

# THE CHRISTMAS SONG

*(This is a quick translation - please be forgiving. For a good editorial we need your help - more about that later.)*



Once upon a time, there was a little hedgehog and a little squirrel who lived in the forest and had been friends for a very long time. The squirrel was called Fiona and the hedgehog Toni.

Fiona and Toni were not only best friends who loved to laugh their heads off all day long, telling each other the greatest stories and comforting each other in every emergency. No, they could also both play an instrument - Fiona played the mandolin and Toni the violin - and they loved to play together. Now Christmas was coming and they had been practicing their Christmas songs for weeks. They wanted to play for their Christmas guests and today was the big day.



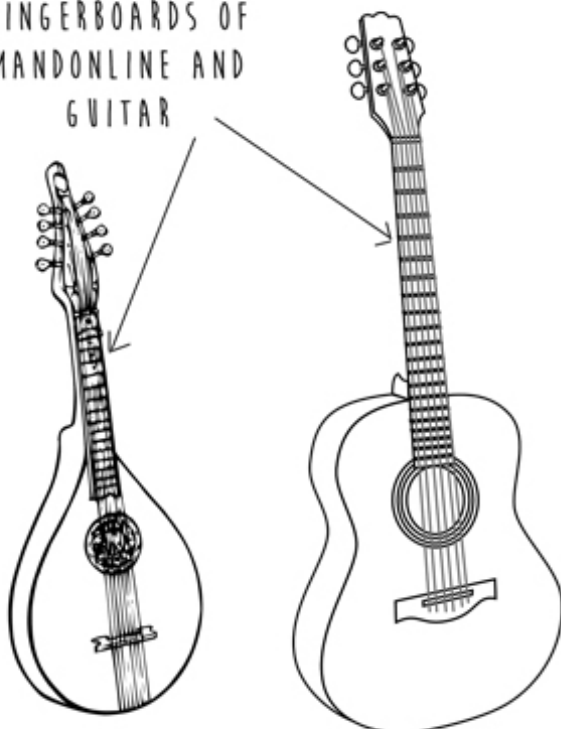
"No, no, I can't play that! I can't do it," Toni grumbled, and threw his violin into the case. "Boom," it went, as the lid slammed shut. Saddened and a little worried, Fiona looked at him and said, "But it's Christmas! How are we supposed to get into a Christmas spirit without music?" "I don't care! As long as I need this note, this, this F hashtag, this F sharp (#) for a Christmas song, there'll be no Christmas songs!" he grumbled loudly. He mumbled and muttered to himself for a while longer and then burrowed into his pile of leaves where he usually slept. Fiona stood helplessly in front of it and listened to the grumbling.

Then the grumbling turned into huffing and finally she heard a soft snoring. Toni had fallen asleep. She sighed, shrugged her shoulders and then checked the violin case to make sure it was still in one piece. Puuuhh, it was, thank God.



But how was she supposed to save Christmas now? Admittedly, O du Fröhliche (O how joyful) had sounded more like O how sad in Toni's version, but that's how it was sometimes with new songs. You needed a new note and your finger had to reach into an unusual place, and if it didn't work, it immediately sounded totally weird on the violin. It was different on her mandolin, it was a little easier. Why was that, she wondered. Then she remembered. On the fingerboard of a mandolin - the black wood on which you place your fingers - there are frets. They're narrow strips of metal, one for each note. A guitar has frets, too, she recalled. You just have to put your fingers between them and the tone is right, because the fret then "pinches" the string at the right place and it can vibrate in the desired tone. It doesn't matter whether the finger is a millimeter further forward or back, the main thing is that you hit between the frets. With a violin, the finger has to hit exactly the right spot on the fingerboard, because you have to directly clamp the note with your finger on the string. If you finger too high

FRETS ON THE  
FINGERBOARDS OF  
MANDOLINE AND  
GUITAR



FINGERBOARD OF A VIOLIN  
WITHOUT FRETS



or too low, the tone sounds "unclean" - or as Toni would say: "It sounds totally " weird " or " wonky " ."

Saddened, Fiona set about further preparations. The Christmas guests had been invited and the food was already in the oven. So close to the end, she couldn't change anything now, even though she knew that all the guests were looking forward to her and Toni's Christmas music.

She had just put down the last napkin when there was already a knock at the door. A bit startled, she jumped to Toni's pile of leaves, quickly poked it with a broomstick and shouted "Toni, Toni, wake up, the guests are here!!!" and rushed to the door.

All her friends had come and were now marching to the festively set table. Mrs. Goose cackled excitedly when she saw the beautiful napkins, Mr. Frog hopped to his seat and made a contented "quack," and Mr. Schneck's googly eyes grew even longer than usual when he caught a glimpse of the oven. Mrs. Bat, Mr. Deer and a swarm of butterflies had also come. Toni had finally woken up and picked one last leaf from his spines before sitting down at the table. Now there was something really good to eat first. It didn't take long and everyone was eating and chattering excitedly.

When the feast was over and the bellies were pressing against the belts, Mr. Frog croaked happily, "Hey guys, when's there going to be music? I'm in the mood for a Christmas song! Quak!" and looked in Toni's and Fiona's direction. Toni's spines immediately dropped as he thought only of the silly F# in O du Fröhliche. "No, no, not today - I just can't do it," he replied.

"What, but why? Yes, you absolutely have to play! I'm sure you can, please, please Toni, we'll sing really loudly too," everyone at the table cackled excitedly. They all quacked and grunted until Toni couldn't help but go to his violin case.

Fiona whispered to him, "Don't be afraid. I'm sure the sound isn't as bad as you think. And I'll play extra loud then, okay?" She winked at him and tuned her mandolin. Toni grudgingly set up his music stand and put his booklet of Christmas carols on it.

So they got started. Fiona played a few introductory chords, then the first line rang out: "O du fröööhöööliche..." - everyone sang along loudly. But when the F-sharp came, Toni made a mistake - his finger just didn't know it yet - and a very strange sound was heard. Yes, in fact, it was sooo weird that everyone stopped singing, startled. Worse still, Mr. Frog flapped his flippers in front of his mouth, Mrs. Goose chattered excitedly and flapped her wings so that all the napkins flew off the table, and Mr. Schneck's googly eyes narrowed completely (as if he could hear something with his eyes, the old dramatic artist). The butterflies all flew wildly, all confused, fluttering around the room and settling on all possible and impossible places: on Toni's spines, on the chimney, and the rest just on his sheet



music. "Oh great," thought Toni, "now I can't even see what to play." He looked confusedly at Fiona.

Fiona tried to save the situation and continued to play happily. She sang extra loud so that everyone could get back into the song. She winked at Toni and nodded promptly - he already understood that he should keep playing.

So he took courage, put his violin back on his chin and continued playing. Since he couldn't read his sheet music anyway, the butterflies were sitting on it, he just looked at his fingers and tried to play by ear. He knew the song well, he had sung it often at Christmas, long before he started playing the violin.

"Oooohh duuuu" went well, that was two long notes. "Frööhöö..." aaahhh and now came the F#! Toni looked strained at his fingerboard and tried to summon his middle finger. The difficult note was about to come, now it was a matter of placing the finger as correctly as possible. "Liiihiiiiiche" ...nanu, what was that? Everyone just kept singing, no one looked at him or got scared like last time? Had the F sharp been right? Toni had no time to think, now the second round of "Oooohhh duuuu Frööööölicheeee" was coming and he had to concentrate on his finger again. This time, too, it seemed to work, because everyone just kept singing as if nothing had happened. Well, that would be something - now, when butterflies were sitting on the sheet music, he could already play his song? He looked at Fiona, who winked at him again, and they continued playing. They managed to finish the whole song without further incident. All three verses sounded in happy harmony through the Christmas forest that evening.

When they took down their instruments, all the guests clapped and praised them for the beautiful playing. "Now I want some fruit punch! I am dying of thirst! Quak!" demanded Mr. Frog and hopped to the stove, where a large pot was already waiting.

"Did you see, it worked out well after all. Sometimes you just have to trust your ears" whispered Fiona to Toni. "Yes, that's right - you're right! As usual" said Toni. "But now I want my present!" and he stormed off to the pile of presents under the Christmas tree.

# THE END



# THANKS FOR READING

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