



## Can't You Fiddle?

by Jackie Abbott

Here I go again, another story about my music. Bear with me, please.

This story goes way back to my childhood. I remember watching and listening to my grandfather play his "fiddle", sitting on a chair on his porch. He and Grandma lived in a small house behind my aunt (their daughter), so that she could check on them and see to whatever needs they couldn't handle themselves.

Grandpa's music was lively and happy to me. He didn't have a music stand or printed music. He magically played by "ear." He held neither the bow nor the fiddle in the correct position...as I learned much later. But he could play music that definitely pleased his audience, and I could sing along when he played "Mary had a Little Lamb." This wonderful old gentleman had a gift from God that he used to God's glory.

I was in the third grade when the invitation to learn to play the violin was announced at school. I was so excited and could hardly wait to rush home and tell Mom and Dad. The lessons were free but the instrument was the responsibility of the pupil. Now, there was the thorn. We were a family of five, living in a three-room house, and I think that to the outside world we were considered "poor" folks. (I never realized that until I got much older. Our home was too happy to be poor. )

But Dad was very ingenious. He made a trip to the pawn shop in town and found a violin ...one that was smaller than the normal-sized one fitted for an adult. Well, definitely this was God's hand in performing a miracle - since my arms were much too short to handle the normal-sized instrument!

Lessons began ...and after a few weeks, we students (I think there were only four or five of us) prepared for our first "concert." Our concert hall was in the basement of the library in Odessa, Texas. Can you believe that one of our pieces was "Mary had a Little Lamb"?!! How proud I was and how wonderful to play the music that brought back such beautiful memories! Of course, as we progressed in skills, we could play music that was more intricate, and by the time I was in junior high school, we had a true group that would have been recognized as an orchestra. And that's when the classical music began in my musical life.

Fast forward about five or six years from my third grade entry into music... my grandfather has now passed away, the funeral is over and Grandma was taking care of his wishes for distributing his few possessions. My family lived many miles away and we knew that Grandma would have my aunt to assist her in this procedure. Some time later, maybe a week or so, my aunt called to say that there was a gift for me. I was somewhat shocked as I had other cousins that were boys, older than I, who lived closer to Grandpa, and I assumed that they would be recognized first. My aunt assured me that they had their mementos, but mine was a bit different.

And I'm sure you can guess. My gift was Grandpa's "fiddle." How happy and thrilled and honored I was to accept this gift! (FYI – there is no difference between a violin and a fiddle. It's just the music that comes from it). So, for many years that fiddle played classical violin music.

My father once said that the music from that "fiddle" wasn't the music that he used to enjoy and didn't I know anything besides Mozart and those other foreigners? (He made it to one symphony concert when I was playing with the Odessa Symphony....and that was it.) He appreciated my skills, but the music wasn't to his taste.

So, when I went to one of my violin lessons, I asked my teacher if he knew any "fiddle" music. To my surprise, he immediately played "Turkey in the Straw." Then he asked me what I needed to know. Explaining the situation with my father, we worked on the turkey song and "Devil's Dream." Not a big challenge, but certainly a change from what I was used to. So the next time that I was practicing my music at home, I changed the pace midway, and played the "fiddle" songs. And I could hear my Dad in the next room clapping his hands in time to the music. What a time of joy for the two of us! And a memory that I still treasure.

Isn't it funny...and wise.... that our God knows our needs and those of others and makes a loving event come to life through diverse talents and desires? He places people in our lives that teach us, enrich us, challenge us, and He oversees the actions to bless our lives. What a God we have that blesses us before we even ask!