

No. 885,067.

PATENTED APR. 21, 1908.

J. MITCHELL.
VIOLIN MUTE.

APPLICATION FILED JUNE 20, 1907.

Fig. 1.

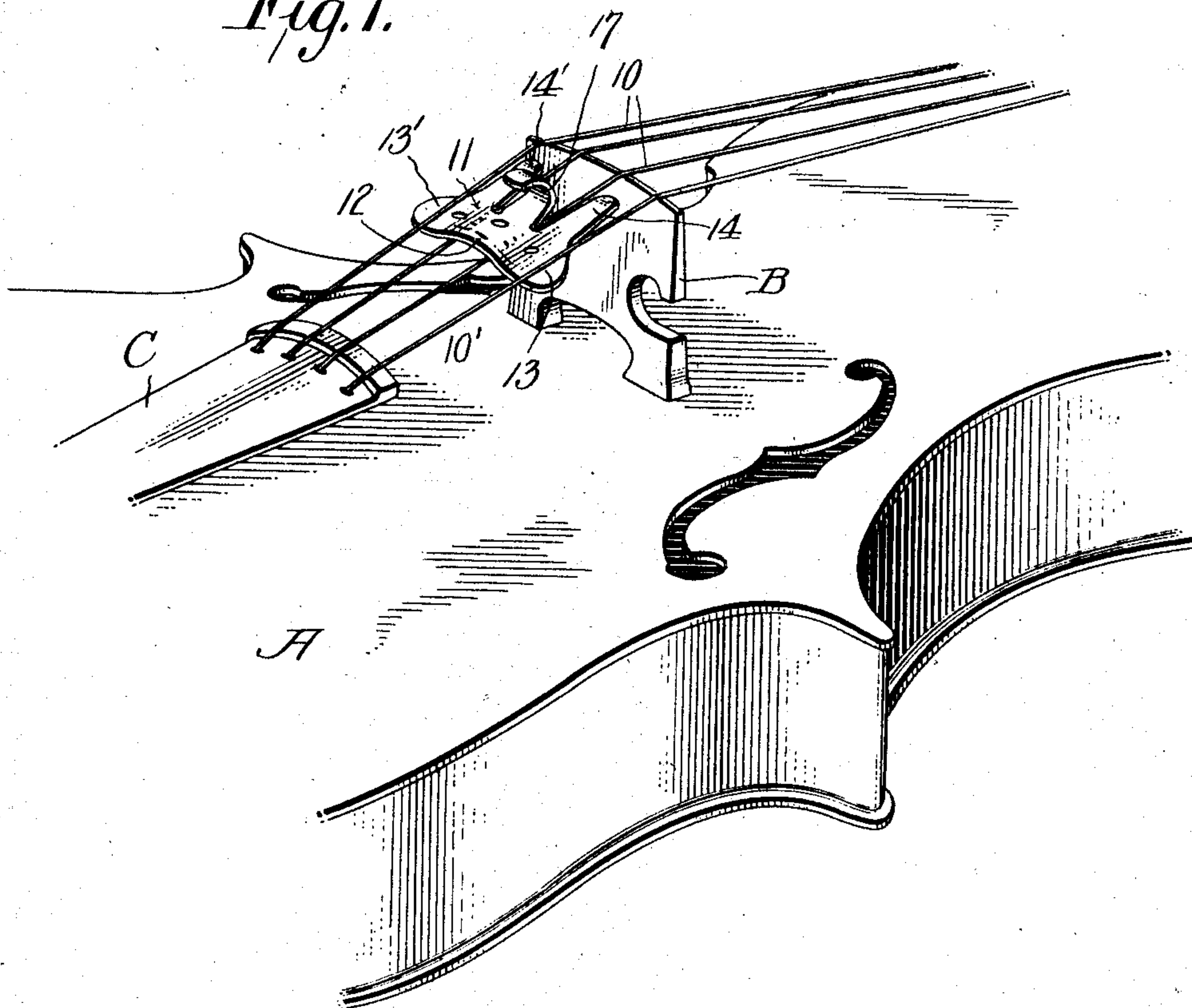


Fig. 2.

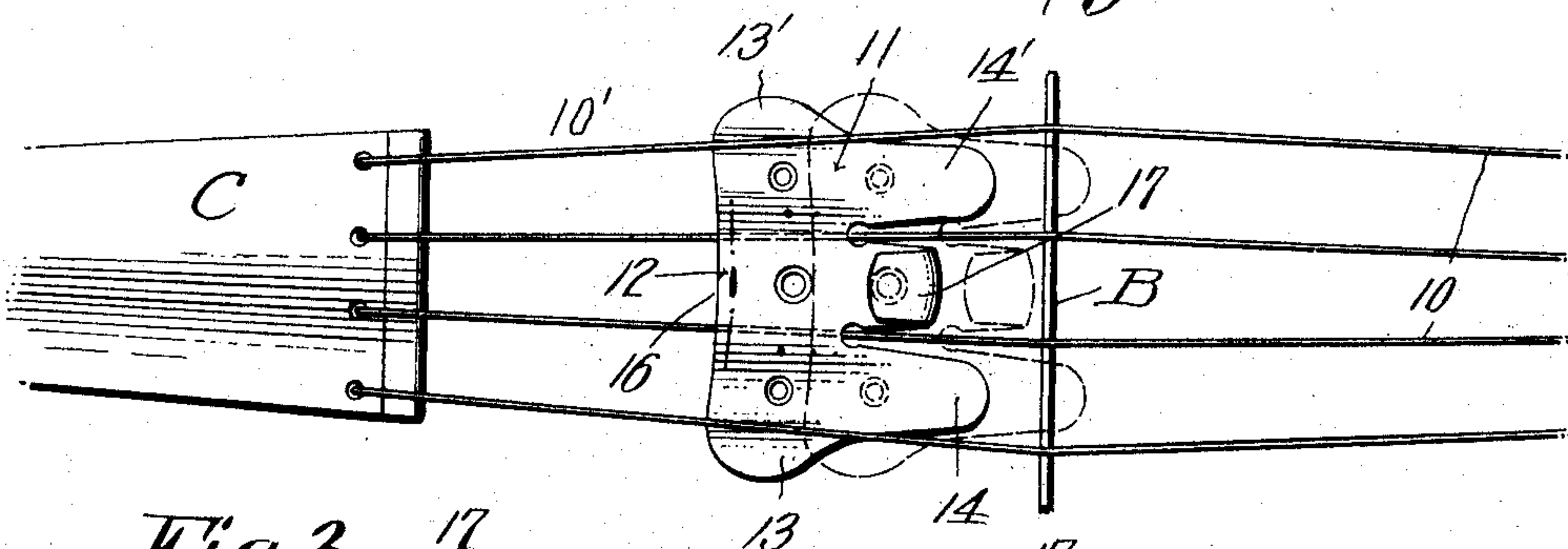
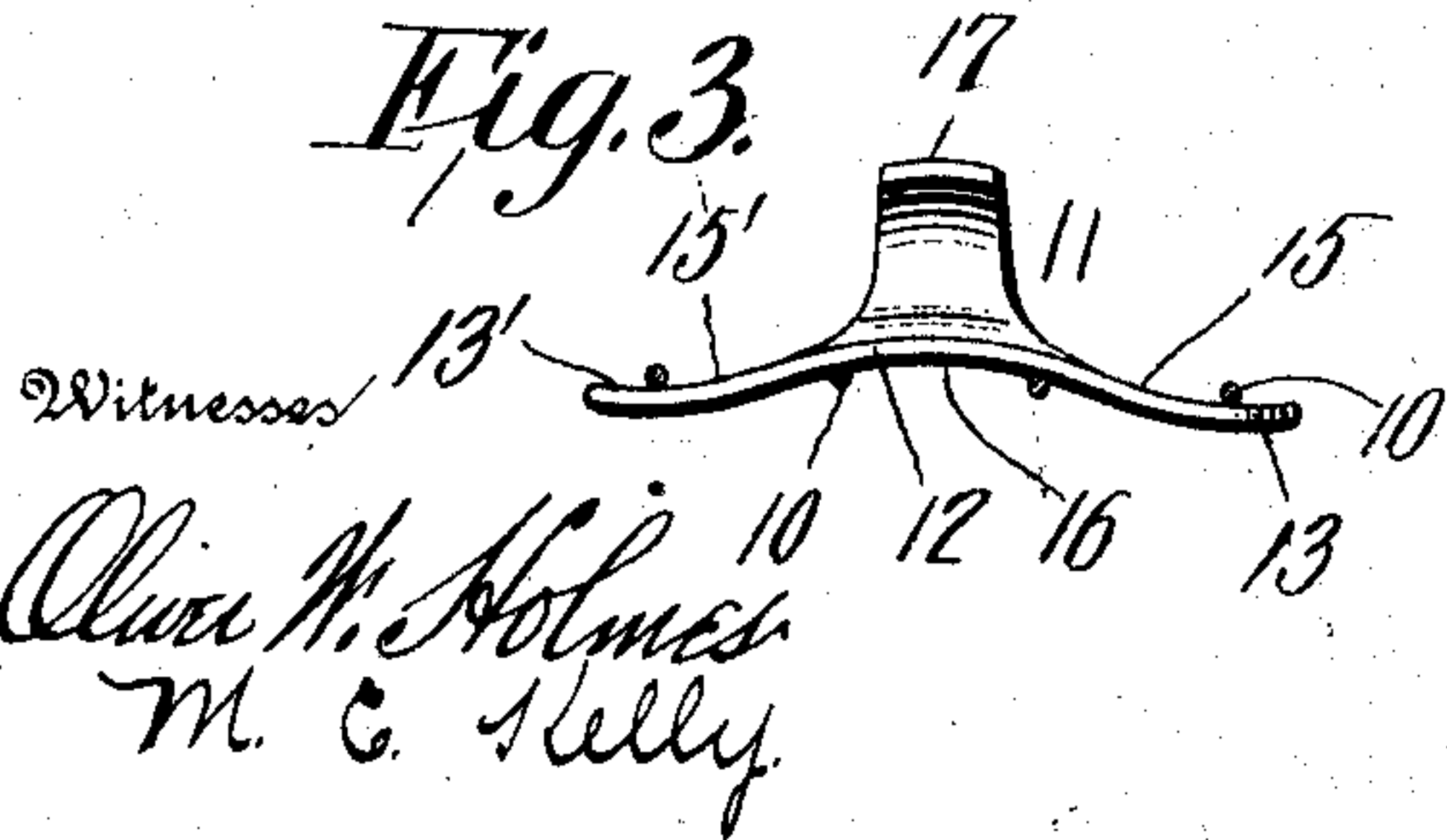


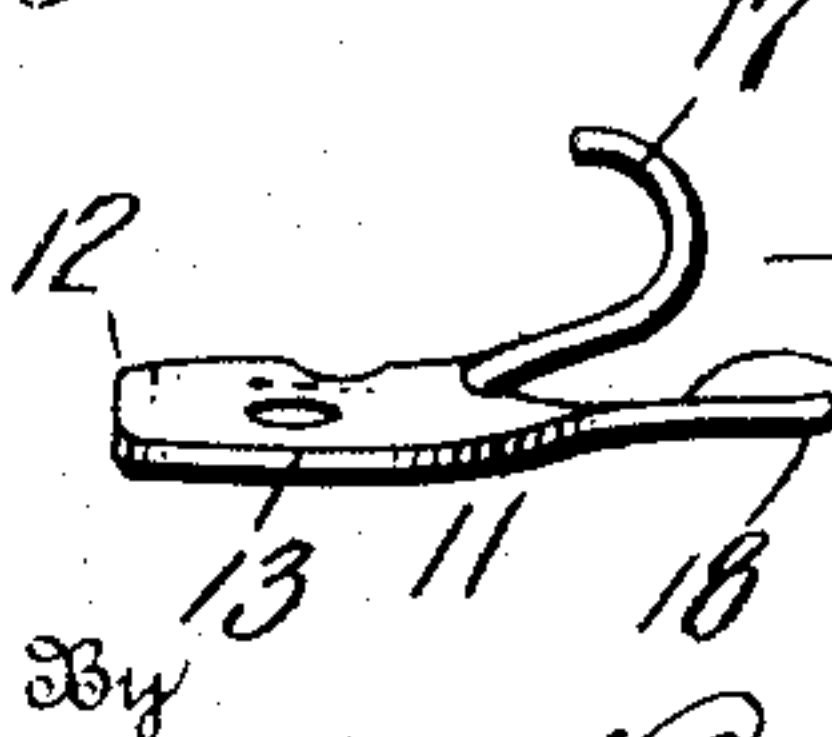
Fig. 3.



Witnesses

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Fig. 4.



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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

JOHN MITCHELL, OF AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND.

VIOLIN-MUTE.

No. 885,067.

Specification of Letters Patent.

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To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, JOHN MITCHELL, a subject of the King of England, and resident of Auckland, New Zealand, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Violin-Mutes, of which the following is a specification.

This invention relates to musical instruments, and particularly to devices employed for muting stringed instruments, such as violins, violas, cellos, bass-violos, or the like.

Generally speaking mutes for violins are of two types, viz., those which are normally detached from the instrument, being carried either in the pocket or about the person of the performer, being adapted to be applied to the bridge or removed therefrom by manual operations, and the other comprises those devices which are adapted to be connected permanently with the instrument in such a way that they may be brought into and out of engagement with the bridge by movement of the instrument itself or the person of the performer. The inconveniences of the former type of mutes are well appreciated by persons familiar with the art, chief of which is the fact that the mute is always more or less inconvenient to reach, even if indeed not lost entirely, whereby it is practically impossible for the performer to avail himself of its use with sufficient facility to enable him to render certain classes of music which make it obligatory upon him to manipulate the mute quickly and repeatedly if desired. Those mutes, as usually constructed, which are borne by the violin, are more or less complicated, involving frequently a large number of movable parts, including springs and the like. This fact renders this type of devices objectionable primarily for the reason that such devices almost invariably are subject to rattle, clicking, and otherwise interfere with the perfection of tone, which is all important to the lover of sweet music. Again, the complicated mutes of this latter class are unsightly in appearance, a matter of vast importance for the reason that it is always the ambition of the virtuoso to attract as little attention as possible in the use of devices of this sort.

By my present invention I aim to overcome the foregoing obvious objections in the provision of a simple rigid mute of peculiar form, and which is adapted to be borne permanently by the hitch sections of the strings in close proximity to the bridge, and whereby

it may be moved into and out of engagement with the bridge by a slight bodily movement thereof by the thumb of the performer, either during the operation of playing or while the instrument is being held in any ordinary position. Being constructed as hereinafter set forth the mute is always in position for immediate use, and being of rigid material and without movable parts, none of the objectionable noises common to devices of this class, which have been proposed, result. Furthermore a richness and sweetness in the quality of the tones which may be rendered are found by actual experience to be of the most superior order.

For a full understanding of the structure of the present invention and its mode of operation reference is to be had to the following description and accompanying drawings, in which,—

Figure 1 is a general perspective view of the mute as it appears in position upon the violin and in such position as to be readily moved into engagement with the bridge; Fig. 2 is a plan view of the mute, showing more precisely its form and also indicating by dotted lines its position in relation to the bridge when muting; Fig. 3 is a rear elevation, and Fig. 4 is a side elevation of the mute.

Similar parts are referred to in the several views of the drawings by like reference characters.

The letter A indicates the body of any suitable musical instrument of the class specified, provided with the usual bridge B, and tail piece C. The usual strings of the instrument as usual rest upon the bridge and the hitch sections thereof are secured to the tail piece in any suitable manner. My mute 11 comprises a broad body portion 12 which lies substantially parallel with the strings between the bridge and the tail piece and is held in place by interengagement with all of the strings with just sufficient frictional contact to hold the same in any position in which it may be placed when not in engagement with the bridge or in connection with the frictional engagement between the mute and the bridge when in the latter position. Said body portion 12 is provided with lateral lobes 13 and 13', and said lobes in the form illustrated are provided with outwardly projecting rigid fingers 14 and 14'. As indicated the body portion is adapted to rest upon certain of the strings and extend be-

neath other of the strings. In the form shown said body portion is provided with an intermediate arch 16 which rests upon the intermediate strings D and A of a violin and the lobes 13' and 13' are slightly concaved as at 15 and 15' wherein are received the E and G strings respectively. The finger 14, therefore, is adapted to engage the bridge between the E and A strings, and the finger 14' between the D and G strings. It will, however, be understood that the number and location of the fingers may be varied if desired, in accordance with the type of instrument with which it may be used without departing from the spirit of the invention, and it will be also understood that while I have hereinabove specified the names of the violin strings, such names are merely illustrative and are not to be understood as referring to other instruments of the violin class and with which my mute is adapted to be employed.

As a convenient means whereby the mute may be moved I provide an upwardly and rearwardly extending semi-circular thumb piece 17, shown as being formed as an integral part of the forward edge of the body portion 12 and intermediate of the fingers 14 and 14'. The exact form of the device both as to its appearance in rear elevation as in Fig. 3 or in side elevation will depend upon the exact form of the bridge, the individual taste of the performer or the particular type of instrument with which it is to be used. The fingers in all cases however are substantially parallel with the strings and each finger lies substantially in the plane of the two strings between which it operates. If desired the tip of the finger may be very slightly upturned as at 18 to increase the facility with which it may be caused to slide upon the upper edge of the bridge, or the tip may be very slightly beveled on the lower surface for the same purpose.

From the foregoing it will be understood that with a very slight movement of the thumb of the performer forwardly or toward the bridge, and with perhaps a very slight lift in some instances, the fingers 14 and 14' will be caused to engage the upper edge of the bridge for muting, and this operation may be performed while the bow is in playing position and with a very slight effort, or loss of time. Obviously the reverse or rearward movement of the thumb would restore the mute to the position shown in full lines in the drawings, and where it will be held without interference with the playing or detracting in any manner from the normal function of the instrument.

The present mute is adapted to be made of any suitable rigid material such as metal, vulcanite, wire, celluloid, or the like. From a vast amount of experience and experimenting, the material which seems to be best adapted however with reference to the qual-

ity of the tone is bronze, and the color thereof is such as to attract the minimum degree of attention.

In the practical manufacture of the invention, the construction thereof as set forth herein is especially advantageous, as the body of the mute may be made from a plate or broad flat piece of suitable material, the bridge engaging fingers and thumb piece being formed by slitting or cutting the body from an edge thereof and bending the thumb-piece upwardly as shown.

I am aware that it is not broadly new to support a mute slidably upon the hitch sections of violin strings in such a manner as to enable it to be moved bodily into and out of engagement with the bridge, but

What I do claim as of my own invention, and desire to secure by Letters Patent of the United States, is:

1. The combination with a musical instrument embodying strings and a bridge, of a mute comprising a broad body portion having a central part slightly arched to rest upon the intermediate strings and lateral lobes slightly concaved to engage with and beneath the other strings, rigid means integral with said body portion and projecting therefrom parallel with the strings and in alignment with the upper edge of the bridge when the mute is in position, and means to slide the device along the strings to bring the aforesaid rigid means into or out of engagement with the bridge, substantially as described.

2. The combination with a musical instrument embodying strings and a bridge, of a mute comprising a broad rigid body portion adapted to interengage with all the strings, means integral with said body portion and projecting therefrom to engage the upper edge of the bridge in muting, when the mute is in position, and a rigid thumb piece projecting upwardly and rearwardly from the said body portion whereby the device may be manipulated, as set forth.

3. The herein described violin mute consisting of a broad body portion slightly arched at the center and having a slightly concaved lobe on each side, a rigid bridge-engaging finger integral with each lobe and projecting therefrom, and a rigid thumb piece intermediate of the said fingers and projecting upwardly from the arched part of the said body portion at the forward edge thereof.

4. As a new article of manufacture, a violin mute comprising a broad integral body formed at an edge with spaced bridge-engaging fingers extending substantially in the plane of said body and an intermediate thumb piece extending laterally of said plane.

5. As a new article of manufacture, a violin mute composed of a body provided at its side edges with integral string-engaging lobes, and at an end with integral rigid bridge-

engaging fingers in spaced relation, the portion of the body between the said fingers being bent outwardly with respect to said fingers to provide a thumb piece.

- 5 6. As a new article of manufacture, a violin mute comprising a broad rigid body arched transversely and provided at an end with slits providing spaced rigid fingers substantially in the plane of the body and an in-

intermediate thumb-piece formed by bending 10 the portion of the body between the fingers upwardly therefrom.

In testimony whereof I affix my signature in the presence of two witnesses.

JOHN MITCHELL.

Witnesses:

CHAS. W. TROUGHTON,
GEO. D. WEEKS.