

**Crafts Council  
Education  
Craft Careers**

# **How to become a Musical Instrument Maker**



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## What does a musical instrument maker do?

Front Page: 'Small Dipper' 7/7 viola d'amore, Jonathan Hill. Photo: [Jason Evans](#)

Musical instrument makers produce and maintain instruments. They may work on a range of instruments, however most will specialise in a particular one.

Makers may occasionally specialise in a group of instruments— for example, a luthier makes stringed instruments generally consisting of a neck and a sound box like violins, acoustic guitars, and ukuleles.

Musical instrument makers need a high level of accuracy and attention to detail. In their work they may:

- Use different materials and techniques
- Use a variety of specialist tools and equipment to cut, bend, shape, joint and polish wood or metal
- Use traditional craft tools such as saws, planes and lathes for instrument making processes
- Liaise with customers and clients

Instruments are sometimes damaged due to age, wear and tear, or accidents. Repairs vary according to the type of instrument, but could range from repairing cracks in the front or back of a violin to removing dents from a French horn. Many musical instrument makers carry out repairs as a regular part of their job.

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## Key Skills.



Viola d'amore with rosette, 2018, Jonathan Hill

- practical skills and the ability to work well with your hands
- an interest in music
- attention to detail
- persistence and determination
- ambition and a desire to succeed
- problem solving skills

If you are dealing with the public, you also need to have customer service skills. If you are creating bespoke pieces, you'll need to be able to work with a customer to create the perfect piece for them.

If you're self-employed, you need business skills too, so you can market your goods and services, deal with finances and develop your business.

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## How do I become a musical instrument maker?



'Clifton' 7/7 viola d'amore, 2017, Jonathan Hill

### University

You could study for a specialist degree course in subjects such as Musical Instrument Craft or Historical Craft Practices— Musical Instruments

You'll usually need 2 to 3 A Levels.

- [Lincon College](#)
- [West Dean College](#)
- [Glasgow Clyde College](#)

### College courses

A college course like a Level 3 Diploma in Music Technology would give you a grounding in some of the theory you'd need. Courses include:

- [BTEC Nationals](#)

You'll usually need 4 or 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A\* to C) for a level 3 course

### Short Courses

You could also develop specialist skills through a short course. Providers include:

- [British Violin Making Association](#)
- [Pianoforte Tuners' Association](#)
- [London Metropolitan University](#)
- [West Dean College](#)

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## Further Information.

- [Heritage Crafts Association](#)
- [The Fellowship of Makers and Researchers of Historic Instruments](#)
- [National Association of Musical Instrument Repairers](#)

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## Featured Maker.

Jonathan Hill makes instruments from the Violin and Viol families and is also a specialist in the making of the Viola d'amore. He has a wide practical knowledge of the traditional decorative techniques typically displayed on old instruments and is particularly inspired to create artistically rich and beautiful sounding musical instruments that reflect the depth of craft knowledge seen on early instruments.

For more of Jonathan's work, see [www.jonathanhill-luthier.com](http://www.jonathanhill-luthier.com) or [Instagram](#)

# Craft Careers

Craft generates £3.4 billion for the UK economy each year, with the contribution of the wider creative industries now growing at twice the rate of the UK economy. British craft has never been so sought-after and craft skills are revolutionising industries from aerospace to architecture.

To learn more about craft careers visit:

[www.craftscouncil.org.uk/learning/craft-careers](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/learning/craft-careers)

