

Medieval Fidel

While the names Trumscheit, Drehleier, lyra, rebec and rubebe clearly refer to specific instruments, the terms 'fidel', 'geige' and 'rotta' are used more generally and are not clearly distinguished from one another. Therefore the name 'fidel' covers numerous Medieval bowed instruments.

The fidel is distinguished from the lyra, rebec, and rubabe by having a separate neck, clearly distinct from the body. The fidel itself can be classified according to shape, size and number of strings.

The Medieval fidel certainly existed in Western Europe by the 11th century, at the latest. A picture in the Utrecht Psalter of what may be a fidel dates from around 900 AD. In Spain, stringed instruments with a separate neck were known quite early.

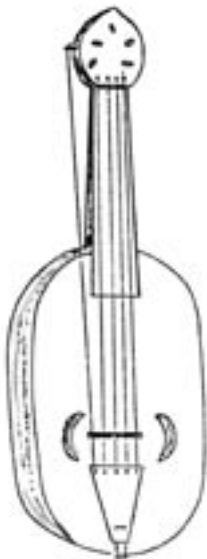
In France, in the 12th century, it was known variously as the vielle, fidel, viole, vyolon, or vyoll. Hieronymus de Moravia, in the first part of the 13th century, described the fidel.

During the 14th century, fidels varied more and more in shape and increased in size. The tops began to be made exclusively from softwood such as spruce.

The fidel developed into three instrument families: the lira, the viola da gamba and the viola da braccio. By about 1500, the Renaissance fidel, the predecessor of the lira, had replaced the Medieval fidel.

Characteristics:

- Separate neck
- Body consisting of back, ribs, and top
- No center bout or with just a very small inside curve
- Flat peg plate with vertical pegs
- Top often decorated with inlays



In a later development, free running string(s), used as bordun(s), could also be plucked with the thumb.

The stringing:

- 3-7 strings, but normally 3 or 5. Instruments with bordun strings have 4+1 or 5+2

Tunings:



Jerome de Moravia 1250



C. Sachs