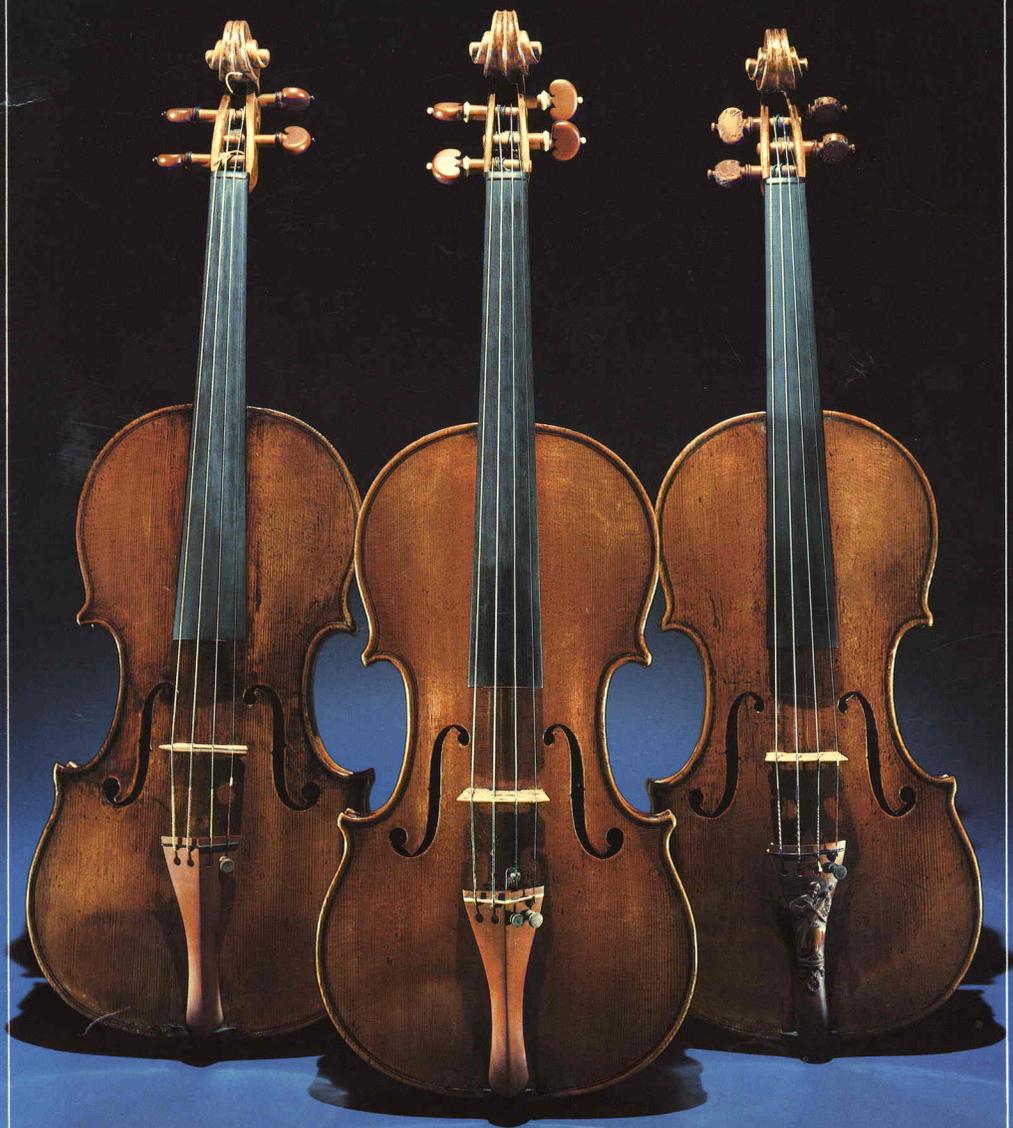


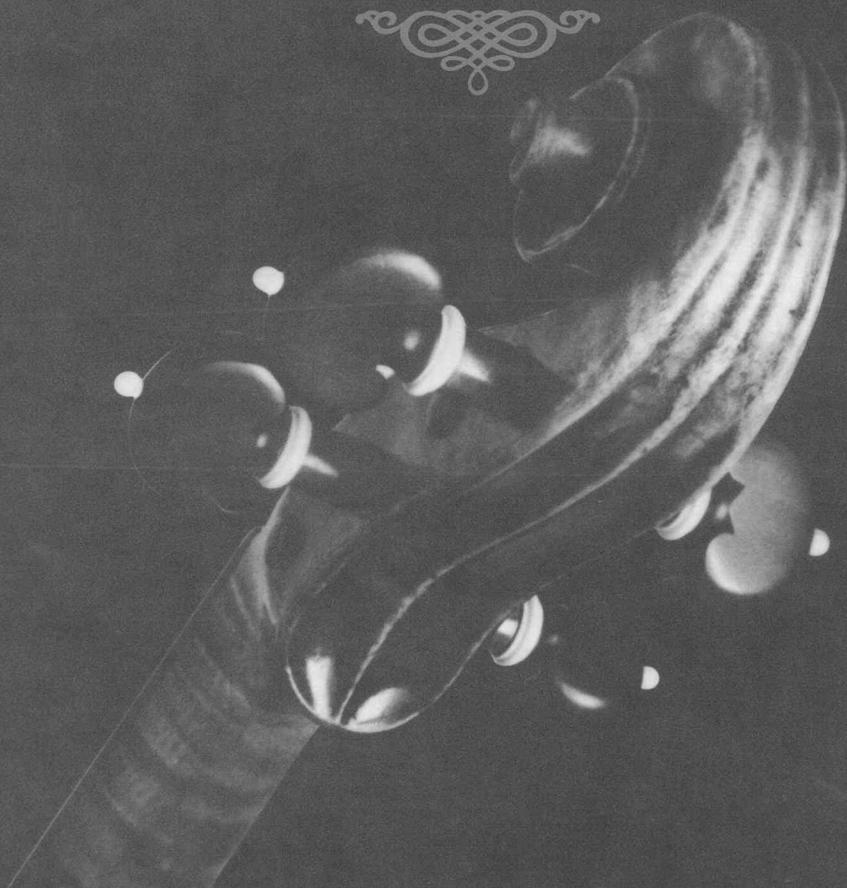
THREE MASTERS





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*The Stringed Instrument Collection
in the Library of Congress*

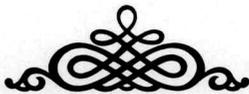






THREE MASTERS

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I

Introduction



“... yet we chiefly Value Old Instruments, before New; for by Experience, they are found to be far the Best.” Thomas Mace published this observation in London in 1676.¹ In that year, 800 miles across Europe in Cremona, Italy, Antonio Stradivari was a young artisan of thirty-two, probably still working in the shop of his eighty-year-old master, Niccolò Amati. And on the same square in Cremona was the shop of another of Amati’s pupils, Andrea Guarneri. The birth of Andrea’s grandson, Giuseppe “del Gesù,” destined to be the most famous of the Guarneri family, was still twenty-two years away. The English luthiers named by Mace as old masters—Aldred, Jay, Smith, Bolles and Ross—of whose instruments “there are no better in the World,” are now forgotten.

By the 1670s, the names of Italian makers would already have been familiar in England. The Amati shop had been established in the sixteenth century and was known throughout Europe. Andrea Amati, the shop’s founder, made more than three dozen instruments for Charles IX of France.² The earliest of these which has survived is dated 1564 and still bears the King’s Coat of Arms. It is possible, then, that Thomas Mace would have placed the Italians among the “very Excellent Good Workmen we have now,” whom he does not name. He observes wryly that these

craftsmen are capable of work as good as that of the old masters, “if They be so well Paid as They were.”

It is more likely, however, that if Mace thought of the Italians at all, he resented them as tasteless upstarts. Craftsmanship aside, Mace, like many of his conservative contemporaries, disliked all violins. When he spoke of bowed stringed instruments, he meant viols, gentler-voiced relatives of the violin. In the minds of seventeenth-century conservatives, the “Scolding Violin” was loud and crude compared with the “Sprightly, Generous and Heroick Viol.” The future belonged to the violins, however, as performances in larger halls requiring the heavier sound became the fashion of the day.

The stringed instrument collection in the Library of Congress includes three viols, as well as seven more famous instruments by Amati, Stradivari, and Guarneri. It is not exactly true, as is sometimes said, that the viol is the “ancestor” of the violin. “Cousin” would be more accurate. The two instruments belong to the same family, but each branch has its own distinct history. The viol’s popularity arrived earlier but was less

¹ Thomas Mace. *Musick’s Monument; or, A Remembrancer of the Best Practical Musick, both Divine and Civil, that has ever been known to have been in the World*. London: T. Ratcliffe and N. Thompson, for the Author, 1676.

² David D. Boyden. *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761*. London: Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 35.

enduring than that of the violin. Viols appeared in Europe in the fifteenth century and achieved tremendous popularity during the sixteenth, alongside the lute and recorder. Although a large repertoire of solo music exists for the viols, they were best known as consort instruments, a matched set being known as a "chest of viols." A consort or chest of viols was valued for the homogeneity of its four to six voices and the excellent ensemble which could be achieved in playing the polyphonic works of the day.

Unlike the violins, all members of the viol family were tuned principally in fourths and held between the legs (even the small treble) whence came the name "viola da gamba," which means literally "viola of the leg." In addition, the neck was fitted with gut frets and the instrument generally had six strings.

The modern violin family emerged in Europe during the first half of the sixteenth century, though versions of the instrument were known much ear-

lier. The French writer Philibert Jamde de Fer describes the four-stringed violin, tuned in fifths, in his *Epitome musical* of 1556. He explains that although the viol is the instrument "with which gentlemen, merchants and other virtuous people pass their time," the violin is easier to tune—fifths, he says, are easier to hear accurately than fourths—and the violin is easier to play while walking in processions. In the seventeenth century the violin began to supersede the treble viol, although all of the viols and particu-

larly the bass continued in use. By the end of the seventeenth century, fashion had clearly turned to favor the violin. As Thomas Mace observed, his beloved viols were being replaced by the stronger violins: "... now the Fashion has cry'd these Things Down, and set up others in their Room; which I confess make a Greater Noise; but which of the Two is the Better Fashion, I leave to be Judg'd by the Judicious."³



³ Mace, p. 234.

II

Sound, Response & Craftsmanship



The two most important qualities by which a stringed instrument is judged are responsiveness and sound. In the hands of a skilled player, any of the great instruments can be expected to produce a beautiful tone. However, listeners often have difficulty describing that tone or distinguishing between the sound of different fine instruments. To the player, on the other hand, distinctions between the *responses* of different instruments are less subtle. And indeed the benefit for the average listener in hearing a great violin may lie as much in the degree to which the speed and depth of the instrument's response will encourage and inspire the player as in the sound itself.

Members of the Juilliard String Quartet, as resident artists at the Library of Congress, play the Library's Stradivari instruments in public concerts every year. Joel Krosnick, cellist with the Quartet, has had this to say about the response he is able to get from the Castelbarco cello, which is slightly larger than a standard modern cello: "I can play lighter on it and faster than I can on my own or on any other cello I've ever seen, which makes up for the fact that it's large. It responds so quickly that I need less vertical pressure, so I can actually move faster than on a smaller instrument. It's an absolute marvel."⁴ Robert Mann, first violinist with the Quartet, says that as the

player puts his bow to an outstanding violin, the notes "shoot out like sparks." But he adds that the extreme sensitivity of such an instrument can also be demanding. He compares a great violin to a thoroughbred horse—extremely sensitive, requiring constant care and affection, scornful of the unskilled player, and always an individual. Of the Library's Strads, he says: "These instruments are very sensitive and very neurotic. You look at them and hate them for a minute and they cry for the rest of the day. You really have to treat them with tender loving care."⁵

A fine instrument not only responds instantly to the player's demands, it also challenges the player to discover its full potential. In his memoirs, the great Russian-American cellist Gregor Piatigorsky describes his experience with the Batta Stradivari, which he played for many years: "While all other instruments I had played prior to the Batta differed one from the other in character and range, I knew their qualities, shortcomings, or their capriciousness enough to exploit their good capabilities to full advantage. Not so with the Batta, whose prowess had no limitations. Bottomless in its re-

⁴ Interview. J. Krosnick, P. Forrest, R. Herbert. Library of Congress, April 25, 1980.

⁵ Interview. R. Mann, P. Forrest, R. Herbert. Library of Congress, April 23, 1980.

sources, it spurred me on to try to reach its depths, and I have never worked harder or desired anything more fervently than to draw out of this superior instrument all it has to give. Only then will I deserve to be its equal. I am still at it and perhaps I always will be.”⁶

When string players talk about the finest instruments available, their talk inevitably turns to Stradivari and Guarneri, and to performers’ temperaments. According to modern virtuoso Ruggiero Ricci, “Violinists are generally divided into camps; those who like a more velvety tone choose the Stradivarius. This group includes many of the past German masters, such as Spohr, Joachim, Busch, Wilhelmj, and also such non-Germans as Kubelik and Sarasate. Stradivarius players of our own time would include Elman, Francescatti, Milstein, Morini and Oistrakh. The Guarneri is more often the choice of the artist who makes more excessive demands of his instrument. Paganini, Vieuxtemps, Sauret, Wieniawski, and Ysaÿe all used Guarneris, and in our time it is the vehicle for Heifetz and Stern . . . A Stradivari generally requires a more gentle and coaxing approach than does a Guarneri. With a Strad the note change is often more fluid. The sound of the Guarneri, on the other hand, has more core and often permits greater intensity in playing. One can dig with the bow and sob or break on the note as Italian tenors do.”⁷

Earl Carlyss, of the Juilliard Quartet, finds that the Library’s Strads are very different in sound but similar in response—in “feel”—in contrast to the feel of the Library’s Kreisler Guarneri: “Tonight I’m playing the Kreisler, and I have to say, that instrument is hard to play. You have to work at it. The Strads, on the other hand, play themselves. The

bow goes by and the sound comes out. You don’t have to dig in quite so much. As to the sound itself, I prefer the Castelbarco Strad, because I like a darker color. This is a very personal thing, but the sound of the Castelbarco is very creamy, like the sound of the Ward [Stradivari]. They both have that quality, and they’re both different from the Betts [Stradivari]. The Betts is a little too bright for me.”⁸

Yehudi Menuhin, in a somewhat more poetic vein, put it this way: “I could recount my entire life in terms of a dialectical argument between the Stradivarius and Guarnerius del Gesù. One must rise to a Strad before it will speak from its craftsman’s soul. It spurns the man who lets his hand exert too much pressure or his finger fall ever so slightly wide of its mark. A phenomenon of coherent asymmetries, a fellow human mercifully absolving the player of his gaffes, the Guarnerius, whose earthier voice belies the fact that it is often slightly smaller than most Strads, sings *de profundis*. One need not rise above oneself, for it appeals to the natural man. Although Strads have been the dominant instrument of my life, at regular intervals I have played Guarneris, finding the first gold while the second brings to mind the red of Sainte-Chapelle.”⁹

This poetic vein is the norm when violinists are discussing the instruments they themselves play. As writer Joseph

⁶ Gregor Piatigorsky. *Cellist*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1965, p. 259f.

⁷ Harold C. Schonberg. “When Glamour Violins Go on the Block,” *The New York Times*, Sunday, November 7, 1976, p. D 15.

⁸ Interview. E. Carlyss, P. Forrest, R. Herbert. Library of Congress, April 25, 1980.

⁹ Yehudi Menuhin. *Unfinished Journey*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977, p. 296. “Stradivarius,” is the Latin form of the name, while “Stradivari” is the Italian form. Either is correct.

Wechsberg put it, "Other musicians take pains to keep their instruments in good shape . . . but they rarely talk about their instruments the way we string players do. They wouldn't claim, as we do, that it is almost alive. They can be sweet or bored or temperamental. They may lovingly respond to your efforts or angrily reject you. They want to be wooed; if you make a mistake, they scream. On damp days they are depressed."¹⁰ Eugène Ysaÿe wrote to his wife in 1891: "By paying a small insurance premium I was able to borrow the Guarnerius for a few days and I am now using this colossus. You can imagine my joy. I have never had such a wonderful feeling. The instrument seems capable of every shade of feeling from drama to romance. Its tone is immense. I played some Vieuxtemps on it and it seemed to me that the violin itself was made happy by the memories the music stirred up."¹¹

As any virtuoso will tell you, a fine violin has a heart and soul of its own. Fiddle and player may get along, as Ysaÿe did

with the Guarneri, or they may not. Fritz Kreisler, who donated the Guarneri in the Library's collection, had both experiences, and recounted this example in a 1908 interview: "I bought a Stradivarius, for which I paid the sum of four thousand dollars. After it was purchased and I had played upon it a while I found that I had made a costly error. For some reason it remained cold and lifeless under my most fervid appeals. I can only say it was antagonistic to me. A violinist cannot explain this attitude between himself and his instrument; he only knows that it 'is,' and that the condition is one of acute suffering."¹²

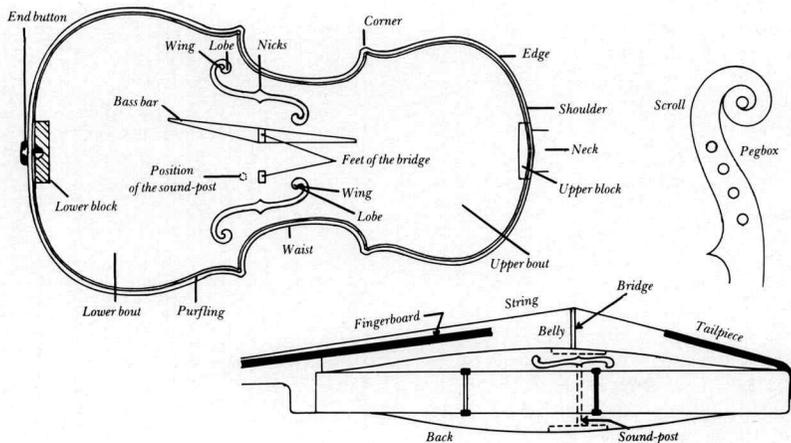
Of the roughly 1,100 instruments which Stradivari is thought to have built in his lifetime, about 600 are known

¹⁰ Joseph Wechsberg, *The Glory of the Violin*. New York: The Viking Press, 1973, p. 7.

¹¹ Antoine Ysaÿe and Bertram Ratcliffe, *Ysaÿe: His Life, Work and Influence*. London: William Heinemann, 1947, p. 69.

¹² Fritz Kreisler, "The Story of my Violins," *Musical Courier*, April 8, 1908, p. 16.

Figure 1.



today.¹³ Most of these are still in playing condition, and there is hardly an instrument among them that isn't outstanding in responsiveness and quality of sound. Consistency on this level is obviously no accident, and suggests the third quality which we must consider, craftsmanship. Both Guarneri and Stradivari were masters of the craft of producing a distinctive sound. Both makers experimented, and though expert players find differences among individual instruments by these makers, we have seen already that players also agree on consistent qualities characteristic of each maker. The ability to maintain this consistency is one aspect of the luthier's art. ("Luthier" is the traditional name for one who makes violins and other stringed instruments.) Another aspect of his art is formal craftsmanship—how the instrument looks. It is here that Stradivari and Guarneri differ dramatically, as we shall see. Menuhin speaks of the Stradivari singing from "its craftsman's soul." A Stradivari violin is a model of symmetry,

balance, and steadiness of line. Guarneri, by contrast, was characteristically rough with externals—lines are irregular, corners and scrolls slightly asymmetrical, carving uneven. Players like to speculate that the contrast in appearance reflects the contrasting spirits of the makers. Says Menuhin: "As Stradivari's career followed a remarkably straight course, bringing him wealth and eminence, so his violins possess great formal beauty . . . From Bartolomeo Giuseppe Guarneri's instruments . . . one can infer quite the opposite, a man at once passionate and compassionate, bull and saint, a temperamental non-conformist, a holy criminal who brawled, found no conjugal happiness, engendered no children and died rather young."¹⁴ It may be so.

¹³ Herbert Goodkin, in his *Stradivari Iconography* (Larchmont, New York: Published by the Author, 1972), lists nearer 700—18 violas, 63 cellos, 4 guitars, and 635 violins, but many players feel that these figures may be high. Samuel Rhodes of the Juilliard Quartet, for example, is personally acquainted with only 11 violas.

¹⁴ Menuhin, p. 296f.

III

A Closer Look



The Library of Congress owns seven instruments by Cremonese makers—five by Stradivari, one by Guarneri, and one by Stradivari's great teacher, Niccolò Amati. Each is named for a former owner. The photograph on the cover of this booklet shows three of these (left to right): the Brookings Amati (1654), the Betts Stradivari (1704), and the Kreisler Guarneri (1733). The Betts is from Stradivari's so-called "Golden Period," 1700–1720, and shows the master at his characteristic best. It is also in an excellent state of preservation. As we look closer at the individual instruments in the collection, the Betts will serve as a representative example of Stradivari's art. For convenient reference, Figure 1 gives the names of the most important parts of the violin.

If we stand the Kreisler Guarneri and the Betts Stradivari side by side (Figure 2), we can see immediately evidence both of the sureness of Stradivari's eye for symmetry and of his concern for the purity of the design. The corners (marked "A" on the Kreisler) are, for one thing, perfectly matched on the Betts,

but not on the Kreisler. On the Kreisler, both the upper and lower corners on the right side are more blunt than those on the left. More important for the overall design, the corners of the Betts are sharper, and the middle bouts (curves) deeper at the corners (marked "B" on the Betts) than on the Kreisler. Moving in still closer (Figure 3), we can see that on the Betts the purfling is brought to a graceful and slender point known



Figure 2.

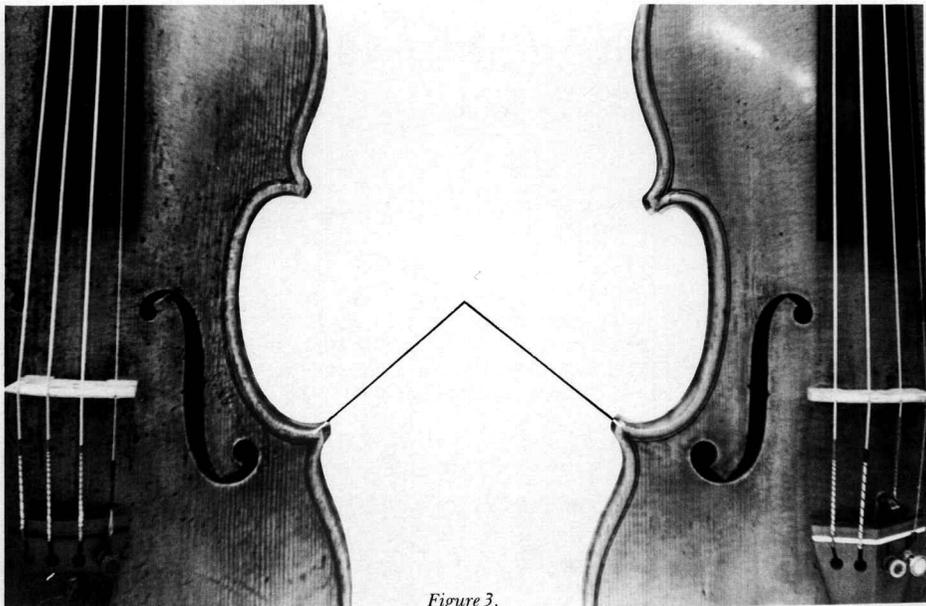


Figure 3.

as a “bee sting,” at each of the corners with extreme precision, adding to the impression of sharpness and flair which the design conveys. On the Kreisler, by contrast, the purfling is irregular as a rule and becomes diffuse at the corners.

Figure 4 (Betts) gives us a good look at the purfling itself, which is an inlay of three narrow strips of wood, in this case two dark strips of dyed pear and a center strip of light poplar. The purpose of the inlay was probably to add to the beauty of the instrument and to bind the edges of the wood—particularly important across the upper and lower bouts, where the purfling runs at right angles to the grain and where the back or belly would tend to split along the grain. The belly, being of soft spruce, is particularly subject to snagging on clothing and splinter-

ing away bit by bit at the edges. The purfling helps prevent this.

The grooves for the purfling were cut by hand with a special tool. The one used by Stradivari can still be seen in the Stradivari Museum in Cremona, Italy. The purfling on the Betts, as on most of Stradivari’s instruments, is remarkably even, unlike that on the Kreisler Guarneri.

Stradivari’s care with detail as well as overall design appears in the cutting of the f-holes. The wings of the f-holes (Figure 4, marked “C”) are slightly narrower than the corresponding wings of the Kreisler f-holes—a seemingly small difference. The effect of the slight narrowing in the Betts, however, is to bring the wings into a visible harmony with the corners and to bring the curves of the f-holes into harmony

Figure 4.



with the curves of the middle bouts (see "D"). Typically with Stradivari, every detail is designed and cut precisely in itself and in precise relation to the larger pattern. Standing back from both violins, and with the above details in mind, we can see in concrete terms some of what is meant by luthiers who praise the formal beauty of Stradivari's craftsmanship.

Many of the same strengths of craftsmanship that we notice in Stradivari's work can also be found in that of Niccolò Amati. It is likely that for more than thirty years, from the age of about fourteen, Stradivari worked as an apprentice or associate in Amati's shop. The Brookings Amati in the Library's collection was built in 1654, probably about four years before Stradivari began his apprenticeship. Like his student, Amati was a craftsman of the first order. A careful eye examining the Brookings Amati and the Betts will see that both men worked along the same lines. But Stradivari's sharper eye for design and his unflinching precision will also be evident, even at this high level of comparison.

Throughout his career, Stradivari experimented with various aspects of design. A consistent Stradivari sound and response are common to all of these instruments, but even given that consistency, players find a wide variation in sound among different Strads, as well as variations in design. As Robert Mann of the Juilliard String Quartet put it: "It's a myth to think that if you gather four Stradivari instruments in one room, then you have the perfect set of matched instruments. The Library's instruments, for example, match very well, but it's not that they're a *special* match. Amati probably made instruments that sound more consistently alike, but Stradivari was ex-

perimenting all his life and there's a variety of sound that his instruments make."¹⁵

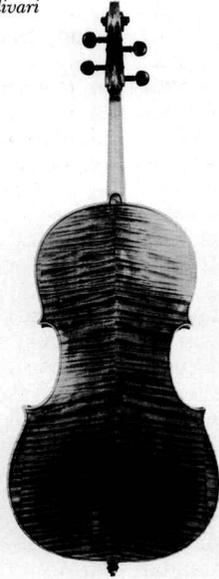
Stradivari experimented even more dramatically with his cellos than with his violins. Although the cello came into general use during the sixteenth century, at roughly the same time as the violin, it was not so readily accepted as a solo instrument. Domenico Gabrielli's *ricercare* (1689) were among the first solo pieces published for the instrument,¹⁶ and it was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that the repertoire began to expand to significant proportions. J. S. Bach's suites of 1720, for example, appeared fairly early in the history of the cello as a solo instrument.

In the seventeenth century, the cello was used primarily as an accompanying instrument, to play slow-moving bass lines. Neither its size nor its design was standardized until after 1700. Existing cellos by Stradivari fall into two distinct groups, those of oversized dimensions built between 1680 and 1701, and those built after 1707, which are of the smaller size that has become standard for modern instruments. (As far as we know, Stradivari made no cellos between 1701 and 1707.) Near the end of the seventeenth century and early in the eighteenth, a number of Italian makers besides Stradivari built smaller cellos, some of which have survived. No doubt the makers were responding to the performers' need for a more manageable instrument, one which could handle the scales, leaps and upper positions called for in the emerging solo repertoire. Of the various smaller models which were

¹⁵ Quoted in Rembert Herbert. *Concert Night: The Library of Congress*. Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress, Whitall Foundation, 1981, p. 24.

¹⁶ Willi Apel. *Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969, p. 139.

Figure 5A. Servais Stradivari



tried, that of Stradivari became the standard and has remained so until this day.

The Library's cello, built in 1697, is one of just over two dozen of Stradivari's larger cellos still in existence, and may be one of only three which have not been cut down to smaller dimensions.¹⁷ It is well made and well preserved and has an excellent sound. But its sides and back are of poplar, less striking to the eye than the maple Stradivari used in other instruments. Figure 5 illustrates the difference by a comparison of the Castelbarco cello with the Servais cello of 1701, now owned by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The Servais has back and sides of maple and is also of the larger dimensions. The back of the Castelbarco is unusual in that it is in one piece.

Joel Krosnick, cellist with the Juilliard String Quartet, plays the Castelbarco

every season in concerts at the Library. He has commented as follows on this somewhat oversized instrument: "I think Stradivari would be surprised to see me floating around on top of this instrument playing it as a solo cello. It may have been designed as a small double bass—a continuo instrument to play bass lines. It is very large, and in order to make it playable the bridge has been moved closer to the scroll by one bridge width, shortening the string length. But the problem is not really so much the size as it is that this cello has a very peculiar distribution of pitches. On a stringed instrument, the lower the pitches are, the farther apart they lie on the fingerboard. The higher the pitches, obviously, the closer together they lie. Each instrument

¹⁷ W. Henry Hill, Arthur F. Hill, and Alfred E. Hill. *Antonio Stradivari: His Life and Work (1644–1737)*. London: W. E. Hill and Sons, 1902, p. 117.



Figure 5B. Castelbarco Stradivari

is different in how the pitches get closer together or farther apart as you move up and down the fingerboard. The pitches on this instrument get farther apart or closer together in a most unusual sort of way.

"But the *sound* of this cello is really one of the most remarkable sounds of any instrument anywhere, ever. It's enormous; bold yet very suave. The only problem with this cello comes if you want to hide. It has a very strong personality. You try to hide and immediately it booms out 'HELLO.' That's the only problem with this cello."¹⁸

Stradivari seems to have paid more attention to the problems of the cello and violin than to those of the viola. The viola has always suffered from the fact that because of its pitch range, its ideal size, from an acoustical point of view, would make it too large to hold on the shoulder like a violin and too small to hold between the legs like a cello. Even today, the problem is often "solved" by compromise, and violas of varying sizes can be found in most modern symphony orchestras. The surviving Stradivari violas listed by Goodkin fall into two size groups: two very large instruments which Stradivari called "tenors," and the remaining instruments of generally smaller dimensions which he called "contraltos," doubtless because of their

lighter sound. The maker's dilemma remains today as it was in Stradivari's time and as it was put in 1912 by Edmund Van der Straeten: "We stand therefore between two evils with apparently no alternative. Either the viola is of proportions which make it comfortable to play upon, but make the tone weak and nasal, or else the tone is free and powerful, but the viola is so large that it is decidedly tiring for the player."¹⁹

The Library's viola, made in 1727 and known as the "Cassavetti," is of the smaller contralto dimensions. Samuel Rhodes, violist with the Juilliard String Quartet, has described it this way: "The Cassavetti is really an alto, and in a quartet it joins more with the violins than with the cello, the way a darker, tenor-sounding viola would. All of the smaller Strad violas tend to be alto and brilliant and a little bit nasal, with tremendous projecting power. The problem with these instruments, and this is particularly true with the Cassavetti, is that the C-string doesn't have enough body. The sound is very robust on the higher side, but the low C-string is a little weak."²⁰

¹⁸ Interview. J. Krosnick, P. Forrest, R. Herbert. Library of Congress, April 25, 1980.

¹⁹ *The Strad*, December 1912, p. 287.

²⁰ Interview. S. Rhodes, P. Forrest, R. Herbert. Library of Congress, April 23, 1980.

IV

The Art of the Luthier: A Living Tradition



If a fine violin is a thoroughbred, then the player must be both rider and trainer. He must know how to coax and encourage the instrument to give its best; he must know when it needs a rest; and he must recognize the symptoms when it is sick. This last is not always a simple matter. In the late 1960s, critics and audiences at concerts by the Juilliard Quartet at the Library of Congress began to notice a harshness in the sound of the Betts Stradivari. Robert Mann had long suspected that the instrument needed work, but it was hard to be sure: "If you have any response to Western culture, a Stradivarius is an awesome thing. And who would dare to criticize an awesome thing? Over the years, people from the audience began to say, 'Well, it's a little nasal on certain notes,' and I would say to myself, 'Well, that must be me.' Then I began to have more and more trouble with squeaks and with getting it to respond. And it wasn't just because of the changes in the weather, or the bows—because I tried different bows—or the strings. And it finally became obvious that something had to be done."²¹

The decision was finally made to send the violin to New York City for major repairs, and the Ward violin, the Castelbarco violin, and the Cassavetti viola soon followed. All four instruments went to the shop of Jacques Français and

into the hands of Français's partner, René Morel. Figures 6 and 7 show both the Betts and the Cassavetti on the luthier's bench. "Opening" a rare instrument is a routine procedure for the master luthier, though of course it is to be done only when absolutely necessary. Some wood is often lost around the inside edges of the belly as it is removed, but a soft hide glue is always used on this seam to reduce the loss to a minimum.

Once the belly of the instrument has been removed, a great deal of its history is open to view. This is literally the case with the Betts, where we see its name written in pencil across the left upper bout, and on the left lower bout we read: "Purchased from/the duchess of Camposelice/ by /W.E. Hill & Son / March 1892." We see further that small cracks have been patched with studs in six places, and that reinforcement has been added to the right of one f-hole, where the sound post rests when the violin is assembled; and from the brightness of the wood we gather that a new bass bar has been added.

We see in this photograph the kinds of repairs that older instruments routinely require. The bass bar of the instrument reinforces the lower notes, as its name implies, but also holds the belly under a slight tension, thereby increasing its gen-

²¹ Interview. See Note 2.

eral responsiveness. Modern bass bars are slightly larger than those used by Stradivari himself, and any bass bar eventually loses its resilience and should be replaced. (See Figure 6.) The sound post is a small wooden rod, about the diameter of a pencil, which transmits sound from the belly of the instrument to its back (see Violin Parts diagram, Fig. 1). The sound post is never glued, as it must be adjustable to exactly the right position. Because it is held in place by being wedged slightly between the belly and back, it sometimes causes small cracks in the belly, which must be repaired as shown here. And as shown in Figure 8, "bushings" must sometimes be used to tighten loose tuning pegs.

The care which an instrument receives over the course of three hundred years is bound to vary in quality. As an expert opens and examines an instrument brought to him for repair, he inevitably sees before him tangible evidence of the living tradition of the art of the luthier. Figure 9, for example, shows the lower block of the Cassavetti, which at some earlier time was in need of reinforcement. René Morel was pleased to find in this case that his predecessor had

taken care to preserve Stradivari's original block and had simply added a bushing under it to provide the extra support. The difference between the two woods is clear in the photograph, where the new wood is the lighter-colored piece glued directly to the base of the viola, and the older, darker wood

is then glued to the newer block. Morel was not so pleased with what he discovered in the scroll, which, as in all the Library's instruments, is Stradivari's original. In Figure 10, the scroll is shown alongside a photograph illustrating its original position. As you can see, wood has been shaved from its base. Morel speculates that this was done long before the instrument came to the Library, in order to change the angle of the scroll slightly to provide more room for some player's hand to supply vibrato. To repair the damage, Morel glued a small wedge

between the base of the scroll and the neck, using wood matched as exactly as possible to Stradivari's original maple. On the instrument today the joint is hardly visible.

The decision to repair the scroll was based partly on a previous decision to replace the neck, which was too short to



Figure 6.



Figure 7.

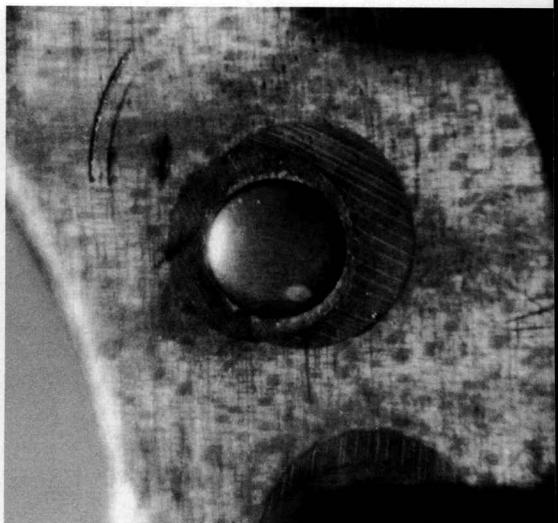


Figure 8.

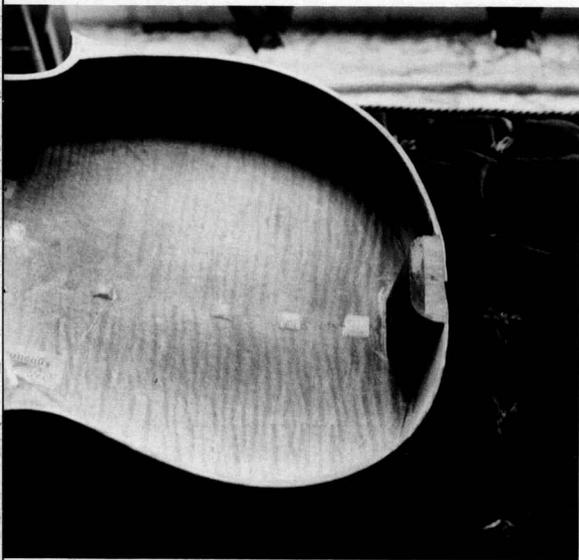


Figure 9.

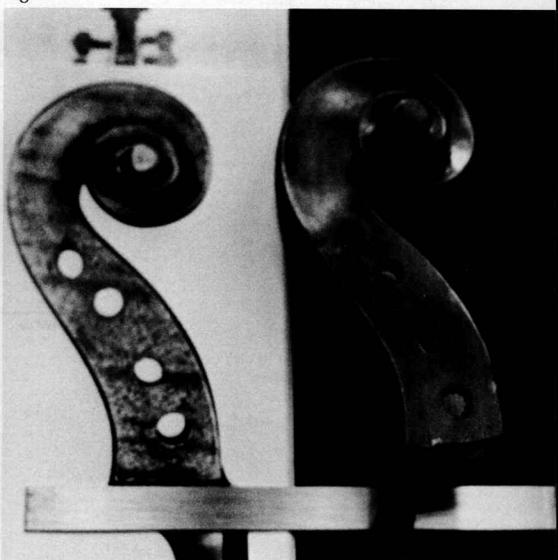


Figure 10.

make the instrument easily playable. As with most Cremonese instruments, the neck which Morel removed was not original. The original was probably replaced sometime in the nineteenth century when the viola was "modernized." Whenever a neck is replaced by an expert luthier, the joint where it attaches to the scroll is carefully hidden.

The question of wood is raised whenever a part of an instrument must be replaced. Of the maple needed to rebuild the Cassavetti scroll, Morel said: "Luckily for me I do have some maple from the town where I came from, the same kind of tree as this one [the original scroll]. So the match will be very good when it is finished. It's going to be hard to tell."²² The bellies of fine violins are made of spruce, the backs, sides (ribs), and scrolls of maple. (Incidentally, what we have called "spruce," following American usage, is generally called "pine" in Europe.) The trees must grow on a slope providing just the right exposure to the sun and be cut at exactly the right time, preferably during winter when the sap is low. After partial drying, the logs are cut into boards called "shakes," using an axe rather than a saw in order to preserve the natural grain.

The kind of restoration work done on the Cassavetti viola in the Français shop was major, not to be undertaken lightly or often. As an instrument is played, however, other important adjustments must be made frequently. This is particularly the case with the Library's instruments, which are played most often in the fall and early spring—those months that bring dramatic changes in temperature and humidity. This would not be a problem in the carefully controlled atmosphere of their exhibit case, but when the instruments are taken into the auditorium for rehearsals and con-

certs, the influence of the weather is considerable. For almost fifty years, the Library has relied on the skilled hands of luthier Albert F. Moglie to make these crucial adjustments during the concert season. (See figures 13–15.) Problems arise inevitably—the cork on the underside of a chin rest has to be replaced; a peg has begun to loosen; a bit of purfling is loose; a bridge needs to be moved slightly.

The most critical of these adjustments is to the sound post. The sound post is called in Italian "l'anima," and in French likewise "l'âme," or "the soul" of the violin. The most microscopic change in its position can bring the instrument to life or, on the other hand, muffle its voice. The sound post is moved with a special tool, through the f-hole, as shown in Figure 14, and can be set properly only by an expert hand. As Moglie put it in an interview in 1980: "No two sound posts are the same length—each has to be measured individually, and it has to fit exactly. If it gets just a little loose or in a different position, you can't possibly play because you have no power; the sound is too weak. Any small imperfection and it doesn't perform properly. I can tell by plucking the strings and by tapping the instrument whether it's in the right position."²³

Albert Moglie has cared for the Library's Stradivari instruments since they were presented by Gertrude Clarke Whittall in 1935 and 1936. He celebrated his ninetieth birthday on December 16, 1980, and the following spring the Library honored Mr. Moglie's almost fifty years of service with a special concert by the Juilliard String Quartet.

²² Interview. R. Morel, P. Forrest. Jacques Français, Inc., New York City, March 3, 1980.

²³ Interview. A. Moglie, S. Ember. Albert F. Moglie, Inc. Washington, D.C., April 1980.

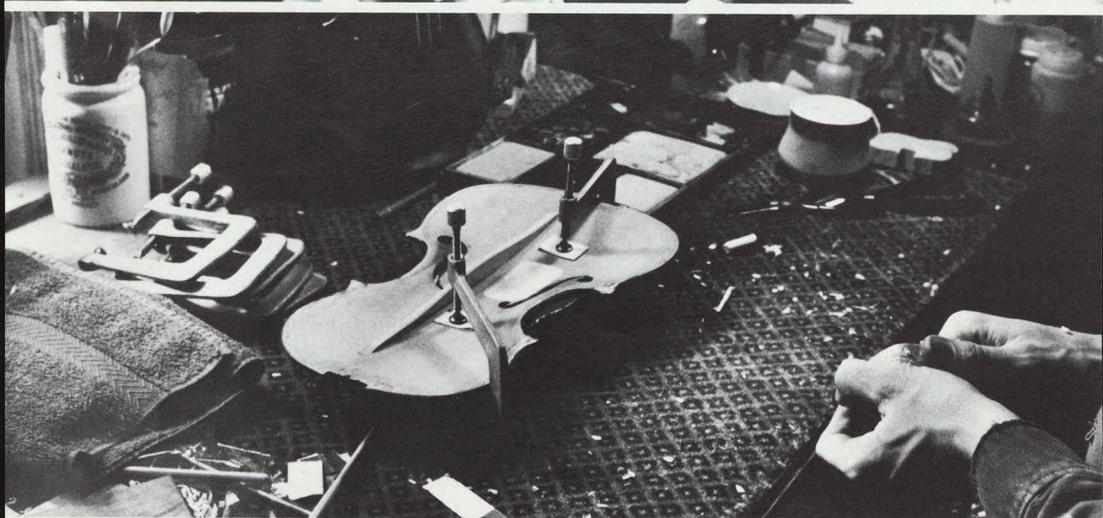


Figure 11. (Top) Luthier René Morel of New York City.

Figure 12. (Bottom) Violin belly with new bass bar. Jacque Français, Inc., New York.

*Figure 13.
Luthier
Albert Moglie
of
Washington, D.C.*

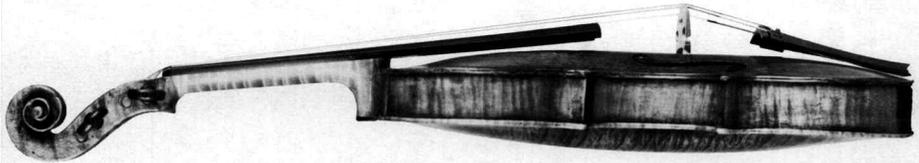
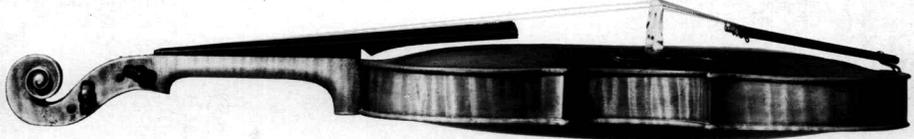


*Figure 14.
Albert Moglie
adjusting
the sound post
in one of
the Library's violins.*



*Figure 15.
Albert Moglie's
violin shop
in
Washington, D.C.*

*Figure 16.
A Jacob Stainer violin
(ca. 1650, above)
restored
to its
original design
and a*



*Niccolò Amati violin
(1675)
with modern fittings.
Photographs
courtesy of the
Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C.,
which owns
both instruments.*

During that concert, Robert Mann of the Quartet, speaking for the Library, presented the distinguished luthier with a set of ten color photographs of the Library's Cremonese instruments, together with the following tribute:

On these instruments made by your illustrious predecessors, the finest music has been played by the greatest musicians of our time. You have cared for them with devotion and skill for nearly half a century. All who have heard them are in your debt, as are those masters whose art you perpetuate.

In recent years, luthiers have taken a keen interest in the design as well as the repair of classic instruments. Some readers may be surprised to learn that a Stradivari in the hands of a performer today is substantially different from the same violin as it came from Stradivari's shop. With the invention and growing popularity of the piano in the late eighteenth century, the violin was called upon to produce a heavier sound in duo sonatas and chamber music; and with the growing importance of the traveling virtuoso, it was required to fill larger concert halls and to sound over orchestras of increasing size and power. Most eighteenth-century stringed instruments were substantially altered to meet these requirements, and those in the Li-

brary's collection are no exception. The names of the makers who altered them, as well as exact times and places, are unknown. As shown in Figure 16, the most obvious differences between a "modern" instrument and its counterpart with original eighteenth-century fittings are in the length and angle of the neck and the height of the bridge. The modern neck is longer, tilted slightly, and matched to a higher bridge, in order to produce greater tension in the strings. Other changes in the original neck joint, bass bar, and sound post were adopted to further intensify the sound and reinforce stress points against the greater tension.

It should be obvious even from this short description that the original acoustical balance of the instrument may be upset by such changes. The alterations, together with changes in the design of the bow in the early nineteenth century, produced an instrument whose tone, potential for phrasing and articulation, and resources of color and dynamic range are considerably different from those of the original. Many performers who specialize in music of the Baroque and early Classical eras have begun to perform on instruments restored to their original, pre-nineteenth-century fittings and to adjust their playing techniques to the earlier styles, guided by instruction books from the period.

V

The Bow



A discussion of the “modernization” of early violins leads inevitably to the subject of the bow. Stradivari himself seems to have made bows, as probably did other master luthiers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Significantly, however, many of these early bows have disappeared, and the maker universally acknowledged today as the “Stradivari of the bow”²⁴ is François Tourte (1747–1835), a Frenchman who worked fifty years after Stradivari’s death. The names of Stradivari and Tourte are linked in our minds, as their violins and bows are often paired on the concert stage. When Gertrude Clarke Whittall donated five Stradivari instruments to the Library, for example, the obvious choice for bows of comparable quality was the work of Tourte.

Today we find nothing incongruous in this assumption that the appropriate bow for a fine violin should be one made a hundred years after the instrument itself. We tend to assume further that the early bows were primitive, and that the nearly universal acceptance of the Tourte design represented simply the replacement of an inferior product by a superior one. This was probably not the case, however. In the first place, as historian David Boyden has pointed out, “It is unthinkable that the finest craftsmen of earlier times would allow their beautiful instruments to be played to disadvan-

tage for want of bows of comparable effectiveness, subtlety, and beauty.”²⁵

Secondly, as more tangible evidence of the quality of the early bow, Boyden describes in detail a beautifully crafted example from about 1700, thought to have been made by Stradivari. He writes: “Compared to the modern bow . . . the ‘Stradivari’ bow is lighter and shorter, and it has less momentum; but it has similar qualities of balance and response. The balance, however, is different, the balance point being lower toward the frog, since, among other things, the head is lighter and less massive. These differences have interesting consequences. Using the ‘old’ bow in experiments, modern concert violinists have been able to produce certain types of bowings with greater technical ease and with better musical results than by using a genuine Tourte bow. And this is true not only of ‘old’ music, where the result could be predicted, but also in certain rapid passages and bowings in Viotti and even in Beethoven and Mendelssohn. In particular, the ‘Stradivari’ bow is superior to the modern bow in the articulation of detached notes in the upper third of the bow.”²⁶

The early bow falls short and the Tourte becomes clearly superior in the

²⁴ Boyden, p. 328.

²⁵ Boyden, p. 208.

²⁶ Boyden, p. 207.

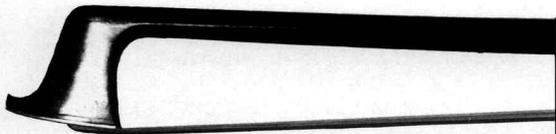


Figure 17. A standard modern "hatchet head" bow tip (above) and an early "pike's head" design (below).



production of those effects which composers and virtuosos were beginning to explore in greater depth toward the end of the eighteenth century, particularly greater extremes of volume and the projection of a long, highly colored melodic line. These demands reflect aesthetic ideals which were then new, ideals which were early indications of the approaching romantic era. These same demands led to the "modernization" of the instruments themselves which we described earlier. In a real sense, the Tourte bow was designed for a new and more powerful kind of violin, a violin which was then "created" from those existing instruments that could best tolerate the alternations. It is not surprising, then, that today, as players of earlier music turn to violins restored to their original fittings, they return to earlier designs of the bow as well.

Unfortunately, examples of early bows are relatively scarce. Soon after the Tourte design appeared it was accepted all over Europe. As Boyden bluntly puts it: "The modern Tourte bow, perfected about 1780 and based on different principles of design, rendered the old bows obsolete, reducing their commercial value to zero."²⁷ As we might expect, the bows themselves disappeared with their commercial value. None from the sixteenth and few from the seventeenth centuries have survived, and so our understanding of their design must be based on a few examples and on iconography. We gather from paintings and drawings that the earliest violin bows, from the sixteenth century, were similar to those used with the rebec, fiddle, viol, and lira da braccio. The stick typically

²⁷ Boyden, p. 111.

had a convex shape, like an archer's bow, with a thin ribbon of horsehair stretched across the curve. As the sixteenth century progressed, the degree of curvature decreased, and during the seventeenth century makers began to use longer sticks, finer wood, and a less convex shape, and began to pay closer attention to the balance, strength and elasticity of the finished bow. Length, shape, and overall appearance were not standardized, however, though concert bows tended to be longer than those designed to play dance music. The hairs numbered between 80 and 100, as opposed to 150 to 200 today.²⁸ At the lower end, near the hand, the hair was separated from the stick by a frog, and at the far end the hair was fastened to the stick at a specially carved point. This point was called a "pike's head" because of its shape (Figure 17). Various devices were used for adjusting the tension of the hair. The screw knob used today was probably introduced near the end of the seventeenth century. The Hill Collection in London includes an early screw knob model dated 1694.

During the first half of the eighteenth century the bow continued to change rapidly. Though a general distinction was still made between the long bow for the sonata and the short bow for dance music, bows were generally longer and less curved, or even concave. As the concave or backward arching became more popular, the so-called "pike's head" was replaced by the wider "hatchet head" (Figure 17) in order to maintain the space between the hair and the stick. The screw knob became a common feature.

Trends that were evident by 1750 in the art of bow-making reached their culmination in the latter years of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth. Tourte dominated this

era, and, more than anyone else, was responsible for fixing upon what has become the standard design of the modern bow. Boyden has summed up Tourte's achievement as follows: "Tourte's bows, works of art in themselves, were so perfectly adapted to the music of his and subsequent times that the Tourte bow is a synonym for the modern bow, and has been for nearly two hundred years. His bows were universally imitated as the perfect model."²⁹ Like Stradivari and Guarneri, Tourte was born into his profession, following the path of his father and older brother after an initial apprenticeship to a clockmaker. He lived eighty-eight years and reached the peak of his career at middle age.

Tourte did not originate the idea of arching the stick toward the hair: bows with concave arching had been made by his father as well as by others. But the balance, strength and flexibility of Tourte's design established the concave arch as a standard feature, and it remains so today. Tourte also demonstrated the superiority of Brazilian Pernambuco wood, established standard dimensions of weight, length, and point of balance, and established the modern design of the head and the frog assembly.

Tourte's bows, and those since patterned after them, are generally between 29.134 and 29.528 inches in length. The original frogs were made of tortoiseshell, ivory or ebony, sometimes mounted in silver or gold. The Pernambuco wood, which was of limited supply in Italy and therefore precious, was not varnished, but was polished with powder and oil. Many of Tourte's bows are stamped with his name, but these markings were added after his death. Bow

²⁸ Boyden, p. 112.

²⁹ Boyden, p. 328.

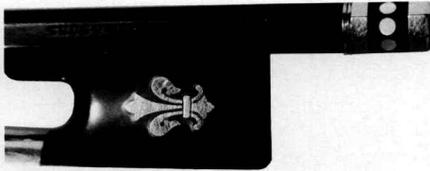


Figure 18. The frog of a Hill bow once owned by violinist Fritz Kreisler, now in the Library's collection.

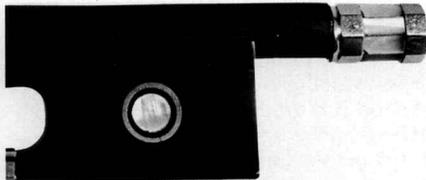


Figure 19. The frog of a Tourte bow from the Library's collection.

makers contemporary with Tourte began to sign their work—the Englishman John Dodd is said to have been the first to do so—but Tourte himself did not.³⁰

The Library of Congress received five Tourte bows from Mrs. Gertrude Clarke Whittall with the Stradivari instruments she donated in the 1930s. Two of the violin bows have acquired names over the years, the "Baillot" and the "Russian," and are considered to represent Tourte's work at its best. Little is known of the history of the third violin bow.

The Baillot, made around 1800, has a round stick of very fine Brazilian Pernambuco wood. It still has the original tortoise-shell and gold mountings and a mother-of-pearl tip. This bow, owned by Nathan Posner before Mrs. Whittall, once belonged to Pierre Marie François De Sales Baillot (1771–1842), a French violinist and leading intellectual, and later to his descendant, violinist Julien Sauzay.

The Russian, also acquired by Mrs.

Whittall from Nathan Posner, has a round stick of lighter wood. It, too, dates from about 1800. The mountings—a gold and tortoise-shell nut with a mother-of-pearl eye surrounded by a gold ring, and mother-of-pearl tip mounted with gold—are original. This bow passed from Émile Germain of Paris to a Russian violinist. Hill of London purchased the bow in Moscow in 1898.

The viola bow, made between 1790 and 1800, belonged to John T. Roberts of Hartford, Connecticut, before Mrs. Whittall purchased it and the viola. The round stick is of dark Pernambuco. The frog—made of ebony mounted with silver, with a mother-of-pearl eye on either side—is original, as is the screw button, also ebony with silver.

The cello bow, ca. 1800, has an octagonal stick. The nut, of ebony and silver, is a reproduction made by the Hill company; the tip and silver face are original. This bow belonged to the well-known American violinist Louis Krasner before it was purchased by Mrs. Whittall.

In addition to the Tourte bows given by Mrs. Whittall, the Library owns two fine Hill bows once used by the Austrian violinist Fritz Kreisler, and a bow by C. W. Knopf, given by Mrs. Robert Somers Brookings with the Brookings Amati violin. One of the Kreisler bows was given by Mr. Kreisler himself to accompany his Guarneri violin, and the other, which has the initials "F.K." inscribed in gold on the frog, was a gift of Rose Marie Grentzer. Both are of the highest quality made by the Hill Company of London. The grade of Pernambuco determines the mountings of each Hill bow, the most elegant of the products having specially designed inlays in the frogs, such as the fleur-de-lys motifs on the two bows in this collection.

³⁰ Boyden, p. 328.

VI

History and Legend



The violin is neither as old as the harp nor as universal as the flute, but in its roughly four hundred years of history it has become more steeped in legend than either. Very early in its history the violin developed a reputation for keeping poor company, most notably the devil himself. The nineteenth-century virtuoso Paganini was said to have been accompanied by Old Nick in the form of a dog, and it would be convenient to attribute the violin's associations entirely to Paganini's phenomenal playing, "demonic passions," and forbidding appearance. In fact, however, the association sought out the fiddle much earlier. One of the best known of such tales was told by the early eighteenth-century virtuoso and composer Giuseppe Tartini. One of Tartini's most popular works was his so-called "Devil's Trill Sonata." According to the composer, he dreamed one night that the Devil appeared, accused him of being a passionless fiddler, and proceeded to play for him a truly inspired sonata. When Tartini woke he could remember only the unusual trill from his dream, and he worked it into a new piece.³¹

The American composer John Philip Sousa, who started his career as a violinist, published his own tale of a fiddler and the Devil in 1902, called *The Fifth String*. In this story, a world-renowned virtuoso finds that he is unable to im-

press his would-be lover with his playing. As Tartini is said to have done, he retires from public life to perfect his technique. He too is visited by the Devil. Old Nick offers him a special violin, strung not with gut or steel but with Pity, Hope, Love, Joy and a crucial fifth string—Death. At the end of the story—as we might expect—the fiddler wins both his lady and the fruits of the "fifth string."

No doubt in the minds of Europeans the violin's very early association with gypsies helped intensify its romantic associations. Yehudi Menuhin echoes this association when he writes: "I myself feel that the violin belongs to the itinerant. It is an instrument of nature, an evolution of the earliest, most primitive bowed instruments which can still imitate those first sounds—a bird's song or human cries—and even express nostalgia for abandoned places and the passionate vibrations of the heart."³²

Whether or not the violin belongs to the itinerant in *spirit*, in *body* a fine violin is usually a wanderer. Today, instruments by famous makers carry at least part of their history with them. In most cases, a rare instrument bears the name of a former owner—collector, dealer or

³¹ Franz Farga. Egon Larsen, tr. *Violins and Violinists*. London: Rockliff, 1950, p. 130.

³² Yehudi Menuhin. Introduction to *Johannes Brahms, Concerto for Violin, Op. 77: A Facsimile Edition of the Holograph Score*. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1979, p. x.

artist—and may carry a certain amount of legend as well. The Kreisler Guarneri owned by the Library, for example, can be traced continuously back to the early 19th century, when it was owned by Marshall Junot, a commander in Napoleon's Army, who sent it by sea from Bordeaux to Lisbon. The ship was intercepted by an English privateer, and an English sailor took the violin, later selling it to a parson in Whitehaven, Cumberland. The instrument remained for many years in Britain, belonging successively to William Thomson, whose initials are stamped on the scroll, Thomson Sinclair, the Misses Day, John Mountford, W. E. Hill and Sons, R. E. Brandt, and Hill again, from whom Kreisler bought it in 1926. Kreisler presented it to the Library in 1952.³³ Just before donating the instrument, Kreisler asked for an evaluation from the American dealer, Rembert Wurlitzer. Mr. Wurlitzer wrote on March 11, 1952, that in his opinion the instrument was a uniquely fine example of Guarneri's work and "possibly the finest concert violin in existence." He estimated its value at \$60,000.³⁴

It is a curious fact that all of the instruments in the Library's collection, and indeed most of the early Cremonese instruments still in existence, carry names attached to them only during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the majority of these cases, a history of ownership can be traced from the present back only as far as the early nineteenth century. The instruments' whereabouts for the first hundred or so years of their existence are unknown. Probably we should not be surprised at this situation. Although Stradivari, the Amatis and the Guarneris were world-renowned in their day, the presence of their instruments in an aristocratic household, even the transfer of instru-

ments to another noble family, would not have been considered exceptional and certainly would not have been publicized.

After the American and French revolutions of the late eighteenth century, and amidst the democratic sentiment that spread through Europe with them, noble households began to break up. Money and power began to change hands, and large aristocratic musical establishments in particular began to disappear. One of the most famous examples of this is the dispersal of the Esterházy musical forces, which left Joseph Haydn a salaried "man of leisure" in his old age. We can imagine that in this process valuable instruments began to be quietly sold into commercial hands. And indeed, it is during the nineteenth century that the maker of fine instruments begins to become also a dealer in and repairer of fine, but older instruments. The Vuillaumes and Hills of the nineteenth century were valued as experts in their judgments of older instruments, even as builders of copies, rather than as builders in their own right. Eighteenth century aristocratic families would doubtless have been amused at, if not disdainful of, the elaborate record keeping, publicity and scramble for ownership which soon transformed what were once simply high-quality tools of the musician's trade into "treasures" enveloped in a mystique of their own.

And so in our own day the very old romantic associations which gathered around the violinist himself and around the violin as a magic tool, have become

³³ Letter from Alfred Hill to Fritz Kreisler, November 23, 1926. Kreisler Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress.

³⁴ Kreisler Collection, documents related to Kreisler's violins. Music Division, Library of Congress.

intertwined with stories of particular instruments, especially those of Stradivari, and with legends of "lost secrets" of his art and of fierce passions released in pursuit of these treasures. Here we simply record these stories as part of the lore of the violin, part of the mystique which brings hundreds of visitors a year to the Library of Congress, for example, simply to have a look at the tangible objects behind the mystique.

The five Stradivari instruments in the Library's collection were all given by Mrs. Gertrude Clarke Whittall in 1935 and 1936.³⁵ The three violins—the Betts, the Ward, and the Castelbarco—bear the names of former owners, as do the Casavetti viola and the Castelbarco cello. The Betts takes its name from the London dealer Arthur Betts who is said to have bought it in 1820 for one guinea from a stranger who walked in off the street. In 1852 the instrument was sold to John Bone, who in turn sold it to the J. B. Vuillaume firm in Paris. When Vuillaume removed the belly in 1859, he was astonished to find that the violin had never before been opened. Stradivari's original bass bar was still in place. After Vuillaume, the Betts was owned by Charles Wilmotte of Antwerp, C. G. Meier and George Hart of London, the Duc de Camposelice of Paris, the Hill Company in London, a German amateur named Jacques Zweifer, R. E. Brandt, R. D. Waddell of Glasgow and the Wurlitzer Company in New York. In 1923 the Betts was bought by John T. Roberts, president of the Philharmonic Society of Hartford, Connecticut, who sold it to Mrs. Whittall in 1934.

The Ward's history is not so complicated. According to records of the Hill Company, it was purchased by a J. Ward of London in 1860 from John Alvey Turner, an English instrument dealer.

After Ward's death in 1907 the instrument passed into the hands of Herr von Donop, upon whose death it went to Switzerland. Nathan Posner of Brooklyn, New York, purchased the instrument from Arthur Bear and in turn sold it to Mrs. Whittall.

The Castelbarco violin was once in the collection of Count Cesare Castelbarco of Milan, an amateur violinist who entertained the finest musicians of the day at his palace. In 1862 the Count sold his entire collection at a London auction, and the violin was bought by an agent of Vuillaume in Paris. The next owner was a Dr. Tesse of Douai, France, who sold the violin back to Vuillaume in 1872. It was later purchased by the Scottish dealer David Laurie, who sold it to composer Richard Wagner. Laurie rescinded the sale, however, when German experts questioned the authenticity of the instrument. Laurie sold the instrument to the Hill firm in London, who sold it in 1875 to an amateur, John Mountfor, who guarded it jealously for over thirty years. Nearly eighty years old, he sold it back to Hill, who sold it to a Mrs. Renton in 1907. In 1928 it came to the United States as the property of Mr. Posner of Brooklyn. In 1934 Posner sold this violin to Mrs. Whittall, for \$35,000.

The Cassavetti viola is one of only about a dozen Stradivari violas known to exist. (See note, p. 6.) In the mid-nineteenth century it was in the hands of two Parisians, first a Monsieur Durand and then a Monsieur Moulaz. At the latter's death it passed to David Laurie, who in turn sold it to Alexander Cassavetti, a member of a distinguished Greek family living in England. In 1885 the viola came

³⁵ The following data on the histories of the Whittall instruments are taken from certificates and official papers authenticating the instruments, now found in the Whittall Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress.

into the possession of the Hill Company, who sold it to Charles Oldham, a physician from Brighton, Sussex, who completed a quartet of Stradivari instruments with this viola. Oldham sold it back to Hill, and Hill then sold it to Baron Johann Knoop, and it was then sold through Hill to R. E. Brandt, who also owned the Betts violin at one time. Subsequent owners have included an amateur in Derbyshire, England, George Hart, and John Wanamaker of Philadelphia. The Wanamaker Collection was purchased by the Wurlitzer Company, and this instrument was sold to John T. Roberts of Hartford. Mrs. Whittall purchased the viola, with the Betts violin, from Mr. Roberts in 1934.

The Castelbarco violoncello, like the violin of the same name, once belonged to Count Cesare Castelbarco of Milan, and it too was purchased at auction by the Vuillaume firm of Paris. Egidio Fabri, an Italian amateur from Rome, bought the cello in 1863, and it remained in his family until 1930, when it was sold to the Hill Company and by Hill to Louis Krasner in 1934. Mr. Krasner sold the cello to Mrs. Whittall in the same year.

Very little is known of the history of the Brookings Amati. It is named for Robert Somers Brookings, founder of the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., who bought the violin in Vienna upon the advice of the German virtuoso Joseph Joachim. Mrs. Brook-

ings presented the violin to the Library in 1938.

The German dealer Emil Herrmann has been credited with the observation: "People who have fine violins in their possession are merely trustees for future generations. Their ownership is temporary. They have the duty of preserving their instruments for posterity."³⁶ Shortly after donating the Stradivari instruments to the Library, Mrs. Whittall expressed a similar feeling about the "collection of instruments I held in trust for a short time."³⁷ By placing the instruments in the Library of Congress, Mrs. Whittall believed that she had fulfilled her obligation to the very best of her ability. She built a room especially for their display and endowed a foundation to provide support for a professional ensemble (first the Budapest String Quartet and now the Juilliard) to play them regularly in public concerts. Mrs. Whittall had given these treasures to the United States Government "to hold and protect forever," confident in the belief that for these wanderers, these itinerant spirits, the Library of Congress would be a permanent home.

³⁶ Wechsberg, p. 197.

³⁷ William Dana Orcutt. *The Stradivari Memorial at Washington, The National Capital*. 1938. Reprinted by Da Capo Press, New York, 1977, p. 23.

Figure 20.
A quartet of Whittall Strads.
Left to right: the Cassavetti viola,
the Ward violin (on its side),
the Betts violin,
the Castelbarco cello (rear).



