The Violin Makers Journal

COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE - MARCH, 1963

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE VIOLIN MAKERS ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Don White
(see Biography on page 2)

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The Violin Makers Journal

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EDITORIAL PAGE OF *The Violin Makers Journal*

CLARENCE COOPER, EDITOR

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COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE EDITORIAL

We, Don's daughter and son, felt we would like to edit one issue of the Journal as a memorial to our beloved father. Actually we can hardly be called the editors as all the material in this Journal was collected by Dad as he opened his mail. We hope we have selected at least one article of interest to each reader, and that this Journal will come near the high standard he had set.

As we read the letters from all over the world, we can see how many good friends our Dad made through the Journal. His editorial work occupied a large part of his day and gave him a great deal of pleasure. The one regret he had about his work on the magazine was that it curtailed his violin-making. It is our sincere hope that the Journal will continue, as he would have wished.

The Violin Makers Journal, when it was started, was a small booklet of local news items related to the Violin Makers Association of B. C. As the Journal, and word of it, travelled, more news items and later articles, were sent in. Eventually the Journal became the world-famous publication it is now. Building a mimeographed pamphlet of a few pages into a printed, 36-page magazine recognized in many countries as a valuable source of information on a highly specialized craft is a great accomplishment. We, the editors, and we are sure you, the readers, give the credit for this to Don White, who was editor during all this time. This issue has been edited by "Don's" son and daughter; included are two contributions from his wife: a short account of his life, and an article which he had requested her to write. And so we hope you will find this issue a fitting tribute to Don White--originator, editor and business-manager of the "Violin Makers Journal".

DON WHITE

A short biography by his wife, Erika White

Donald Percival White was born in Newport, Wales, on August 24, 1896. His father was Scotch and his mother Welsh. From his father, who was tenor soloist in a large cathedral for many years, Don inherited a fine voice, and from his mother, a happy disposition and the typical Welsh temperament, and from both, a great love of music.

When Don was twelve years old his parents decided to move to Canada, his father leaving a good business as coal-merchant, to try to make a fortune farming in the "land of promise." They bought a farm near Macleod (now Fort Macleod) and settled with their four children. Unfortunately, it was not a particularly good farming district, so, like other farmers, they did not make a fortune. Even more unfortunate was the curtailment of the children's education, as the two young boys, Don, aged twelve, and his brother, Arthur, fourteen, had to help on the farm, driving a plough and doing other work during most of the year instead of going to school. So they received little education after coming to Canada. I believe Don often felt handicapped by this lack of formal education, though he didn't complain about it. In fact, it was partly recompensed by his up-bringing in a home where both parents were well-educated and well-informed people, and, of course, by his own native intelligence.

Soon after coming to Canada, his mother bought him a good violin, and he quickly learned to love the instrument and practised diligently. Although he never acquired any dexterity on his violin, he did develop a good tone with a pleasing tremolo, and played well enough to give himself a great deal of pleasure, rambling around from one tune to another.

When his voice developed, he and his father joined the United Church choir in Macleod, and Don became their leading tenor. It was in this choir that Don and I first met. The choir-leader and organist suggested that since he was resigning, I apply for the position even though I had never conducted a choir before. He also recommended me to the Church, so in 1926 I became leader of the choir in which Don was singing. Two years later we were married and kept on in the choir until we came to Vancouver in 1931 with our year old daughter, Vaughan. Here we resumed our musical activities until our son David was born. With two small children to look after we stayed at home and enjoyed our music through radio and records, and playing and singing just for our own pleasure.

Don turned to flower-growing which had always been his other great love. With his usual boundless enthusiasm, he went in, in a big way, for the raising of dahlias, and finally had one of the best private collections in the city. He won numerous awards at the Pacific National Exhibition dahlia shows and in 1955 took the trophy for the best flower in the whole show.

Another dahlia enthusiast suggested that they try to form a dahlia club, which they did, with Don as president, until he was forced to drop out because his working hours were changed and conflicted with the club meetings. This club is still a flourishing organization and on his retirement from office made Don an Honorary Life Member.

Don's violin (an Amati) had been sadly neglected and unplayed for some years. But on meeting the gifted Danish violinist, Nina Bentzen, and hearing the marvellous tone she produced on her rare old violin, and on examining the frail-looking much-patched instrument, he was inspired to get out his own violin and fix it up. Then he tried his hand at making one, a triangular shaped Savart, and finally set about making one with standard design and measurements, getting instructions from a book on how to make a violin. This instrument turned out so much better than he had dared to hope that he was encouraged to try another, then another, always seeking new methods to improve the tone.

Early in 1957, Rev. George Wright, another violin maker, and Don got together and agreed to try to find enough violin makers in Vancouver to form a club. Their efforts were successful. On March 21st of that year, fifteen interested makers presented themselves at the home of Rev. Wright and formed "The Violin Makers Association of B. C."

From that time on, the growing Club and the Journal, which sprange from it, occupied the major part of Don's spare time, right up till the last week of his life.

He was very happy in the many friendships he formed through his voluminous Journal correspondence, and even happier in the good friends he made among the members of the Violin Makers Club.

A "THANK YOU" TO THE SUBSCRIBERS

Many thanks to all the subscribers who have written to me. I cannot answer these letters individually, not now anyway, but I am most grateful for them.

Erika White

PROF. GIOACCHINO PASQUALINI, President of A.N.L.A.
(National Association of Italian Luthiers)

Editors' note: This article by Mrs. White was translated from an Italian newspaper at Don's request.

In the Jan. Feb. issue of the Violin Makers Journal we referred briefly to an event of the greatest interest to all Italian luthiers, artists and musicologists, and to luthiers all over the world. This event was the presentation last summer by Dr. Gioacchino Pasqualini of his priceless collection of antique and modern musical instruments to the "Accademia di Santa Cecilia" (St. Cecilia Academy, Rome, Italy). This magnificent gift was made by Dr. Pasqualini in honor of his only son, a fine, highly gifted boy of brilliant promise, who died suddenly and tragically in his teens.

Photographs were taken of the collection as it was arranged in the home of Prof. Pasqualini in Piceno, Italy, in his "Instrument Studio" on the day it was presented to the Academy.

The collection was later moved, along with some of the furniture and cabinets, to St. Cecilia's Academy, and now forms an important section in the Academy museum.

M.o. Bustini, president of the Academy, wrote a long letter to Dr. Pasqualini, expressing the gratitude of this important musical institution for so generous a gift. The full text of this letter appeared recently in "L'Artigianato D'Italia." In appraisal of the gift M.o. Bustini said that though in the field of Arts, donations were not uncommon nor were examples of praiseworthy endeavor. But rarely did one hear of the two combined, in the gift of a collection that was the fruit of a live-time of endeavor; by one who was both a competent collector and a great student; and who had shown the greatest tenacity of purpose in gathering these instruments, often against great odds.

When I wrote to Dr. Pasqualini asking for his permission to publish the photos of his collection in the Journal he replied promptly, and courteously as always, freely gave his consent. He said that he has always held the Journal and its editor, Don White, in the highest esteem, and would be pleased to have the pictures with their descriptions in our magazine. As can be seen from these pictures, it is a real museum of musical instruments, antique and modern.

From descriptions of the collection one learns that it comprises instruments of all ages; of all families, bowed, keyboard and percussion; of all nationalities. It also includes over 500 bows and bridges. The instruments are all in a state of excellent preservation. Many of them are so rare as to be almost unique. By studying the collection one learns the history of the development of musical instruments to their present form. By playing them, even the oldest, so well preserved are they that one can hear their original tone qualities and strength.

The official opening of the collection took place on December 3, during the Conference of the General Assembly of Italian Luthiers at Rome. Impressive ceremonies marked the occasion, attended by a distinguished gathering of notables including Allesandro Bussini, president of the Academy, Renato Fasano, music director of the Academy and Dr. Guiseppi Ceralli Irelli, senator.

After the formal presentation, Prof. Pasqualini as Curator of the Academy Museum, conducted the guests around his collection with informal remarks concerning the various instruments. The whole of the memorable occasion was televised and later shown on a number of Italian T.V. programs and in moving picture houses.

In response to my request for a short biography to be included with the account of his gift, Dr. Pasqualini replied that he would send one as soon as possible, meanwhile referring me to the "Universal Dictionary of Violin and Bow Makers" for some information about him. So I shall quote from this very brief outline since Dr. Pasqualini has not yet sent his own biography. He must be a very busy man, and I did not give him nearly enough time.

"Gioacchino Pasqualini was born at Ascoli, Piceno, 1902. Went to Rome, 1919. Studied violin playing at the Cecilia Academy. Won diploma, 1926. Member of the famous Augusto orchestra in that city. Professor at the same Academy, 1934. Made assiduous research in electro accoustics applied to the resonance of violins. Author of several booklets on the subject which have been accepted as authoritative by various scientific sources."

These booklets have been translated into several languages. If there are any English translations perhaps in a later Journal they could be published. They should be of the greatest possible interest to many of our readers, and perhaps prove helpful in their search for the "Perfect Tone".

There is little I can add to the above brief sketch of Dr. Pasqualini. From our personal experience of him, we found him to be most generous not only in big things like his gift to the Academy, but in smaller gifts he presented

to his friends. He sent us only this Christmas, a beautifully bound book of fine photos on various subjects, has sent several pamphlets of various photos which apparently he publishes just as gifts to friends. I could name other instances of his constant generosity. He is generous with his time also, writing promptly and with great courtesy, and a kindly man, judging by what he says in his letters. I hope another time we can give a little more of his history as an artist and a physicist.

Below and on the following page are illustrations of the "Gobinetto armonico" (instrument room) taken on August 13, 1962, the day on which Dr. Pasqualini presented his collection to the St. Cecilia Academy.

Partial view of the central and left walls

Partial view of the central and right walls

View of the back wall and part of the left

SWEDISH RHAPSODIES

From The Christian Science Monitor
Re-printed in the Lethbridge Herald

This interesting little article which was sent to me by a friend, follows so closely on the heels of "Violin Making in Sweden," published as Editorial in the Jan.-Feb. issue of the Journal, that I think it deserves a place in this March Violin Makers Journal.

While the Russians and the Americans engage in over-publicized competition with sputniks and space capsules another country, working without fanfare -- almost, one suspects, with a touch of secrecy -- suddenly appears away out in front in a field in which Einstein would have had as personal an interest. The great violin-playing physicist, if he were among us today, would surely call to the attention of the Nobel prize committee (not the one on peace though) that Sweden has stolen a march, or a waltz or a minuet on all the world in the numbers of its citizens engaged in making violins.

There are nearly 1,000 violin makers in Sweden, Stockholm reports say. In a Europe shaken with Common Market crises, why does this have to happen to Italy? Once upon a time it could be assumed that the sunny warmth of Cremona was indispensable to violin making.

Now, according to officials of an association of Swedish violin makers, the long dark winters of the north are an equal inspiration.

Is there a Swedish Stradivarius or Guarnerius? What would Paganini sound like on a Swedish violin? Apparently many of the instruments are made for fiddling, which art is a national tradition.

The descendants of Amati need not shudder. Their northern neighbors are not bumptious about their musical talents. They do not even claim as much for their musical achievements as they might; but anyone who has heard the opera in Stockholm sing Wagner in Swedish would give a Swedish fiddle as good a chance as another of translating the "Devil's Trill' into celestial music.

A SET OF VIOLIN BENDING IRONS

by

William E. Slaby

These bending irons make it a joy to form violin ribs, purfling, and linings. They are an adaptation of a design created many years ago by the dean of Detroit violin makers, Josef Deulin. Mr. Deulin made wood patterns for these irons which he then had cast in iron. Over the years he sold and gave away many sets to violin makers in this area. During World War II a soldier visited Mr. Deulin's shop, admired the irons, and asked if he might borrow the patterns from which he proposed to have a set cast. As might be expected, the patterns were never returned.

The major difference in these irons from the original is that the principal parts are sawn from a 1 1/2" x 4" x 12" piece of hard aluminum (analysis 2024 T4). Aluminum has the advantage of not staining wet wood and it holds the heat much better than iron. This material is the major item of expense in making the irons since it will cost about $8.00.

The way the irons are used is probably obvious: With the binding strap removed, heat the center bout iron on the stove until a piece of damp itssue paper stuck on its surface starts to turn brown. Clamp the iron in a vice by its

holding rod. Put the rib in place and fasten the yoke by dropping a 1/4" bolt through the holes in the yoke and iron. Tighten the thumb screw. Slowly draw the binding strap around the iron with the rib stock sandwiched in between.

Slide the threaded rod on the end of the binding strap into the slot in the clevis and draw up tight by turning the wing nut. The binding strap has a tendency to twist when turning the wing nut. This is prevented by placing a nail or nail set in the 1/8" hole in the threaded rod which is held with the left hand to counteract the turning of the nut. The upper and lower bout irons are used in the same way except that the sharp curves at the wings should be started on the center bout iron after which the rib is transferred to the upper or lower bout iron. You will find the action of these irons so perfect that ribs can be bent without wetting, although you will probably wish to momentarily wet the stock.

Except for the sawing operation, for which a metal cutting band saw is necessary, the only other machines which are an absolute necessity are a drill press, and a disc sander with a stock supporting table. If you have machine shop facilities available, it will save time and hand operations. I shall not give detailed instructions for making the irons since the plans, I hope, are sufficiently clear. Instead, I will outline only those procedures that need elaboration or where difficulty might be encountered.

Make full size metal patterns by rubber cementing the full size outlines in P ate 3 to a thin sheet of aluminum or zinc with lines A-A^1 adjoining. Cut out the patterns with heavy scissors--split the line. Drill small holes in the patterns to mark the centers of the holes in the irons proper. Coat one surface of the 1 1/2" x 4" x 12" piece of aluminum with layout dye. When it is dry, scribe the outlines of the patterns and mark the centers with a sharp scriber. The sharp inside curves cannot be cut on the saw but must be formed by drilling 59/64" holes before the sawing is begun. The aluminum saws almost as easily as wood. Keep at least 1/32" outside the line when sawing the working curves of the irons. The other cuts may be made right to the line. Finish the working curves to the line on the disc sander using about 1# aluminum oxide or silicon carbide paper. To make a smooth flowing line from the large sweep to the small curve on the upper and lower bouts, use a small drum sander in the drill press. Delta makes a sanding drum 11/16" diameter by 2 1/2" (catalog no. 840) which is perfect for this job.

The clevises and yokes can be bent in the vise after heating the stock to a cherry red with a propane or blow torch. Leave the stock long and cut to length, layout, drill and tap the holes after the parts have been bent. Sharp cornered bends (as shown in the drawings) are unnecessary except for the inside corners of the center bout yoke (part no. 20). These must be squared up with a file so that the clamping block (part no. 25) will not have a tendency to bind in the corners. The two slots in the center bout yoke can be made by drilling and filing--a milling machine will simplify the job.

The threaded rods and wing nuts (part nos. 7 and 8) in the yokes form thumb screws which are made by soldering or brazing the wing nuts to the threaded rods.

The clevises (part no. 2) are attached to the center bout irons with 1/4" - 20NC x 3/4" cap screws and the irons must be drilled and tapped for this purpose. In tapping "blind" holes (those that do not run all the way through the material), drill the holes deep to minimize the possibility of breaking the tap off in the hole. Since it is impossible to drill blind holes for the clevises in the upper and lower bouts without an unusually long drill, I chose to fasten these parts with 1/4" x 1 1/2" socket (Allen) head bolts and nuts. The holes are counter bored from the outside to accept the heads of the bolts. Lock washers should be used on all bolts and screws.

The drawing shows the screws (part no. 10) in the ends of the center bout clamping block (part no. 25) as having Allen heads. This is not necessary--either slotted or hex head screws will do. In tapping the holes in the end of this piece, they should not be so deep as to cause the screw heads to bind on the yoke since the clamping block should slide freely in the yoke. A flat washer is placed under the head of each of these screws.

The clamping block (part no. 20) for the upper and lower bout yoke (part no. 22) is a 7/8" diameter by 1 5/8" piece of cold rolled steel. A 9/32" hole is drilled lengthwise through it so that it may be held tightly in the yoke by a 1/4" x 2 1/2" machine bolt and nut. A 1/2" wide flat must be milled or filed on this piece to accept the 1/8" x 1/2" x 1 5/8" strap clamping strip (part no. 21).

It will be noted that the binding straps are held in place by pinching them between the strap clamping strips (part nos. 6 and 21) and the clamping blocks (part nos. 20 and 25). The binding straps are made of brass shim stock which may be of any thickness from .005" to .015". I used .005" and it has the advantage of conforming snugly to the curve of the iron. The disadvantages are that it might break if the tension is drawn too tight and one must be careful in brazing it to the threaded rod (part nos. 4 and 17) as it might melt away. The heaviest material, on the other hand, might not conform readily to the curve of the iron. I would say that stock about .010" thick would be the ideal. I used a propane torch to do the brazing and a low melting point brazing rod known as Phosgene #6.

After the binding straps are brazed to the threaded rod, their correct length can be determined by placing them on the irons with a thickness of cardboard in between to represent the thickness of the rib stock. Cut to length at the clamping end.

The holding rods (part no. 24) are self explanatory. If you wish, you can make these out of 1/2" diameter stock and not bother with the flats. This will enable you to dispense with a metal lathe which is necessary to turn the shoulders if you use 3/4" stock. The only purpose of the flats is to keep the rod from turning in the vise, but this is unlikely to happen if the vise is well-tightened. One end of the holding rod is threaded to fit in the bending iron and the other fits into a commercially produced wooden handle known as "Shur-Grip"--size #5. These can be purchased at any good hardware store. If you prefer, you can turn your own wood handles, put metal ferrules on them, and pin them to the holding rods.

It will be noted that only two binding straps are needed. The center bout strap will fit either the Strad or Guarnarius iron. The other strap fits both the upper and lower bout irons by virtue of the longer clevis on smaller upper bout iron.

After bending your ribs, minor adjustment of the small curves may be necessary to make them conform to your individual mold. This is easily done by shaping them on a heated 3/4" diameter piece of iron.

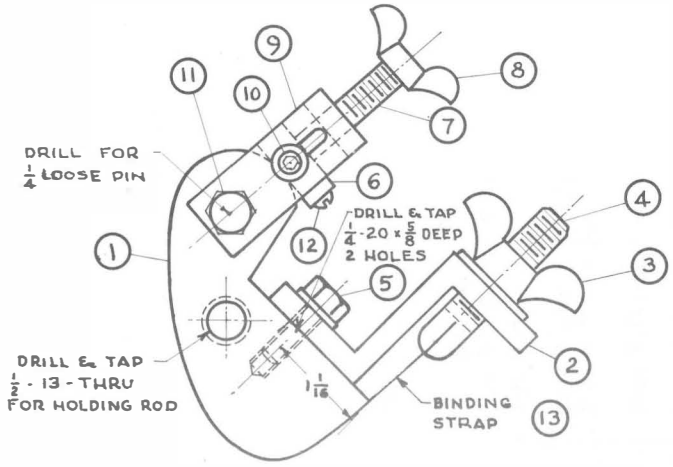
* * * * * * * *

BILL OF MATERIALS

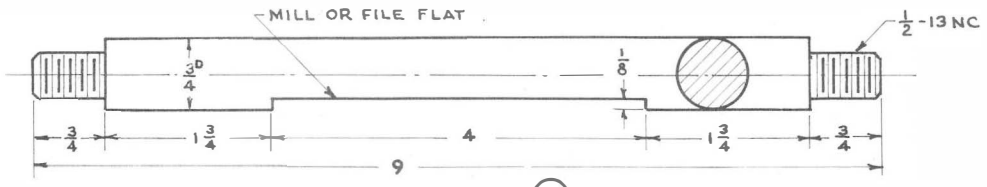
Part No.	No. Reg.	Description	Material	Size
1	1	Center Bout Bending Iron--Strad. Model	2024 T4 Aluminum	See Text
2	2	Center Bout Clevis	Steel	1/4" x 1 1/2" x 4"
3	2	Wing Nut	Steel	3/8" - 16NC
4	1	Threaded Rod	Steel	3/8" - 16NC - 2"
5	4	Hex Head Cap Screws	Steel	1/4" - 20NC - 3/4"
6	1	Center Bout Clamping Block	Steel	3/8" x 3/4" x 1 1/2"
7	2	Threaded Rod	Steel	1/4" - 20NC - 1 1/2"
8	2	Wing Nut	Steel	1/4" - 20NC
9	1	Center Bout Yoke	Steel	1/4" x 3/4" x 5"
10	2	Clamping Block Guide Screw	Steel	No. 6-32-3/4"
11	1	Machine Bolt	Steel	1/4" x 2"
12	4	Machine Screws	Steel	No. 6-32-1/4"
13	1	Center Bout Binding Strap	Brass	.010" x 1 1/2" x 8"
14	1	Lower Bout Bending Iron	2024 T4 Aluminum	See Text
15	1	Lower Bout Clevis	Steel	1/4" x 1 1/2" x 5"
16	1	Lower and Upper Bout Binding Strap	Brass	.010" x 1 1/2" x 11"
17	1	Threaded Rod	Steel	3/8" - 16NC - 2 1/2"
18	-	See Part No. 3		
19	1	Hex Head Machine Bolt with Nut	Steel	1/4" - 20NC - 2 1/2"
20	1	Lower and Upper Bout Clamping Block	Steel	7/8D x 1 5/8"
21	1	Lower and Upper Bout Strap Clamping Strip	Steel	1/8" x 1/2" x 1 5/8"
22	1	Lower and Upper Bout Yoke	Steel	1/4" x 3/4" x 6"
23	4	Socket (Allen) Head Cap Screws with Nuts	Steel	1/4" - 20NC - 1 1/2"
24	4	Holding Rod	Steel	3/4D x 9"
25	1	Center Bout Strap Clamping Strip	Steel	1/8" x 3/8" x 1 1/2"
26	1	Center Bout Bending Iron--Guarnarius Model	2024 T4 Aluminum	See Text
27	1	Upper Bout Bending Iron	" " "	" "
28	1	Upper Bout Clevis	Steel	1/4" x 1 1/2" x 7"
29	4	"Shur Grip" No. 5 Wood Handles		

Miscellaneous Washers

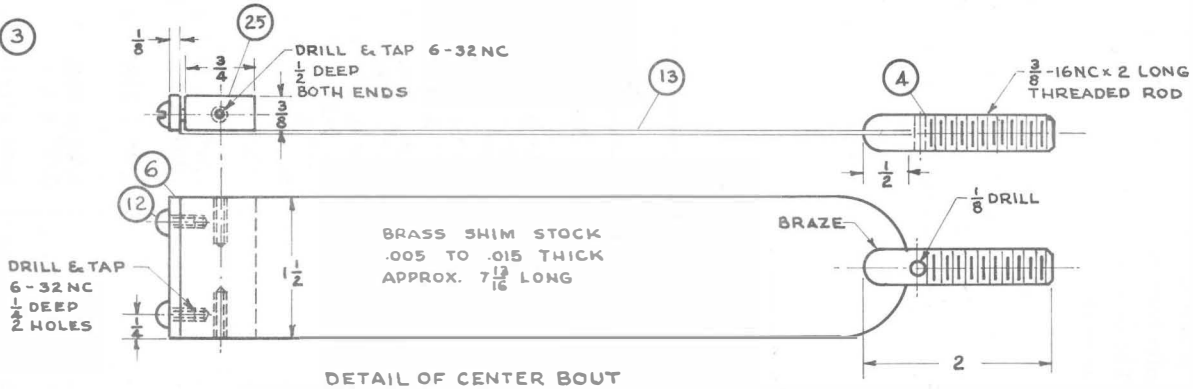
8	1/4" Lock Washers
4	No. 6 Lock Washers
2	No. 6 Flat Washers
2	3/8" Flat Washers



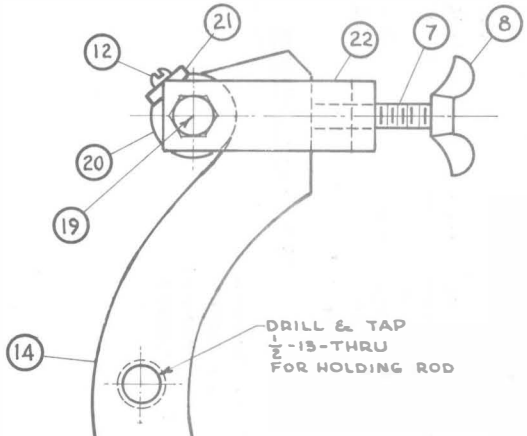
CENTER BOUT BENDING IRON — STRAD. MODEL ASSEMBLY DRAWING

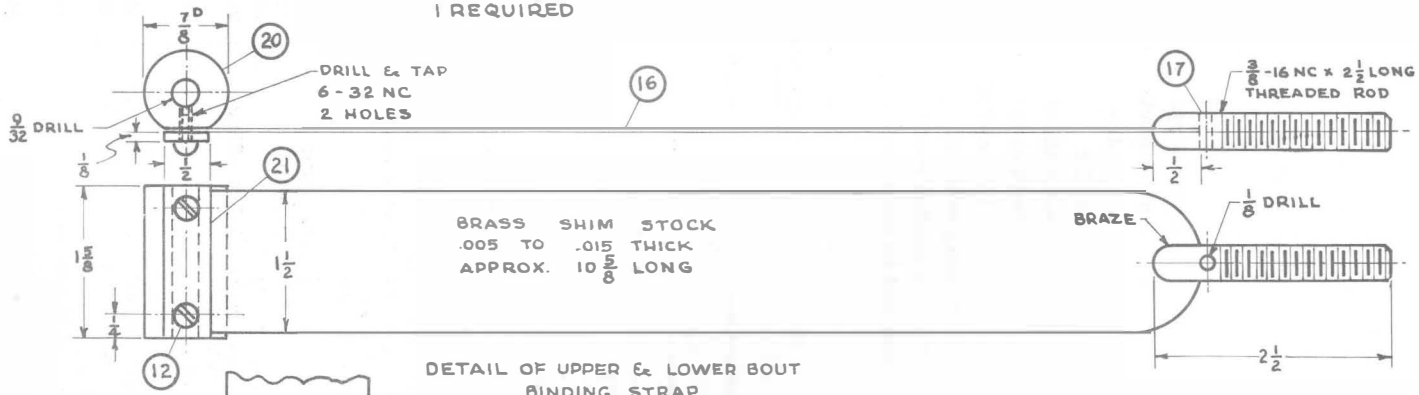


HOLDING ROD (24)
4 REQUIRED



DETAIL OF CENTER BOUT BINDING STRAP
1 REQUIRED





DETAIL OF UPPER & LOWER BOUT BINDING STRAP
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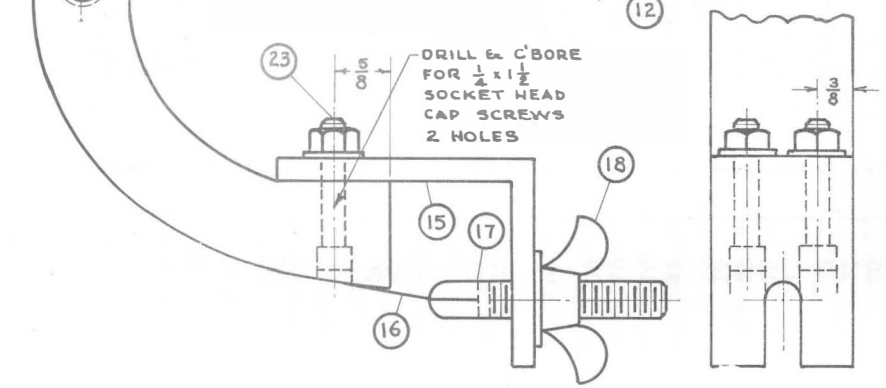
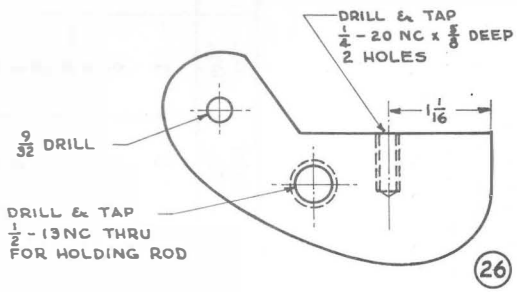


LOWER BOUT BENDING IRON ASSEMBLY DRAWING



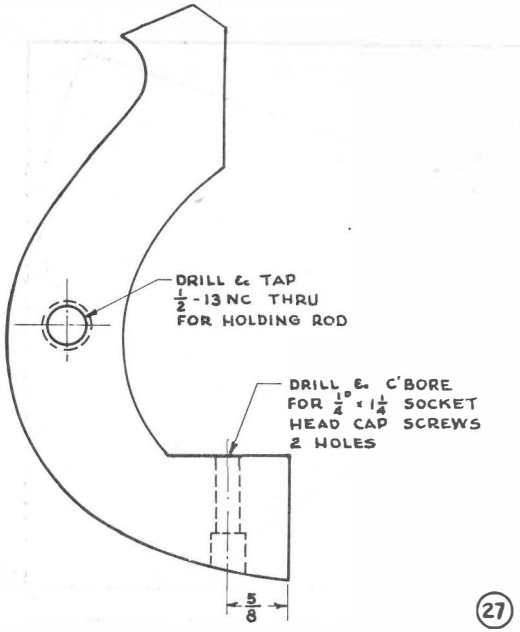
DETAIL OF CENTER BOUT BENDING IRON GUARNARIUS MODEL

A SET OF

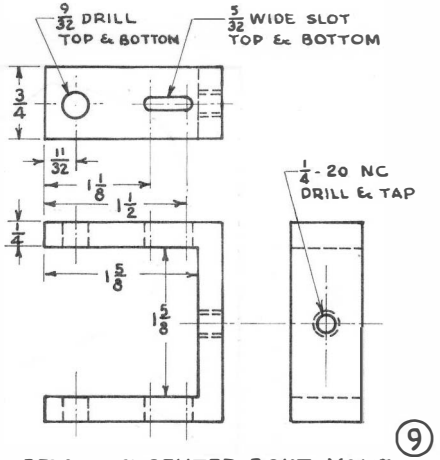
VIOLIN BENDING IRONS

ADOPTED BY
WM. E. SLABY
FROM AN ORIGINAL
DESIGN BY
JOSEF DEULIN

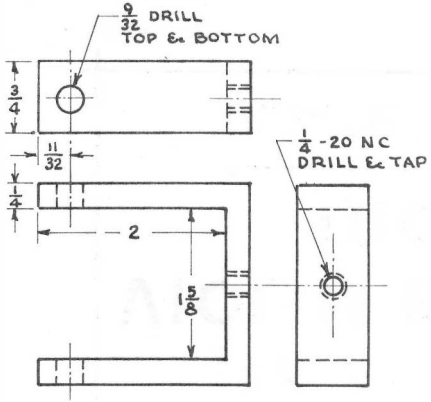
PLATE 1 OF 3



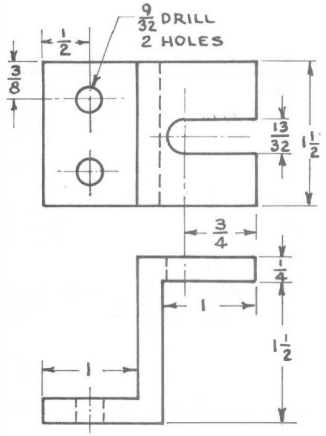
DETAIL OF UPPER BOUT BENDING IRON
1 REQUIRED (27)



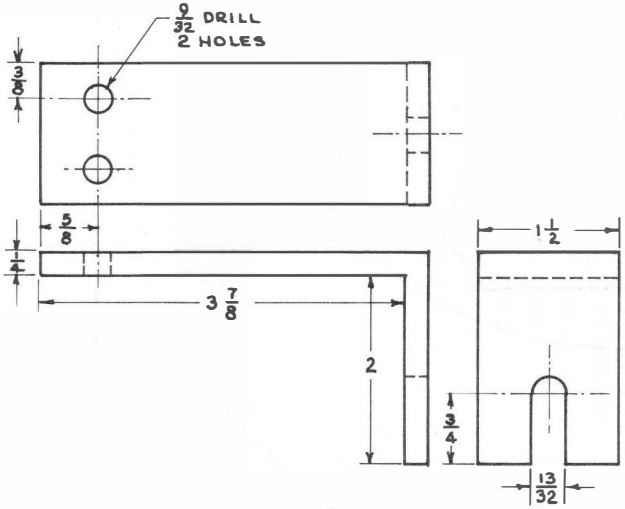
DETAIL OF CENTER BOUT YOKE
1 REQUIRED (9)



DETAIL OF YOKE FOR
UPPER & LOWER BOUTS
1 REQUIRED (22)



DETAIL OF CENTER BOUT CLEVIS
2 REQUIRED (2)



DETAIL OF UPPER BOUT CLEVIS
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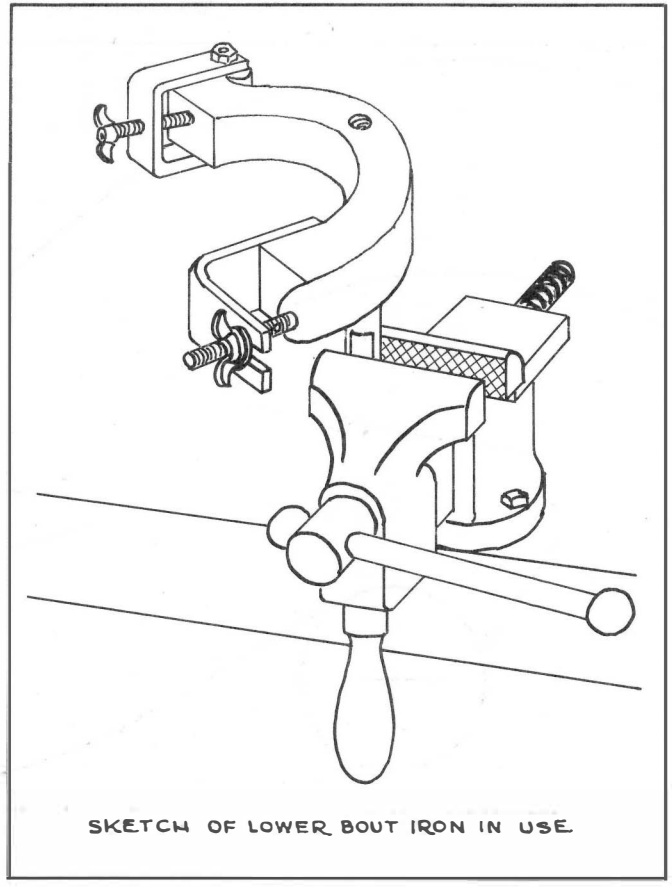
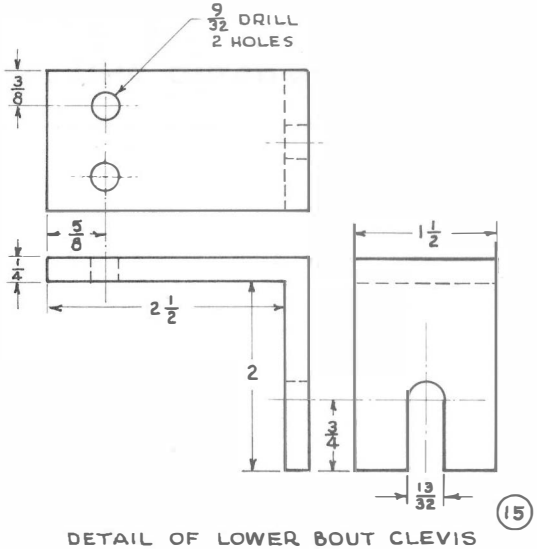


SKETCH OF LOWER BOUT IRON IN USE.



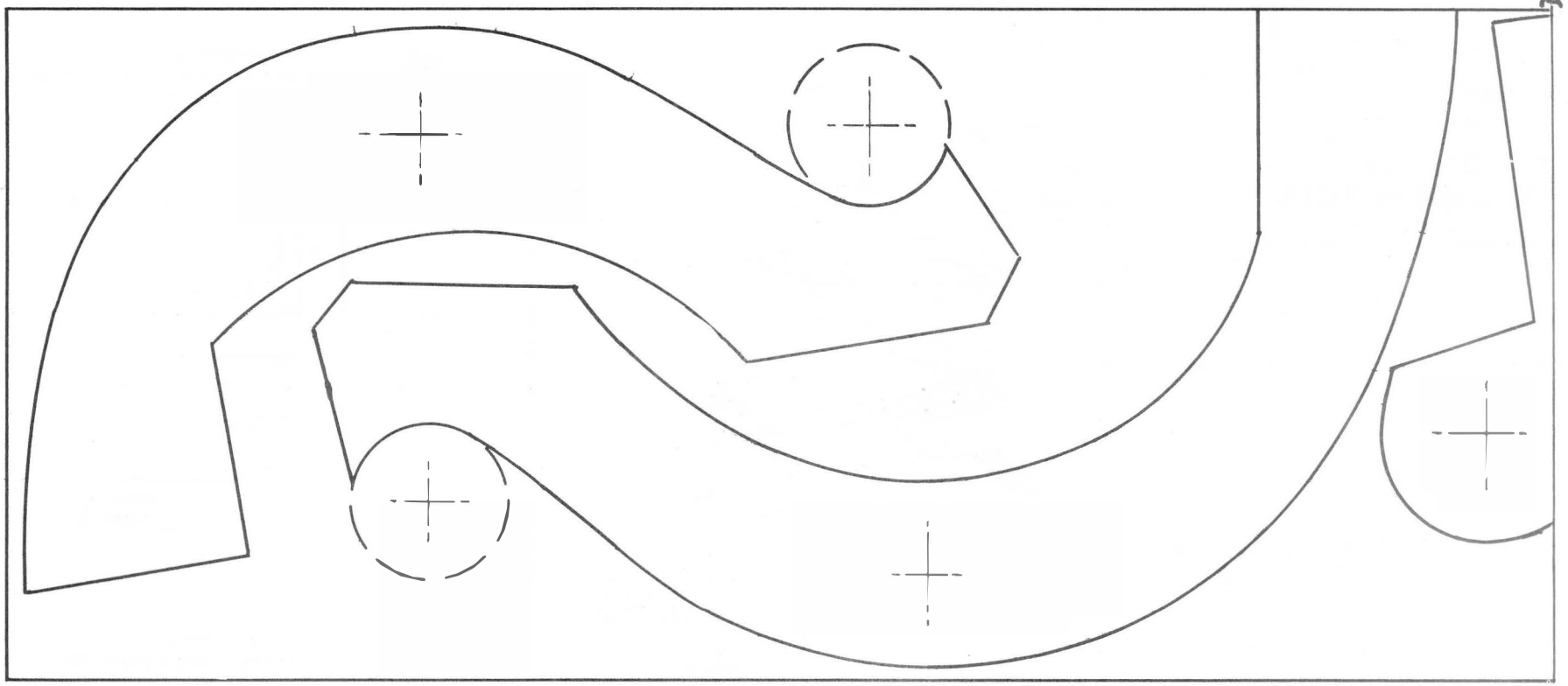
DETAIL OF LOWER BOUT CLEVIS
1 REQUIRED (15)

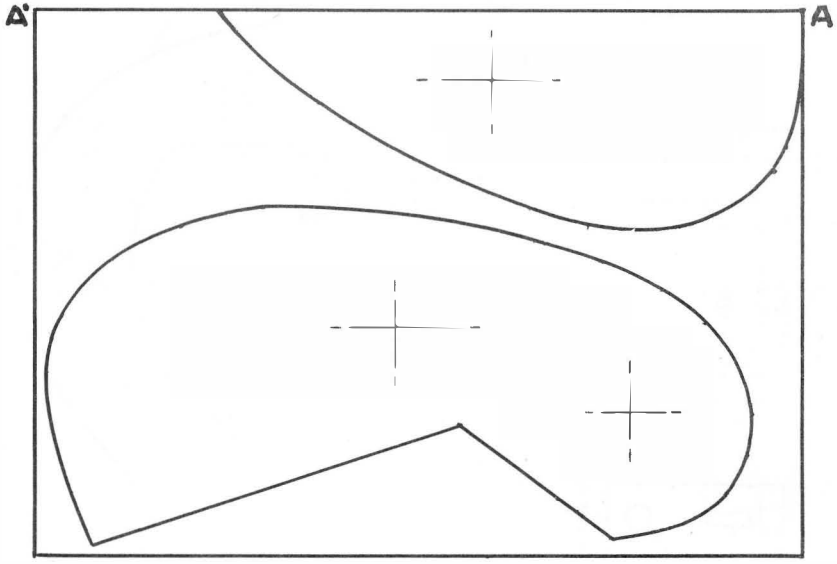
A SET OF

VIOLIN BENDING IRONS

ADOPTED BY
WM. E. SLABY
FROM AN ORIGINAL
DESIGN BY
JOSEF DEULIN

PLATE 2 OF 3





FULL SIZE PATTERNS AND CUTTING DIAGRAM

A SET OF

VIOLIN BENDING IRONS

PLATE 3 OF 3

THE EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

by Loy R. Smith

"Dear Don:

Enjoyed seeing your nice picture in the last issue of the Journal.

I have just finished reading the November-December issue of The Violin Makers Journal. This is the fifth issue that I have received. I am not a violin maker, nor a repairer. I have been interested in stringed instruments all my life and own two fine violins - one is very old and was recently rebuilt completely by Jack Batts. The other one is a new violin made by Jack Batts in 1960. The new fiddle is the better of the two. (Jack Batts, by the way, is a very good friend of mine and I think he is one of the best violin makers and repairers in America.

During the past 5 years I have studied, read books pertaining to and talked violins very consistently with the best authorities I know of. I made one trip to Lewis and Sons, Chicago which I deem very profitable. They were unusually nice and I was so surprised that they took so much time showing me old and new violins, bows, and letting me use them to my satisfaction. I left Lewis and Sons realizing completely that without doubt this was one of the finest music companies in the world. I know now why it is accepted as such by people everywhere.

During my trip to Lewis and Sons, "Italian Tone Quality" was explained to me verbally and then Mr. Johnson used different violins to demonstrate. I now have stored in my memoray a criterion of what "Italian Tone" is, and when I hear a new violin I listen for that singing, edgy quality. What better criteria could one use from the listener's standpoint?

During the past 5years I have talked to Jack Batts hour after hour and also watched him work in his shop in the same manner. During this past summer, I was privileged to talk to Carmen White while he was visiting Jack. I examined his violins and listened to them. They certainly possess the "Italian Tone Quality" that I have heard so many times coming from the fine old violins of our concert artists. Might I say this - Carmen White's violins seem to exemplify the character and personality of their maker (Quality to the highest degree).

After having studied violin making during this time, I now know how little I really know about the art. I credit myself with having learned more about what I hear than the reason why a violin sounds as it does. I do believe that many makers do not know good violin tone when they hear it, so if the fiddle looks good - then he is a good maker. Both physical appearance and tone are important, but the latter is a must if one is looking for a good violin. I have seen some beautifully made violins that sounded terrible. On the other hand, I have seen some violins that were "mongrels" to look at but were nice to listen to. I would choose the latter. We would all, however, prefer beauty both from the tonal and physical standpoints.

At this stage of the game, I am wondering if there is enough reason for so many conflicting opinions in the various facets of violin making. I do not believe that there is anything mysterious about the work of the old Italian makers. I believe that chance played a great part in the production of the very few of their finest instruments. I believe that any good maker can take good wood and make a good violin every time, but that exceptional one will crop up occasionally. When the exceptional one does crop us, I doubt, generally speaking, if the maker can exactly pin-point the reasons why. He probably has made other violins that he had higher hopes for before they were finished. We have automobiles, washing machines, etc. being made with interchangeable parts. Why do some of these work flawlessly indefinitely while others that look the same never seem to come up to our expectation? I believe that occasionally chance brings parts together in such a manner that there is a complete co-ordination of every working part but the difference between these parts before being used was so small that one could not distinguish until it had been used.

I was told at Lewis and Sons that Carl Becker Jr. has one of his father's violins that he favors highly above any of the others. We all know that Mr. Becker is an excellent maker and probably worked no harder to achieve perfection in this particular violin than he has in the others. I would imagine that after making several hundred violins as Mr. Becker has, that he would tell you that all are good, but occasionally there crops up an exceptional one. I doubt if even he could pinpoint the exact reason for this. I am a school teacher and I know that this happens in children also. I believe it happens in everything.

I do not claim to be an expert in any sense of the word and I doubt that what I have said is worth printing, but when I read The Journal and see that there are so many different opinions about violin making, I just wonder if anyone will ever be able to make that exceptional violin every time. Stradavari certainly did not. I say AMEN to all the fine makers for trying, though."

* * * * * *

The String Section

Conducted by
CARMEN WHITE

CONTEMPORARY STRING-QUARTET PERFORMANCE

by Marvin Bram
Chicago

There is no genuinely great string quartet playing before the public -- let us say, the New York public -- today. Critics too often beg the issue of greatness by insisting upon superficial criteria in their judgments. X is a wide-vibrato, therefore a lush, romantic ensemble, while Y is a narrow-vibrato, therefore a lean, modern ensemble. Nonsense. X and Y may be these things, but, to face the only important issue, they consist of uninspired, uninteresting musicians. "Professional musicians," to be sure, but how often exalted by the lyricism of Mozart's K. 428 or Beethoven's Opus 130, or transfigured by Beethoven's Opus 131.

Let us postulate a more meaningful distinction than that of wide against narrow vibrato: spontaneous, unmediated playing against conscious, precise playing. The former ideal, however admirable for the isolated player, seems inconsistent with the requirements of four musicians playing together. But the latter approach to music-making leads, as we all have experienced, to "correct" but soulless playing. Perhaps a synthesis of the two modes of playing is necessary before greatness -- a word I am defining as just such a synthesis, informed by extraordinary musical sensibilities -- can exist.

We can assume the possibility of a synthesis of inspiration and discipline on purely empirical grounds. There have indeed been quartets that transcended at once the ensemble problems of unconstrained playing and the straitjacket of metronomic playing. The Capet Quartet was one, that of Adolph Busch another. In their playing there was no barrier between the composer and the performer, and the listener heard not a sequence of accurately cued notes but the welling, re-created inspiration of Mozart and Beethoven.

Several forces work against greatness in contemporary string-quartet performance. The too-frequent playing of pieces that should be approached freshly every year or two inhibits musical growth. A mechanical view of teaching and learning diminishes the potentialities of young players. It would not be difficult to go on. Still, cumulatively, such reasons are not enough. Something in our time, in the world-view of the mid-twentieth century, is very wrong. Profound and moving music, both its composition and its performance, requires profound and free creators and re-creators. Some pervasive poison in the world's spiritual atmosphere is stunting the maturation of such artists.

The string-quartet repertory represents one of the triumphs, perhaps the triumph, of Western civilization. I suggest that the emptiness of contemporary performance of that repertory is symptomatic of the spiritual paralysis of the civilization that gave it birth.

* * * * * * * *

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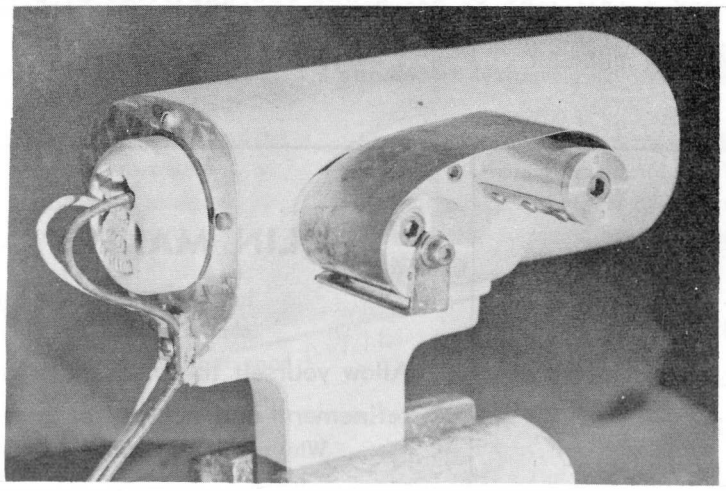

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"ANOTHER PRESCOTT"

by Fred Fehr
Kankakee, Ill.

In the last number you had an article by a subscriber from Wyandotte, Mich. about an old bass viol he has. Well three days from the time I read the article, one of my pupils brings me an old cello or small bass. The body was or is 31 inches long the lower width is 18 in. the upper is 14 in. The scroll is beautifully worked, he made the gear and worm for the peg arrangement; also of the highest type of workmanship.

Now here comes the odd thing about this monstrosity. He did not have any linings, but to give the ribs solidity, he cut out, as you would for purfling and set the ribs into this recess. Also I did not know this, but I wondered why the thing was so broken, the ribs were split from all around the instrument. Some two splits adjacent to the other one. I tried to take the top off, but it would not give at all; but would split away from the top or the bottom as which side you tried to take off. So I laid it in a tub for five days. It would not part, as the top was badly split. I just broke it off, that is when I discovered what he had done. And that is when the weather had its way with it; the top would not give and that is why the ribs is split so badly. This man knew nothing about the building a cello. The middle between the Cs was the thinnest part, the outer near the edges and about two inches in was very thick, about five mm.

Why I made the latter statement as not knowing anything about the building of a cello, he glued the bass bar from about four inches from the wide end crossing the center line about six inches above the upper end of the FF holes, and enough wood in the bar to make two of the ordinary cello requirement. All in all the instrument is an indication of how far a man may error in thinking what should go in the making of an instrument.

The back and sides were of flamed maple, of good pattern, birds eye, and well finished. If this man would have learned something of the dimensions of a cello, he no doubt could have been a very good workman. Oh yes, the length of the string was 26 in. and to so compensate for his long body he made the neck much shorter. The length, where the neck entered the body, is only nine inches. He made the neck and block of one piece, wedging the ribs into the neck with a small wedge which held it very securely.

He had his card inside the cello on the sound post side. It reads Abraham Prescott, Manufacturer of Premium, Bass and Double Bass Viols, Melodians and Seraphines (whatever they are), Concord, New Hampshire. The card was made by a printer. I took the card off the back and it is in quite readable condition.

INFORMATION ON SOUNDPOSTS

by George Hacskaylo

A sound post in stringed instruments serves primarily, as a fulcrum for point of balance of the some 26 pounds pressures (in the case of a violin) exerted downward on the top of the violin, by strings tuned to pitch. It is sometimes difficult to realize that the near-equivalent of the weight of a 25 pound sack of sugar rests on the top of a violin.

The soundpost is placed within the instrument off set "south by east" from the right foot of the bridge, leaving about 3/16 inch between longitudinal facing surfaces of both; and laterally, slightly to right from center of bridge-foot to center of sound post. This arrangement gives us, in reality, a teeter or fulcrum point for the point of pressure at the bridge. Lateral and longitudinal string pressure, in as much as the violin is constructed as it is, must be balanced on this fulcrum. Is it not reasonable to believe that this, simply, is the primary function of a sound post?

This fulcrum point is a point of focus of tension or pressure balance and in every instrument, there is but one spot where the point exists. It would seem that the sound post is a child of contortion when in fact, it is a coldly precise physical appurtenance to be fitted in a physically precise spot within the instrument. One can do no better. To deviate from the focal point of balance is to reduce the efficiency of the stringed musical engine, if you will.

Just a word about the sound post. A sound post with ends appropriately contoured should be of a length sufficient merely to rest between top and back plates when placed in position of balance. Plates are in no position to function efficiently if forced out of normal contour. A sound post that will remain at rest at focal point of balance of lateral and longitudinal pressures when pressures are not exerted, will certainly do so after strings tensions are applied.

It sometimes seems the sound post is asked to correct an improper fingerboard angle, to double for a faulty bass-bar, to change air-column or chamber, re-cut the F-holes, put new lift into old strings--or nearly everything except to function as it is designed.

It has work of its own to do; and enough, at that.

* * * * * * * * *

5903 North Winthrop Avenue,
Chicago 26, Ill.

"Dear Don:

Your violin, described in the November-December Journal, looks like a splendid instrument. I'm sure many have remarked on the remarkable curl of the back. I'd like to add my compliments on the very bold and graceful cut of the f-hole. Most important, of course, your construction innovations impress me as being extremely soundly conceived on acoustical principles. They should constitute a lasting contribution to string-instrument design.

I was recently in Philadelphia for a scientific conference. While there I discussed the Association's work with an excellent violinmaker there, Martin Nebel. Mr. Nebel showed me a very interesting viola of his, quite large (17" body length), and with unusual f-holes, very long, thin, and hardly curved at either end. The tone was quite outstanding--even and resonant.

I will soon be buying an inexpensive instrument, and I would certainly like to do business (an expression I don't like) with an Association member. If there are any Associate Members who are makers in the Chicago area it would be a pleasure for me to meet them.

Yours sincerely,

Marvin Bram"

THE 'FAKE' STRAD WORTH $40,000

The following article from the San Francisco Sunday Chronicle of June 10, 1962 by Dean Wallace, was sent in by Gordon Rork.

Every so often, you hear of someone "discovering" a rare old Stradivarius violin in a second-hand shop. Most of them turn out to be fakes.

But with Arpad D'Zurko, gypsy violinist who entertains nightly at Rickey's Studio Inn in Palo Alto, it happened just the other way around.

Sometime ago, D'Zurko was in the market for a new fiddle and found one to his liking at Jacob's Violin Shop here in San Francisco. It was a fine old Italian model, expensive, and in excellent--in fact, perfect in terms of tone and other essentials--condition. And neatly pasted inside was the label, "Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis, 1734."

It's Nothing. Don't pay any attention to that, the dealer warned, telling D'Zurko that the instrument was actually attributed to one Carlo Landolfi, an old master whose violins and cellos rate high, but considerably lower than those of the great Stradivari. Besides, the label of the master was obviously forged.

Perhaps as much impressed by the dealer's honesty as by the perfection of his find, D'Zurko bought it and took it home. And had he been just an ordinary gypsy fiddler, the story might have ended right ehre. But Arpad D'Zurko is neither an ordinary fiddler nor an ordinary Gypsy. He is a full-blooded Gypsy of the Lavutara class--he says there are fewer than half a dozen on the West coast--and one of the few Gypsy musicians in the world with a college education and conservatory training in music.

Impressed. The more he played his new (or, rather, old) violin, the more he became convinced it was somewhat more than a Landolfi.

He therefore re-christened his instrument the "Gypsy Stradivarius," and the magic name of the master maker of Cremona began appearing on the nightclub billing, just below that of Arpad D'Zurko.

Finally, Frank Passa, violin maker of 391 Sutter Street talked D'Zurko into getting an exhaustive appraisal in New York at a cost to the gypsy fiddler of four or five hundred dollars.

Expert. Now the scene shifts to New York City, where Rembert Wurlitzer, one of this Nation's three top violin experts, had just returned from Italy. In Cremona, he had come across a Stradivari mold or jig (the form around which instruments are constructed) of an unusual design. It was unquestionably genuine, but to his knowledge few, if any, violins had been made from it. He had searched, but none were to be found.

A day or two after his return, D'Zurko's violin

arrived. It was exactly the model wurlitzer had been looking for. He learned that the violin had been owned by the 19th century virtuoso, Paganini, but because of its dubious origin--the mold had not yet been found--Paganini probably sold it in London.

The late T. C. Petersen, Bay Area violin collector, bought it for a Landolfi in 1928, and brought it to Berkely. After Petersen's death it passed from one dealer to another, one of whom presumably pasted the forged Stradivarius label inside.

Triumph. But Arpad D'Zurko has the final triumph. His rare and unique treasure was returned to him a few days ago. D'Zurko paid less than $10,000 for it. Today he could sell it for more than $40,000. But if you could see the light in his eyes when he tucks it under his chin, you would know that he is not likely to part with it.

FAMOUS VIOLIN MAKER'S BIRTHDAY

This article from the Soviet Union was sent in by Dr. Nicholas.

Not long ago well-known musicians, conservatory professors, and students as well as public figures of the Soviet capital gathered at Moscow's Central House of Art Workers to celebrate Timofei Filippovich Podgorny's eightieth birthday.

More than half a century Podgorny devoted to the making of violins, altos, 'cellos, and double-basses. More than a thousand of these were produced by the outstanding bowed instrument maker. They invariably received the highest testimonials from the most particular musicians.

Timofei Podgorny came of peasant stock. Two of his uncles, self-taught violin players both, instilled into the boy a passion for music. He learned to play the violin and then began to make such instruments, at first toy fiddles, then the real thing. Later Podgorny became an orchestra member while continuing to make violins.

In 1897 he constructed a set of bowed instruments for an entire orchestra, which marked his debut as a professional violin maker. Many eminent musical performers of today play for the public on instruments of his make.

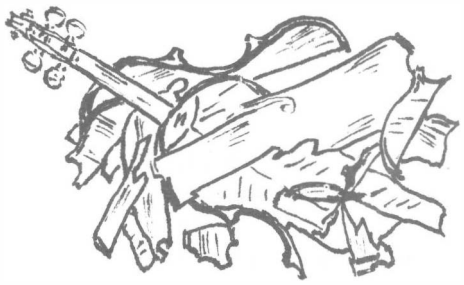
This past-master in the art of making violins does not stop there, however. He goes further and conducts research on the basis of his vast practical experience, his many years of experimentation, and deep study of bowed instruments. Musicians, professional and amateur violin makers are always welcome to share his knowledge and experience.

Podgorny-made instruments have repeatedly received recognition at international exhibitions. At the 1905 World Fair held in Brussels, the "Madonna", a violin of his make, was awarded a Grand Gold Medal, and the year after, at Antwerp, he received a Small Gold Medal. In 1912 he was adjudged the first prize at a St. Petersburg show for the best instruments for a quartet.

"I have dedicated my life to the thing I like most, the making of musical instruments," he said at the celebration meeting; "and I shall continue to work for the good of our Soviet art!"

A concert followed the speeches in honour of the famous violin maker. The performers, distinguished musicians all, played instruments of Timofei Podgorny's production.

Galina Barinova,
Violinist, Stalin Prize Winner.



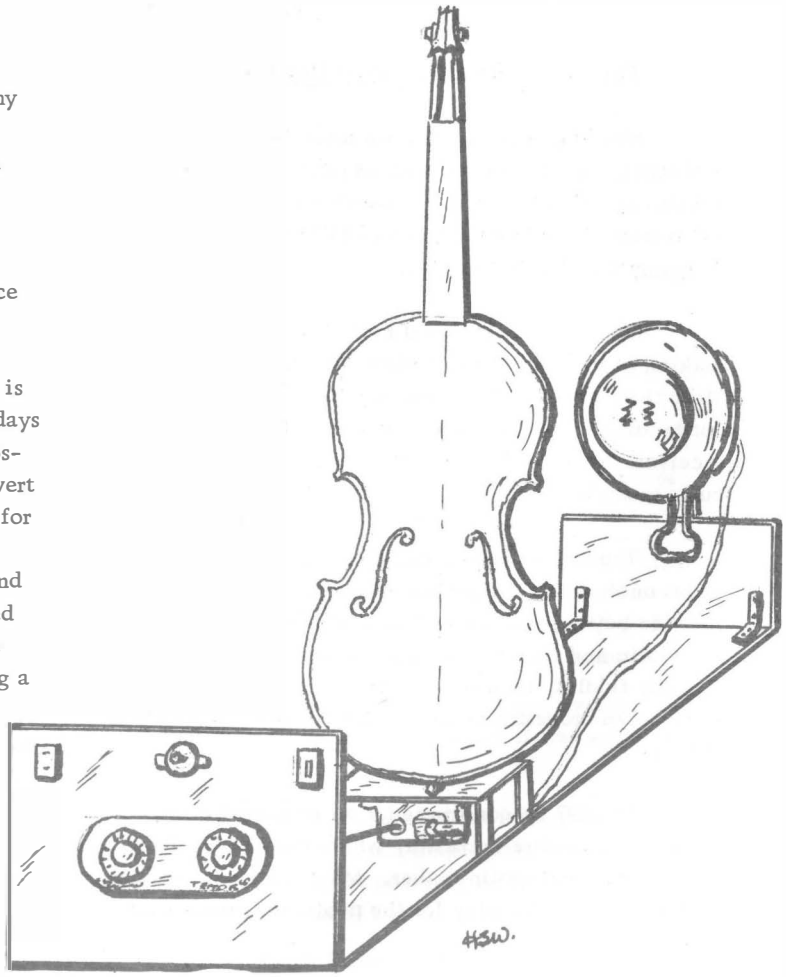
Fiddle Fix.

By H.S. Wake.

An Interesting Project

Finding myself with a discarded "Rotisserie" on my hands recently; you know, one of those contraptions that you can put a chicken or a roast in, throw the switch and set the timer for the cooking operation to begin; you can regulate the temperature and the length of time that it will continue to turn the enclosed roast. Well, I just couldn't see myself giving away such a mechanical device having potential for good use in my shop.

Although our climate here in Southern California is ideal for the fiddle maker, there being very few sunless days and precious little rain, it is not always convenient or possible to hang a violin out in the sun, so I decided to convert the aforesaid Rotisserie into a sunlamp treatment device for use after varnishing. The project was so easy and turned out so well that I am passing it on for what it is worth, and I suggest that if you don't happen to have an old discarded rotisserie around the house, you might pick one up at the nearest second hand shop and have the pleasure of making a useful piece of equipment out of it.



You will find all the controls at one end of the machine. These you can remove completely and they will consist of a motor with reduction gears to drive a small square female socket; there will be a control for temperature, together with the time regulator having settings up to several hours. There will be a heavy duty heating element with switch to turn the heat on and off. Also a small indicator light. Some of these items you will not really need and can do without but it's best to keep everything intact so as not to disturb the wiring hook-up too much, with the possibility of getting the wires crossed and running into difficulties. One thing we will discard is the heating element, so you can cut the wires a couple of inches or so away from each end of the element and put the element away for possible future use. These are expensive, and, who knows, some day you may have use for it.

The heating element will be replaced with a standard lamp socket suitable for a sunlamp. Just hook up the two ends of the wires where you removed the heating element temporarily to the terminals on the lamp socket so that you don't get your wires mixed up. Try not to disturb any of the wiring but you may find it necessary to splice in a piece of wire in some places to give them extra length.

Having removed the controls you can mount them on a panel. This need only be a piece of 1/4" plywood about ten inches square and you should not have any difficulty here. There will be the timer and temperature controls that will require a couple of holes through the panel. The indicator light and switch will also call for some drilling. Arrange these on the panel anyway that is convenient and

attach the panel in a vertical position at one end of a baseboard. This should be at least a couple of feet long to allow for placing the sunlamp some distance away from the fiddle when in use. You could make it extensible but all such refinements can be left out for the present.

The motor must now be mounted on the baseboard which, incidentally, is also of 1/4" plywood. You will find that there is a drive shaft connecting the motor drive to the timer, so you will have to place the motor fairly close behind the front panel; or you can discard the short drive shaft and rig up a longer one to suit; the square socket drive of the motor must be directed upwards and the timer drive from the motor must be directed towards the timer behind the panel, so your motor must be mounted on the baseboard to meet these conditions.

With the motor secured you can attach at the other end of the baseboard another vertical panel. You can use any means available for mounting the lamp but I found one of the clip-on devices having a lamp socket on a swivel to be just right. This you can clip on to the back panel and direct the rays just where you want them. Make an adaptor plug to fit snugly into the square socket of the motor and having its other end tapered the same as an endpin and you are ready for business. Place a sunlamp in the lamp socket and set your fiddle firmly upright on the adaptor pin. Set the timer and plug in the cord. You will find that you can run the machine either with or without the light, so you can if you wish place the device in a sunny spot indoors and leave it running, or on the other hand you can set it for a few hours at night with the sunlamp on, go to bed and forget it as it will shut itself off. Incidentally, don't use an infrared lamp as this will only heat the outside surface of the varnish. The infrared rays do not penetrate; however the rays from a sunlamp will go right through the varnish to the wood. Have fun.

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Repairing Cracks

I believe that the lower wing of the 'F' holes is more vulnerable to cracks than any other part of the fiddle, and it speaks well for the care bestowed on a good old instrument when it can survive 150 years or more without ever having been cracked in this area. True it is, that very few do come through because a person just has to pick up a fiddle and unwittingly have his thumb on the lower wing of the 'F' and the damage is done.

The crack will always run from the top edge of the lower hole of the 'F' upwards to the outside of the fiddle, and sometimes right through the purfling, Fig. 1. No one would ever think of putting a small thin veneer cleat, cross grained on the inside in this area before putting the top on, but it wouldn't be a bad idea; leaving the wood thicker here when the top is being made might help a little, but the cross grained thin cleat is stronger.

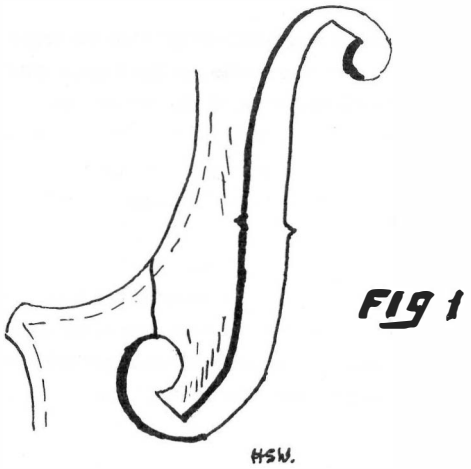

Fig 1

Assuming that your violin has unfortunately developed a crack here, or perhaps it's an old one that has opened up, and maybe causing a buzz when you play; well, it's not too difficult to make it right, and at the same time reinforce it so that it can't happen again.

Should it be an old crack, run a little hot water in it and leave it long enough to soften the old glue; this must be cleaned out before any fresh glue is put in. A new crack of course will not need the hot water treatment. Prepare a strip of thin metal about 3/16" wide and 4" long, make a right angle bend about 1/4" from the end to form a long stemmed 'L'. This end must be small enough to pass through the hole of the 'F' so use your judgment. Now prepare a small thin cleat about 3/16 x 5/16" with the grain running lengthwise. This will go inside the fiddle over the crack, but first, having the hot glue ready, bend the end of a pipe cleaner over at a right angle, dip in the glue and through the hole of the 'F' put a touch of glue over the crack on the inside, then run some glue in the crack itself from the outside and work it in. Now put just a spot of glue on one side of the cleat that you made previously and place the cleat on the ledge that you made on the metal strip. Carefully place this through the hole of the 'F' and lift up to press the cleat in position across the crack. Don't worry if it shows a little through the 'F' because this can easily be trimmed off later. You can quite understand that all this must be done quickly,

but it is really quite a simple operation if you have every thing ready and at hand.

Now in order to hold the wing up in its correct position, place a fairly stiff strip of wood in the 'F' and lift up the wing. Slip a rubber band over the end of the stick and over one of the opposite corners of the fiddle, so that there is just enough tension on the stick to hold the wing up in place. Leave overnight to set and you can then trim off the edge of the cleat that shows through the 'F'. By the way, those pipe cleaners can be real handy around the shop for touch-up purposes and for glueing. They only cost a few cents a dozen, and the used end can be snipped off leaving a new end for another touch-up job.

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Removing the Neck

We sometimes have occasion to remove the neck from a violin, either for the purpose of making a neck graft or splice, or for re-setting at a more correct angle. To do this without damage to the ribs or the button can be quite difficult, but there is an easy way which is good for most fiddles. However it is not recommended for valuable instruments for reasons which will become obvious. Instead of removing the neck from the block, we can reverse the procedure and remove the BLOCK from the NECK. The block will be sacrificed in the process but this can easily be replaced with a new one.

The belly of the fiddle must first be removed, and having this done, set the violin on the bench with the back down and with the area of the upper block resting on something solid. Place a piece of felt or other material underneath to protect the fiddle varnish. Now with a sharp chisel and gentle taps with a small mallet, proceed to remove the block by chipping away a small piece at a time. The grain direction of the wood will make this quite easy, and the wood can be removed right to the inside face of the upper ribs, leaving the neck attached only at the button. This can best be separated with a thin artist's palette knife from the inside.

Glue

Back again to the subject of glue and those misguided people who still insist on using white glue for violin repairs; and most particularly to those who remove violin tops and use white glue to replace them. As I have said many times before, this glue is very good, and useful for many purposes. It can also be diluted with water and used as a size or sealer for wood, but not on fiddles in any way.

This white glue, when it has once set, is insoluble and most difficult to remove, and to remove a fiddle top glued with it has been next to impossible. However, there is just one way that it can be done. The stuff will cut like butter with a hot blade, use a thin artist's palette knife and heat it over a gas burner. It doesn't take too much heat so there is no danger of burning the wood. Work the blade between the ribs and the fiddle top, doing an inch or two at a time then reheating the blade as it must be kept hot. Remember that you are slicing through a thin layer of glue and not separating the parts by a wedge action as is done in the case of regular glue. It seems odd, but those people who use this stuff on fiddles usually leave big blobs of it on the inside. They also stick ugly wood patches on the inside of the fiddle. Well the hot blade will get rid of a lot of this stuff quickly; just slide it under the patch or blob and presto: it's off.

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS

As the editors for this issue know very little about violins, editing or printing, we thought it best to leave all the ads as they were in the January-February issue. We hope the advertisers who wished changes made will please accept our apologies.

Ed.

A REVIVAL OF VIOLINMAKING

(from the magazine Poland No. 2 (42; 1958)
sent in by P. Svindsay

Among the many international art competitions violinmaking competitions are outstanding both because of their unusual, complex subject and the difficulties entailed in organizing them. Nowadays violinmaking as the art of constructing stringed musical instruments is a vanishing profession, however efforts have recently been made to revive this fine and important branch of art. The decline of violinmaking, which set in in mid 18th century, came about, among other things, through the transformation of violinmaking into a trade and later into industrial production. The craft of violinmaking may be revived only by restoring to it the characteristics of an art.

A stringed instrument (violin, viola, cello) is a unique product into which its maker must pour his diverse skills; a knowledge of the laws of acoustics, a profound aesthetic feeling, ability to carve in wood, knowledge of the technique of varnishing and the production of an appropriate varnish. And all this is restricted by a precise form, fixed by years of experience, of the instruments and their specific functions.

As a final result, the finished instrument must have a fine tone and this is not easy to achieve. The craft of violinmaking conceals a great many mysteries, fanned by a legend about lost secrets of the old, truly unsurpassed masters. Though modern conditions are unfavourable, there is in every country a group of people passionately interested in this problem; each country seeks in its own way to prevent violinmaking from becoming a lost art and to restore it to the flourishing state it enjoyed in the 17th and first half of the 18th centuries.

In striving to revive the fine craft of violinmaking most important decisions were taken in Poland in 1954. That year the Association of Polish Violinmakers was established and by government decree included among the creative associations. Thus, violinmakers were given the rank of artists on an equal footing with musicians, composers, writers or painters. Violinmaking was no longer treated as a trade or industrial production. This raised the value of the violinmakers' work on the one hand and, on the other, gave them opportunity to practice freely their craft which is now differently paid and subject to different tax regulations. The establishment of an association gives the violinmaker an opportunity to sell all the instruments he makes to the state which distributes them through a network of music stores both to private buyers and to musical institutions.

In 1954, a group of prominent Polish amateurs of the violin conceived the idea of extending the Wieniawski International Violin Competition, initiated before the war, to composition and violinmaking. Since then the Wieniawski competitions are divided into three categories; violin playing, composition and violinmaking. In 1955, an international competition was held for compositions written for violin and piano, in November, 1957--a violinmaking competition, and in December of the same year, a violin playing competition.

The Wieniawski competitions are held in high esteem throughout the world. More than 120 works from a score of countries were entered for the composers' contest. More than 75 applications came from 24 European countries and from overseas for the violin playing competition. The violinmaking competition also had many entries: 130 instruments came from some 20 countries.

The jury was composed of outstanding connoisseurs of violinmaking from Italy, Belgium, France, the German Federal Republic the German Democratic Republic, the Soviet Union and Poland. Each instrument was thoroughly examined both as regards its purely structural features and its tone. The competition was conducted in secrecy, ie., the instruments were given numbers so that the jury should now know from which country the violin had come. After two weeks of minute work the points were added up and the instruments which had the highest number of points were awarded prizes.

Though the general level of the competition should be considered as a high one, it did not yield a single instrument markedly better than others. The jury therefore decided not to award a first prize, establishing instead three fourth prizes which were not foreseen by the rules. When the prizes had been awarded, the sealed envelopes containing the names of the makers of the rewarded instruments were opened. Two second prizes went to: J. Wavra, A Czech violinmaker and to M. Quenoil, a French one. Further prizes were won by Petzel, a Czech and Harry Muller, from the German Democratic Republic, Albert Lany, a Czech citizen, E. Gosiewski, a Pole, and Fr. J. Klier from Western Germany.

In addition, the following prizes were placed at the disposal of the jury; a gold medal of the A.N.L.A.I., an Italian association of violinmakers, for the youngest awarded violinmaker of the competition; a gold medal from the Belgian organizers of violin quartette competitions, for the best Polish violinmaker, and a gold medal of the Association of Polish Violinmakers. The Italian gold medal was won by the winner of the second prize, M. Quenoil, the Belgian

medal was awarded to Gosiewski of Poland, and the A.P.V. medal was awarded to the best Italian violinmaker, Otello Bignami, as a representative of the famous Italian school, the cradle of violinmaking.

During the competition three additional prizes were sent in. They were founded by the Association of Polish Violinmakers and the National and Poznan Philharmonic societies. The jury decided to award these prizes to Polish violinmakers whose instruments reached the finals: J. Gosiewski of Warsaw, J. Swirek of Katowice and Bielanski of Wroclaw. Swirek received special mention of the jury for outstanding achievements in violinmaking.

As may be seen from the list of prize winners, the competition was won by Czechs. Italian violinmaking was rather disappointing while German showed a good, even level.

Polish violinmakers were the revelation of the competition. It appeared that after only three years' existence of the Association of Polish Violinmakers, we are able to compete with leading ones in the field.

The specific feature of our competition was the preference given to the tone of the instrument rather than to the purely structural aspect. Not all were at first in accord on this issue, but the results of the competition convinced everyone that the road to the revival of violinmaking leads, first of all, through striving for a fine tone, provided, however, that the style of work and the aesthetic side is an indispensable component for the instrument to be considered a work of art. Thus, the competition has fulfilled its role and was an important contribution to the development of world violinmaking.

(Prof. T. Wronski)

THE ROMANCE OF FIDDLE HUNTING

It was a hot and humid day on deck of an interisland steamer plying Philippine waters. A friend and I were discussing hobbies. He told me, when he heard of my interest in violins, that a guest at the Manila Hotel had taken to drinking and had left a fine violin as part payment of his hotel bill.

Permit me to look back for a moment at the scenery surrounding this boat 36 years ago. The flying-fish streaked out in all directions, the dolphins sported along the sides of the ship, and occasionally a giant sting-ray leaped out of the blue Mindanao Sea. The tender green fronds of coconut palms lined the beaches, the sloping sugar plantations of another beautiful shade of green stretched inland and dark blue mountains were seen in the distance.

The day I got back to Manila, I went to see the fiddle and bought it for $250. It had no label, so I did not know what I was buying, but believed it to be an old Italian instrument. The case was of the finest Hill & Sons make and there were two Hill bows. So I wrote to this firm in London to find out what kind of a treasure I had acquired and paid for certificate of authenticity. It was a J.B. Gabrielli and had cost 140 pounds--at that time (1927) about $700, and I expect the case and bows were extra.

Cecilia Hansen borrowed this violin from me to give one of her concerts in Manila, when her Strad became unglued by the humid heat.

In 1929 I went to America and Europe on vacation and business and took the violin along. While in Chicago I showed it to one of the leading dealers. The expert told me it was not a Gabrielli but a Gagliano. That a supposedly reliable house could make that kind of a statement was such a shock to me that on arrival in New York I went to see Jay C. Freeman at Wurlitzer. As soon as I opened the case, he said it was a Gabrielli, but would consult his books to make sure which Gabrielli. I closed the case and said he had already told me all I wanted to know and paid the fee of $10. This shows how important the right signature on the certificate of an old violin is.

Later I was persuaded by my violin teacher to trade with his sweet-toned old violin, which bore the label of J.B. Zanoli, Verona, 1762. At the time I did not know that the instruments of this maker are not worth much more than one tenth the price of Gabrielli violins. In 1935 I took this Zanoli to Hill & Sons in London, where I found out the unpleasant truth, that it was made in Czechoslovakia and the label was false. In spite of this, the enchantment of hope is still alive. I believe the very beautiful scroll may be made by Sanctus Serafin. If ever I go to New York again, I shall see Rembert Wurlitzer about this.

The next instalment will tell how I acquired the C. A. Testore and Jacopo Brandini which I lost during the war in Manila.

Bertel Skou

Mr. Skou is a pharmacist who represented Parke, Davis & Co. for 31 years in the Phillipine Islands. He is retired and lives in Santa Barbara, California.

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The photograph below was sent in by Mr. Frier of the Crossroads Violin Shop, 229 Lark Street, Albany 10, New York. He says "I spent two weeks at the Bavarian State School for Violin Making at Mittenwald last May. The photo shows one of the classrooms. There are presently two American students at the school."

MASTERTONE

by P.F. Wright
Author of Violin Data

Mastertone is the superior quality a master violin maker imparts to the tone of his instrument. This is the crowning feature of a masterpiece, which distinguishes it from the ordinary and commonplace.

Since the days of the classical makers thousands of men have devoted themselves to the violin maker's art. Some fine instruments, with wonderful playing qualities, have been produced and, as one generation after another has passed, illustrious names have been added to the list of great violin makers. But these are exceptions. The majority have been persons of ordinary attainments whose labor produced only haphazard results.

Among the latter class there have been, and always are, some who harp about the lost Cremona secrets and who endeavor to duplicate accidents, laboring under the delusion that this can be done. Varnish, pickling processes, graduating by the light of a candle, proportioning wood to air space, tuning the top and back to certain musical notes, swabbing the inside with white of egg, freak bass bars and rattlesnake rattles are but a few of the long list of discoveries.

Whenever a haphazard genius hits on an accident, somewhat better than his previous efforts, he announces the discovery of a lost Cremona secret. Failing to duplicate it, he remains more or less out of the picture until another accident is stumbled upon, when a lost Cremona secret is again broadcast. Such fellows are as perennial as the color of autumn leaves. Their theme is romantic enough to appeal to the press as good copy, and the persistence with which such fictions are published leads a credulous public to believe that there actually were Cremona secrets.

The merits of these different discoveries is about the same in each instance. That is, none of them are of

any value. Rattlesnake rattles are no more silly than in computing of cubage in vibrating wood and air content impractical. Violins are not designed in that way. Yet the latter stirs the imagination of the intelligensea, while the former appeals to country fiddlers as a potent charm.

In no case is the bugaboo over Cremona secrets more misleading than that of relative tone values typical of the classical makers. Instead of being the result of profound research, the instruments these artists made are a record of evolution in musical taste. Whatever acoustical studies may have been conducted were incidental to meeting the demands of the period in which each worked.

In order to visualize this, let us turn back to the sixteenth century when the string instruments in vogue were of inferior resonance. Among bands of humming viols and tinkling lutes a roaring Gasparo da Salo or Maggini violin was as unwelcome as the proverbial bull in a china shop. It is easy to imagine how violin devotees of that day were berated. They no doubt were accused of having leather ears, of being fools, of being freaks, of being insane, etc. Slurs that have been cast upon saxophonists during the past thirty years supply a parallel illustration.

Andrea Amati, aware of the objection to Brescian instruments, devoted his talents to producing violins more compatible with the musical taste of his time. He modeled the top and back with lovely reverse curves which were not only beautiful to behold, but also reduced the vibrating area to such an extent that the tone was small and pinched. His instruments were favorably received and his fame spread to distant parts of Europe. A notable order that he filled was one for King Charles IX, of France, which was for twenty-four violins, six violas and eight basses.

A hundred years or so of familiarity with the violin awakened a better understanding of its place in music with a corresponding demand for fuller tone values. Nicola Amati complied with his "Grand Amati". This evolution toward bigger tone continued until both Joseph Guarnerius and Stradivarius met its demands, each in his own way. The "Long Strad" was one effort to be followed later (1700 to 1725) by the "Grand Strad".

Although their models were different, each of these great artists combined power with refinements lacking in the early Brescian instruments. Their work, including that of their pupils, indicates that the effect of the arch of violin tone was recognized. The arches of these makers, although differing somewhat, were designed along lines permitting free vibrations.

Had the violin makers of that period understood the importance of suitably distributing the wood, there no doubt would have been greater uniformity in the acoustic value of their instruments. Records of many old instruments have been obtained and, although measurements from the most celebrated are used for reference in modern computations, the bulk of the evidence is so at variance that graduations found in these appear to have been due to chance rather than to any well developed theory.

There is reason for this uncertainty of graduation revealed in old violins. In those days necks were shorter than they are today and the musical pitch was also lower. The resultant low tension in the plates made full tone value, as we now understand the term, impossible. Therefore, wood might be distributed in almost any manner and its effect on the tone was minimized. When the problem is viewed in this light it seems marvelous that any of the old instruments should be adaptable to modern demands. We can afford to be grateful for those occasions when the old masters were careless enough to leave ample wood in the tops and backs. We should be thankful for this and find no fault with their manner of distributing it.

In spite of age-old prejudices, there has never been a time when so large a proportion of violins being built were of superior tone value as today. Violin makers now possess the accumulated experience of four hundred years and also a better knowledge of violin acoustics than ever before.

Violins may be classified as belonging to any of several types and, although the master violin maker may confine himself to one of these, he never makes duplicates. Each is a masterpiece. A gem, with an individuality of its own, that defies duplication. Besides its individuality, each masterpiece also has a history of its own. The story is of complex origin that begins long before leaving the master's hands; a finished violin for the artist to fondle and caress to the delight of his audience. In order to see this unfold let us pay a visit to the studio of Mr. Herman Weaver.

On the work bench is a Mastertone violin in the process of making. The lines and arches follow, very closely, those of Joseph Guarnerius. The scroll, hanging near by, is not from stock but one that Mr. Weaver has carved from a choice and beautifully marked piece of maple. This has not yet been joined to the body. In fact, the body is not entirely assembled. The back is finished. So also are the ribs, blocks and lining which have been put together. The linings have been joined perfectly to the blocks and the whole interior is as carefully finished as the exterior will eventually be, when it is ready for the superb varnish he uses. There is not a spot, stain or blemish of any kind to be seen--not even a drop of glue.

The top lays nearby. It is of amazingly fine, straight grained spruce. The grain is so very fine and close that, where it not for being told differently, the visitor is ready to believe that Mr. Weaver rediscovered Jacob Stainer's grove of Swiss pine.

The top is about to be graduated. The first groove of this operation has been cut just inside the line where the ribs join. Distribution of wood being of prime importance in determining the penetration of violin tone, at the time of designing the lines and arches, tables were plotted. The position of these contours was worked out mathematically. From these theoretical thicknesses departures, suggested by experience, to compensate for the peculiar textures of both top and back were made. Thus, the graduations of each violin become a separate study. In Mr. Weaver's case, callipers are used which register to 1-10 of a millimeter of 4-1000 of an inch. Where extreme care, such as this, is used, it is any wonder that a superior instrument is the result?

The wood used in this violin has been gathered from spots extending from the Cascade Mountains of Washington to the State of Maine. An old building, erected in Colonial days, contributed a part and a piece of antique furniture another. That which came from the virgin forest was the soundest of strictly prime timber, cut at the most favorable season of the year. After being worked into stock sizes, for violin maker's use, it has been seasoning for years in dry, but well ventilated, lofts.

Mr. Weaver knows the history of each piece and takes pleasure in relating it to the visitor. The top has one story, the back another, ribs another, the end blocks another, the corner blocks another, the linings another, the scroll another and, by the time it is completed the bass bar and sound post will each have contributed a story.

Although this particular instrument is very much of an all American product, wood from European sources is conspicuous in others. Partiality to any locality plays little part in the choice of these materials. The question uppermost in the master violin maker's mind is, how to combine different pieces of wood to produce the most perfect instrument? It is not unusual for a choice piece of wood to repose in the rack for years before another turns up to combine with it to suit his taste. Thus each piece of material, used in the construction of a masterpiece, endows it with history even before its intimate association with temperamental, and sometimes trafic, musical career begins.

On Mr. Weaver's desk is a letter relating to a violin at the time that it took its rightful place in musical activities. It is from Europe and in it the writer acknowledges receipt of the violin. Briefly, the story is as follows: The writer, a musician who had been in this country for a number of years, tested one of Mr. Weaver's Mastertone violins and became very attached to it. At about the same time he was offered a position in his native country which he accepted. Although he was profoundly impressed with this violin, he had not yet outlived his early prejudice for things European. He tested violins in every market at which he stopped along his route, without finding one which suited his tastes and purposes as well. Having become convinced, against his will, he ordered it sent to him after reaching his destination.

Mr. Weaver's studio is an interesting place and the variety of things to be learned about violins changes on each visit. A prospective customer is testing some violins. One is a Weaver Mastertone and four or five others are old masterpieces, of which there is always a representative stock on hand. Whether the price, the best instrument for business purposes or the gratification of his own taste is the controlling motive in his thoughts, is not known. The significant thing is that he alternately plays upon Mastertone and then upon one or another of the old Masterpieces. Figuratively, he is playing Mastertone against the field.

While this is going on another gentleman enters in a highly agitated frame of mind. He has with him a bow that has been broken. It is a genuine Guillaume that he values above price. To restore it requires the making of a new head that must be spliced for some inches along the remaining portion of the stick. The artistic manner in which Mr. Weaver accomplished this, while preserving the original balance and spring, was a marvel to all who were fortunate enough to observe the work, and a matter of supreme satisfaction to the owner.

Restoring attracts an endless variety and there is a story of interest attached to each instrument. One time it is a Nicolas Amati to have the peg holes rebushed and to be generally overhauled. Another time it is a Gaspar da Salo viola for bass bar and general repairs. Then a pedigreed Joseph Guarnerius, valued at $30,000, arrives for general repairs.

On another occasion an old Italian cello is brought in. There is no pedigree and the name of the maker is unknown. Nevertheless, fragments of history accompany it.

The lines are good. The wood is very old--probably not a day less than two hundred years. The varnish and certain tricks about the linings and blocks are characteristic of the old Italian makers. It has been repaired on four different occasions by as many different workmen and the work of each is distinguishable in the order in which it occurred. The graduations are crude but, fortunately, both top and back have been left heavy in wood so that there is

leeway for proper distribution.

Another instrument revealing the uncertain ideas of the old masters regarding wood distribution, was a Grancino which had been smashed to kindling wood. Even the bass bar had been driven through the top. When this violin left Mr. Weaver's hands it had not only been so cleverly restored that no indication of the accident was visible, but the tone had been so vastly improved that the owner could hardly believe it to be the same instrument.

The stories of two basses of American make may interest the reader. One was a Prescott which was in need of almost everything in the category of restoring.

During the early history of the United States, before organs had come into general use, string basses were extensively employed in church choirs and the making of these instruments was quite an industry in New Hampshire, during the early part of the last century. Those made by Dea Abraham Prescott were of high repute and, on account of their superior tone, are much prized by bass players today.

The Prescott bass has a novel feature in its design. At the lower corners, instead of the ribs being joined in an angle, one terminates in an almost complete circle of very small diameter. While this does not affect the tone or materially enhance the symmetry of outline, it is a trick that no violin maker cares to imitate. The more experienced he is in bending ribs the greater is his respect for the mechanical genius of Prescott.

Another remarkable American bass encountered in Mr. Weaver's studio was that by George Gemunder. During his lifetime he made but two basses, one of which has been destroyed. Hence, this is the only string bass in existence built by him.

It is a copy of Stradivarius. The maple in its back, ribs and neck were selected with the same care, as to figure, as that bestowed upon his violins. Every detail, including the delicately carved scroll, is carried out with precisely the same degree of perfection as found in his smaller instruments. And the varnish, also, is the same as used upon his violins. The writer has never seen another bass that compared with it in beauty.

The top wood is of American white pine with two holes that have been plugged. A casual observer might overlook this. But any violin lover, who is looking for such things, can find the plugs with ease. Gemunder was clever enough to have concealed them more effectually, had he chosen to do so. It so happens that this wood came from the timbers of a noted old building. At the time of its erection the frames were held together by wooden pins. That Gemunder plugged these pin holes in such a manner as to be easily found, impresses one with the idea that he must have done so purposely, in that the story of the instrument's origin would be obvious.

What has been told indicates, in a general way, things to be seen and learned at Mr. Weaver's studio. Those mentioned did not all occur on the occasion of one visit, nor has all that transpired on any one visit been related.

Four hundred years of violin history, progress in the art of violin making, progress in its acoustics and in its design are gathered together here. Lessons gleaned from the life work of Maggini, Amati, Stainer, Guarnerius, Stradivarius, Lupot, Vuillaume and the more recent masters are all included, and the most salient points coordinated in Mastertone.

There are no lost Cremona secrets exploited to befuddle the mind of the visitor, for the advantages of the best instruction, intensive study in violin acoustics, rare native talents and mature experience place Mr. Weaver in a position where he has nothing to conceal. He is a master violin maker and any violin lover will be well repaid for visiting him at his studio, the home of MASTERTONE.

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JOSEF DEULIN'S DISCOVERY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA WOOD

by Victor Angelescu

That the wood a violin maker uses for his instruments in large part determines the success of his effort is a point no longer open to question and most violin makers have definite opinions about the wood they prefer. Josef Deulin of Detroit also has preferences about wood and it is probably no surprise to members of the Vancouver Association and to Don White, the editor of the Violin Makers Journal, to hear of Deulin's unequivocal endorsement of the wood of their area. "Those fellows have a gold mine of the best violin wood right in their own back yard," says Deulin enviously. Yet he did not always know of the excellent quality of this wood and he found out its value quite by accident. His first experience with it occurred in the early 1920's when a wood salesman visited his shop and sold him some British Columbia spruce for a top. Later, when Deulin took a close look at the wood and saw that it was beginning to dry rot, he angrily set the wood aside and determined to have no more dealings with the man. But the next time he made his rounds, the man persuaded Deulin to use the wood, since he was convinced that it would make a good violin. Deulin reluctantly did so and found that the completed violin had a truly marvelous tone. He remembers stringing up the violin on a Friday and selling it the next day to a man named Phillips. Deulin saw the violin again a few years ago and he considers it one of his most successful creations. The owner values the instrument very highly and refuses to part with it.

The success he had with this wood aroused Deulin's curiosity and his suspicions about the excellence of British Columbia wood were verified later with the help of a man named B. J. Roy. Mr. Roy was a salesman whose product was a commercial scratch remover for woodwork. He was in his seventies and ill, and he came to bid goodbye to Deulin, saying that he was going to the Northwest to die. Deulin asked him to send back some violin wood when he got there, and he also gave him precise instructions as to the type of wood which was wanted. Needless to say, Mr. Roy didn't die. He regained his health and eventually he and his family established a lumber business which continued to supply Deulin with wood. Deulin at this particular time was in great need of large quantities of wood because he was the chief supplier of commercial grade instruments for the Detroit Board of Education and other school systems. The wood sent to Deulin was used by the now defunct Jackson-Guldan Co. of Columbus, Ohio, to make violins which Deulin marketed under the trade name "The Golden Strad". In 1925-26 alone more than one thousand of these violins (made according to his pattern and specifications, and with the wood which he supplied) were made for Deulin. For commercial grade violins they had a surprisingly good tone which he attributes in large part to the fact that the wood used came from Washington and British Columbia.

For the benefit of those makers who wish to cut their own wood, we will now outline those principles which guide Deulin in his choice of wood. He believes that the best violin tone wood is spruce and maple that has been cut from a dead tree. It is best for the wood to age on the stump; the longer the tree has been dead, the better the wood. The reason why British Columbia wood is so good, believes Deulin, is related to soil and climatic conditions. The proportion of resins in the wood is just enough not to discourage the formation of dry rot; remember again that it is dry rot that the violin maker wants. The proportion of resins in spruce grown in Alaska, for instance, is usually too high to encourage dry rot.

A number of questions might be asked Deulin at this point. If dry rot is desirable, what about the possible presence of worms? Deulin replies that in his experience with British Columbia wood, nine times out of ten there will be no worms present. Another question: does he recommend the cutting of live trees? He does not particularly recommend this but recognizes that this is the method most generally used. There are certain disadvantages in cutting a live tree, however. The wood should be prepared shortly after cutting and of course it will be necessary to age the wood for a much longer period of time before it can be used by the violin maker. These disadvantages are in large part eliminated if the tree is cut after having been dead for some time. A third question: how will the use of dead wood affect the tap tones of violin plates? Deulin believes it is a mistake to deliberately choose wood which has a ringing tone. The deader the sound of the wood, the better it is for violin making. In all of the old master violins which he has repaired, Deulin has found that the plate emitted a dull, hollow, or muffled tone, not a ringing one. The popular conception of a Stradivari walking, hammer in hand, through the forests near Cremona and searching for trees which emitted a ringing tone when tapped is one of the many myths of violin making which have not yet been lived down.

Because he usually must depend upon others for his wood supplies, it is not always possible to procure wood that is cut exactly to his specifications and he sometimes must be content with the best British Columbia wood he can get. After he had discovered the desirable qualities of British wood in the early 1920's, Deulin still occasionally used other wood

which he thought would be suitable for his own instruments. Since 1935, however, he has used British Columbia wood exclusively. The viola illustrated with this article was made by Deulin in 1957 entirely of British Columbia wood and is the instrument of Paul Armin, the violinist of the Armin String Quartet. This youthful ensemble, all members of the same family and from Windsor, Ontario, are becoming well known through the United States and Canada because of their frequent concert appearances. They have just been appointed quartet in residence at Indiana University. The dimensions of the Armin viola are as follows: body, length, 16" full; upper bouts, 7 1/4"; middle bouts, 5 1/4"; lower bouts, 9 1/2"; the string stop is 15". The viola is covered with a lustrous brownish yellow varnish.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

by Robert Hill

I must say thanks again for all the wonderful information contained in past issues. The Journal certainly keeps me on my toes. I have sent Mr. Skou an old broken Stainer Violin for his experiments, which he is very pleased about. I can't put all I want to say in this letter, so I will confine my talk to my recent activities. I have microtoned in all, 15 Violins, mostly with good results, but it is difficult to find Violins with top and bottom of the back thick enough to measure up to Mr. Skou's directions. Thus I am bound to tune belly at top and bottom in unison with a too thin back.

Congratulations on winning the prize for your violin. I see that the belly is in three pieces. After I read of this, and the article, Vibration Pattern by Arthur Walker (can this be where you got the idea for a three piece belly?) I got started right away on a belly. I used wood from a fruit packing case. I cut the center strip to length, planed it down to about five mm. Next I put it centrally over a small bridge, clamped it down far enough so that it would have the right lengthwise arching when released. This was done without heat or moisture, and it set in about four days. This kept horizontal reeds intact. Next, I glued side pieces to this and carved them to shape and microtoned the whole thing to the existing back. This is a very powerful fiddle, and in fact in some ways, it is the best instrument I have. Now, it seems to me that if results can be so good using this system with box wood, (nail holes and all, it is time I got hold of some decent wood and try for something really good. Could you supply this wood for me, Don? A center piece 1 3/4 inch broad, say 5 mm thick, and long enough for a Violin, along with two side pieces thick enough to carve out, and a piece for bass bar. If you can supply this, please let me know first what the cost will be. Some of the woods supplied here for Violins is not worth using, but I am certain that if I get some from you, it will be the genuine article.

I have been collecting a lot of information about varnishes and fillers which will take sometime to put together but I will send it to you at a later date. However, I must mention the following in passing... The drying of linseed oil. It appears that linseed oil can be conditioned to dry instantly, and without adding driers. For example, in the manufacture of printing ink, the oil is never boiled, but gently heated for a length of time depending on the use the ink is put to. For newspaper print, if the oil is heated for too long a period, it dries actually before the type touches the paper, or else the paper sticks to the rollers. If the heating period is too short, the paper leaves the rollers easy enough, but the paper pages stick to each other. It appears that the trying time can be controlled to within split second timing. Each printer has his own special formula which is kept a very close secret. It may be a mistake to boil the oil. What do you think?

Robert Hill
18 Mardale Crescent,
Edinburgh 10, Scotland.

A THANK YOU

We would like to give Mr. and Mrs. G. Gow (Apex Printing) our sincere thanks for all the help they gave us in putting out this Commemorative Issue. Also, we would like to say "Thank you" for the help they gave Don, particularly with the Jan. -Feb. issue when he was too ill to do all the work himself.

Ed.

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* * * * *

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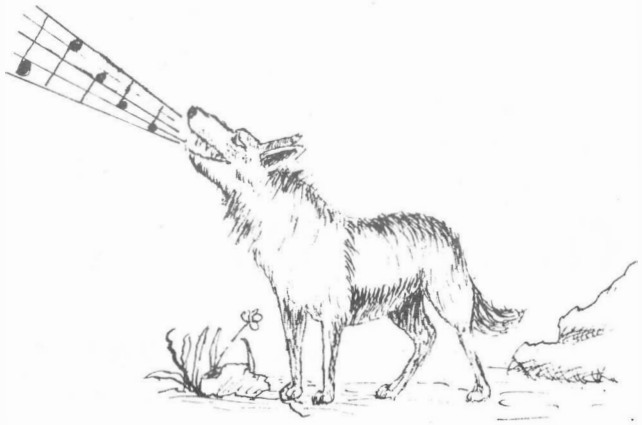
Wolf Notes

by The Editor



We have had some favorable letters regarding the formation of a Library. Any new ideas or suggestions our readers may have concerning a Library would be appreciated.

You will shortly be receiving, either with your Journal, or separately, literature and a form concerning the proposed Directory. As we are temporary Editors, we cannot take too much on ourselves. It is our opinion, however, that a Directory such as that suggested, would do a great deal towards bringing violin-makers into closer contact, if only by mail. We have seen similar directories which were very useful and enjoyable for those concerned.

* * * * * * *

Academy Road
RFD #1 Suncook,
N.H., U.S.A.
18 Nov. 1962.

"Dear Don:

I sure enjoy every issue and hope that the new subscribers will be ever on the increase. I can't see how anyone interested in Violin-making that can read English would want to be without it. There just isn't anything else like it. I especially liked the article on different woods by George Wright. I was glad to read his high regard for Eastern Sugar Maple as that is one of our principal trees here in N. H. His was grown in B.C., which probably gave it faster growth than most of our forest grown trees. Evidently he has never tried our eastern red maple or swamp maple (Acer rubrum). It is softer and faster growing that sugar maple and a darker colored wood. It might compare with broad leaf maple for density. I noticed that he had never tried Balsam fir either, which grows here in N. H. as well as up into Eastern Canada. An amateur maker I wrote to in Ohio said he preferred red maple but had only been able to get a hold of one well seasoned board of it. Wright mentioned an eastern bird's eye maple which could have been either red or sugar maple. I have some beautiful pieces of that seasoned over 100 years, but it doesn't seem very resonant as he mentioned and with its difficulty in working didn't think I would try it.

I haven't done anything on making since I moved last March. I don't usually in the summer anyway but with so many things to do I haven't gotten straightened out yet. Just beginning to work in the basement and haven't even got a bench down there yet. A lot of the magazine articles on woodworking seem to go for the peninsula type bench with just one end against a wall and one article recently was on an island bench. I think I'll try a peninsular one as I'd still like to be handy to a shelf to put my most used tools on especially when the top of the bench is most covered by a project. Latterly in the basement I've been working on a stand that my bandsaw is on and find it really handy to be able to walk all around it. My benches have always been the conventional against the wall type.

I haven't heard from Norman Miller lately, but I guess its because I haven't written, but notice he hasn't had an article in the Journal lately.

Keep up the good work with the Journal. Wish I could get another subscriber for you but violin makers are few and far between around here.

Sincerely,
Wendell"

* * * * * * * *

455 Fountain Avenue,
Brooklyn 8, New York.
Feb. 6, 1963

"Dear Don:

I thank you for your copy of the Violin Makers Journal I received and found it most interesting and instructive, and for your best wishes, your picture of yourself and the fully illustrated violin you constructed. I never before saw such beautiful wood used in any violin.

Sincerely,

Bernhard M. Biber"

31 January, 1963

"Dear Don:

For many months now we have been wanting to write you and compliment you on the wonderful Violin Makers' Journal which you edit. We find much of interest in it and I personally do not see how you gather so much informative material together for each issue. We know how much time our little "World of Strings" takes, so my hat's off to you, and congratulations for a job very well done.

Sincerely,
William Moennig & Son. Inc.
2039 Locust St.,
Philadelphia 3, PA. "

* * * * * * * *

15 Jan. 1963

"Dear Don:

I am rather curious to know if any reader of the Journal has played on the type of instrument which Heron Allen describes in his book as a "vagary". The instrument I speak about is the one with no protruding edges and the ribs are externally convex in section. I played on such a fiddle for a number of years, and the tone was excellent on G D and A strings but the E string was a little harsh. Heron Allen describes these instruments as being factory productions, but I would have thought that forming the ribs that I describe would be a most difficult mass production job. The label inside the specimen that I possessed stated that the maker was one "Regat Rubas" of St. Petersbourg and the varnish (?) was BLACK! A monstrosity no doubt, but, as I say, the three lower strings were really sweet toned.

None of the fiddle fraternity in the old College orchestra that I was once associated with had ever seen such an instrument. The outline, incidentally, was quite "normal".

Very best wishes to all in Canada,
Yours sincerely,
Harvey Greenway"

* * * * * * * *

"Dear Don:

Thanks for yours of the 26th ult. Say, those pictures are good. And your violin shows excellent workmanship; you have every reason to be proud of it. I am wondering if you did not use panchromatic film for the photographs, because the detail and colour rendering in black and white are so good. And the wood!

In a poor contrast, I am enclosing blow-ups of my cello and quartet. I used panatomic, which is a fine grain film, but despite care in exposure, the results are disappointing. Anyway, it will give you an idea of the work of a kindred spirit.

I did consider rigging up a jig on the lines suggested by Harry Wakes but when you have three instruments to consider, and at different heights, that poses a problem. So, finally, I cut up three ordinary wire coat hangers, choosing the thin wire type, and twisted them to curl around the two upper pegs, with an eyelet at the end to hold a screw. I laid the back drop of an old off-white blanket against my garage wall, then screwed in these hooks through the blanket and hung the fiddles and viola on them. As my wife paints, I used her tube of casein white and painted over the black of the wire, and the end result as shown in the picture is not too noticeable. The cello was held upright by a drill-press vise gripping its extended end pin between two blocks of wood with a hole drilled between the blocks. Also, the smaller instruments had balls of paper taped to their backs so that they stood out perpendicularly.

Hope you like the effort. School is out now and I've got two basses, 4 celli and fiddles awaiting me in the shop, so - back to work! Cheerio!

Yours truly,

Fred H. Artindale"
1243 Palm Street
San Luis Obispo,
California.

* * * * * * * *

One of our members, Leo Lynch, would like some information.

"Here is a question I'd like to ask such men as Michelman and Carmen White and other soft gum users. How are they to get or achieve the high tone that Justin Gilbert talked and argued about so often with a soft toned (low toned) gum such as resin, rosin, mastic, domar, etc. Of course, Michelman's process of potassium, then neutralized by alum makes these gums a little more solid but to my way of thinking they still do not have the high tone of the classical violin.

* * * * * * * *

H. W. Ratcliffe, Cremona 5 Thornfield Ave., Moor End, Lockwood, Huddersfield, England, writes as follows:

"Dear Don:

Many thanks for your letter of the 6th. I note you had a good Hobby Show. It would be interesting if Mr. Skou would submit one of his own instruments to

compare for tonal results with some of the others. I do not agree with any staining of the violin before varnishing, this can sometimes spoil the look of the finished instrument. Of course there are thousands of ways this can be done, but anything of a coloured nature applied to bare wood will sink in at the ends of the pine under the fingerboard end and tail piece end, unless some good priming has been applied previously. Re Mr. Skou's method; there is one little point which I do not quite agree with in his system--that is, he says after the varnish has had time to set and harden the microtones will be altered. Now this may be so but it could not have been Stradivaris' method, as there is not much evidence he took off the belly to retune his fiddles. I do agree there is some relation between the two boards and an article from Mr. Sanborn would be useful as a comparison of the two methods. Mr. Skou has gone to quite a lot of trouble to give us his own ideas for which the fiddle world should be very grateful. I understand he also thins the thickness of the bass bar a little from the centre to the ends and places this a little nearer to the bottom bout, i.e., not equidistant from the ends of the plate. This was also the late Justin Gilbert's method of placing the bar.

Now as to evaluation of one's own violins, this is a bit dodgy. Every maker will claim his fiddles to be the last word. Now there can be no doubt we have some very good makers in every country today. For instance Mr. Harry Wake, from the photographs in the last issue, this looks to be a real fine job, and he is doing great service with his very excellent articles on the practical side of fiddle making, more power to his elbow. Some years ago I challenged any violin maker in England to produce a better toned violin than my own make, these to be tried with any named virtuoso in any Hall and to have a critical audience too to pass judgment on the results of the test. I did not get any takers, my own have at times been compared privately with Strads and come off very well tonally, but it is folly for any maker to say my violins are better than any Strad etc. This is only a personal statement which does not carry any weight. Many of these people have never played on a genuine Strad or Guarneri so they are not competent to say this. The wood itself is one of the chief things if this is not perfect, the result will certainly not be.

Re the microtones I would have no difficulty in comparing the pitch of one in the back with one in the belly, but to say what they were would be quite another thing and more difficult. I am very glad you are having success with this method, and, like hourself, I agree one's standard is bound to rise.

Do not worry about a fiddle that goes off after varnishing. It will ultimately come back again if it has been properly varnished. My first violin made fifty years ago had a reasonably good tone when first made. However, I was not satisfied with it and hung it up in the workshop. Here it laid for six years when one day a friend said "What's this instrument doing here with all this dust on it". I replied "Oh it's only a first attempt at fiddle making. So we took it down and strung it up. The tone was first class and my friend went balmy over it. The G string was quite as good as a fine Cremona fiddle. This instrument was varnished with Millington's varnish. This is now no longer on the market. I do not however attribute the tone to the varnish in any way, just good wood and patience in making it.

Re blowing ones own horn, we shall always have this. You know it is only natural. I am afraid we have a lot of these in England. No names, no pack drill.

I sent Mr. Nicholas a piece of Sitka spruce for a fiddle which he says turned out very well. One of my best had a silver spruce belly sent to me by Justin Gilbert with whom I was very friendly. Anyway I hope the microtone system will be fully tried out by various makers as it seems to have possibilities.

Yours sincerely,
H. W. Ratcliffe "

NOTICE

You will note that Don White's advertisement for wood is in this issue. As this is a Commemorative Issue of the Journal we decided to leave the ad in. However, as Mrs. White is not able to handle the sale of the wood at this time, she would appreciate it if you would hold any orders for wood until the April issue of the Journal. Orders will then be filled if she can find someone to assist in making them up. Those orders already received and not filled will be looked after as soon as possible.

Thank you.

The Editors