

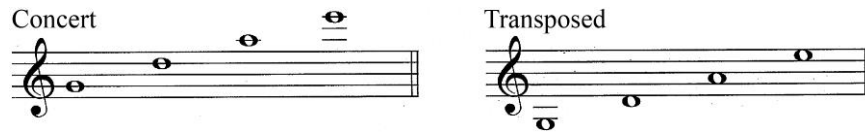
Violin Octet

The violin octet (also known as the new violin family) is a consort of string instruments that represents the results of research into violin acoustics that began with physicist Dr. Frederick A. Saunders (1875–1963) and culminated with luthier Dr. Carleen M. Hutchins (1911–2009). The eight instruments of the consort, inspired to some extent by the writings of Michael Praetorius (1571–1621), are constructed in a series of sizes and tunings designed to cover the range of written music. Decades of research and experimentation with body length and other physical characteristics resulted in a somewhat lighter timbre than that of standard string instruments, and a more balanced sound across the ensemble registers. While not in great supply, one may have occasion to encounter and exploit these unique instruments. The instruments record well and offer the orchestrator viable options when a transparent string sound or a distinctive solo timbre is needed.

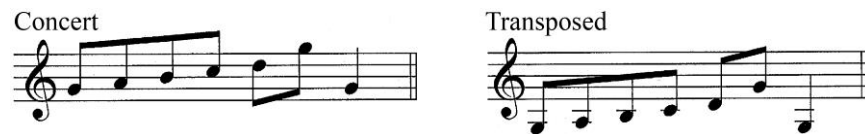
Treble Violin

The treble violin (known as the sopranino violin in England) is tuned an octave above the standard violin and is the smallest member of the violin octet. With dimensions that approximate those of a quarter-size violin, large leaps are more practical than on a standard violin. The player can easily produce tremolos on intervals of up to an octave on any one string, and double stops of up to a twelfth on any two adjacent strings. The tone quality of the treble violin is quite bright and easily projects above any ensemble. One should approach writing for the instrument with the same philosophy that one would apply to writing for piccolo. It is a transposing instrument, sounding an octave above the written pitch.

Treble Violin Tuning



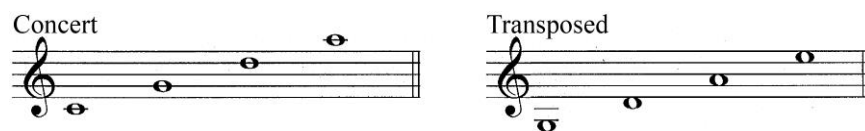
Treble Violin Transposition



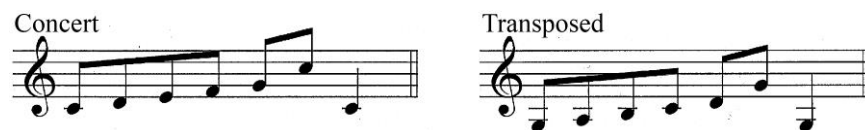
Soprano Violin

The soprano violin (known as the descant violin in England) is tuned an octave above the viola. With dimensions that approximate those of a three-quarter violin, the range of the soprano violin overlaps the lower and middle registers of the treble violin, and the middle and upper registers of the mezzo violin. It is a transposing instrument, sounding a perfect 4th above the written pitch. While most performers are comfortable reading transposed parts, many performers still prefer to read their parts in concert pitch. Therefore, for soprano violin it is customary to provide both a concert pitch part and a transposed part.

Soprano Violin Tuning



Soprano Violin Transposition



Mezzo Violin

The mezzo violin is a slightly enlarged version of the conventional violin. Though possessing a somewhat lighter texture, it is capable of a wider dynamic range than the standard violin that can be advantageous when combined with wind instruments. It is a non-transposing instrument with the same tuning as the conventional violin.

Mezzo Violin Tuning

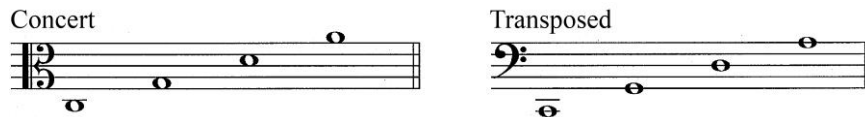


(The mezzo violin is non-transposing.)

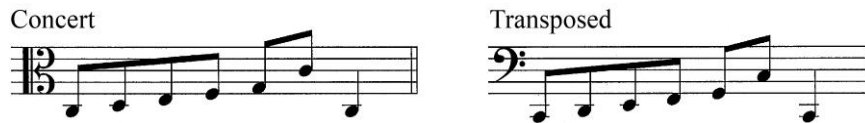
Alto Violin

The alto violin is in effect an enlarged viola, similar in size to the early “tenors” constructed by Stradivari and the Amatis. It has the same tuning as the conventional viola, but is usually played cello-style (with an end peg), giving the performer greater facility and allowing thumb techniques to be used. It is customary to provide both a concert pitch part (primarily in alto clef, as one would write for viola) and a transposed part notated primarily in bass clef and sounding an octave higher than written.

Alto Violin Tuning



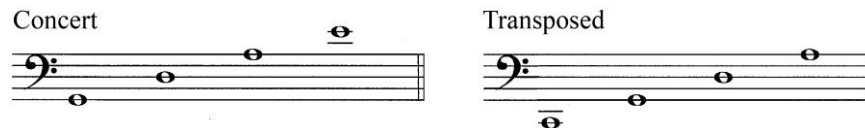
Alto Violin Transposition



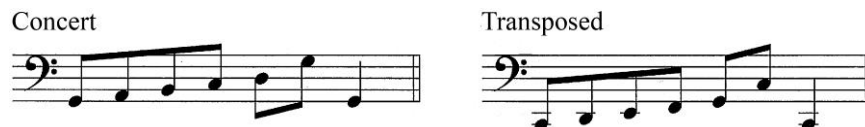
Tenor Violin

The tenor violin is similar in size and playing technique to a three-quarter cello, sounding an octave below the conventional violin. It has a clear and lyrical timbre that is well suited for solos, or for duets with wind instruments or voice. Since most performers are converted cellists, it is customary to provide both a concert pitch part and a transposed part (notated primarily in bass clef and sounding a perfect 5th higher than written).

Tenor Violin Tuning



Tenor Violin Transposition



Baritone Violin

The baritone violin is like the cello and its body dimensions are reminiscent of the large cellos of the 15th and 16th centuries. With a clear and resonant timbre, the difference between the cello and baritone violin is especially noticeable when playing pizzicato. Like the tenor violin, it is particularly useful as a solo instrument, or for duets with wind instruments or voice. One should provide baritone violin parts in concert pitch, written as one would for cello.

Baritone Violin Tuning



(The baritone violin is non-transposing.)

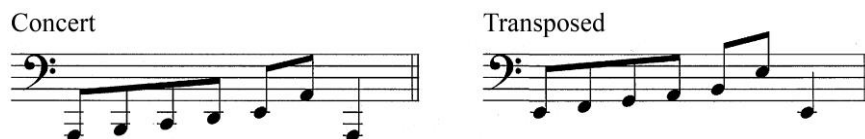
Small Bass Violin

The small bass violin is tuned a perfect fourth above the conventional double bass. With dimensions that approximate the size of a three-quarter bass, it has a clear and resonant timbre with an exceptionally fine pizzicato. Its smaller size allows for greater agility and more flexibility as a solo instrument than the double bass. It is customary to provide both a concert pitch part and a transposed part (sounding a perfect 5th lower than written).

Small Bass Violin Tuning




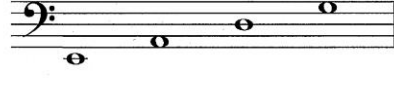
Small Bass Violin Transposition



Contrabass Violin

The contrabass violin is larger than the conventional double bass, having a body length of 130 cm. As such, its lower notes produce what have been called “organ-like” sonorities. The clarity of tone provides a focused foundation, but due to the overall size of the instrument, one should not write notes beyond the 3rd or 4th position. Like the standard double bass, the contrabass violin is a transposing instrument, sounding an octave above the written note.

Contrabass Violin Tuning

Concert	Transposed
	

Contrabass Violin Transposition

Concert	Transposed
