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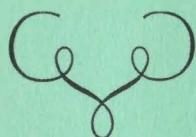
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# The Violin Makers' Journal

*Jan 1909*

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF  
THE VIOLIN MAKERS ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Devoted to the development and encouragement of the art of violin making  
in Canada.



ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE EDITOR

DON WHITE, 4631 W. 14TH AVE., VANCOUVER 8, B. C.

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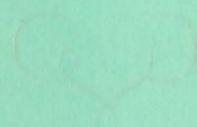
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САНКТУАРІЙ СВЯТОГО ВАЛЕНТИНА, МОНТЕРІАЛ, КАНАДА

САНКТУАРІЙ СВЯТОГО ВАЛЕНТИНА, МОНТЕРІАЛ, КАНАДА

САНКТУАРІЙ СВЯТОГО ВАЛЕНТИНА, МОНТЕРІАЛ, КАНАДА

THE VIOLIN MAKERS' JOURNAL

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Secretary and Editor: Don White, 4631 West 14th Avenue

VOL 2 .. No.3 ..... January, 1959

EDITORIAL

THE NEW YEAR 1959:

Most People seem to take a great delight in saying farewell to all "Old" Years and welcoming the New Year with much exhuberance not realizing that in 12 short months 1959 will go the way of all Old Years.

We can carry this force too far, certainly it is well to plan for the future but there is much good in the past and everything in the present. Someone has said "if I can be happy and contented at this present moment, I shall be always Happy." Certainly that could be true for we only live at that present moment.

As an association we have learned much from the past year and lessons learned should serve as a pattern to follow in 1959. The Journal has done its best to point out mistakes and has itself made its quota. We have also endeavored to suggest improvements. On another page we have tried to review our experiences and the knowledge which we have accumulated. In our hobby it is hard to sift the grain from the chaff. To experiment on all information received would take a lifetime and more money tha the average maker can spare. We can only explore those paths which experience has shown promising. Those that suit our individual character and will in our violins reflect that character.

During 1959 then, let us endeavor to profit by the past year and plan to use our experience, in making even better instruments.

A Happy and Prosperous New Year to all members and subscribers.

.....

Said the proud mother, "My daughter has arranged a little piece for the violin."

"Good!" replied the honest neighbor. "It's time we had a little peace."

.....

A traditionalist is one who declares that nothing should be done for the first time.

.....

### OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY:

The Christmas Party put on by the Violin Makers Association was a huge success, there being over 50 people present.

The Program while quite informal was much enjoyed by all. Our Orchestra composed of 12 members, mostly amateurs did remarkably well especially in the playing of the carols in which the audience joined, and sang with much gusto. We wish to thank Mrs. Gibson Heyworth for so ably accompanying us.

Special mention should be made of the delightful playing of Mr. Osbaldeston. His violin solos were really brilliant.

We were particularly pleased to hear Miss Jeanette Lindquist, daughter of one of our members. We predict a great future for this outstanding young violinist.

The cello solos by Garvin Andrew were also of a high caliber, we wish we could have heard him with piano accompaniment. He did not do justice to himself playing alone. A player with remarkable technique and tone.

As a contrast to string playing the singing of Mrs. Floyd Holly was delightful. She sang two solos and captivated the audience.

The piano solos by Janice Shandler were also enjoyable.

Thanks are due to the Ladies who provided such excellent refreshments. We feel everyone enjoyed themselves and believe we should have more of these informal entertainments.

.....

### REVIEW OF 1958:

It seems the established customs on the event of the Birth of a New Year for Editors and Columnists to pick out and discuss the events that have highlighted the past year and crawl out on a limb and make predictions for the coming year.

.....

These predictions I will leave strictly alone but a flashback to some of the main events, and a review of personalities who reflected their shining character upon us might be in order.

Hobby Show: In spite of all the controversy it created, first event of the year must be The Hobby Show Exhibit. To have violins from all over Canada and U.S.A. collected and exhibited at one centre must be considered an outstanding achievement. We who were privileged to view, handle and play violins by the best makers on this continent learned much and have been greatly inspired.

Arts Resources Convention: A close second in actual cultural value was the Arts Resources Convention, held in June at the University of B.C. Few, I feel, fully realize the contribution this not only from the standpoint of the artists and craftsman but in the actual

REVIEW OF 1958 cont..

fact that The Arts Council combined with the Canada Council is creating a climate wherein all the arts will flourish.

Outstanding Personalities: I could name twenty members and subscribers who by their activities and sincerity have contributed to the Atlar of knowledge. I must be content to mention only a few.

The two most likely to be long remembered: During 1958 we in Vancouver lost two leading Violin Makers. In January, Andy Leitch a most respected and talented member of our association passed suddenly from our midst.

Only a few weeks later, probably the leading Violin Maker in Canada died quite suddenly. "Doc" Porter left an indelible impression on all that knew him.

Let us pause to do homage to our two lost friends.

How can he be dead, who  
lives immortal in the hearts of men?  
- Longfellow

For the Most Outstanding Contribution to Violin Making. I suggest Dr. F.A. Saunders for his work on the tuning of plates.

For the Most Outstanding Violins of the Year: I would pick one of Earl Sangsters of Dallas Texas, and Bob Holts of Belfast, Main. Two lovely instruments.

Most Loyal, Thoughtful and Unselfish Member of our Association: This might well be Harold Briggs. Harold follows our activites closer, I beleive, than any and always has free gifts of wood, varnish material etc. to give away.

Most Outstanding Personalites: Whose names our Journal could be extended to take in many individuals. From letters received from correspondents who know him and from his own letters I must place our friend Earl Sangster well near the front. Here is a man well spoken of by all that know him and a man who knows his business and spends most of his spare time imparting all his knowledge to those who will listen. Others who possess my friend Earl are Dr. Saunders, Bob Wallace, Burt Hatfield, Joseph Reid, Bob Holt and - well what's the use. I could go on and name all of you.

We cannot conclude this list of personalities without mention of our Publisher Mrs. Leona Pedosuk without whose help this Journal would never have achieved the success it now enjoys. Thanks Leona.

The Man Most likely to get well and Strong During 1959: Ernie Lindberg.

The Newest Subscriber most likely to help Violin Making During 1959: Carmen White

The Men Most Likely to be Critisized in 1959: Judges of the Hobby Show - Violin Section.

A LETTER FROM MR. OWEN:

Editors Note: Mr. Owen brings to our attention some very pertinent questions. Certainly material for thought. He has already stirred me sufficiently to attempt an answer next month. I hope readers will write in giving their opinions on the several points he has brought forward. (D.W.) . . .

Thank you for your invitation for another letter. Frankly I was disappointed that there appeared neither agreement nor disagreement with observations made in the first letter. If your violin association places accoustical properties as its first concern, then the matter of standards and definitions and checks are of prime necessity. I do not see that accoustical testing of the physics laboratories is essential, but results should be checked by some carefully selected board in some controled situation.

The first control necessary is one of semantics you don't think this is a problem, review the adjectives used by various writers in the Journal. "Violin Tone" by Cardo Smalley uses the adjectives "Woodiness, rings like a bell, hardness." My respected friend Mr. Sangster speaks of articulation, and true ness of fifths... Mr. W.A. Jacklin mentioned "brightest tone." "Elastic Tone" is the title of an article by S. Kujawa. Further adjectives added to the vocabulary are "power, penitration, sweet, mellow, and brilliant". Here are twelve undefined adjectives on one issue. Surely many people would agree upon many violins as having certain of these qualities; i.e. brilliance; yet any experienced violin dealer can quote many instances in which excellent violinists have given opposing definitions to the same instruments. It happens all the time. It can be proved within the membership of your association. Try to have the personnel give written definitions for the adjectives used in defining accoustical qualities of violins; they will often differ! Try having them explain the accoustical nature of the vibrations which produce a "sweet" or "mellow" tone. They will fail worse.

How can there be any value of discussing (for example) the value of tuning plates, when the results are discussed in terms not agreed upon by the membership, nor clearly understood, nor heard the same by various people.

Admittedly in dealing with tone one is dealing with aesthetic qualities which do involve subjective evaluations, however whether or not one likes a "sweet" tone, such a quality may be defined and occur within the general scope of the definition. It may be agreed upon (in its purest forms) by any sensitive, trained observer. When we know that the final results of experiments are clearly and reasonable accurately reported, then, and only then can we be sure of the value of the experiments. If, on the other hand, we read a report by maker X who claims the tone was made "brilliant", or anything else, we have no basis of being sure - 1. that he heard accurately; - 2. that he remembered the original sound (in case of an adjusted or reworked violin). - 3. that he is using his adjectives as we would.

Frankly as reporting now exists, only articles by such authors as Dr. . .

As for tuning plates, I have been experimenting on German factory violins with poor results. ent pitches evident in the top when tapped is a tone two octaves below the pitch range considered. That tone which I call the "boom" tone is usually duplicated two octaves higher. The backs (which are usually two thin) by

A LETTER FROM MR. OWEN cont..

are too low in pitch as compared to the tops. Many of the tops become "rubbery" or overly flexible when brought to weights mentioned in Dr. Saunders article, or to "Classical thinness", namely about  $7/64$  to  $6/64$ . These violins end with about an octave difference in the pitch and sound very "hollow". One violin with a back measuring  $11/64$  to  $8/64$ , which is the thickest of all, still is extremely low in pitch.

Dr. Saunders often wrote me about thinking violins with fine tops might be generally superior, since usually the finer grained spruce had greater strength per weight, but that gives a higher pitch per volume of wood, and it seems that we need strong wood with low pitch. Has anyone else found these problems of backs with low pitches and tops with too high pitches?

Another thing can anyone in your group offer solid evidence that a good new violin will improve with use? As we all know the new makers claim that their violins "play in" while the old dealers claim that they "play out". Frankly I have never seen conclusive evidence of either.

A short time ago I tried an interesting experiment proposed by Dr. Saunders for testing "carrying orium which has its own and individual accoustical peculiarities, one should try an open field with no objects near to reflect the sound. Under such conditions it is the instrument alone that must "project" in order to "carry". Using seven instruments with varying qualities including "loud", "soft and sweet", "contralto and mellow", "brilliant" and "nasal"; a group of six observers of mixed experience, and two effective players came up with such mixed evaluations (not knowing what was played) that it seemed certain one cannot seriously consider "carrying power" as an important factor in selection of violins.

Larry Owen, Redwood City, Calif.

FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE TUNING OF VIOLIN PLATES by Don White

I have received many letters commenting on the article by Dr. F. A. Saunders in our last issue. Most writers also mention the work of the late Austin Gilbert who did much investigation on this subject. As this article is to be confined to the tuning of plates as recommended by Dr. Saunders, I shall deal with Austin Gilbert's work in a separate article next month.

In all my writings on this subject I am particularly fortunate in that I am dealing with the work of a gentleman of natural good nature and understanding character. This allows me to discuss his valuable work freely as seen through my own intelligence and with the knowledge that my good friend will correct me when I misquote or stray away from facts.

Having just completed two violins whose plates were tuned (as near as possible without electrical equipment) to Dr. Saunders' instructions I am convinced as to the value of this method. Both violins were tuned to the recommendations given for Solo and Orchestra instruments as outlined in my article last month. viz: The top having two peaks or tones one note apart. The back then tuned to fit in between these two peaks. Notes were top plate G and F, back plate F sharp. In the case of one violin, the tone was quite good but the back (violin in finished condition) seemed to give a rather

solid ring when tapped, not the hollow sound which seems desirable. On sanding down the outside of the back very slightly, responsiveness increased and the tone is exceedingly good.

The most outstanding feature of these two violins is consistancy of good tone. All of the violins I have previously made varied so much in tone from day to day as to warrant fooling around with sound post and bridge, not so these. Perhaps I am pessimistic but what will these violins sound like in a years time? Which brings up the question (and I am straying from my subject) of varnishing. It is the opinion of many that a violin may sound well "in the white" but when varnished, loses much of its tone. Here it must be noted that all Dr. Saunders work is based on violins "in the white". He is now investigating the result of varnished violins. It is possible that Austin Gilbert was correct in stating that a violin must be taken apart after one year and retuned.

I have a letter from Dr. Saunders and while not written for publication, I feel privileged to make a few quotes.

I believe many have read the description of the Electrical equipment used by Dr. Saunders and his associates and have perhaps come to the conclusion that even though this system is desirable, the equipment necessary and the knowledge to operate same, places it outside the realm of the average layman.

To my question regarding this Dr. Saunders replies: (quote) "It isn't necessary for you to have any "electric equipment", or even any knowledge of what it is. You can get the pitch of a tone by comparison with a well-tuned piano, or by ear if yours is good; assisted perhaps by a tuning fork, or a tuned violin. The purpose of our work is to make it possible for anyone with a good ear to get results. For instance, (page 126, Strad magazine) Viola, tune your back to 250 (C.P.S.,) and top to 200 and 275, that is all you need, but the weights 116 and 103 grams would give a useful check ----- Why the back gives only one tone? Because, as you know it is so simple. The top is not simple. I can generally get a lot of tone from a loose top by tapping it at different places. We avoided this in our article by defining the place of holding and the place where the vibrator made contact with the plate (tap point) ----- You are wrong in thinking you have to work the top slowly and test it stage by stage. You can make a quick approach to the right pitch. You can do it to the top and the back before you glue them in. If we're correct you won't have to re-touch them. ----- The strange thing that happened to viola 28 was that the bass bar was added between the 3rd stage and that of the 4th, and this raised its peaks. (But there is no figure for this stage). Then it was thinned and lowered to the last stage. Of course the bass bar raises the peaks and thinning lowers them. I think we don't get two good strong tones until we add the bass bar." (end of quote)

This does not mean that those who have access to electrical equipment should not take advantage of it and obtain through tests but it places the system within the reach of the average intelligent person. This is very welcome news. We will be glad to have comments from readers on this system, especially from any after they have experimented with it.

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One of the best places to find a helping hand is at the  
end of your right arm.

.....

## THE ITALIAN VARNISH PUZZLE

This month we feel we have made a good start on the controversial topic of varnish.

We expect to give a summing up of all data in a future issue, after our correspondents have exhausted themselves!

Our friend Earle Sangster writes in further support of his system but is very broad minded about the whole subject.

Harold Briggs asks for information regarding the late "Doc" Porter's methods. We hope Floyd Holly will answer this query.

We also introduce a new subscriber to the Journal in the person of Mr. Carmen White. Carmen has made an extensive study of varnish and its application and has studied the subject with Mr. Joseph Michelman of Cincinnati, Mr. Michelman gives his recipe and method of application in the December issue of "Violins and Violinists." We hope to publish a reprint of this in our February number.

We start our discussion by calling upon Mr. Carmen White, occupation - High School Teacher. Recreation - Symphony player - M.A. Degree for Viola and Violin. First love - Violins.

### Comments on Varnish by Carmen White

The enthusiasm you people have for the neglected art of violin making is wonderful to a lone wolf like myself, who lives so far away from such centers as your city must be. It was challenging to note the differences of opinion among the writers in the Journal, but I was surprised to note that none of them mentioned the late Mr. Justin Gilbert or Mr. Joseph Michelman of Cincinnati, Ohio, who has worked so well with the varnish problems. I note that you have members in Victoria, B.C., the home of the late Mr. Gilbert and it would seem that his influence would be felt in that area. Perhaps you people have already determined that his principles are not good.

We should give Mr. Gilbert credit for pioneering in the development of the idea of treating the wood. Of course, his methods were open to question, particularly the application of strong heat as he recommended, as the process is accompanied by warping of the plates, yet, I have secured some very beautiful results by the method -- however, with practice and experience, most makers would not resort to strong heat as Mr. Gilbert did. It would seem that Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Michelman have made significant contributions to modern violin making.

Mr. Michelman's varnish resembles the old Italian classic varnish more than any other modern varnish I have ever examined. It takes some practice and experience to prepare and work with it--moreover, it cannot be made and sold in bottles, as the varnish must be used immediately upon being prepared, or it jells in about 6 hours. It does not remain tacky or sticky when dried in bright sunlight, and it will not fade in bright sunlight, the colors are constant and fast. Its transparency and brilliance are unequalled by any gum-in-oil varnish I have ever seen. The actual weight of the varnish will be 8 to 14 grams--about three times as heavy by actual weight. The Michelman varnishing gives a resulting varnish more like a celluloid, that is, it is

Comments on Varnish cont...

light and resonant in quality. Tonally, it does not interfere with the plates at all; while all fossil gum-in-oil varnishes dry hard and grip the plates as in a vise, or surrounded with leather--either one kills the tone and response in the violin--test: try a Pianissimo passage on your violin and listen to the resulting articulation. We have placed it right beside the varnish of the best Gaglianos, J.B. Guadagnini, and Andreas Guarnarius--side by side, in every position and angle--and we cannot tell that the old Italian has any superiority whatsoever over this varnish. In two months, it fully matures and looks almost exactly as if it had been right there for 200 years the wood looks as if it were under colored glass. The red colors prepared with this varnish are blood red--not the glarish aniline reds found in fossilized oil varnishes at all.

Complete instructions for preparing Michelman's varnish may be found in the December issue of Violins and Violinists a magazine published by Wm. Lewis & Son, Chicago, Ill. or by writing Joseph Michelman, 6316 Wiehe Road, Cincinnati, Ohio.

I have worked constantly with the Michelman violin varnish since his book came out in 1947, and have visited with him personally to discuss technical problems growing out of his book and his subsequent revisions of his process. Many professionals have commented most favorably on the result of this work and it may be that some information of value to our mutual friends, the violin makers, could be passed on through the medium of your excellent Journal. As you may surmise from these statements, I do not agree at all with my very good friend in Dallas, Mr. E.H. Sangster, in spite of his long reputation and success; there are certain limitations to his method which I should like the opportunity of pointing out. I must say in passing, however, that Mr. Sangster makes beautiful violins and that he is, to my mind, the "dean" of the craft in our section of the country, and certainly, a very sincere, honorable, and able man. He also knows violin tone, which is more than we can say about most violin makers.

Should the Wood be Treated? The evidence is right inside the violin if we only use our eyes, intelligence, and musical ears! Look inside an old German, French, English, American, or other violin made from raw, uncultured wood. You see dark brown wood. Go out and look at an old plank or telephone pole and you see the same wood. As Charles Reade said, "Bare wood turns a dirty brown with age". Now, look inside a known Italian violin made before 1745. Here, indeed, is a difference in appearance! There is no raw, dirty brown surface at all. This surface has a healthy, preserved appearance, yet, there is nothing on the surface itself. But, it is evident from the appearance alone that something has been done to this wood. You will not find such wood in nature anywhere after 200 or more years.

One violin maker says he has a "special size" which keeps oil out of his wood, and that no treatment should be made at all, but goes right on to say that he can tell a Guarnarius violin in the dark because the tone has to be pulled out of the instrument after 200 years. Why this "pull"? Why do we not find this quality in raw wood instrument, either new or old?

Look at the wood under a microscope. Here you see long fibers with great spaces between. If a professor of Physics attempted to send a vibration through such wood, certainly we would expect that vibration to travel in an erratic and uncertain manner. Tone from such vibrations must reasonably

COMMENTS By Carmen White cont..

be sharp, sour, uneven, and quick to fade out, with no reserve at all. Leave the inside bare and moisture will fill these blank spaces between fibers, deadening the whole effect, as nothing is so fatal to vibrational resonance as damp and water. What could be more reasonable than to fill these blank spaces between wood fibers with some substance which will do two very necessary things (1) preserve the wood and its resonance and (2) permit vibrations to go through the wood in an even, flowing manner. The result is permanent so far as our experiments can tell. The tone is flowing, it can be pulled out and worked into climaxes so the artist can use such an instrument as a fine medium of expression. The real test of a good instrument is not its loudness but that the artist can do what he wishes with it without too much resistance from the instrument itself.

I have put from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 grams of filler material in a violin top by actual weight, with no loss of natural resonance at all--in fact, the resonance from the treated top is much more bell-like and clearer in sound than that torn and quickly fading resonance from the finest raw-wood top I ever tested. Workmen who condemn the treatment of violin wood must be among those who have never really tested this matter for themselves. Mr. Sangster himself who now advocates treatment, was among those who condemned the practice only a few years ago, but now, after having tried it for himself, he is most enthusiastic about it, as he should be. Mr. Ellersieck is correct in his analysis of the Stradivarius method, except that we must give the old master credit for having enough sense to remove his plates when the violin was finished to make final adjustments--which adjustments could have included checking the resonance of the plates, and certainly, their weights. It would have been easy for him to have at hand a top and back from a Known Good Violin and to have used these weights as a guide for his new violin. Such a procedure would not have required any knowledge of mathematics or physics. It is just a practical method of "knowing his violins" as one maker has so well said.

Carmen White

1022 Caddo Street, San Angelo, Texas.

.....

A group of Russians showed up unexpectedly at the pearly gates. St. Peter looked at them with amazement and then announced: "I don't know why you've come up here, but you positively can't come in--you're atheists. Whereupon one of the group stepped forward and replied: "Who wants to come in? We just want our dog back."

.....

A NOTE FROM MR. HAROLD BRIGGS:

For those who would like to try making varnish in accordance with Mr. Sangster's formula, my fiddle making friend from Port Kells - Mr. Walter Luckton, has given me a fair quantity of fir resin and I have made up ten bags of 2 oz each to give to whoever would like to try it. Mr. L. has a big box and says I can get more if I want it.

Please drop me a line at - 13367 North Bluff, R.R. #1, White Rock, B.C.

.....

### OLD ITALIAN VARNISH by E.H. Sangster

The recipe for the old Italian varnish has been printed in nearly every book printed on the subject and I cannot understand why someone had not tried it long ago. It would seem the color is the stumbling block of all varnish makers even Hills & Sons who state and I quote - "That Stradivari used solely a pure oil varnish the composition of which consisted of a gum soluble in oil possessing good drying qualities with addition of colouring ingredients is, we think beyond controversy."

In my opinion none of the old Italians ever used any coloring ingredients. From the recipe of Fioravanti (Bologna 1564) formula quoted as M11, any color ever known of the old Italians can be made. I have varnish from that recipe of all colors from a golden yellow to a deep red and all the color in between and I have made it with water white resin of the Southern pine, resin from the Douglas fir of California and resin from the fir of Nova Scotia. Anyone of these resins will make a fine varnish of most any shade of color. The color depends on the amount of heat and how long it is cooked, five, ten, fifteen or twenty minutes. I must say here I would never of had the varnish except for George Fry's book on Italian varnish. He made a beautiful varnish by using Nitric Acid, I know because we made some here in Dalla. Judging from his book I would say Mr. Fry did not know the varnish has to be dried in the strong rays of the sun. Experience has taught me that each time a coat of varnish is put on the violin or any other instrument it must be put in the sunlight at once, must not wait even ten minutes. In my opinion this is the reason for the letter of apology written April 24th, 1638 which states and I quote - "The new violin is in progres but as he wishes to send an instrument of exquisite work it cannot be brought to perfection without the strong heat of the sun". This just as true today as it was at that time not only was the strong heat of the sun needed to dry their varnish but the old Italians knew that it seasons the fabric and stiffened it enabling them to make their violins thin without impairing the tone. It also gave their violins ease of articulation and volume above the third position. This in my opinion is the so called secret of the old Italians, which was not any secret because every maker prior to 1750 knew what to do and did it in a greater or lesser degree.

It is my opion also, the reason the method was abandoned, it took so much time and about that time the art of making spirit varnish came in and all the younger makers adopted it enabling them to put their instruments on the market in a short time. It took about fifty years or more before they discovered that the instruments covered with the modern varnish did not sound or play like the old ones. All the old makers had passed on and nothing of the old method had been put down on paper. From experience, it is my opinion that Stradivari finished his violins in the white, applied his filler hung them where there was plenty of moving air and strong light and left them for at least six months or a year before he varnished them. What the old Italians used as a filler or first coat is anyone's guess but I am certain they used pure raw linseed oil, what they may haved used with it if anything, I do not know nor does anyone. I do know that pure raw linseed oil alone gives marvelous results if oxidized properly.

Now! wishing you Good Health, Happiness, and Prosperity during the coming year. Give my best wihes to all your members and tell them to keep up the good work.

.....

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COMMENTS by Harold Briggs

Just another thought to add to the various ideas appearing in the Journal on the subject of violin varnish. I have looked thru the articles in the Journal, a year ago, by Floyd Holly on the work of the late "Doc" Porter, and find no mention ther of any filler to be used before applying color varnish. On the occasion of one of my visits to Mr. Porter's shop he told me he sized the tops only, and used clear shellac, with a little white shellac and then thinned this out with wood alchol. Proportions were not given. It seems to me the alchol would cause the mixture to penetrate deeper into the wood. Mr. Porter said he applied color varnish directly to the back, sides and scroll. I wonder if those who were more closely associated with Mr. Porter could give us any more information

.....

WOOLF NOTES by Chibiabos

Only one person gave the correct title to the poem from which I selected, the above nom-de-plume - "Chibiabos." Several gave the title as "Hiawatha" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The red-wood went to Harold Briggs with "The songs of Hiawatha" the correct title. Harold has already the top glued together and getting it nicely into shape.

Violins and Violinists - A magazine perhaps not so widely known as "The Strad" magazine is one called "Violins and Violinists", published by William Lewis & Son, 30 East Adams Street, Chicago 3, Ill. Printed on very high grade paper the magazine shows perfect illustrations of famous violins and all the articles are really interesting. It is published every other month and the price is \$2.75 per year. Order from Lewis & Son. This reputable firm does not use it as a medium of advertising.

Violins on the Prairie - Mr. Sid Enger of Dauphin, Manitoba, suggests that most violins sound better and play easier in a dry climate than they do in our high humidity climate of the pacific coast.

Would any of you care to comment on that statement? Could it be the altitude?

Regarding ease of playing. I read some time ago about one of the large orchestras of the Eastern States visiting Mexico City. Owing to the high altitude some of the brass instrument players found it quite difficult to execute long passages - they couldn't find "The wind". Seems we need more oxygen in high altitudes and therefore breath faster.

A subject which I have never heard discussed is why a violin kept, say in one room, will one day sound splendid and the next day be rough and hard to play, or is it the psychology of the player? For I believe it is more noticeable to amateurs, could it have anything to do with air pressure. Whatever it is why can't we duplicate the conditions and have our instrument in perfect playing condition at all times.

More about our Advertisers - Readers will notice the addition of two new advertisements this month. I will introduce these two newcomers now. This will finish the out of town advertisers, then in the two future issues I can describe the high caliber of our local merchants.

WOOLF NOTE By Chibiabos cont..

Geo. Heinl & Co. Ltd., Toronto - needs no introduction to thousands of music lovers and instrumentalists all over Canada. They pride themselves in the, high quality of their merchandise, and prompt service. A firm that has been in business a long time and have earned the success they enjoy.

Vitali Import Co., Maywood, California - This is a firm well known in Calif. but perhaps not so familiar to Canadian buyers. One of their specialities is Old Instruments and bows. Mr. Vitali Rymsha the manager, is a true lover of the violin family. How rare it is for many of us to earn our living at our favorite hobby?

Mr. Rymsha must enjoy every minute of life. They put out an artistic catalogue describing instruments and a full line of violin makers supplies. Send for it, and if in need of a good bow there is a good place to obtain it.

Correspondence - I have several letters in answer to my request for information about the late Justin Gilbert. I hope to sift these and write a short article on his theories next month. If anyone has the book he wrote please contact me.

Burt Hatfields Letter - I will close this column with two letters which I found interesting. Mr. Hatfields experience upsets all the theories laid down for Violin Making:

Dear Don:

Well I have just discovered I don't know a thing about violins! A chap brought in an old fiddle for repairs. It was made in New Westminster, B.C. in 1878 by a 15 year old boy. Very crude, no purfling but beautiful wood in back and ribs. I told the owner it was not worth fixing but he stuck to it that his father played it for years and the tone was good.

So I went at it. The linings were only 1/16 inch wide - no surface to glue to - the join was wide open at back. The blocks had split in two, great big hunks of wood with grain the wrong way. The neck I had to shorten. It was so long you couldn't get up to the third position.

There was no attempt at graduating, back was between 3/16 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  in., front not so bad. Well I got it fixed up at last and then for the big surprise Clear and ringing on the G and D and better articulation on the A and E than any I can make. I wonder "how come". The owner was so pleased in insisted on giving me an extra \$10.00 over and above my charge!

Letter from Mr. Wm. H. Driggs - Mr. Driggs is a new subscriber. One of America's leading makers. A pupil of the late Alfred Lannini of San Jose, who in turn studied with the Antonazzi Bros. in Italy. Mr. Driggs owns a fine collection of old violins an imposing list of which he sent me, most of them for sale.

Dear Mr. White:

It was nice to have your interesting letter ----- As to violas; I was one of the first to produce Richardson Tertis violas in the U.S. having made 7 or 8 of them. However I have since worked on a model somewhat smaller, I had two Richardson Tertis' in the L.A. Symphony for a time but both finally went back to smaller ones. ----- In violins I made many Guarnerius models

WOOLF NOTES By Chibiabos cont..

and made fine toned copies from my J.B. Vuillaume. Also I make one I call the "Contino", modeled after on by Alfredo Contino. It is really a Guarnarius outline with Strad F holes. I have the honor to be listed in Vannes Dictionary. I have made fiddles since I was in the 8th grade and am now 82 years old. I still have a fiddle I made in 1901.

I take the pitch of plates and have a record on 40 instruments but I do not find the results conclusive. I do believe in weighing the plates.

My last teacher, and I have had several, was best. Alfred Lannini of San Jose now deceased. He after working over here went back to Italy in 1912 and worked two years with the Antonazzi Bros., very fine makers. He weighed his plates prepared his own woods. Made a light weight violin of excellent tone and even scale.

I use Sangsters ideas as to ground coats but have used spirit varnish also for several color coats, final coats oil.

I know Sangster quite well having spent quite sometime with him in years back. I have just finished a violin in the white having a strong tone good resistance and quick response. I am going to use his varnish entirely allowing 3 weeks partly in the sun for drying each coat. I will then know if the tonal results are equal to those I have used both spirit and oil.

.....  
Take a chance! Even a turtle gets nowhere till

he sticks his neck out.....  
.....

CORRECTIONS:

In the publication of an Amateur Magazine such as The Violin Makers' Journal, many mistakes are inevitable. We make no apologies for we believe we do a good job under the circumstances. We do feel however that we should draw any mistakes to your attention in the following issue to which they were made. Hence this column.

Corrections to December Issue - Page 5, under Varnishing - I am assured that Mrs. Sangster is a very lady like person and would not do battle with anyone. It should, of course, read "Mr. Sangster", he might be persuaded to carry on a verbal battle, but even that will be very gentlemanly.

Page 5, under Violinists Program Courageous - The second line of this article was left out. First two lines should read: "The following quote from the Vancouver Sun is of special interest as Miss Lindquist is the talented daughter of one of our members."

Page 6, under Our New Advertisers - Our thanks are due to Dr. Saunders for bringing this to our attention, although I have a hunch he only did so in order to introduce a little humor. He says "Didn't we agree that only God could make a tree?" I had stated that Mr. Loubi was a wood manufacturer, whereas of course, he has to rely on wood produced (especially for him!) by nature.

CORRECTIONS cont..

Page 9, The article by Don White on Dr. Saunders - I was very lucky in getting most of this article correct. See my article, in this number, Dr. Saunders as you will notice straightens out a few wrong impressions.

Page 10, "Mr. Porter's Curve" - Part of a letter received from Mr. Clarence Cooper will explain:

Dear Don:

I was pleased to find that you had published my article on "Porter's Curve". I notice that you had given the dimensions of  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ". These should all be  $3\frac{1}{4}$ ". We don't want anyone telling us we worked it out on the wrong formula because we didn't.

I have been successful in figuring out many of the lateral curves - i.e. from the center line to the edges. These were most revealing and again confirmed the use of intervals in arriving at the proportions.

Clarence Cooper.

Page 11, "Mr. McNeese on Varnish" - Thanks for putting my little article in your Journal. However you are mistaken about the vinylidine Chloride it should be Pyridine. Pyridine was taken to be the only thing that could be used in the process, by the Chemists at the Forest Products Laboratories at Madison, Wis. - C<sub>5</sub> H<sub>5</sub>N boiling point 114.5 degrees and is distilled from bone oil and coal tar. It is possible the old masters had this. The Forest Products People found their process to produce some very startling qualities - but not for fiddle wood I'll swear to that. This was just one of the things I worked around with.

Lee McNeese, Buffalo, Wy.

Page 12, This Letter Explains Itself:

Dear Mr. White

In the little article I wrote in the last number it should have said that Oxidized turpentine could be used as sizing, and that I preferred it to linseed oil because it is more translucent and yellow in color. While Oxidized linseed oil gives a more greyish and cloudy effect.

Outside that, I should think the readers would understand what I meant.

Peder Svindsay, Vancouver

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