

## ***‘Fortissimo di voce, e quasi tenore’***

**‘Very strong of voice, and like a viola’**

An evidence-based investigation into the historical reality of the 1724 Stradivari violin  
which Il Conte Cozio di Salabue sold to Niccolò Paganini in July 1817

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The following description of a 1727 Stradivari violin was written by the Paris-based violin dealer Gustave Bernardel. Bernardel’s text is today located within the The Jacques Francais Rare Violins Inc. Photographic Archive and Business Records (The sales ledgers 1845-1938, Box 55, Folder 2, p. 126, and Box 55, Folder 4, p. 126), National Museum of American History (Archives Center), Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA; see the link from [www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk).

*1894: M<sup>r</sup> Nicolini, à Ystradgynlais*

*Violon Stradivarius, année 1727, 13p. 3l.,*

*Fond de 2 pièces, ondes douces descendant, belles éclisses pareilles, table de 2 pièces, très-beau sapin; petite cassure à l’f droite, et 2 petits trous de ver au fond; beau vernis rouge doré bien conservé; très-belle tête.*

*Ex Paganini*

*Ex Comte de Vireille*

*30,000 francs.*

1894: M. Nicolini, from Ystradgynlais

Antonio Stradivari violin, year 1727, 13 *pouces 3 lignes* [358.7mm]

The back plate is made from two pieces; mild flames, descending [from the centre-joint]; the beautiful ribs are similar [the wood used for the ribs is similar to that used for the back plate]. The front plate is made from two pieces; very beautiful spruce. There is a small split at the treble *f*-hole and two small worm tracks at the bottom. Beautiful varnish, golden red, well conserved. Very beautiful head.

*ex Paganini*

*ex Comte de Vireille*

*30,000 francs.*

NOTES: Ernesto Nicolini (1834-1898) was the second husband of the soprano Adelina Patti (1843-1919); Adelina bought a country house in Ystradgynlais (Powys, Wales) overlooking the river Tawe. Bernardel’s measurement uses the *Pied du Roi* system where one *pouce* = 27.07mm and one *ligne* = 2.26mm. Note that Bernardel does not indicate the name of the owner prior to (Niccolò) Paganini, nor does he mention Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume (see below). No details of identification for the ‘Comte de Vireille’ have been discovered.

Two years later the following report was published in *The Violin Times*, issue of October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1896, pp. 188-189:

Mr. Jan van Oordt, the violinist, and his energetic manager, Mr. Charles de Groat, left England for the United States on Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, by the "Paris". Mr. Van Oordt is to make his first public appearances in America on November 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. He will be assisted by the Chicago Orchestra, which is under the directorship of Theodore Thomas. Just before leaving London, Mr. van Oordt bought from Messrs. Hart and Son, of Wardour Street fame, one of the finest Stradivarius violins that has ever come under my notice. It is one of the finest and most perfect specimens of this illustrious maker; its date is 1727. It is of the grand pattern, covered with beautiful soft red varnish. The instrument is of peculiar interest, having been in the possession of the great Paganini, who bequeathed it to his son, Baron Achille who recently died in Italy. J. B. Vuillaume acquired it from the Baron and sold it in 1853 to the Comte de Vireille, who in turn disposed of it to Messrs. Gand and Bernardel, of Paris; thereafter it passed into the hands of Signor Nicolini from whom it was purchased by Messrs. Hart and Son. With the violin there is an interesting letter from Vuillaume, dated 1853, fully authenticating its former possession by Paganini and his (Vuillaume's) purchase of it from the former's son. Mr. Van Oordt is thus the happy possessor of two Strads. Besides these two instruments he owns an exceptionally fine violin which bears the label of Messrs. Hart & Son; this is such an exact copy of the Stradivarius whose history we have just given, that if held at a distance of a couple of yards the one may well be mistaken for the other.

NOTES: The appearance of Jan van Oordt (b.1874) with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is confirmed by the *Chicago Tribune* newspaper, 8 November 1896, p. 37: 'Mr. Jan Van Oordt, the young Dutch violinist, will make his first American appearance with the Chicago Orchestra this week' [Brahms' Violin Concerto]. The second Stradivari violin owned by Jan van Oordt was dated 1721. The only violin mentioned in Paganini's Last Will and Testament (27 April 1837) is that which he bequeathed to his home city of Genoa. With Vuillaume having died in 1875 there was no-one in Paris, in 1894, from whom Gustave Bernardel could obtain confirmation that the violin which (it seems) he had bought from the mysterious Comte de Vireille was the same violin as identified in Vuillaume's letter of 1853. The unidentified writer of the *Violin Times* article – probably the editor, Eugene Polonaski – does not mention Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue.

According to Ernest Doring (*How many Strads?* (1945), p. 283) Jan van Oordt subsequently sold his 1727 Stradivari violin back to George (II) Hart; further owners of the violin included Frederick Smith, W. E. Hill & Sons, Felix Kahn (in 1914), Helen Jeffrey (in 1920), and, in the mid 1920s, the New York dealers W. R. Ford Company, Inc. (successors to Gittelson & Howard). In 1927 Ford published a catalogue of his instrumental stock: *Rare Old Violins*. What seems to be the Bernardel/Nicolini violin is identified therein as *Antonius Stradivarius, Cremona, 1727* (priced at \$35,000). There are two colour photographs (**Figure 1**) of the violin – front plate and back plate – and a commentary, which states:

On the authority of Hill and Sons, London, whose documents accompany this instrument, the violin was bought from [Achille] Paganini by J. B. Vuillaume, of Paris. The instrument was later bought by Gustav Bernadel [*sic*] who sold it to Nicolini, the husband of Adelina Patti. It has been in the hands of George Hart, and was purchased by Hill and Sons from the well-known collector, Frederick Smith.

As with the Bernardel description, Ford makes no mention of the violin's owner prior to Paganini. Ford specifies the basic measurements of the violin (probably replicating measurements which were provided in the Hill documents): Upper Bout 6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches (168.3mm), Lower Bout 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches (208mm), and Body Length 14 inches (355.6mm). These dimensions point strongly towards Stradivari's 'PG' mould of 1689 or the 'P' mould of 1705 as being the source. Gustave Bernardel specifies his violin's length as being 358.7mm (cf. 'it is of the grand pattern'); in this case the 'G'

mould is the most likely source. It would be impossible for the 'G' mould to be the source for a violin of 355.6mm length.



**Figure 1**

Ernest Doring (*ibid.*, pp. 281-283) identifies the following 'ex Salabue' violin:

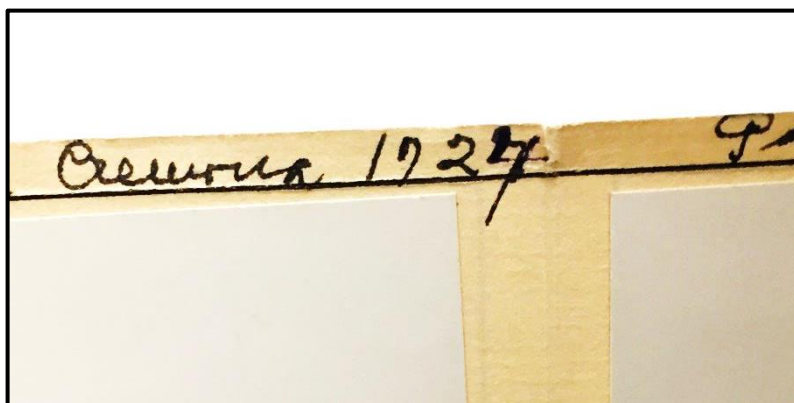
1727\* The PAGANINI, *ex Salabue*. Our plates indicate the visual characteristics of this famous violin. It is in a perfect state of preservation and almost fully covered with its original varnish of rich dark-red color.

NOTE: Doring's asterisk indicates his personal inspection of the violin.

Doring's monochrome photographs (which include a view of the violin's rib structure on the bass side) show the same violin as that which had previously appeared in W. R. Ford's *Rare Old Violins*.

During the 1940s the 1727 violin came into the hands of the New York dealer Emil Herrmann who sold the violin in 1946 – as part of a complete quartet of Stradivari instruments – to Mrs A E Clark of New York. Ownership subsequently passed to the Corcoran Gallery of Arts (Washington DC) and

then to the Nippon Music Foundation of Japan; it is assumed that Herrmann's original certification and photographic documents are currently with the Foundation. The Jacques Francais Rare Violins Photographic archive (Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA) includes certification and photographic documents (Box 42, Folder 4) which are assumed to be Herrmann's duplicates. These documents are titled, in Herrmann's handwriting, *Ant. Stradivari 1727 Paganini Mrs Clark*, with, underneath, the annotation *Oct 3 1941* (possibly the date when Herrmann acquired the violin). A set of photographs of the violin is titled – again in Herrmann's handwriting – *Antonio Stradivari Cremona 172[?] Paganini* (**Figure 2**). The fourth numeral of the date is a 7 which has been over-written with a 4 (or *vice versa*).



**Figure 2**

Herrmann's photographs of his *Paganini* violin include one which shows the inside face of the back plate; the violin's label is clearly visible and the date on the label is 1724 (this photograph is viewable on the Cozio Archive of Tarisio.com, ID 40048). The first numeral is printed in Roman form, the remaining three numerals are written in Arabic form, slightly untidily, somewhat 'jagged' in their shaping, as if the nib of the pen failed to run smoothly on the label-paper. The rather crude appearance of the written numerals raises the suspicion that they might not be the originals, i.e. perhaps the original date was 1727 but the final 7 was subsequently altered – by Herrmann? – to show as a 4, possibly to insinuate that this was the 1724 violin sold by Count Cozio to Paganini (documentary evidence for the sale having been publicised by the Hills in 1931 – see p. 5 of this account). Alternatively, an original I727 label was removed, in its entirety, and replaced with a false I724 label.

Is it plausible that Gustave Bernardel, Eugene Polonaski, (W. E. Hill & Sons?), W. R. Ford, and Ernest Doring would all have dated a violin as 1727 if, all the while, it contained a 1724 label?

Claude Lebet (*Le Quatuor Stradivarius "Niccolò Paganini"*, Les Amis de la Musique, 1994) identifies the *Paganini-Comte Cozio di Salabue 1727* violin as having 'an original label from 1724; the experts are agreed on 1727 as the date of its manufacture' (*Ce magnifique instrument porte une étiquette originale de 1724; les experts, eux, s'accordent sur la période de construction de 1727*). Lebet does not indicate which physical and/or stylistic features of the violin underpin the agreement of 'the experts' with regard to a date of 1727, nor does he identify the experts or indicate where their agreement is published. On the Nippon Foundation (Instruments) website (accessed January 2017) the violin is dated 1727 with no mention of its label-text.

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Geraldine de Courcy (*Paganini, the Genoese*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1957, Vol. II, p. 388-389, *List of Instruments in Paganini's possession at the time of his death*) provides the following chronology (closely sourced from Doring, p. 283) for a Stradivari violin which is dated 1724 rather than 1727:

#### Strad 1724

Acquired by Paganini from Count Cozio di Salabue of Casale Monferrato, in 1817. Vuillaume purchased it from Achilles Paganini and sold it to Count de Vireille. From the latter it passed to Bernardel in 1893. Albert Caressa, then a youth employed by Bernardel, was sent to London with the instrument to place it before Ernest Nicolini, who [bought the violin but subsequently] sold it to Hart in exchange for a Guarneri. The Dutch violinist, von Oordt, then acquired it from Hart and some years later sold it back to him. The English collector Frederic Smith later obtained it by way of exchange and in 1911 sold it to Hill. In 1914 it was sold to Felix Kahn [1873-1950] of New York and in 1920 passed to Helen Jeffrey [violinist]. It was later acquired by Emil Herrmann, who sold it to Mrs. Clarke of New York. It is now one of the instruments of the Paganini Quartet.

The label-date which Courcy specifies for her Paganini/Salabue violin is entirely correct (see below); it is disconcerting that her sequence of owners is that which is associated with the 1727 Stradivari violin.

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The documentary evidence – especially the dimensional evidence – from the hand of Count Cozio demonstrates that the 1724 Stradivari violin which he sold to Niccolò Paganini in July 1817 cannot be the 1724/27 violin described above.

Previous to Paganini's ownership, it is an established fact that the [1727] violin was one of Count Cozio di Salabue's choice possessions. Hill records the sale to Paganini as taking place in 1817, naming the instruments as a "chef-doevre" [*sic*] of the Count's collection.' (Doring, p. 283)

NOTE: The Hills, in their 1931 *Guarneri family* monograph, p. 92, footnote 2, write: 'In 1817 Paganini purchased from Ct. Cozio a violin of Stradivari of the year 1724, described on the receipt as a *chef-d'œuvre* of the master; the price paid was ninety-five Louis d'Or = £76.' Since Ernest Doring quotes this information (Doring, p. 259) it is peculiar that he replaces, without any explanatory justification, the Hills' date of 1724 with his own date of 1727.

Documents written by Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue (1755-1840) – the documents archived at the Biblioteca Statale di Cremona, Italy – demonstrate that the only Stradivari instrument sold by the Count to Niccolò Paganini was a violin with yellow/light-red varnish, dated 1724, this violin being one of twelve which the Count had obtained in 1774-75 from Paolo Stradivari in Cremona (Paolo being the youngest son born of Antonio Stradivari's second marriage). Count Cozio sold the 1724 violin to Paganini in July 1817, using Carlo Carli (a Milanese banker who was known to both men) as an intermediary. There are no known documents within the archive at the Biblioteca Statale which indicate that Count Cozio owned a 1727 Stradivari violin or ever sold more than the one violin, of 1724, to Paganini.

Count Cozio's earliest manuscript text (BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 41, written in late 1774 or early 1775) for his 1724 Stradivari violin is here transcribed and translated by the present author:

*Fondo giunto, bosco di vena piuttosto larga e bella, il covino più rotondo, quasi al cerchio, il rizzo belle e col contorno nero, travagliate come l'antecedente ma la vernice più gialla di tutti. Il biglietto come gli altri anno 1724 e bolate.*

Jointed [two-piece] back plate, the wood having flames which are rather wide and beautiful. The [neck-foot] button is more rounded [than is usual], almost a circle, the scroll is beautiful and with black edging. The workmanship is like the previous [violin within the Count's sequence of descriptions – a 1716 violin] but the varnish is the yellowest of all. The label [in its appearance] is like the others, *anno 1724*, and stamped [i.e. with Stradivari's monogram].

Left margin annotation: *2<sup>da</sup>, il più forte, si hà*

Number 2; the stronger [in tone]; I have it.

Added no earlier  
than July 1817:

*venduto dal Cavaliere Carlo Carli al celebre suonat Genovev Paganini  
per Luigi cento ma da togliere cinque sconto.*  
Sold by Signor Carlo Carli to the celebrated player from Genoa, Paganini,  
for 100 *Luigi* [100 *Louis d'or* 20-franc coins] but deduct 5 [*Luigi*] as a discount.

The reason for the discount is unknown; see also Paganini's letter of 18<sup>th</sup> January 1840 (pp. 10-11 of this account).

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In 1801 Count Cozio wrote a new inventory of his instruments (BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42):

*1801, 8 Aprile: Violini di Stradivario Antonio da molti anni accomperati dal  
suo nipote a Cremona*

1801, 8 April: Violins of Antonio Stradivari, of various years, obtained from  
his grandson at Cremona

The same 1724 violin is now described in more detail:

*Come sopra: anno 1724: fortissimo di voce, tonda e pastosa sebbene paja  
ancora interna, di forma più grande, segnata, vernice rosso chiara tirante nel  
giallino: fondo, fascie, e manico di bellissima vena larga: e fondo in due pezzi  
cosi al solito del coperchio, che ha la vena piùtosto larga. Di forma delle più  
grandi con panza corta al fondo ben tirata, ed al coperchio anche ben  
spianata: benissimo profilato, e di finissimo lavoro, ed ff ben fatte e scavate,  
con manico dato indietro dal G. B. Guadagnini: intatto pero con una picciol  
marca di fissura nel coperchio a destra vicino al cordile: vale cento trenta.*

As above: *anno 1724*: very strong of voice, rounded and mellow, although  
[*paja?*] still constricted [*?not sounding freely*]; of larger type, marked  
[*?lettered in the pegbox*]; the varnish is light red shading into yellow. The  
back plate, the ribs, and the neck – all have the most beautiful wide flames.  
The back plate is in two pieces; likewise, as usual, the top plate, which has  
rather wide veins [growth rings]. [The violin] is of the larger type with the  
barrel[*?*] arching on the back plate being well graduated, and the top plate is  
also well smoothed out. Excellent purfling of the finest workmanship, and the  
*f*-holes nicely made and [the wings] hollowed; with a neck which has been  
[raised, lengthened and] tilted backwards by G. B. Guadagnini. Undamaged;  
however there is one small fissure in the top plate, to the right of, and next to,  
the tailpiece. Worth 130 [*zecchini*].

Left margin annotation:

*zecchini 130. Viglietto stampato e bollo sudetto*  
130 *zecchini*. The label is printed and stamped as above [i.e. as with the previous  
instruments described in this inventory]

Added no earlier  
than July 1817:

*1817 Luglio venduto al Signor Professore Niccolò Paganini di Genoa  
per mezzo del Signor Cavaliere Carlo Carli di Milano.*  
1817 July, sold to Signor Professor Niccolò Paganini of Genoa  
through Signor Carlo Carli of Milan.

The following features are noteworthy:

- 1: the violin is of 'larger type'
- 2: the violin is 'marked'
- 3: the varnish is 'light red shading into yellow'
- 4: the back plate, ribs, and neck 'all have the most beautiful wide flames'.

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In 1808 Count Cozio once again returned to his 1724 Stradivari violin and wrote yet another description (BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 46). Although his manuscript does not contain a margin annotation identifying the sale of the violin to Paganini the descriptive details agree with the previous (and subsequent) texts:

*1808, 16 Gennajo, Milano. Inventaro delli instrumenti nella guardaroba alta di noce nel gabinetto.*

1808, 16 January, Milan. Inventory of the instruments in the tall walnut wardrobe in the closet

*Violino di d'Anto Stradiuario del 1724, forma più grande P.G. anche b[...?] fino per modello, vernice rosso chiara, fondo giondo vena larga viva, fascie di vena più fina bella, e così il manico fascia doppiamente gionta al fondo con due profili intieri, coperchio pura vena larga eguale forastiero. Fortissimo di voce, e quasi tenore, con solo picol crepatura in fine a destra nel coperchio. Colle pontine nel fondo vicino alli profili, e nel profilo dei CC, per la sua rarità di voce – Luigi 140. Covino più grande a tre quarti di circolo.*

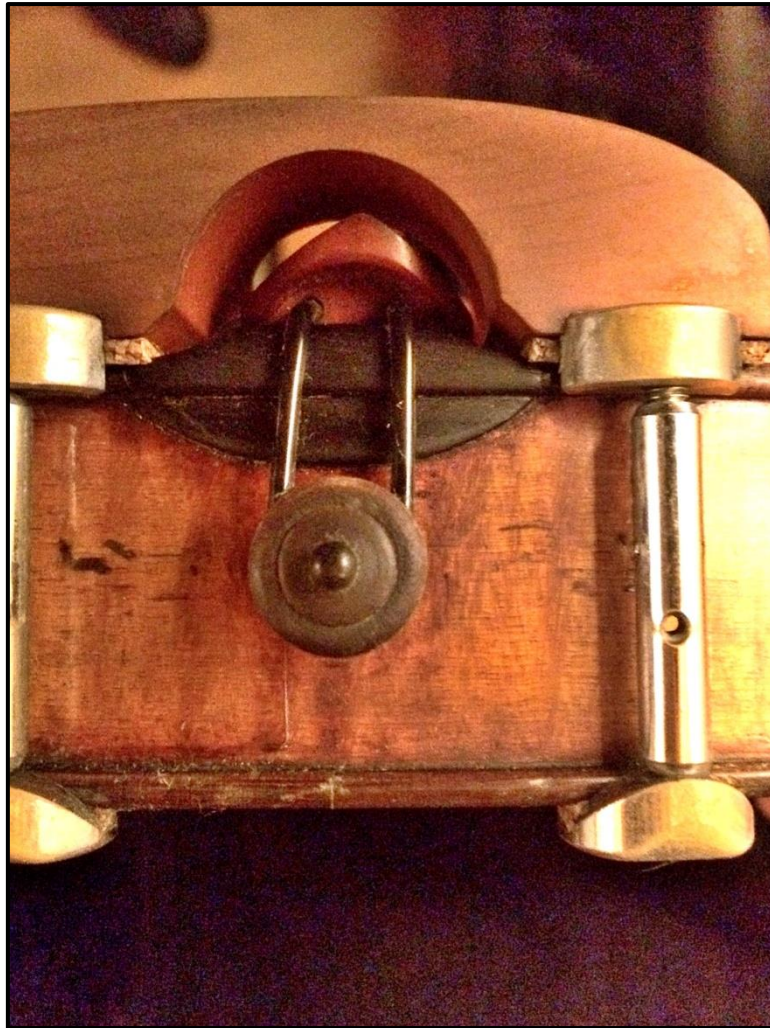
Violin of the aforementioned Antonio Stradivari, of 1724, [derived from] the larger P.G. mould, also [...?]. The varnish is light red, the back plate is jointed, with wide bright flames; the ribs have narrower flames, beautiful; likewise the neck. The rib is double-jointed at the bottom [at the tail-piece end pin] with two inserted pieces of purfling. The top plate also having wide and consistent growth-rings; foreign wood. Very strong of voice and like a viola; with one small crack at the [bottom] end, to the right of the top plate. In the back plate the [top and bottom] locating pins are [positioned] adjacent to the purfling, and [additional pins are positioned] within the purfling of the C-bouts. For its rarity of voice – 140 *Luigi*. The [back-plate] button is larger [than usual] at three-quarters of a circle.

Note:

- 1: the violin is associated with ‘the larger P.G. mould’
- 2: the reiteration regarding the ‘wide, bright flames’ of the back plate (cf. both previous documents)
- 3: the expression – ‘very strong of voice and like a viola’ – which finds an echo at the end of the Count’s text from May 1816 (see below)
- 4: the single crack (to the right of the tail-piece) which was identified in the April 1801 text (see earlier) and is here identified again.

One descriptive detail found in this 1808 text but not mentioned previously is the identification of two vertical strips of purfling inserted into the rib at the tail-piece end pin (probably to restore the bottom ribs, after shrinkage, to their original curvature). What is unclear is why Count Cozio did not mention this feature in his 1774/75 and 1801 texts. An explanation might be that between 1801 and 1808 the Count had this 1724 violin restored – possibly by one of the Mantegazza family in Milan – and the purfling inserts were added on that occasion. A second newly-identified feature concerns the locating pins in the violin’s back plate, specifically those ‘within the purfling of the C-bouts’. These pins may have been original but not previously observed by Count Cozio within the dark colouring of the purfling, or they may have been fitted when the lower ribs were expanded (to ensure the structural security of the back plate).

Photographic evidence (**Figure 3**, below) received by the present author demonstrates that the Stradivari ‘1727 Paganini’ violin currently owned by the Nippon Foundation of Japan does not have any strips of purfling inserted at the tail-piece end pin. It has not been possible to confirm or deny the presence of pins within the violin’s C-bout purfling.



**Figure 3**

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In 1816, one year before selling his 1724 Stradivari violin to Paganini, Count Cozio comprehensively measured the instrument's various dimensions (BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 47; folio 15r and 15v); the Count used the French *Pied du Roi* measurement system in which one *pollice* measures 27.07mm and one *ponto* measures 2.26mm. Since the Count still possessed the 1716 Stradivari violin which he had defined in his 1774/75 documents as 'number 1' he uses that violin as a point of comparison with the 'number 2' 1724 violin (**Figure 4**, below):

*1816, 19 Maggio, Milano*

*Misure del mio violino Antonio Stradivari, nella cassa marcato: forma P.G., più forte, vernice giallo, dell'anno 1724*

Left margin annotation: *N.B. questo violino l'ho venduto al Signor Proffessore Paganino*

Retro ## (folio 15v): *Maggiore larghezza superiore polici sei e un terzo, 6. 0.  $\frac{1}{3}$ , nel fondo e poco più nel coperchio  
Maggiore larghezza inferiore polici sette, ponti sei, 7. 6. -.*

(folio 15r): *In mezzo alli CC ossia il petto è questo più grande d'un ponto, ma nel fondo è eguale al sudetto. La longhezza totale è eguale, ma questo e longo dell'altro*



d'un ponto e mezzo inferiormente e più corto di un ponto e mezzo superiormente.

E pure eguale nella distanza delle ff in mezzo al petto [...] così le ff di questo violino sono più in piedi dell'altro di due ponti e sono più vicini li occhietti di sotto [sopra?] alle ff di un ponto.

Le altezza delle fascie di questo sono pure eguali a quelle. Li bordi sono eguali ma le ponte del [?] più grande [?] e così sostanzialmente la forma e eguale all'altro più bello rosso ma non sta nel medesimo sito nella cassetta.

[...] Questo ha la voce più forte, e da tenore.

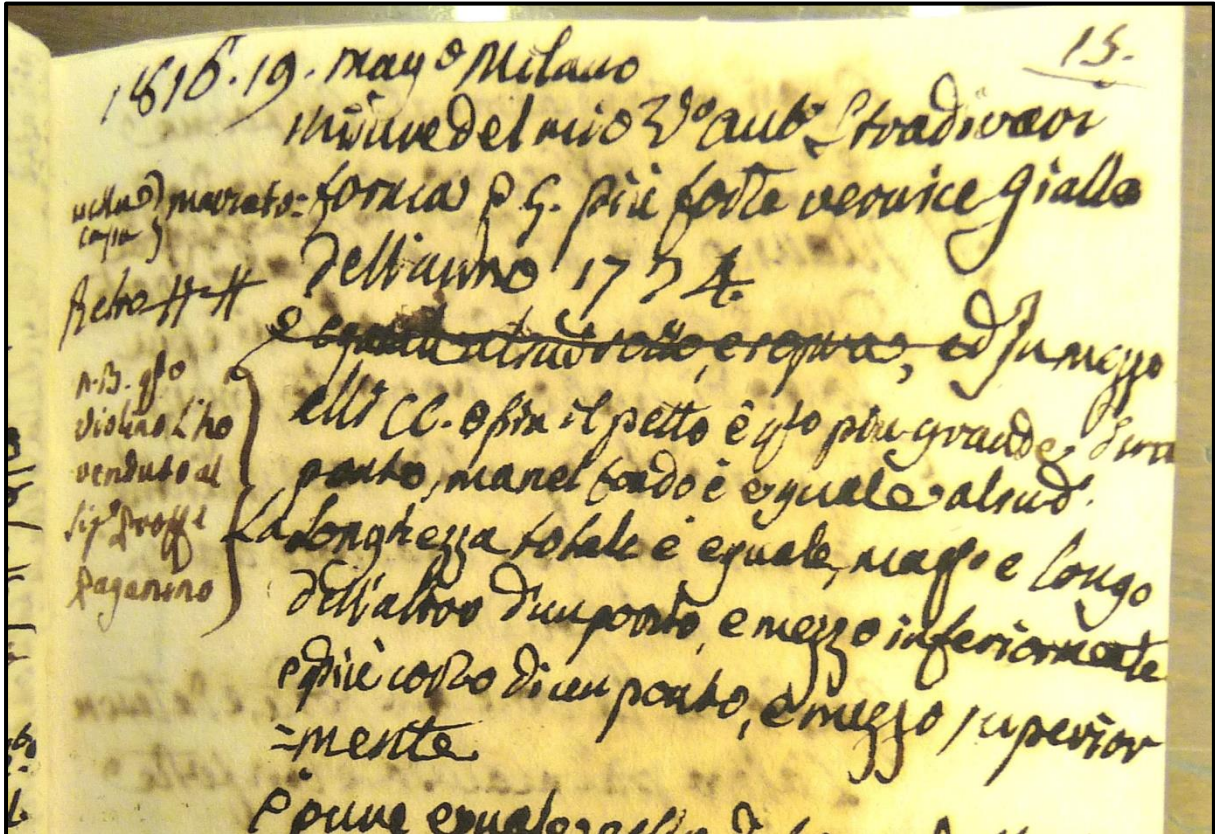


Figure 4; first part of folio 15r

1816, 19 May, Milan

Measurements of my Antonio Stradivari violin, marked in the [?peg] box, P.G. mould, the stronger [of the two violins], yellow varnish, of the year 1724.

Left margin annotation: N.B. this violin I sold to Signor Professor Paganini

Maximum width of the upper bout is 6 polici and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of one ponto [163.2mm], measured on the back plate; a little wider on the front plate.

Maximum width of the lower bout is 7 polici and 6 ponti [203.1mm]

[the bout-width maxima do not include the width of the wood lying to the outside of the purfling: add  $2 \times 3.75$ mm to each]

[Measuring] across the mid-point of the C-bout, also termed the 'chest', and this [the 1724 violin] is wider [than the 1716 violin] by 1 ponto, but on the back plate the [1724] measurement is the same as on the aforementioned [1716]. The total [body-] length is the same [on both violins] but this [1724 violin] is longer than the other by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ponti in the lower part [i.e. from the bridge to the lower edge of the plate] and shorter by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ponti in the upper part [bridge to upper edge].

[i.e. the inside notches of the *f*-holes (the notches defining the location of the bridge) were further up the plate on the 1724 violin than on the 1716 violin]

And, also, [the two violins] are equal in the distance [between] the *f*-holes at the mid-point of the chest [...] the *f*-holes of this violin [1724] are more [i.e. wider] at the feet [at the *f*-hole lower eyes] than the other [1716] by two *ponti*, and are closer together at the upper[?] eyes of the *f*-holes by one *ponto*.

[i.e. the *f*-holes on the 1724 violin were angled outwards more than on the 1716 violin]

The height of the ribs on this [1724 violin] is also the same as on the other [the 1716 violin]. The [plate] borders are the same [in width] but the [locating] pins of [?] are larger [?] and thus the form [of the 1724 violin] is substantially the same as the other [the 1716, which is] a more beautiful red but is not identified as being made by this maker [Stradivari] in the [peg-] box.

[i.e. the 1724 violin had identifying letters marked in its peg-box whereas the 1716 violin did not]

[...] This [1724 violin] has the stronger voice, and [like] a viola.

From Count Cozio's information the upper- and lower-bout widths (extremity-to-extremity) of Paganini's 1724 violin are shown to be 170.7mm (163.2 + 7.5) and 210.6mm (203.1 + 7.5). The equivalent measurements provided by W. R. Ford for the 1727 violin are 168.3mm and 208mm. The total body-length of Count Cozio's 1724 violin is the same as on the Count's 1716 violin (360.95mm), a length which does not match the 358.7mm of Gustave Bernardel's 1727 violin nor the 355.6mm of W. R. Ford's 1727 violin.

Paganini himself described his 1724 violin as 'the father of all violins; [it] has a tone almost as big as that of a contrabass, so distinguished is it by its power. I would not part with it at any price.' (J M Schottky, *Paganini's Leben und Treiben*, Prague, 1830, pp. 281-282.)

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In 1828 Niccolò Paganini consigned to Carlo Carli, in Milan, a collection of his instruments which were to be kept safe while Paganini was travelling and performing around Europe. On 4 March 1828 Carli sent Paganini a letter itemising the instruments which he had received:

*Un Violino di Antonio Stradivario di forma grande, vernice gialla col biglietto del 1724.*

A violin by Antonio Stradivari, of large form, yellow varnish, with label of 1724.

*Un Violino con vernice rossa col biglietto di Giuseppe Guarnerio del 1724, con arco in una cassa da due.*

*Un Violino di Andrea Guarnerio col biglietto del 1675, in una cassa da uno, quadrata, dipinta in verde, con arco.*

*Una Viola di Antonio e Girolamo Amati col biglietto del 1612, in cassa da uno, coperta di bulgaro.*

*Un Violino piccolo senza biglietto con arco, borsa, e cassa di legno in bianco.*

*Una Chitarra di Napoli con cassa di legno.*

*Un Violoncello con vernice rossa col biglietto di Antonio Stradivario del 1728, in cassa usata.*

(Grisley R., *Niccolò Paganini: Epistolario, Vol. 1, 1810-1831*, Skira, Milan, 2006; letter 218, pp. 340-341.)

In the final few months of his life, Paganini, with his son Achille, took up residence in Nice (southern France) where he was befriended by Comte Hilarion Spitalieri de Cessole (1776-1845). On 18 January 1840 Paganini wrote to his lawyer, Luigi Germi:

I have neither touched my music nor an instrument, other than the two Stradivari violins recently received from Milan [i.e. from Carlo Carli] via Genoa – one of which cost me 95 *Louis* [the discounted price of July 1817] which I shall have to let Conte de Cessole (a great enthusiast) have

for 4,500 francs, though I could get 5,000 for it in Paris. But it is necessary to make a sacrifice for such a friend.

(Neill E., *Paganini: Epistolario*, Edizione speciale per il Comune di Genova; letter 366, p. 297; present author's translation.)

NOTE: Since Carlo Carli lists only one Stradivari violin in his 1828 inventory it must be the case that Paganini, at an unknown date, sent a second Stradivari violin to Milan for safe-keeping.

Thus the certain existence and location for Paganini's large 1724 Stradivari violin with yellow/light-red varnish is confirmed for the years 1774/75, 1801, 1808, 1816, 1817, 1828, and 1840. It is unclear whether the violin was actually sold to Conte de Cessole before Paganini died on 27 May 1840.

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In a letter of 8 January 1840, to Vincenzo Merighi, Paganini acknowledged the delivery of a quartet of Stradivari instruments, and in a subsequent letter Paganini identified his personal ownership of eleven violins, one viola, and four cellos. In April 1840 Paganini instructed Vincenzo Merighi to buy six Guadagnini violins (as well as a Stradivari violin from Count Castelbarco) as part of 'our enterprise' but whether these instruments were bought and delivered to Paganini before his death in May 1840 is unknown. Further descriptive entries within the Jacques Francais Rare Violins Inc. sales ledgers identify a Guarneri *del Gesù* violin of 1740 (known as the *Boissier/Paganini/Arbos*) as having been owned by Paganini, likewise a 1672 Stradivari violin, a 1712 Stradivari violin, and a 1726 violin (the *Hubay*). The Tarisio.com/Cozio Archive website identifies a 1720 Carlo Bergonzi violin which also belonged to Paganini (ID 47169). Paganini himself, in a letter of 15 February 1840, identifies his ownership of an Amati viola and 'My Amati cello, or Rugeri, or whatever make it is [...].'

Paganini died on 27 May 1840; an inventory of his estate was compiled two months later, on 24 July 1840. Claude Lebet (Lebet, p. 18) indicates that the inventory documents are located in the 'Mandozzi Collection' in Locarno, Switzerland; it has not been possible for the present writer to gain access to these documents. The documentary source for Geraldine de Courcy's list of Paganini's posthumous instruments (see p. 4 of this account) is not identified by her but is assumed to be the Mandozzi inventory; Courcy does not indicate whether her information is the result of her personal inspection of the inventory documents. Her *List of Instruments* identifies seven Antonio Stradivari violins, two Giuseppe Guarneri *del Gesù*, one Giuseppe Guarneri, one Andrea Guarneri, two Niccolo Amati, one Carlo Tononi, and one Ruggieri – fifteen violins in total. In addition there were two Stradivari violas (1721 and 1731) and two Stradivari cellos (1708 and 1736), as well as an Andrea Guarneri cello (1642) and a Pietro Rogeri cello (1714).

The seven Stradivari violins are dated by Courcy to 1680,\* 1692, 1695, 1724 (two such violins), 1725, and 1726. The first of the two 1724 violins is identified by Courcy – without any documentary support – as that which is now known as the *Bentinck/Stucki*; the *Paganini/Bentinck/Stucki/Sandor Vegh* violin (1724) is included within Jost Thöne's *Antonius Stradivarius* publication of 2010 (Vol. IV, pp. 44-51) but the photographs clearly show that the violin has a one-piece back plate and therefore it cannot be the 1724 violin which Count Cozio sold to Paganini. It is Courcy's second 1724 violin which she identifies as the Cozio/Paganini instrument, but, again, without any supportive documentary evidence; see pp. 4-5 of this account.

\* Courcy's date appears to follow the 1945 opinion of Ernest Doring (Doring, p. 40) which is that the violin has a 1696 label but actually dates from 1680; Doring appears to be following the opinion of the Hills (Hill (1902), p. 35).

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There can be no doubt that the Cozio/Paganini violin was label-dated 1724 and had yellow/light-red varnish; it had the same dimensions as Count Cozio's large 1716 violin and was 'marked' in the peg-

box; it had two strips of purfling inserted in the rib at the end-pin, had 'wide bright flames' on the back plate, and a crack on the front plate to the right of the tail-piece.

Achille Paganini (1825-1895) was 15 years of age when his father died in 1840. In the years immediately thereafter Achille apparently enjoyed full control of all his father's instruments. With respect to the violin – *il mio violino* – which Niccolò bequeathed to the city of Genoa this instrument was secreted by Achille for more than ten years; only in July 1851 did Achille hand over a Guarneri violin to the Genoese authorities.

Five years earlier, in 1846, Achille had deposited a quartet of his father's Stradivari instruments with Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume, in Paris, for repair, restoration, and sale. Within the letters sent by Vuillaume to Achille between 12 December 1846 and 10 September 1851 (see Lebet, pp. 41-69) the label-dates of the four instruments are never mentioned; one of the violins is simply described as 'red', the other as 'yellow'.

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The current location of the large 1724 Stradivari violin which Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue sold to Niccolò Paganini in July 1817 is unknown.

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