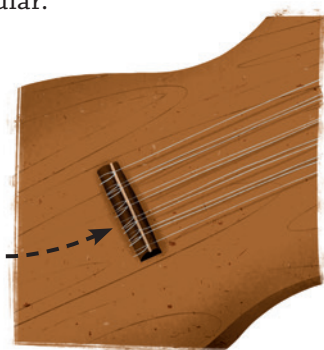
SPANISH GUITAR



## FOUR, FIVE, OR SIX?

Vihuelas had doubled strings known as paired courses. While the Renaissance was partial to four paired courses, the Baroque period preferred five. From the second half of the 18th century, six paired courses became popular.

PAIRED STRINGS



## ARE WE COOL?

What's more, in the 18th century, the guitar became very fashionable. Young people liked to play it, men and women alike. As happens with fashions, the guitar would later lose its popularity for a while, although in good old Spain it would remain as popular as ever. "All these guitars are making my head spin. What on earth can we call an 'ordinary guitar'? One thing's for sure, though—I must have a guitar in my little orchestra! I'll get myself one and start practicing really hard. I'd love to play like ..."



FERNANDO SOR

## FERNANDO SOR

Fernando Sor (1778–1839) was a Spanish composer and guitarist. He was considered the Beethoven of the guitar. Study of his works—which there are over sixty—is today indispensable in the basic education of young, classical guitar beginners.



MAURO GIULIANI

## MAURO GIULIANI

Mauro Giuliani (1781–1829) was another composer and guitarist of the same era, this time from Italy. He went on a grand tour, delighting concert goers all over Europe with his virtuoso playing. Not for nothing was he invited into Austrian aristocratic circles; not for nothing did he appear and work alongside Ludwig van Beethoven at important concerts in Vienna.

## JIMI HENDRIX

Let us return to the more recent past—to the America of the second half of the 20th century. The hugely talented Jimi Hendrix (1942–1970) used his guitar to write rock history. He knew nothing of musical notation or music theory, yet he played like a god. From the age of fifteen, he forever had first a battered Spanish guitar and then a very cheap electric guitar in his hands. He learned to play by listening to records played on the radio. Although a left-hander, he played an instrument strung for right-handers. He was only 27 when he died, but his immortal guitar solos will always gladden the hearts of lovers of rock music.



JIMI HENDRIX

STRUGGLING NICCOLO



## MORE ABOUT JIMI

Just imagine, children—not only has Niccolo the cricket played a guitar that once belonged to John Lennon, one of the famous Beatles; he has even clawed at the strings of Jimi Hendrix's instrument. He was so inspired by the experience that he spent the rest of that day trying to get his fingers around the chords. What about Luciano? He sang his heart out until the sun went down.



ANDRÉS SEGOVIA

## ANDRÉS SEGOVIA

Spain's Andrés Segovia (1893–1987) was one of the most phenomenal guitarists of the 20th century. He was a pioneer in bringing the guitar to concert halls. By his amazing playing, he demonstrated the full distinctive sound of the guitar and its technical potential. Before Segovia, the guitar was considered an instrument that greatly improved the atmosphere in cafés. It is amazing to think that Andrés Segovia's brilliant guitar playing was achieved without a teacher, through his own hard work, talent, and intuition. He was still playing concerts in his nineties.



# THE STORIES OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

ŠTĚPÁNKA SEKANINOVÁ & JAKUB CENKL

Niccolo the cricket would like to become a musician. But which instrument should he start with? The violin? The guitar? The trumpet? All at once? Well, he does have six limbs, so why not? In any case, Niccolo and his trusty companion Luciano the nightingale travel the world as they learn about musical instruments of all kinds, some familiar to us, some less common. If you are interested in music at least a little, join Niccolo and Luciano and learn the stories of musical instruments along with them.

DISCOVER  
MUSICAL  
INSTRUMENTS  
OF ALL KINDS



ISBN 978-80-00-05932-7



9 788000 059327

5 1 7 9 5



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\$ 17,95  
Printed in China by Leo Paper Group.  
www.albatrosbooks.com