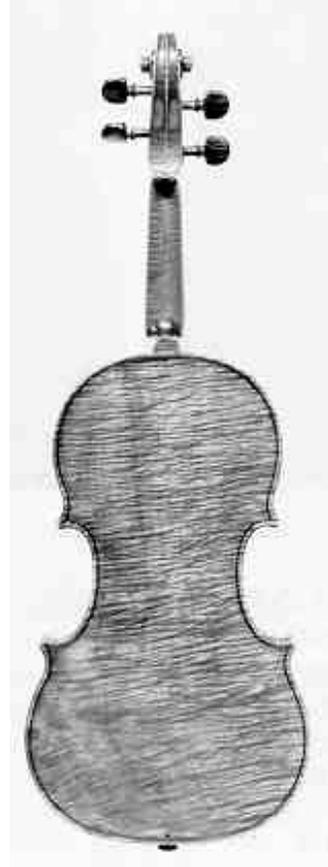


World of Strings

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Giacomo and Leandro Bisiach
Milan 1964



Leandro Bisiach, Sr.
Milan 1935



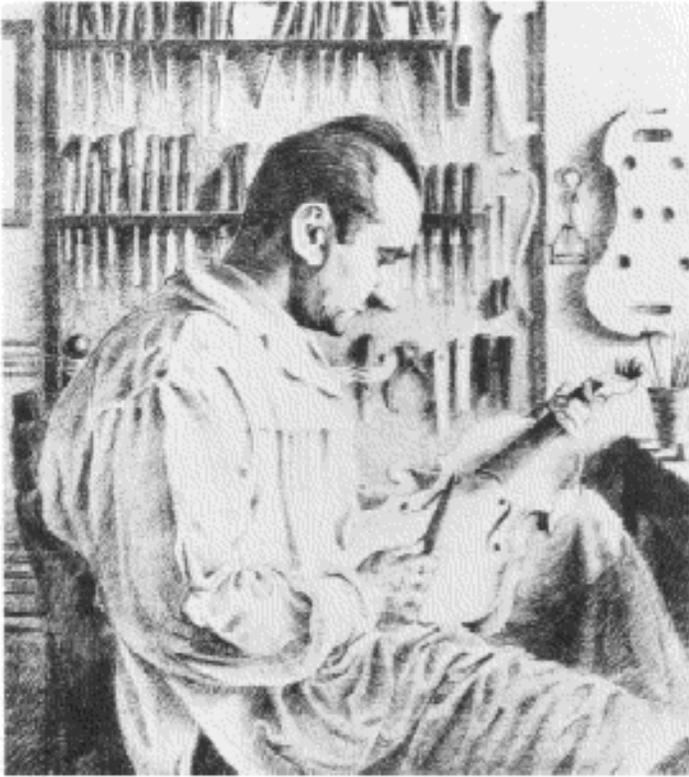
Leandro Bisiach, Jr.
Milan 1974

The Bisiach Family Heritage

In these pages, over the years, we have discussed the important revival of Italian violin making in the late 19th and 20th centuries. This resurgence involved not only violin making but also violin repairs, performance, and expertise on the past masters' artistry. The standard bearers of this movement were the five members of a remarkable family who cast a great and undeniable shadow on virtually all of these disciplines, the Bisiach family of Milan.

The Bisiach family came from Dalmatia, the region on the eastern Adriatic coast which formerly was part of the Republic of Venice and which is now part of Yugoslavia. The patriarch of the family, Leandro, was born in Casale Monfer-

rato in 1864. He studied violin making with Riccardo Antoniazzi, a pupil of Enrico Ceruti. In 1886 he opened his workshop in Milan, beginning as a violin maker. Success and acclaim came rapidly his way so that by 1900 he was regarded as one of the most important violin makers of his generation. He had as clients virtually all of the most important performers of his time, a fact readily apparent from the innumerable photographs which filled his walls, and his instruments had won many awards at the great International Competitions. By 1900, the complexion of his business had also begun to change. Leandro had a great talent as a maker, but he also had other great talents. He had a keen eye and was an astute



Portraits of Giacomo and Leandro Bisiach Presented to William Moening III

businessman, and so he rapidly became known as a leading expert and connoisseur. Many of the greatest masterpieces passed through his hands, and his scholarship soon came to be spoken of in the same breath as that of his colleagues the Hills, the Harts, the Hammas, and Caressa. Expert repairs became an important part of his work, with standards that set the pace for others. With the tremendous demands that his other endeavors required, Leandro found it necessary to curtail his violin making. Although he could not continue to create violins in the quantity of his earlier years, he never actually gave it up. He continued to work with the assistance of his younger sons Giacomo and Leandro, Jr., up until his death in 1945. He also employed as violin making assistants many of the early 20th century masters. In this regard he stands as the most important early patron of Italian violin making of this century. He could count as assistants or pupils such masters as Romeo and Riccardo Antoniazzi, his teacher; Giuseppe Ornati, Gaetano Sgarabotto, Giuseppe Pedrazzini, Ferdinando and Afro Garimberti, Iginio Sderci, Giuseppe Lucci, Sesto Rocchi, Ferruccio Varagnola. to name a few. It

would also be unfair not to note that Leandro was an accomplished concert violinist, maintaining a performance schedule in the midst of so many other pressing responsibilities. Leandro had four sons who ably continued the tradition after his death. The first was Andrea, who was born in 1890. Andrea was trained by his father as a violin maker, but was especially fine as a restorer and a connoisseur. His eye was particularly keen and he quickly filled the Bisiach vaults with fine classic instruments and the Bisiach home with outstanding art, sculpture, and furniture. Andrea continued his father's expertise until his death in 1967. The second son was Carlo, born in 1892. Carlo, like his older brother, had worked closely with his father, but after working with his father in Siena, came to love the Tuscan countryside and moved there in the early 20's. Though an accomplished restorer and expert, violin making was his great love, and for this skill his fame is secure.

The youngest sons, Giacomo, born in 1900, and Leandro, Jr., born in 1904, became active in the family workshops after the First World War. They too shared the skills of their father

and brothers and worked closely with their father in violin making during the 20's and 30's. After their father's death they continued the family firm under the name of "Giacomo and Leandro Bisiach", the name which they also used on their joint creations. When the firm closed in 1973, Leandro, Jr. continued to work from his home in Venegono, making violins until his death last year.

Illustrated on these pages are three outstanding examples made by the Bisiachs. The illustrated example of Leandro, Sr.'s work was made in 1935 and was crafted with the assistance of Giacomo and Leandro, Jr. This outstanding work was created on the Amatis Stradivari pattern which he so preferred. Leandro has used the finest of Italian woods and craftsmanship is of the highest order. The violin by Giacomo and Leandro, illustrated, is of special significance to their artistry; it was this violin that they chose to exhibit at the Cremona Exhibition of 1964. It is truly an outstanding example of their great ability. The third violin illustrated is a work by Leandro, Jr., made in 1974, and also created for the Exhibition of that year. It displays similar great talent.

P.J.K.

WELCOME

To 2039 Locust Street

Our friends in the string world are always welcome to enjoy our collection of fine vintage instruments and bows. Certainly these examples rightfully deserve to be owned and enjoyed by those financially fortunate. The young professional and talented amateur player today sets out on his quest facing a dilemma not unlike his predecessors, choosing affordable string equipment. These budding talents understandably have been greatly influenced by the luxury of enjoying superb performances and the benefit of excellent teaching. Why wouldn't they be drawn to the revered works of the classical luthiers? The inspiring music drawn from these instruments made it worth any sacrifice their past owners had to make in order to enjoy owning them.

Affording valuable acquisitions today is a far different plight than in past decades, I would suggest. One is, of

course, offered many reasons (some of which I suspect are self-serving) to justify high price tags. One may rightfully discuss with admiration and awe the qualities and values of classical works and convincingly prove their values on the strength of current publications and newsletters, when many times these alarming sums are often unrealistic and occasionally the end result of two determined bidders.

Perhaps equally at fault may be appraisers who provide inflated evaluations in the interest of maintaining mutually profitable relationships with their clients, and firms desperately needing to add to their "stock", who knowingly accept consignments with over-inflated values. Prospective purchasers, dependent on limited budgets, deserve our sympathetic counseling. Few professions demand as much continuous concentrated dedication as is expected of the string player. Their labor in return deserves to be served by our own dedication, acting as guides through a bewildering maze of potential acquisitions that could result in a monetary pitfall. Enchantment with string music admittedly hampers me from mustering an argument with those who, drawing lush sounds from

fine Cremonese instruments, ask, "should this unique creation, a masterpiece of many dimensions, be considered inferior to a fine framed canvas?" My feeling is that fine art, except in museums, is intended for the privileged. Instruments, a utilitarian art form, are intended for the performer and for the joy and pleasure of many listeners.

It has often been hinted that the first hesitant steps through the doors of a violin shop can be overwhelming. For the uninitiated this can be especially intimidating. It is only to be regretted by those of us who truly care about our profession that occasionally "good salesmanship" and the hint of a bargain can reverse what at the onset ought to be, for the prospective purchaser, a secure, informative and exciting adventure. We urge our friends to carefully consider how much they truly enjoy the instrument they are considering acquiring.

It must have qualities that satisfy the tastes of the player, giving the needed response, comfort and inspiration, but above all, it must please its owner. Remember that you are buying an instrument for yourself, not a colleague, although colleagues' comments may be helpful. Resist being pressured—the decision must feel right to you. Ask questions and expect nothing less than clear, intelligent answers. Caring professional advice can help to bring a search to a satisfying conclusion.

Our occasional comments in the World of Strings have evidently evoked a great deal of interest. Many of our string friends have asked that they might be given an opportunity to advise us of their own thoughts and experiences. The subject of the majority of our correspondence pertains to the merits relative to contemporary and vintage string equipment and the counseling one seeks and expects from an established firm.

We enjoy hearing from our friends and welcome the opportunity of devoting a portion of the World of Strings as a "forum"—each letter would, before our acceptance, be submitted to the Editorial Board. W.H.M. III



All of us here at William Moennig & Son wish all of our friends a Joyous New Year filled with beautiful sounds.

Beginning after the New Year, our hours will be:

Tuesday to Friday
10:00 AM to 5:30 PM.

Saturday
10:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

Closed Sunday and Monday

From Memorial Day until
Labor Day, our hours will be:

Monday to Friday
10:00 AM to 5:30 PM.

Closed weekends.

From The Herbert Goodkind Collection



Sebastian Kloz
Mittenwald 1772

Viola by Pietro Giovanni Mantegazza
Milan c. 1780

Claude Augustin Miremont
New York 1858

Distinguished Examples in Sound

The family of Herbert K. Goodkind has entrusted us with the sale of some of the finest examples from his excellent collection of violins.

Herbert Goodkind was a colleague and our very good friend. He loved instruments and collected them assiduously, accumulating several hundred violins by the time of his passing last year. He was also a great lover of violin literature—his library being one of the most outstanding in existence.

Herbert's great triumph, and the one for which future generations will best remember him, was the creation of his monumental 'Violin Iconography of Antonio Stradivari'. His goal

was by no means simple—to collect a provenance and documentary profile of every known Stradivari—715 at publication, a number which the book itself has increased by luring out examples which had been forgotten—and to supplement it with as many photos of the instruments as possible. Added to this effort would be interesting and rare material on Stradivari culled from his incomparable library. At the time many in the violin world believed this project to be impossibly difficult, and doubted that the book would ever be published. They did not consider Herbert's zeal, determination, and love. He completed the book in a remark

ably short space of time, making a volume which is now regarded as one of the most important of its kind and a cornerstone of any serious violin lover's library. With this book we have the most complete and in-depth analysis of the growth and development of Stradivari's style, from his youngest days to the very late years when, assisted by his sons, Omobono and Francesco, he carved his last masterpieces. It is a fitting memorial for Herbert, and no man could ask for a finer one.

We invite our friends to communicate with us directly for more information on violin in the Herbert Goodkind Collection.

P.J.K.



George Wolme-Hudson
London 1947

George Wolme-Hudson London 1915
copy of a Carlo Testore

“A Genius of Classical Design”

When asked about the great master copyists we find that several names always come to mind. Some are obvious—Vuillaume, Fendt, Lott, the Neapolitans and the Vollers. To these names we must add another destined to join their ranks—George Wolme-Hudson. In every respect he stands as the most skillful, original, and innovative master of this century.

Wulme-Hudson was born in the St. Pancras district of London in 1862 and started to work in a pawn shop at the age of twelve. To amuse himself and his colleagues he learned to play many instruments proficiently. An early fascination with violins led to his early repairs and with the aid of Edward Heron-Allen's book on violin making

he created his first violin in 1897. He took this to the English master Thomas J. Holder, who was so impressed that he encouraged Hudson to devote his efforts to violin making, providing lessons for him. By 1900 he was established in Lower Clapton as a violin maker. He was well

regarded—his guide on violin making was widely read when it was published in *The Strad* in the 1920's. In 1947 he moved to Chessington where he worked until his death on February 12, 1952, at the age of 83.

Some copyists are content to create an exact replica of a famous instrument. Others choose to create a work in the style of a past master. Wolme-Hudson goes one step beyond. We encounter violins which are straightforward expressions of his artistry, made in his finest personal style bearing his label and signature. Secondly there are his copies made on the Testore, Gagnani, and Gagliano patterns. However, we also see instruments made in 'Old

Italian style' by makers invented by Hudson—names such as Carressi and Castellini. These outwardly resemble old instruments, enough to fool some viewers. These instruments bear all the characteristics of Wolme-Hudson's style and invariably his brand and signature as well. These works were not intended to deceive, but rather reflected the maker's enjoyment of classic instruments. He did, though, enjoy fooling his more pretentious colleagues, always stopping short of actual deceit.

Illustrated are two excellent examples of Wolme-Hudson's artistry. One is a straightforward work, the other a copy of Testore which even uses scribed purfling on the back

GOOD NEWS

In our Winter 1982 issue we illustrated a violin by Igino Sderci and sadly reported that he had passed away. This report was given to us by a Florentine violin maker who visited us early last year. You may imagine our delight then on receiving a note from one of our friends and clients to tell us that indeed Sderci is still alive and actively making violins in his 99th year. Our friend, in fact, owns Signor Sderci's most recent creation, a fine instrument which shows that his fine hand and eye are still marvelously accurate. We are glad to wish Signor Sderci many more years of violin making.

in the fashion of the original. Their common ancestry is quite apparent on close examination, particularly with respect to the outline, modelling, interior construction, the poise and cut of the f's, and the quality and texture of the varnish, which is warm, transparent and lustrous. P.J.K.



"Le Rossignol"

a

1717

Stradivari

It is with pride that we announce the imminent acquisition of an outstanding, definitive example by Antonio Stradivari of his golden period, Cremona 1717, known as the "Le Rossignol". The instrument comes to us in an exceptionally pure state of preservation and is accompanied by W. E. Hill & Sons, Wurlitzer, and William Moennig & Son, Ltd. Certificates. Accompanying these documents is a personal letter from Alfred Hill concerning the fine instrument's provenance. When considering the wealth of superb Cremonese examples that have passed through Mr. Hill's hands, one should take special note of Mr. Hill's admiration and enthusiasm for this particular example as stated in his letter.



"I have nothing but praise for the 1717 'Stradivari'! It is, without doubt, a superb example of the Master's broad pattern, which you will note in our Life of Stradivari, he initiated in 1708-9 and adhered to to the end! . . . In conclusion, I repeat, I look upon this 'Stradivari' as one of the supremely fine existing examples of the maker's work, the beauty of which cannot be surpassed, its purity and condition to be equaled by few!"

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, which reads "Alfred Hill". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "Yours faithfully,".