

# HOW TO SELECT A BOW:

Choosing a bow that matches your instrument is just as important as finding a good instrument. Without a sufficiently good bow, the tone of your instrument will not properly come out.

**PRICING:** A typical rule of thumb for narrowing down bows appropriate for your instrument would be to look at ones that are 25 to 30 percent of the value of the instrument. For example on a \$2000 violin, it is ideal to be looking at bows valued \$500-600. While these may seem expensive to first time bow buyers, the materials and expertise required to make a high quality bow are extensive.

**MATERIALS:** There are 3 types of bows appropriate for higher quality instruments. **Wood:** The first are Pernambuco bows (nickel mounted or silver, see below) which are made out of the heartwood of the brazilwood tree which is called "Pernambuco." Bows simply designated "brazilwood" are cheaper and merely designed for beginning students. There are several different qualities of pernambuco which is why there is a large pricing differential. Some pricing is also determined by country where the carving is done and the size of the workshop, whether the bows are made by one person, or a group working together. **Carbon:** Another group of common materials are "Carbon Fiber" and "Carbon Composite" bows, which are nearly Carbon Fiber blended with other synthetic materials such as Kevlar. Although they use machinery to craft them, Carbon bows also require a high degree of skill to create, but typically are slightly less expensive than comparable wooden. **Hybrid:** The third type is a "hybrid" or "fusion" bow which is a pernambuco stick with a hollowed core which is then filled with the strong and flexible carbon fiber.

**MOUNTING AND HARDWARE:** Typically, the finer cuts of pernambuco are reserved for the better bows which are then "Silver Mounted" which entails giving them sterling silver metals on the frog, a silver ferule and a sterling silver grip. Cheaper pernambuco bows are typically given nickel or "nickel-silver" (a non-silver alloy) mounting and grips. Even finer bows are often given grips with a wind of Silver and Silk, and the very finest cuts of pernambuco are often "Gold Mounted" with Gold or Gold and Silk grips.

Frogs are mostly ebony, though Ivory, Horn and Tortoiseshell are also seen, and are usually fitted with an "eye", or a Fleur De Lis. Rare frogs increase the value of the bow, though trade laws on Tortoise and Ivory restrict many sales of such items. Carbon and Hybrid bows may also be silver mounted.

**WEIGHT AND BALANCE:** Violin Bows are weighed in grams and typically are between 58G and 63G. This and the way the bow is balanced will determine how it responds. Some bows are also slightly stiffer than others. You will see the weight displayed on the side of each bow.

**PLAYER PREFERENCES:** Different bows will actually make your instrument produce a different quality of sound. Some bows are "brighter" or "darker". Some bows are "faster" or "slower". You will also find bows have differences in stiffness and density.

**MATCHING A BOW TO YOUR INSTRUMENT:** Materials, balance and weight aside, the most important thing is to determine whether a bow "matches" your instrument. Since each bow has its own "sound", even within the same model and make and when the sound of the bow brings out of the most of your instruments sound, this is the ideal combination. We recommend playing on a large number of our bows to find which ones compliment your particular instrument. We then recommend a 7 day trial on at least two bows so that your instructor can further assist your choice of bow.

**FOR GREAT SAVINGS ON VIOLIN OUTFITS BUY A BOW WITH YOUR VIOLIN AND SAVE 20% OFF THE PRICE OF THE BOW\***

\*excludes some professional bows