

**THE ORPHEON FOUNDATION**  
**MUSEUM OF HISTORICAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS**  
**In the service of a living tradition...**

The collection now contains over 100 instruments (viola da gamba, viola d'amore, violin, viola, violoncello, violone, baryton) dating mostly from 1560 to 1780, all restored to their original playing conditions and placed at the disposal of members of the Orpheon Orchestra, Orpheon Consort, and professional musicians all over Europe for concerts, recordings and study purposes. Its owner, Prof. José Vázquez of the University for Music and the Performing Arts Vienna holds that it is the living acoustical heritage - the sounds that these instruments produce for those living today - that interests us, and not their mere decorative flair as objets trouvés from aristocratic residences from our distant past. We wish to hear what these instruments have to say and we wish to learn from them about the manner of performance of their musical heritage from the Renaissance, the Baroque and the Classical Periods.

**The Viola da gamba Family**

**The Violin Family or Viola da braccio Family**

The instruments which comprise the collection are grouped into these two main families. It is important to note that the two families - contrary to common opinion - are not related to each other: the viola da gamba is not at all a predecessor of the violin. They arose almost simultaneously, but in different parts of Europe.

The viola da gamba was born in the culturally heterogeneous region of Valencia, Spain at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. The first painting of a viola da gamba being played by an angel, found in Xativa (Valencia), dates from 1475-85. A photo of this painting is to be found in Hall 2. The instrument derived frets, the number of strings (six) and the tuning (in fourths, with a third in the middle) from the lute or the vihuela (a predecessor of the guitar). In essence, the viol, as the viola da gamba is called in English, is a bowed guitar. The playing position is on the knees or between the legs, therefore the name "da gamba", from the Italian word meaning "leg".

The violin descended onto Northern Italy in the hands of wandering minstrels most likely from Poland or the far North. The first paintings of a complete quartet of viole da braccio were painted by the exquisite Renaissance artist, Gaudenzio Ferrari and are to be found in the cathedrals of Saronno and elsewhere; these date from ca. 1535. These paintings are also to be seen at the exhibition (hallway leading to Room 4). The violin has commonly four strings and is tuned in fifths. There are no frets on the fingerboard. The violin is derived from the medieval vielle or rebec, both played on the shoulder, for which reason the Italians called it the "viola da braccio", meaning "arm-violin".

These two independent families lived and worked together in harmony for about 250 years. The viola da gamba disappeared gradually in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The violin has come to represent the highest achievement of Western musical tradition. The modern symphony orchestra is based on the sound of this family of instruments.

### The Viola da gamba Family

Like all instruments of the Renaissance, the viola da gamba came in all sizes, representing the different ranges of the human voice. These are called:

- Treble viola da gamba (tuning: d",a',e',c',g,d)
- Alto viola da gamba (historically very rarely used: c",g',d',b-flat,f,c)
- Tenor viola da gamba (g',d',a,f,c,G)
- Bass viola da gamba (d'.a,e,c,G,D)
- Great bass viola da gamba (g,d,A,F,C,GG)
- Double bass viola da gamba (d,a,e,C,GG,DD)

In addition to this, a smaller member was added in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the pardessus de viole, tuned one octave higher than the tenor (g",d",a',f',c',g), but sometimes having only five strings (g",d",a',d',g). All members of the viola da gamba family may be seen in this exhibition!

### The Violin Family or The Viola da braccio Family

- Violin (e",a',d',g)
- Viola (a',d',g,c)
- Violoncello (a,d,G,CC)
- Double bass (g,D,A,EE and sometimes CC)

There were also several sizes which were used very seldom. One, the violoncello piccolo, is a four or five-string version, with an added upper string tuned to e'. Another, extremely rare, a five-string violin with variable tunings. All these members of the violin family are on display in this exhibition, too!

### The Viola d'amore

From the 17<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, two other types of string instruments were also occasionally used. In the wake of the expansion of European hegemony, the discoveries in the Far East, principally in India and China, inspired the construction of musical instruments in Europe, as in the case of the sympathetic strings of the viola d'amore and the baryton.

The **viola d'amore** is a type of violin, but with six or seven gut strings on the fingerboard which are played with a bow, and another six or seven thin metal strings running under the fingerboard, which resonate when the upper strings are bowed and produce a magical, silvery resonance which manages to charm every listener. This special color was used to express delicate and amorous sentiments, as the name foretells.

### The Baryton

The **baryton** is essentially a viola da gamba with six or seven playing strings but with many thin metal strings running under the fingerboard, which however, can also be plucked with the thumb of the left hand while the other strings are bowed: a very amusing and delightful effect. Since Prince Esterhazy adored (and played) this instrument, his Capellmeister, Joseph Haydn composed a large body of magnificent works for the baryton.

Two viola d'amore and one baryton are displayed in this exhibition!

### **The Collection of Original Bows**

The history of the bow is thoroughly documented by the original bows in the collection as well as by copies of historical bows, where no original is to be found. Since 1500 the bow has undergone significant transformations, which influence to a high degree the performance of the artist on his instrument. In fact, a bow can totally transform the sound of a viol or a violin, something which few know.

### **The Visual and Acoustical Documentation**

Another important aspect of the work of the Orpheon Foundation is the recording of the sonorous heritage the collection represents in the form of compact discs, catalogs, postcards, which are available at the door. There are recordings of the viola da gamba consort, the Trios by Haydn and Lidl and the monumental double-choir motets by Johann Ludwig Bach, recorded with nine violas da gamba of the collection.

These may also be ordered via our web site, which you may wish to recommend to interested friends. We are also interested in bringing this collection to other cities and other countries and would therefore be very thankful for your recommendation.

[www.orpheon.org](http://www.orpheon.org)

## ON THE VIOLA DA GAMBA

“If one were to judge musical instruments according to their ability to imitate the human voice, and if one were to esteem naturalness as the highest accomplishment, so I believe that one cannot deny the viol the first prize, because it can imitate the human voice in all its modulations, even in its most intimate nuances: that of grief and joy”  
(Harmonie Universelle, 1636)

Thus praised the French theoretician Marin Mersenne in 1636 the viola da gamba\*, this most noble of all string instruments, which graced during its flowering - from 1480 to 1780, i.e. from the Renaissance to the Classical Period - court, church and chamber with its presence. Because of its delicate sound, rich in harmonics and in subtle inflections, the viol was considered the most perfect imitator of the human voice, which, in the wake of humanism, had been elevated to be the measure of all things musical, and therefore became a paramount medium for sophisticated music.

Baldassare Castiglione -“Il Libro del Cortegiano” of 1528 - considers the playing of viols indispensable for the education of a nobleman:

“Music is not just a decoration, but a necessity for a courtier. It should be practiced in the presence of ladies, because it predisposes one to all sorts of thoughts... And the music of four viole ad arco is very enchanting, because it is very delicate, sweet and artfull.”

Spellbound by the ideas of Italian Humanism, the art-loving princes Francis I (†1547) and Henry VIII (†1547) brought not just the leading Italian painters, sculptors and thinkers, but also Italian composers and musicians to France and to England respectively. At the time when Neoplatonic Thought was in everyone's head, Petrarca and Ariosto in everyone's mouth, the viola da gamba was in everyone's hand!

Postlude:

We had our Grave Musick, Fancies of 3,4, 5 and 6 parts to the Organ, Interpos'd (now and then) with some Pavins, Allmaines, Solemn and Sweet Delightful Ayres; all which were (as it were) so many Pathetical Stories, Rhetorical, and Sublime Discourses ; Subtil and Accute Argumentations, so Suitable, and Agreeing to the Inward, Secret, and Intellectual Faculties of the Soul and Mind ; that to set Them forth according to their True Praise, there are no Words Sufficient in Language ; yet what I can best speak of Them, shall be only to say, That They have been to my self, (and many others) as Divine Raptures, Powerfully Captivating all our unruly Faculties, and Affections, (for the Time) and disposing us to Solidity, Gravity, and a Good Temper, making us capable of Heavenly, and Divine Influences.  
Tis Great Pity Few Believe Thus Much, but Far Greater, that so Few Know It.

(Thomas Mace, Musick's Monument, 1676)

## ON THE VIOLIN OR THE VIOLA DA BRACCIO

A quoy l'on peut adjoüster que ses sons ont plus d'effet sur l'esprit des auditeurs que ceux du Luth ou des autres instrumens à chorde, parce qu'ils sont plus vigoureux & percent davantage, à raison de la grande tension de leurs chordes & de leurs sons aigus. Et ceux qui ont entendu les 24. Violons du Roy, advoüent qu'ils n'ont jamais rien ouy de plus ravissant ou de plus puissant: de là vient que cet instrument est le plus propre de tous pour faire danser, comme l'on experimente dans les balets, & partout ailleurs. Or les beautez & les gentillesses que l'on pratique dessus sont en si grand nombre, que l'on le peut preferer à tous les autres instrumens, car les coups de son archet sont parfois si ravissans, que l'on n'a point de plus grand mescontentement que d'en entendre la fin, particulièrement lors qu'ils sont meslez des tremblemens & des flattemens de la main gauche, qui contraignent les Auditeurs de confesser que le Violon est le Roy des instrumens.

...ceux qui jugent de l'excellence des airs & des chansons, ont des raisons assez puissantes pour maintenir qu'il est le plus excellent, dont la meilleur est prise des grands effets qu'il a sur les passions, & sur les affections du corps & de l'esprit.

Etienne Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, 1636

## Hall 1 The Viola da gamba Family

The viola da gamba is not a predecessor of the violin, but is a completely different family altogether. It first appeared in Valencia, ca. 1470 - 1480 and was in vogue until about the French Revolution, although some still played the viol until 1800. Unlike the violin, whose form was already firmly standardized by the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> C., the viola da gamba was built in a wide variety of shapes and forms: no standard model was ever attained nor striven for. Indeed the divergences in construction principles during the period from 1480 to 1780 yielded remarkably different acoustical results, so that one cannot really speak of "the" viola da gamba. An Italian viol of the Renaissance has literally very few things in common with, say, an English Tudor viol or a French viol serving His Majesty in Versailles. Each instrument has thus to be examined individually. But this is the exciting thing about this multifaceted "family" of instruments which you are about to get to know...

The viol was an outspokenly aristocratic instrument; as it formed an integral part of the education of a gentleman, like lute, harpsichord, singing. It was used principally for serious music in cultured surroundings, as opposed to the violin, which in the beginning was used by professional musicians and minstrels for accompanying dancing and entertainment and thus was not considered suitable for persons of gentle breeding.

### The Viola da gamba in Consort Music

In the Renaissance, all instruments were built in families, representing the ranges of the human voice: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass. The viol consort was made up of instruments of different sizes: treble, tenor and bass being the most common. Two trebles, two tenors and two basses constituted a "chest of viols", which would ideally have been built by the same maker, although the literature for consort counts works of from two to up to seven players. Due to its delicate, rich and finely nuanced tone, the viol was employed preferentially in polyphony, either in combination with voices (motets, madrigals, chansons) or in the instrumental forms derived from these vocal models (*ricercare*, *canzona*, *tiento*, *fantasia*). It is principally in the *Fantasia* - the polyphonic form *par excellence* - that the greatest English masters - Byrd, Ferrabosco, Coperario, Lawes, Gibbons, Purcell - excelled: the most erudite thoughts, the most sublime poetry found expression here. In quality, these works cannot only be favourably compared with the very best in the poetical and theatrical genres of their English contemporaries, but also with the best of chamber music of all periods.

When therefore Mersenne wished to demonstrate the style of music suitable for the viola da gamba, he chose to print a six-part fantasia by Alfonso Ferrabosco!

### The Main Instruments in this Hall

#### A. An English viola da gamba consort (London: 1620 - 1687)

Two treble (soprano) violas da gamba and a magnificent bass viol by **William Turner, London.**

**Dates of known instruments: 1647 -1656**

Treble by Treble viol by **Henry Jaye, London, ca. 1620** (attribution: John Pringle)

Bass viol by **Henry Lewis, London, 1687**

These bellies of these instruments were constructed by assembling several (five to seven) separate boards of spruce and bending them over heat. This typically English method, which may have also been used by Tielke (see other display case in this hall), produces a very different response and a different sound than the traditional method of construction, which consists of digging out the belly from a thick plank of wood, as used in violin making.

### **B. North German Viola da gamba by Joachim Tielke, Hamburg, 1683**

Considered to be the "Stradivarius" of the viola da gamba, Tielke's instruments are usually richly decorated, since they were intended for aristocratic hands. Prince Leopold of Anhalt -Coethen played a viola da gamba by Tielke. Note the finely carved head, the decoration on the peg box and the applique on the back of the instrument, which is slightly curved, like on a violin. The belly was most likely constructed by bending the strips of wood, as in the English models.

This particular viola da gamba was in the hands of famous soloists since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> C. Christian Döbereiner, a German soloist of the first decades of the century, performed on this instruments the Passions of Johann Sebastian Bach. Later, the very gifted cellist and viola da gamba player, Eva Heinitz, purchased the instrument. It is likely that she performed concerti by Tartini and Telemann with the Berliner Philharmonik before emigrating to Seattle, Washington just before the Second World War. It is a particular privilege to have this instrument in the collection.

### **Five-string violin by Joachim Tielke, Hamburg, ca. 1700**

Only 9 known to exist in the world. Special instrument, used on special occasions. Lion's head, cut-through scroll: typical of the work of Tielke.

### **C. Austrian and South German schools**

An important bass viola da gamba by **Jakob Stainer, Absam (Innsbruck), 1671**

Dendrochronology results: year rings from 1504 until 1633

During 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> C. Stainer was universally considered the finest instrument maker in the world. His instruments were many times more expensive than those of Stradivarius, whose fame began to rise only towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> C. Heinrich Biber, Johann Sebastian Bach, Leopold Mozart and many others performed on his instruments.

Note: High arching of top, use of bird's eye maple - very beautiful, wonderful proportions;  
Unusual: the rosette, which was gilded with gold.

Bass viola da gamba by **Johann Seeloss, Linz, 1691**

A famous family of instrument makers, came from Füssen and settled in Venice, Innsbruck, Linz, Vienna and elsewhere. This viola da gamba is in particularly good state of preservation.

Bass viola da gamba by **Michael Albanus, Graz, 1706**

One of the youngest bass viols of the collection! Michael was the son of Matthias Albanus, Bozen (Bolzano) in Tyrol (a violin by him in Hall 4), settled in Graz and founded the violin making school there.

**Two treble viols in festoon shape, ca. 1730** (leaf shape) - very baroque form, found in Italy, Austria, Germany, England. Dendrochronology has demonstrated that these two viols were made not just at the same time, but also from the very same tree!

Other treble viols by Leonhardt Maussiel, Matthias Joannes Koldiz, Joann Andreas Kämbl and anonymous. The treble viola da gamba called sometimes "violetta" in Germany and Austria. There are some solo works for this instrument: Molter, Finger, Schwarzkopf and others composed especially for the violetta.

**D. Portrait of Carl Friedrich Abel** (painter: Gainsborough, Reynolds or other) - one of the last great masters of the viola da gamba. His father worked with Johann Sebastian Bach in Coethen. Carl Friedrich later went to study with Bach in Leipzig, later settling in London, organising an immensely successful concert series with a son of Bach, Johann Christian. His fantasies - improvisations on the viola da gamba - literally moved people to tears. Abel's symphonies were played all over Europe. His style greatly influenced the development of Classical Music, particularly Mozart, who studied and transcribed his works.

## Hall 2: Magical Instruments

### 1. Painting of the oldest viola da gamba in history

Xativa (near Valencia), Spain, dating from 1475-1485. Already shows a classical viola da gamba outline, c-holes, deep ribs, five-strings, frets on the fingerboard, very curved bridge to facilitate playing. Invented in Spain, the viola da gamba went then in 1492 with the court of Rodrigo Borja (Italian: Borgia) to Rome: Rodrigo was elected to the papal throne as Pope Alexander VI. From Rome the viola da gamba spread all over Italy, then to Germany and the North: it became a great fashion almost over night!

### 2. Pardessus de viole - the smallest member of the viola da gamba family

Two models: à 6 and à 5 cordes

**Pardessus de viole with six strings, Flemish, early 18<sup>th</sup> C.**

**Pardessus de viole with five strings, French, Mid-18<sup>th</sup> C.**

Designed to enable noble persons to play the fashionable but difficult violin music (the violin was not yet considered as acceptable instrument for aristocratic hands).

Nevertheless many composers soon wrote specifically for the pardessus: the best among them were the Family of De Caix d'Hervelois, Dollé, Marc, Blainville, Barrier and others. It may surprise many that there is at least as much literature written for the pardessus as for the bass viola da gamba!

### 3. An exquisite bow for a pardessus de viole by Louis Tourte père

This bow, a very early work of this craftsman, ca. 1740, was purchased at Sotheby's together with the Flemish pardessus

### 4. Another very fine bow for a pardessus de viole, possibly French, 18<sup>th</sup> C.

## STRINGS WITH SYMPATHY

Succumbing to the influence of musical instruments entering Europe from the Far East during the Age of Discovery and Colonisation, most notably from India and China, European luthiers started experimenting with sympathetic strings on bowed instruments. These thin metal strings running under the fingerboard are not accessible to the bow, but simply resonate magically when the upper strings are bowed producing a wondrously enchanted atmosphere.

The viola d'amore appears in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century received its name for just that reason: the magical resonance of its sympathetic strings. It was used by many composers for special effects: Heinrich Biber, Attilio Ariosti, Antonio Vivaldi dedicated marvelous works for the viola d'amore. There are basically two types or models.

**The viola d'amore with the label "Johann Christoph Leidolff"** is of the 12-string variety.

Stylistically, this instrument would most likely have been built by Johann Schorn in Salzburg, ca. 1700. It is completely in its original condition, including bridge, tailpiece, fingerboard. Even some of the strings are original!

**The viola d'amore by Salomon, Paris, ca. 1740** is of the 14-string type. This instrument retains its original condition: it was never altered. It is in perfect state of preservation.

## **The Baryton**

Even more curious than the viola d'amore, the baryton has very many sympathetic strings running behind the neck. However these strings, although not bowed, can be plucked by the thumb of the left hand of the player, thus giving it the possibility of providing its own bass accompaniment while the upper strings - six or seven in number - are bowed. This technique was brought to perfection in the late 17<sup>th</sup> C. and is so extremely difficult, that few players today perform it! Alfred Lessing in Düsseldorf and Jeremy Brooker in Great Britain are among the few who dare to perform the solo repertoire of this instrument.

About the name: according to a story, this instrument was invented by an English condemned criminal while awaiting execution. The Duke was so thrilled with the invention that he pardoned him, thus the name "**Viola di Pardone**", as it was known in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The later word "baryton" is a corruption of the Italian.

## **Violoncello by Anton Posch, Vienna, ca. 1700**

This very big instrument (the body measures 81 cm!) was designed to give power and majesty to the bass of the orchestra. It retains its original size. The majority of orchestral violoncelli of the 17<sup>th</sup> C. were cut down to reduce the size to the normal standard of today (74-76 cm.). This is the fate suffered by even the Stradivari instruments. Michael Praetorius describes and portrays this type of five-string violoncello in his Syntagma Musicum of 1619, according to whom the added low string would be tuned in either GG or FF.

## **Violoncello piccolo, five strings, Venetian, ca. 1700**

The violoncello piccolo with five strings, a popular solo instrument in the Baroque, drew the attention of Johann Sebastian Bach and others. The top string is tuned to e, thus facilitating playing high passage work.

## **Violoncello piccolo, four strings, German, ca. 1800**

This type of small violoncello is frequently encountered. The tuning would be G,d,a,e'.

## **Four particular violins:**

### **1. Violin in Renaissance form by Anton Gedler, Füssen, ca. 1790**

Gedler was known to copy ornamental forms of violins, perhaps from Renaissance paintings.

### **2. Violin from the Allemannisch School, Schwarzwald (Black Forest), ca. 1700**

This very quaint violin, with inlay work of floral design in various colours, belongs to a school of instrument making, the Alemannisch School, which died out in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> C.

### **3. Violin, possibly 16<sup>th</sup> C.**

Perhaps a very early violin, with an archaic shape: a viola da braccio of sorts. Dendrochronology has not yet been made. Recent acquisition.

### **4. Violin, Brescian School, perhaps late 16<sup>th</sup> C.**

This may also be a very old violin from Brescia (the f-holes point to this). Dendrochronology has not yet been done but the attribution is by Andrew Dipper.

## **The Collection of Historical Bows**

documents the history of the bow from 1600 until 1850. Please consult the informative panels adjacent the display cases in Halls 2 and 4.

### Hall 3 The Viola da gamba in Italy: 1580 to 1700

Almost all of the instruments in this hall are of paramount importance, for makers and players alike. Since there are almost no extant viols from the Renaissance in private collections and since none of those in museums are in playing condition, current views on these instruments are forcedly based on experience with so-called copies. An encounter with the following instruments will serve to dispel any doubts about the extremely high qualities of craftsmanship and sonorities of these instruments and will place the Renaissance and Early Baroque viola da gamba from Italy in a totally different light.

#### **Bass viola da gamba by Ventura Linarolo, Venice, 1585**

Dendrochronology results: year rings from 1352 to 1564.

This extremely fine and rare instrument, built in Venice at the time of the Republic's zenith of musical prowess - a brilliant period, which bequeathed to posterity the legacies of the Gabrielis, Merulo, Castello, Guami, Bassano, Monteverdi and many others - bears witness to the achievements of the Art of Venetian Instrument Making from its finest side.

Since this astonishing viol unquestionably once stood in the service of a palace or a church in Venice and since those fabled musicians, the Gabrielis, Merulo, Monteverdi did render their services for decades in that city, then it can easily be deduced that this viol most assuredly once or many times stood in front of and played under the direction of those great masters. It is a privilege for us today that my colleagues and my students take this viol in their hands to rehearse and to perform Gabrieli, Merulo and Monteverdi on it today as it once did with those masters: in continuation of this living tradition.

#### **Bass viola da gamba by Giovanni Paolo Maggini, Brescia, ca. 1600**

Dendrochronology is not possible because the top was made with four strips of wood, however the opinion of Charles Beare, London, serves to substantiate the attribution.

This viola da gamba is an instrument of magnificent proportions, endowing it with a majestic presence. Viols made in the form of a violin were quite common not just in Italy, but all over Europe. In his "Division-Violist" of 1659 Christopher Simpson, perhaps the most prominent viol pedagogue in history, recommends viols built in this shape because "they sound sprightly, like a violin", thus making them suitable for solo playing. Although the back of this viols is flat, many were furnished with a curved back, as viols by Grancino, Boivin and Tielke, also shown in this exhibition.

#### **Bass viola da gamba by Giovanni Battista Grancino, Milano, 1697**

One of the most coveted instruments in the collection, this could have been either a violoncello or a viola da gamba. There are three reasons why it would be possible to think that it was originally a viol. 1. The original head was missing; it could have had five or six holes, therefore making it necessary to replace it when the instrument was restored as a cello. 2. The body has been enlarged. The original corpus measured only 72 cm. The restoration, carried out by Meinel in Germany around 1850, is so excellent, that only a very careful examination of the top could reveal the point where the wood was added. However this is clearly visible on the back. 3. The placement of the f-holes is very far apart, particularly if one thinks of the smaller dimensions of the original body. Therefore I chose to have it restored as a viola da gamba.

Stradivarius built at least six different models of bass viols, all based on the violoncello forms, which implies that the bodies were identical; only the number of strings was different. Some of his viols had flat, others rounded backs. He also built two different models of treble viols. The restoration of the Grancino viol used the forms and designs for viols by Stradivarius found in the museum in Cremona.

**Bass viola da gamba by Claude Boivin, Paris, ca. 1740**

With the shape of a violoncello, but with sloping shoulders., curved back.

This model was used in the 17<sup>th</sup> C.; judging from his portrait (ca. 1650), the famous violist, Hotman, played on such an instrument. Other makers in Paris who made similar instruments: Ouvrard, Salomon, Castagneri

**Contrabasso di viola da gamba, Venice or Veneto, 17<sup>th</sup> C.**

This is one of many instruments in the Baroque which are also commonly called "violone".. Member of the viola da gamba family, tuned one octave lower than the bass viola da gamba.. Note the very deep ribs.

There are three other types of Violone to be seen in the exhibition:

Double bass by Eberle - a very large instrument, four strings, standard tuning of today

Five-string Viennese bass by Johann Georg Thir, Vienna, 1750 (both in Hall 4)

**Treble viola da gamba or viola da braccio, Veneto (or Brescia)**

most likely 16<sup>th</sup> C. A recent acquisition (Dendrochronology will be done in the near future.)

**Treble viola da gamba (or da braccio) - provenance not known**

An instrument with this outline is to be seen on a woodcut in the Treatise, Regola Rubertina by Silvestro Ganassi, 1542-43. The restoration follows those general lines.

**Painting after Paolo Veronese, Venice, 16<sup>th</sup> C.**

depicting music-making. Note the introspective state of the interpreters, who seem to be completely submersed in the music, very typical of Renaissance aesthetics, reflecting the mild and soothing effect of music on man's soul. The instruments in this hall are ideally suited for this type of music-making.

**"Isn't it strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?"**

**William Shakespeare (Much ado about nothing)**

**Hall 4**  
**The Violin or Viola da braccio Family**

**The Italian Instruments**

**VIOLINS AND VIOLAS**

**\*Nicolò Amati, Cremona, 1669, large model**

Dendrochronology results: 1489 to 1658

The Amati Dynasty was founded by Andrea (†1577), who essentially standardized the violin, was continued by his sons, Gorilla and reached its pinnacle with Nicolò, his grandson. Nicolò was in turn the teacher of Antonio Stradivarius, Alessandro Ganglioni, many a whole generation of master craftsmen who carried the tradition all over the world. This violin is in very excellent state of preservation.

**\*Carlo Tester, Milano, ca. 1700**

In modern condition. This instrument is loaned out to outstanding artists for performance, recordings, and auditions. It will eventually be set up in Baroque dimensions.

**Antonio Pollusca, Rome, 1741**

The first baroque violin of the collection! Pollusca is probably from the North, , but, like his colleagues Techler, Plattner and others, settled in Rome. Bird's eye maple for the back.

**School of Goffriller (Veneto, ca. 1700)**

Opinions vary as to the attribution; nevertheless the violin sound very good.

**\*Viola, Milano, ca. 1700**

Papers by Hill and Machold. This viola suffered the fate of nearly all very large 17<sup>th</sup> C. instruments: it was cut down to a smaller dimension for ease of playing. It is now 41.8cm long. The original could have well been up to 44 cm.

**VIOLONCELLI:**

**\*Simon Champagne, Rome, 1692**

According to a musicologist from Rome, Dr. Agnes Pavanello, Simone and his son both played in the orchestra of Arcangelo Corelli, but Simone also made instruments. Thus we can be certain with no doubt whatsoever that this violoncello once stood in front of Corelli and played under his direction. It is a great honour to have this instrument in the collection. It has already been used to play the soli in the Concerti Grossi by Corelli and Georg Muffat!

**\*Violoncello, North Italy, ca. 1760**

One of the earliest acquisitions, bought in Spain. A very fine instrument for solo playing, with a quick response. The back and sides are from a particular species of maple which grows in the Apennine Mountains in Central Italy.

**\*Violoncello, Venetian (Montagnana School), ca. 1700**

An excellent violoncello employed in the solos of the concerti grossi. The generally wide dimensions remind one of the Montagnana style.

### **\*Violoncello, Milano ca. 1780**

Papers by Hill. A very plain but incredibly good sound in solo cello for modern playing, we intend to keep it in modern set up. This instrument has been frequently loaned out for recordings, competitions (several prices!) and auditions.

### **Austrian Instruments: Tyrol, Vienna, Prague**

The Austrian Empire brought forth many outstanding families of violin makers ever since the beginning of the trade. The main celebrity, Jakob Stainer, whose style dominated the entire Baroque Period, became the most copied master of all times. His followers are to be found in Italy (Bologna, Florence, Rome), Tyrol (Bolzano), Germany, Holland, England and elsewhere. Unlike the German violins, which generally produce a piercing and hard sound, the Austrian violin has a very pleasant quality, enabling it to blend well with the instruments around it: it has charm, warmth and "Schmalz". The choice of wood is always very excellent in Viennese instruments.

### **The Tyrolean Instruments**

#### **\*Violin by Matthias Albanus, Bozen, ca. 1680**

This maker lived a long time and underwent several changes in style, basically following Stainer and Amati. His son, Michael, settled in Graz. (See viola da gamba in Hall 1). The violin has one of the most beautiful heads in the collection, a beautifully sculptured back, a reddish varnish which shows signs of craquellé (typical of this master).

#### **\*Violin by Joannes Jais, Bozen, 1774**

Like Mathias Albanus, Johann Jais (1752-1781) worked in Bozen, a Tyrolean town on the southern slopes of the Alps in present-day Italy. His works show many of the characteristics of the Tyrolean School, which at this point was also very much under the influence of the Italians. Typical for this school is the very careful selection of the woods: beautiful hazel spruce for the belly and bird's eye maple for the back and ribs. (not in display at this exhibition, but see internet site!)

### **The Leidolff Family**

#### **\*Nikolas Leidolff**

Pater patriae. Large \*violoncello of 1690, retaining the dimensions of the 17<sup>th</sup> C. An irresistibly beautiful \*bass viola da gamba with a fawn's head (note the leaves instead of hair) and a beautiful rosette. The stunning viola with a label by his son, Johann Christoph may be by Nikolas.

#### **\*Johann Christoph Leidolff**

There are four violins, one \*viola (perhaps by the father) and one violoncello in the collection. Two of the violins shown are literally twins - same year, same construction. One retains its original neck and fingerboard. A viola d'amore in original condition is shown in Hall 2.

#### **Joseph Ferdinand Leidolff**

Only one violin in the collection (not on display because it is in use in Switzerland).

### **The Thir Family**

#### **\*Johann Georg Thir**

A truly outstanding maker, judging from the \*\*violin, the viola, the violoncello and \*\*\*the fabulous five-string double bass. This last instrument must have been ordered by the Imperial House or by a very rich patron, such as Prince Esterhazy or the Duke Lobkowitz, since the wood is of a high quality unheard of in a double bass. Such quality is usually reserved for violins and violoncelli, but never found in double basses. We have called it: *Bassus luxurians*.

**Matthias Thir**

Fine worker, although his craftsmanship does not equal that of his father. The viola is in perfect state of conservation and retains its original condition, including the pegs!

**The Stadlmann Family**

had the monopoly on instrument making wood of the entire Hapsburg Empire, which meant that they kept the best for their own use.

**Johann Joseph Stadlmann**

Son of Daniel Achatius (Pater patriae), J.J. was a gifted artisan, as demonstrated by the violin and viola here shown, with particularly good choice of wood, as expected!

**Michael Ignaz Stadlmann**

is represented by a fine Violoncello.

**Violin by Jacobus Koldiz (Rumburgue, 1751)**

This violin has been attributed to the Mantua School by three independent experts.

**Violoncello by Anton Posch (see Hall 2)****\*Double bass by Jan Udalricus Eberle, Prague, 1750**

This magnificent double bass retains its original condition. It produces an incredibly powerful, full and rich sound which completely metamorphoses a whole Baroque orchestra; one has to experience this to believe it!

**The German Instruments**

The two major schools: Mittenwald and Füssen.

**The Kloz Family****Violins by Aegidius I, Aegidius II und Sebastian Kloz****Violin by Leopold Widhalm**

is in particularly fine state of preservation, including most of its red varnish.

**Others****\*Viola by William Smith, Sheffield, ca. 1780**

in perfect state of preservation, retaining its original condition.

**\* denotes main instruments: a must to see!**

We would very much appreciate your comments about the exhibition in writing. This could help us for future exhibitions. Please take a few minutes and send your comments to us at:

[orpheon@orpheon.org](mailto:orpheon@orpheon.org)

or leave them at the exit of the museum or send them to:  
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