

## ***‘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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In early 1817 Niccolò Paganini learned from Carlo Carli, in Milan, that the latter had for sale a Stradivari violin, dated 1724, which was the property of Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue (1755-1840). Carli was Count Cozio’s banker and commercial agent; he was also a talented violinist who was good enough to play in quartets alongside Paganini. A letter sent by Paganini to Carli on 21 June 1817 (see below) demonstrates that Carli, on Niccolò’s behalf, negotiated the virtuoso’s purchase of the 1724 violin from Count Cozio. The Count’s price was 100 *Luigi* (100 *Louis d’or* 20-franc coins) but he was willing to allow a 5 *Luigi* discount to secure Paganini’s custom. It is possible – indeed, more than likely – that Count Cozio was expecting Paganini to use and advertise the Stradivari violin during his European concert tours, and the violinist’s admirers would then beat a path to Carlo Carli’s door to purchase more of the Count’s instruments.

Documents written by Count Cozio demonstrate that this 1724 violin was one of twelve which the Count had obtained in 1774-75 from Paolo Stradivari (the youngest son born of Antonio Stradivari’s second marriage).<sup>1</sup> There are no known documents within the Cozio archive at the Biblioteca Statale di Cremona which indicate that Count Cozio ever sold more than the one violin, of 1724, to Paganini.

In 1817 Paganini purchased from Ct. Cozio di Salabue 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.<sup>2</sup>

Paganini, in his 21 June 1817 letter to Carli, writes:

I will always recognise as the fruit of your efforts the decision of Count Cozio to pass to me his well-known Stradivari [violin], with a discount from 100 *Luigi*.<sup>3</sup> [...] The transaction is now concluded. [...] I give you my word that I will pay the price. [...] I would be most grateful if the violin could be sent to me here [in Genoa] at the first opportune moment. [...] I will stay in Genoa until the arrival of this ‘bride’ that I receive from his [Count Cozio’s] hands.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Count’s documents are archived at the Biblioteca Statale di Cremona, Libreria Civica (BSCr, LC). Many of the documents are transcribed by Renzo Bacchetta in his *Carteggio* (Antonio Cordani, Milano, 1950).

<sup>2</sup> Hill, *The Violin-Makers of the Guarneri family*, 1931, p. 92, footnote 2.

<sup>3</sup> See p.7 of this account for Paganini’s changing opinion of the violin. It is unclear whether Paganini travelled to Milan to try out the violin before buying it.

<sup>4</sup> R Grisley, *Niccolò Paganini, Epistolario, 1810-1831*, Skira, Milano, 2006, pp. 100-101.

## Part One

Count Cozio's earliest description of his 1724 Stradivari violin is here transcribed and translated by the present writer from the Count's manuscript:

*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.*<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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 strongest [in tone]; I have it.<sup>7</sup>

[Added no earlier than July 1817; see overleaf]

*venduto dal Cav[aliere] Carlo Carli al celebre suonat[ore] Genovev Paganini per Luigi cento ma da togliere cinque sconto.*

Sold from Signor Carlo Carli to the celebrated player from Genoa, Paganini, for 100 *Luigi* but deduct 5 [*Luigi*] as a discount.

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In 1801 Count Cozio wrote a new inventory of his instruments:<sup>8</sup>

*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:

[Left margin annotation] *Vig<sup>lo</sup> stamp Bollo sudd.*

*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 più tosto 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 ind[ietro] dal G. B. Guadagnini: intatto pero con una picol marca di fessura nel coper[chio] a destra vic[ino] al cordile: vale zni cento trenta.*

The label stamped as on the above-mentioned [violin, of 1730].

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.

<sup>5</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 41, the description written in late 1774 or early 1775.

<sup>6</sup> (a comparative comment which does not necessarily mean that the violin's varnish was entirely yellow).

<sup>7</sup> Count Cozio's 'Number 1' violin was his large 1716 instrument which was built around Stradivari's now-lost P.G. mould; see pp.9-10 of this account for further information.

<sup>8</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42.

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, near the tailpiece. Value *zecchini* 130.

[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.

[Left margin annotation] *zni 130*

*130 zecchini*

**NB:** the 1724 violin is of 'larger type, marked'  
the varnish is 'light red shading into yellow' (cf. fn. 6 on p.2 of this account)  
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.<sup>9</sup> 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'Ant<sup>o</sup> Stradiuari 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, [built around] the larger P.G. mould, also [..?] fine for this model. 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 whole purflings [i.e. vertical strips]. 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 in the top plate. With [top and bottom] locating pins in the back plate which are adjacent to the purfling, and [additional pins] within the purfling of the C-bouts. For its rarity of voice – 140 *Luigi*. The [neck-foot] button is larger [than usual] at three-quarters of a circle.

**NB:** the violin is associated with 'the larger P.G. mould'  
the reiteration regarding the 'wide, bright flames' of the back plate (cf. both earlier documents)  
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 p.5 of this account)  
the single small crack 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 rib, after shrinkage, to its original curvature). What is unclear is why Count Cozio did not mention this feature in his 1774/75 and/or 1801 texts. Perhaps, between 1801 and 1808, the Count had this 1724 violin restored (if so then probably in Milan by Carlo Mantegazza (1772-1814)) 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 always been

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<sup>9</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 46.

present but not previously observed by Count Cozio within the dark colouring of the purfling, or they may have been fitted during the restoration (as proposed) in order to increase the structural security of the back plate after the expansion of the bottom rib.

Present-day ownership of the 1724 Cozio-Paganini violin is claimed by the Nippon Music Foundation of Japan. The NMF website defines the violin as the *'1727 Paganini'* (see **Part Two** for further information). The Foundation's website unambiguously states – 'the bottom rib is still in one piece' – and photographic evidence (**Figure 1**, below) received by the present author demonstrates that the NMF violin does not have any strips of purfling inserted at the tail-piece end pin. This absence confirms that the NMF violin cannot be the 1724 Stradivari-Cozio-Paganini violin.



**Figure 1**

A knife mark can be seen in the edge of the back plate, indicating the violin's centreline; the vertical line above and just to the left of the knife mark is a scratch.

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In 1816, one year before selling his 1724 Stradivari violin to Paganini, Count Cozio measured the instrument's essential dimensions;<sup>10</sup> 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 2**):

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<sup>10</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 47; folios 15r and 15v.

1816, 19 Maggio, Milano [abbreviations have been expanded]  
 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 ## [text from 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. -.

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 è lungo 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, ma è minore nella maggior distanza delle ff inferiormente di ponti due, e d'è maggiore di due ponti di distanza fra li occhietti superiori, così le ff di questo violino sono più in piedi dell'altro di due ponti e sono più vicini li occhietti di sotto alle ff di un ponto. La longhezza delle ff pero è eguale a petto dell'antecedente.

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 è eguale all'altro più bello rosso ma non sta nel medesimo sito nella cassetta.

[...] Questo ha la voce più forte, e da tenore. L'altro più matura e ben forte e più bello in totale.

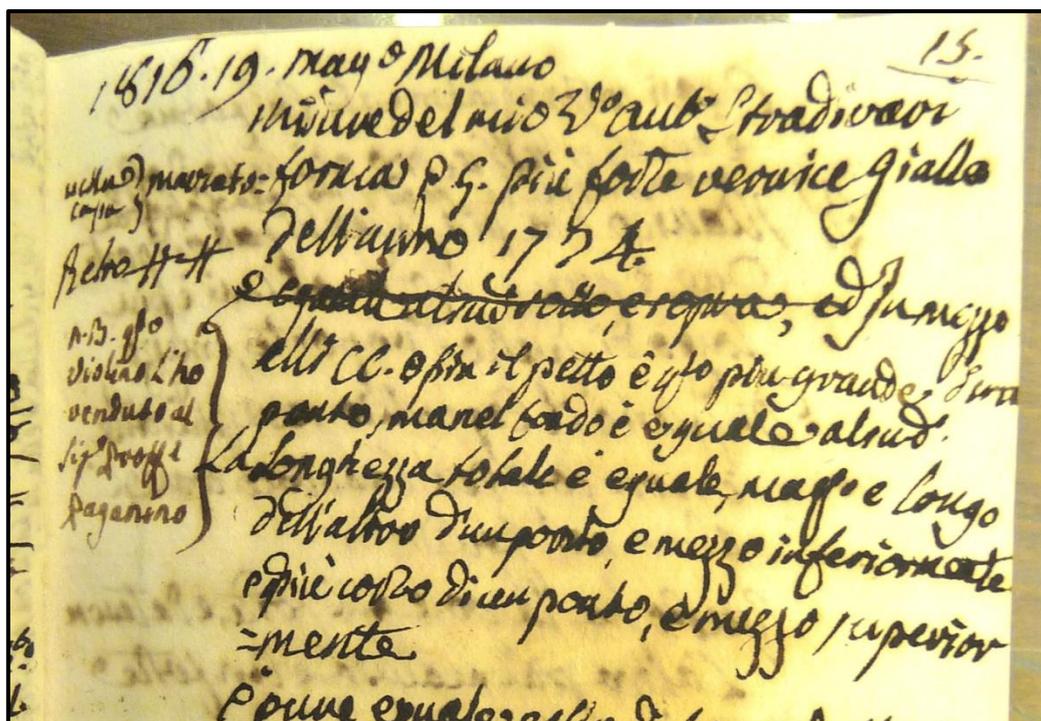


Figure 2: first part of ms. Cozio 47, folio 15r

1816, 19 [29] May, Milan  
 Measurements of my Antonio Stradivari violin, in the box; marked: 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

[folio 15v text] 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]

**NB:** It is acknowledged that in his text (as presented on the previous page of this account) Count Cozio has forgotten to identify his usual bout-width measuring limits: *compresi li profli* ('including the purfling'), nor does he define a dimension for the width of the border-wood on the outside of the purfling: *larghezza (or spessore) dei due bordi*. But, within the consecutive pages of the Count's ms. 47, both of these dimensional definitions appear **(1)** in the text for a 1668 Amati violin (folio 12r), **(2)** in the text for the 1716 Stradivari violin (folio 13v), **(3)** in the text for a Brothers Amati violin of 1612 (folio 16r), **(4)** in the text for an Andrea Guarneri violin of 1658 (folio 17v), and **(5)** in the text for a 1736 Stradivari violin (folio 20v). **These five measurement texts were all written on the same day – 29 May 1816 – as the text currently under examination.** Therefore the omission of these two width definitions from the text which describes and measures the 1724 violin is without significance. For the border-width on the outside of the purflings add  $2 \times 3.75\text{mm}$  to each of the Count's measurements; see the present writer's *The 'Messiah' violin: a reliable history?*, chapter 5, for further information.

If, for unknown reasons, Count Cozio, in this particular instance, included the border widths *within* his bout measurements of UB 163.2mm and LB 203.1mm then the 1724 Paganini violin would have a most peculiar shape.

[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 above-mentioned [1716].

The Count's measurement of the centre-bout width of his 1716 violin is 110.16mm (see *The 'Messiah' violin: a reliable history?*, chapter 5); the additional one *ponto* width on the front plate of the 1724 violin increases that instrument's measurement to 112.42mm (110.16+2.26mm); **the average of both dimensions is 111.29mm** (see below).

The total [body-] length is the same [on both violins]

The body length of the Count's 1716 violin is 360.95mm (see *The 'Messiah' violin: a reliable history?*, chapter 5).

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 3.4mm further up the plate on the 1724 violin than on the 1716 violin. This alternative position does not affect the overall length of the body.

And also [the two violins] are equal in the distance [between] the *f*-holes at the mid-point of the chest, but [the *fs*] are narrower at the lower [eyes] by two *ponti*, and wider by two *ponti* between the upper eyes. Thus the *f*-holes of this [1724] violin are more upright than the other [1716] by two *ponti*, and are closer together at the lower eyes by one [two?] *ponto*. The length of the [1724] *fs*, however, is equal to [the length of the *fs* on] the chest of the preceding [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 bridge of the [..?] larger [..?] and thus the form [of the 1724 violin] is substantially the equal of the other [the 1716] – [which is of] a more beautiful red [colour] – but it [the 1724] does not fit in the [other's] box.

[...] This [1724 violin] has the stronger voice; viola-like. The other [1716 violin] has a more mature and well-rounded sound, and, overall, is more beautiful.

From Count Cozio's information the upper-bout and lower-bout widths (extremity-to-extremity) of his 1724 violin are shown to be 170.7mm (163.2+7.5) and 210.6mm (203.1+7.5); the body-length is the same as on his 1716 violin, i.e. 360.95mm. Thus the four essential measurements of the 1724 Stradivari/Cozio/Paganini violin were: **170.7, 111.3, 210.6, and 360.95mm.**

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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.<sup>11</sup>*

In 1830 Paganini 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.'<sup>12</sup> In the following years, however, his opinion of the instrument underwent a radical revision. In a letter dated 28 March 1838 to Luigi Germa (Paganini's Genoese lawyer and confidante, also a talented violinist) Paganini writes:

*Il mio Stradivario si terrà onoratissimo se verrà esercitato dal mio amico Germa, perciò ti prego di prevalertene. Detto strumento avendo un timbro di voce di violoncello, non credo anche cambiando anima e ponticello di poterlo perfezionare in certe note che riescono crude.<sup>13</sup>*

My Stradivari [violin] will be honoured if it is exercised by my friend Germa, so please make use of it. Since the instrument has the tonal timbre of a cello I don't believe that even changing the soundpost and bridge would be able to rectify the ugliness of certain notes.

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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. On 18 January 1840 Paganini wrote to Germa:

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 *luigi* [the discounted price for Count Cozio's 1724 violin] which I shall have to let *Comte 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.<sup>14</sup>

Thus the certain existence and location of 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 comte de Cessole before Paganini died on 27 May 1840 but it would have made sense for this transaction to be concluded quickly since this would place the violin out of reach of the creditors who were pursuing the violinist following the collapse of the 'Casino Paganini' project in Paris. In January 1840 it was Hilarion Spitalieri (1776-1845) who was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Comte

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<sup>11</sup> Grisley, pp. 340-341. The manuscript of Carli's receipt is archived at the Biblioteca Comunale di Trento (Fondo Anzoletti, MA 62);

<sup>12</sup> J M Schottky, *Paganini's Leben und Treiben* (Prague, 1830), pp. 281-282.

<sup>13</sup> E Neill, *Paganini: Epistolario*, Edizione speciale per il Comune di Genova, p. 244 (present author's translation).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297. 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.

de Cessole; on his death, his son, Jean-Joseph Eugène (1806-1876) became the 4<sup>th</sup> Comte de Cessole. The Cozio Archive of Tarisio.com associates three violins with 'Count Eugène Joseph Cessole':

1. a 1736 Guarneri *del Gesù* violin, known as the *Count Cessole*
2. a 1732 Guarneri *del Gesù* violin, known as the *Ferni*
3. a 1716 Stradivari violin, known as the *Cessole*.

The post-Paganini history of the large 1724 Stradivari-Cozio violin, with its 'ugly' notes, is unknown.

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An inventory of Paganini's estate was compiled on 24 July 1840. Claude Lebet<sup>15</sup> 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 is not identified by her but is assumed to be the Mandozzi inventory;<sup>16</sup> Courcy does not indicate whether her information is the result of her personal inspection of the Mandozzi documents. Her *List of Instruments* identifies seven Antonio Stradivari violins, two Giuseppe Guarneri *del Gesù*, one Giuseppe Guarneri, one Andrea Guarneri, two Niccolò 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.

Courcy introduces the matter of Paganini's instrumental purchases with the following commentary:

It was while arranging some financial matters with his banker Carlo Carli at this time [1817] that he [Paganini] purchased through the latter [Carli] a 1724 Stradivari from Count Cozio di Salabue, which was apparently his first important acquisition of this nature.<sup>17</sup>

One of the two 1724 violins which are itemised within Paganini's posthumous inventory is identified by Courcy as that which is now known as the *Bentinck/Stucki* (which has a one-piece back plate). She writes:

Strad 1724. Now in Berne, Switzerland. In possession of father of former owner Jürg Stucki. This violin passed from Vuillaume to Charles Maucotel [...].<sup>18</sup>

Courcy does not provide any evidence which demonstrates that the present-day *Bentinck/Stucki* violin was one of the two 1724 violins left behind by Paganini. The *Paganini/Bentinck/Stucki/Vegh* violin is included within Jost Thöne's *Antonius Stradiuarius* publication of 2010.<sup>19</sup> Thöne's historian writes:

G. I. C. de Courcy recorded that Paganini purchased the instrument [the *Bentinck/Stucki*] from Count Cozio di Salabue through his banker, Carlo Carli [...].

**NB:** Courcy does not record such a purchase.

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<sup>15</sup> 'Le Quatuor Stradivarius Nicolò Paganini', Les Amis de la Musique, Spa, 1994, p.18.

<sup>16</sup> G I C 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*.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 166. Although Renzo Bacchetta's *Carteggio* transcription of Count Cozio's documents (see fn.1 of this account) was published seven years before Courcy's two-volume biography of Paganini she apparently had no knowledge of Bacchetta's work; his *Carteggio* is not listed in Courcy's bibliographies.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 388.

<sup>19</sup> Jost Thöne & Jan Röhrmann, *Antonius Stradiuarius*, 2010, Vol. IV, pp. 44-51.

Thöne's historian continues:

According to his [Paganini's] testament, the [*Bentinck/Stucki*] violin, along with several other precious instruments, was left to his son Baron Achille.

**NB:** The only violin mentioned in Paganini's Will was *il mio violino* which was left to the city of Genoa.

Thöne's historian then quotes the Certificate of Warranty issued by the Hills in 1938 for the *Bentinck/Stucki* violin:

'On the death of Paganini, the famous violinist left, amongst other instruments, a quartet of "Stradivaris", which were sold by his son, Baron Achille, in 1852-3, to J. B. Vuillaume of Paris.'

**NB:** The Hills do not identify the *Bentinck/Stucki* violin as one of the 'quartet of "Stradivaris"'.

Thöne's historian then quotes William Henley writing about the *Bentinck/Stucki* violin:

'One of the four Strad's [*sic*] sold by Paganini's son to Vuillaume, 1853.'

**NB:** Henley was likely simply copying the Hills' text.

Achille Paganini consigned four Stradivari instruments – two violins, a viola, and a cello – to J-B Vuillaume in 1846. Vuillaume, in his subsequent correspondence with Achille, never refers to the two violins other than by their varnish colour – 'red' and 'yellow'.<sup>20</sup>

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Courcy provides a provenance for her second 1724 violin which closely follows that which had been previously published by Ernest Doring:<sup>21</sup>

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.

Courcy's text – excepting her first sentence – relates to a Stradivari violin dated 1727 (see overleaf, **Part Two**).

There can be no doubt that the Stradivari-Cozio-Paganini violin was label-dated 1724 and had yellow/light-red varnish; it had the same large dimensions as Count Cozio's 1716 violin and was 'marked'; it had two strips of purfling inserted in the rib at the end-pin and additional locating pins in the C-bout purfling of the back plate; it had 'wide bright flames'/'beautiful wide flames' on the two-piece back plate, likewise on the ribs and on the neck; its top plate had wide and consistent growth-rings, and a small crack to the right of the tail-piece.

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A detailed investigation into the dimensions of the now-lost *P.G.* mould (not the *PG* mould of June 1689) around which Stradivari made the 1724 violin which Count Cozio sold to Paganini can be found in the present writer's article *The case of the missing mould* which was published in the June 2018 issue

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<sup>20</sup> See the present writer's research article *Paganini's instrument legacy* which is free-to-read at [www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk).

<sup>21</sup> See E Doring, *How many Strads?*, William Lewis, Chicago, 1945, p. 283.

of *The Strad*, pp. 54-58. The investigation uncovers, through documentary evidence from the hand of Count Cozio, a sequence of measurements which demonstrates that the *P.G. (Più Grande)* mould had dimensions of 163.26, 104.01, 202.26 and 353.65mm which would have generated violins with extremity-to-extremity plate measurements of **170.6, 111.4, 210, and 361mm**.

These measurements can be compared with Count Cozio's measurements of his most-admired Stradivari violin of 1716 (the violin which many believe to be, but which cannot be, the *Messiah* violin): **169.9, 110.2, 210.6, and 360.95mm**. Count Cozio's measurements of his 1724 *Paganini* violin are: **170.7, 111.3, 210.6, and 360.95mm** (see p. 6, bottom, of this account).

The Count's index to his book of measurements (BScR, LC, Cozio ms. 47) includes the following sequential entries:

*Violino Ant<sup>o</sup> Strad<sup>o</sup> mio piu bello P.G. 1716* fol. 14  
*V<sup>o</sup> d'Strad<sup>o</sup> f<sup>a</sup> [forma] P.G. mio come s<sup>a</sup> [sopra] 1724* fol. 15

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## Part Two

The following description of a 1727 Stradivari violin was written by the Paris-based violin dealer Gustave Bernardel:

*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: [sold to] Mr 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 [i.e. 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 Count of Vireille*  
30,000 francs [equivalent to £1,200].

**NB:** 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. Bernardel's body-length measurement uses the *Pied du Roi* system where one *pouce* = 27.07mm and one *ligne* = 2.26mm. It is not known whether he used callipers or a flexible tape 'over the arching'.

Ernesto Nicolini (1834-1898) was the second husband of the soprano Adelina Patti (1843-1919); in 1878 Adelina bought a large country house – 'Craig y nos' – in Ystradgynlais (Powys, Wales) overlooking the river Tawe.

In his business ledger (Musée de la musique, Paris) Bernardel identifies the violin purchased by Nicolini on 6 April 1894 (stock number 1503) as *Un violon d'Antonius Stradivarius, année 1727, en parfait état de conservation*. Nicolini paid the sum of 30,000 francs in two instalments: 11 April and 5 July 1894. The ledger also shows, against the date of 31 August 1894, a charge of 370 francs for *Voyage a Craig y nos et assurances* ('... and insurance'); evidently Bernardel sent a colleague to meet with Nicolini, in Wales, and to personally deliver the violin.

No definitive details of identification for the 'Comte de Vireille' have been discovered; it is possible that he was Henri-Eustache Dufresne, comte de Virel (1812-1892). The Charles-François Gand business ledgers (Musée de la musique, Paris, *Grand Livre, 1816-1831*) contain an entry for 'Monsieur de Virel', dated 14 April 1830, itemising the purchase of a 'Joseph Guarnerius' violin for 1,800 francs. The name 'Monsieur le Vicomte Henri de Virel' subsequently appears in Charles-Adolphe Gand's *Grand Livre, 1845-1867*; the ledger itemises the Vicomte's purchases of violin strings (only) between June 1845 and October 1849. The subsequent business ledgers do not contain any further references to 'Henri de Virel'.

Two years later the following report was published in *The Violin Times*, issue of October 15, 1896, pp. 188-89; the unidentified writer of the article is probably the editor, Eugene Polonaski.

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.

**NB:** 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 he was about to sell to Ernesto Nicolini was the same violin as identified in Vuillaume's letter of 1853.

The Tarisio.com webpage (accessed April 2021) for the '1727 Paganini, Comte Cozio di Salabue' violin (ID 40084), under 'Certificates & Documents', summarises Vuillaume's 1853 letter: '[the letter] states that the instrument was once owned by Paganini, who purchased it from Count Cozio di Salabue.' The present writer has been informed by personnel at Tarisio Fine Instruments and Bows that they do not hold a copy of Vuillaume's letter; the current whereabouts of Vuillaume's letter are unknown.

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In 1927 the New York violin dealers W R Ford (successors to Gittelson & Howard) published a catalogue of their instrumental stock: *Rare Old Violins*. The Paganini-Bernardel-Nicolini violin is identified therein as *Antonius Stradivarius, Cremona, 1727*, priced at \$35,000. W R Ford provides two colour photographs of the violin (**Figure 3**) and a commentary:

On the authority of Hill and Sons, London, whose documents accompany this instrument, the violin was bought from Paganini by J. B. Vuillaume, of Paris.<sup>22</sup> 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. [...] The varnish is of a reddish brown colour.<sup>23</sup>

This sequence of owners cements the historical reality of the 1727 violin as photographed by Ford.

W R Ford specifies the basic measurements of the 1727 violin (very probably using the information which was provided by the Hills in their accompanying documents): Upper Bout  $6\frac{5}{8}$  inches (168.3mm), Lower Bout  $8\frac{3}{16}$  inches (208mm), and Body Length 14 inches (355.6mm). Note that Gustave Bernadel specified the body length of his violin as being 358.7mm (cf. Polonaski's 'it is of the grand pattern'). The 3mm variance in the body-length is disconcerting.



Figure 3: W R Ford, *Rare Old Violins*, 1927

At an unknown date (but possibly in 1941) the 1727 Bernardel-Ford violin came into the hands of the New York dealer, Emil Herrmann.

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<sup>22</sup> It is Eugene Polonaski who twice states that it was Baron Achille Paganini who sold the violin to Vuillaume; clearly, Polonaski had read Vuillaume's 'interesting letter'. To repeat – no Stradivari violin of 1727 is identified in the posthumous inventory of Paganini's instruments.

<sup>23</sup> Bernadel describes the varnish as 'golden red'; Polonaski as 'beautiful soft red'.

Ernest Doring, writing in 1945, identifies *ONE OF PAGANINI'S VIOLINS*.<sup>24</sup> In his paragraph of information Doring quotes the Hills writing in their *Guarneri* publication of 1931:<sup>25</sup>

"In 1817 Paganini purchased from Ct. Cozio di Salabue a violin of Stradivari of 1724, described on the receipt as a *chef-d'œuvre* of the master; the price paid was ninety-five Louis d'Or = £76."

Doring then quotes an earlier commentary, also written by the Hills, in their *Antonio Stradivari* monograph of 1902:<sup>26</sup>

"1817. From a letter of Paganini in our possession we learn that Count Cozio sold him a Stradivari violin in the year 1817 for 100 louis d'or = £80 approximately."

Doring's opinion is that it is only the appearance of '1817' in both commentaries that prevents the reader from assuming (because of the 'obvious dissimilarity of the amounts recorded as having been paid') that two instruments were involved. The fact that the Cozio-Paganini violin is identified by the Hills in 1931 as being dated '1724' is ignored by Doring, who continues: 'This violin will be found recorded as a work of 1727.' Doring does not provide any explanation for this change of date.

Subsequently in his publication Doring identifies *THE PAGANINI STRAD OF 1727*:<sup>27</sup>

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

1727\* The PAGANINI, *ex* Salabue.<sup>28</sup> 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**.<sup>29</sup> [...]

Doring's monochrome plates (p.282), which include a view of the violin's ribs on the bass side, show the same violin as that which had previously appeared in Ford's *Rare Old Violins*.

Doring's identification of Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue as the owner of a 1727 Stradivari violin which the Count sold to Paganini in 1817 is clearly incorrect. His error is underscored by his uncharacteristically forceful expression: 'it is an established fact ...'.

Prior to the 1945 publication of *How many Strads?* Ernest Doring likely inspected the 1727 Bernardel-Ford violin in Emil Herrmann's New York workshop; Doring comments: 'at the time of this writing<sup>30</sup> the violin is in the Herrmann Collection'.<sup>31</sup> Did Herrmann show Doring the violin's accompanying documentation and 'guide' him towards a belief that because the documentation mentions Paganini the 1727 violin must be Cozio's violin and the Hills' '1724' must be a typographical mistake?

Doring concludes his commentary:

[...] Emil Herrmann has succeeded in bringing together an entire quartet of Stradivari instruments formerly owned by Paganini; they are to be made the subject of a monograph soon to be published by Herrmann, entitled "Paganini and his Stradivari Quartet", which will present the two violins, viola, and violoncello in color plates.

The present writer has been unable to find any evidence for this publication.

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<sup>24</sup> Doring, *How many Strads?* p.259.

<sup>25</sup> *The Violin-Makers of the Guarneri Family*, p.92, fn.2.

<sup>26</sup> Hill, *Antonio Stradivari* (1902), p.270. cf. the text associated on p.1 of this account with footnote 2.

<sup>27</sup> *How many Strads?*, pp.281-83.

<sup>28</sup> Doring's asterisk indicates his personal inspection of the violin.

<sup>29</sup> Present writer's emphasis. Count Cozio's 1724 violin had yellow/light red varnish.

<sup>30</sup> (late 1941/early 1942?)

<sup>31</sup> Doring, p.283.

Emil Herrmann sold the 1727 Bernardel-Ford violin to Henry Hottinger on 11 September 1942 for \$30,000; Hottinger paid \$17,800 by cheque and handed in his 1714 *Berou* violin in part-exchange. The Smithsonian Institution holds an image of Hottinger's cheque, with the annotation *Antonio Stradivari. Cremona 1724 Ex Paganini* in Herrmann's handwriting.

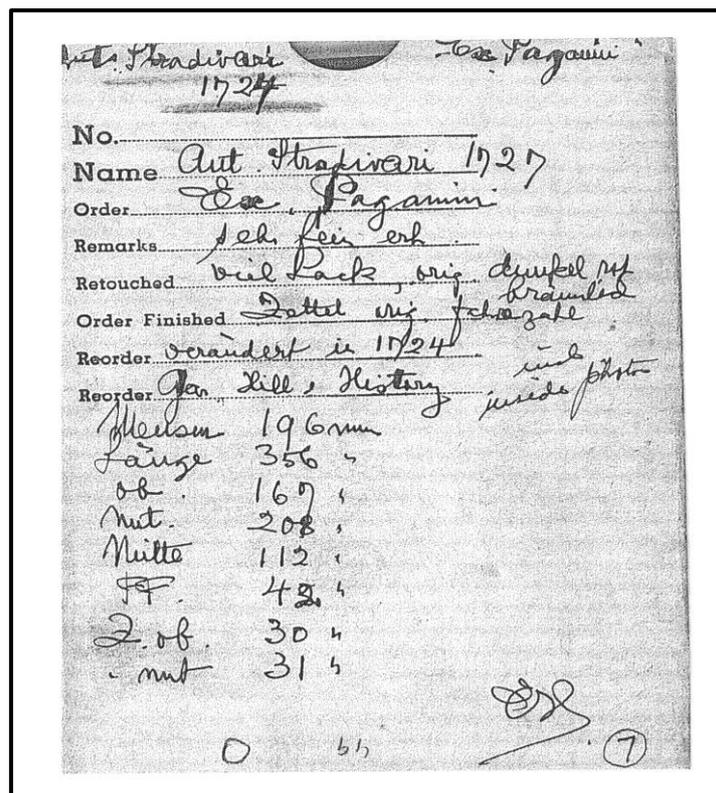
In a typed document – 'Important Sales by Emil Herrmann, 1920-1944' – Herrmann describes the violin as *Antonio Stradivari, 1724, Ex "Paganini", \$30,000.00*.<sup>32</sup> Herrmann's photographs of his *ex-Paganini* violin show the same pale-coloured vertical 'wedge' immediately to the right of the back-plate centre joint as is shown by W R Ford (**Figure 3**).

Packaged together with Herrmann's collection of photographic negatives are small filing cards, each card carrying information about an individual instrument; see **Figure 4** for the card relating to the *ex Paganini* violin. Note that the printed words on the left of the card are irrelevant to Herrmann's written comments. As will be seen, Herrmann has written 1727 at the top of the card but then overwritten the 7 to show as 4, and roughly underlined the date. Herrmann then unambiguously identifies the *Ant. Stradivari* violin as being dated 1727.

<i>sehr fein erhaltung</i>	very fine preservation
<i>viel Lack, orig. dunkel rot braunlich</i>	lots of varnish [still exists], original dark-red brownish
<i>Zettel orig. falschezahl</i>	label original wrong number
<i>verändert ins 1724</i>	changed into 1724 <i>incl[?] inside photo[s?]</i>

Herrmann then specifies the essential measurements of the 'changed into 1724' violin:

Upper Bout 167mm      Centre Bout 112mm      Lower Bout 208mm      Body length 356mm.



**Figure 4:** Jacques Francais Collection, NMAH Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>32</sup> It will have been noted that Ford, in 1927, priced the 1727 violin at \$35,000. All Herrmann's documents are to be found in the Jacques Francais Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA.

The Hills' three measurements of the 1727 violin (see p.12) were specified as UB 168.3mm, LB 208mm, and Length 355.6mm (the Hills seemed never to measure an instrument's centre-bout minimum width).

Count Cozio defined the measurements of his 1724 *Paganini* violin as: 170.7mm  
112.4mm  
210.6mm  
360.95mm.

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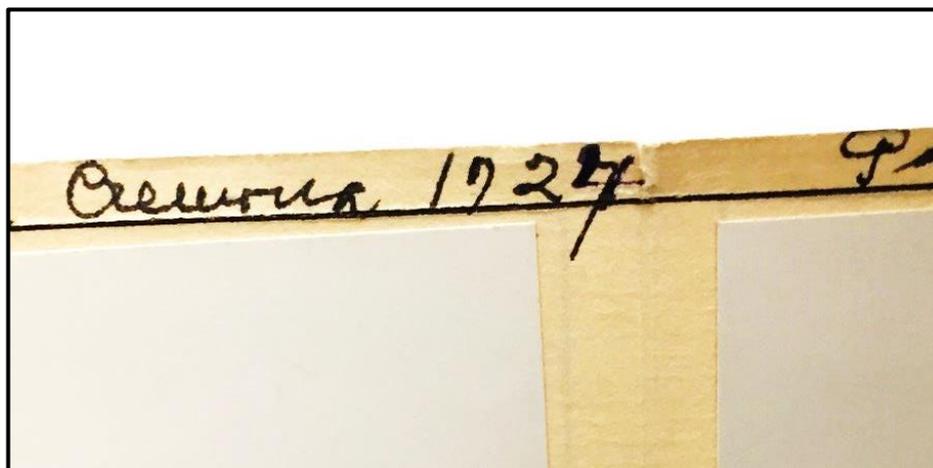
In 1946 Herrmann sold a set of four Stradivari instruments – two violins, a viola, and a cello – to Mrs Anna E Clark of New York. Despite the date of this sale being 1946 the details are still listed in Herrmann's 1920-1944 'Important Sales' document: *Quartette by Antonio Stradivari, ex "Paganini"*. The two violins are dated 1680 and 1727,<sup>33</sup> the viola 1731 (but see below, §), and the cello 1736, and the price for all four instruments is specified as \$155,000.00. Mrs Clark paid \$75,000.00 on 16 January 1946 and then \$80,800.00 on 15 April 1946. The reason for the additional \$800 is unknown. The Smithsonian's image of the two cheques also shows Herrmann's handwritten annotation:

*Stradivari Quartet*  
*of*  
*Nicolo Paganini*  
*1. Ant. Stradivari 1680*  
*2. Ant. Stradivari 1727*  
*3. viola Ant. Stradivari 1730 §*  
*4. cello Ant. Stradivari 1736*

Archived at the Smithsonian Institution is a duplicate of the certificate which Herrmann issued to Mrs Clark for the 1727/1724 violin. On the first page of this certificate Herrmann writes:

*Ant. Stradivari 1727 Paganini Mrs Clark*

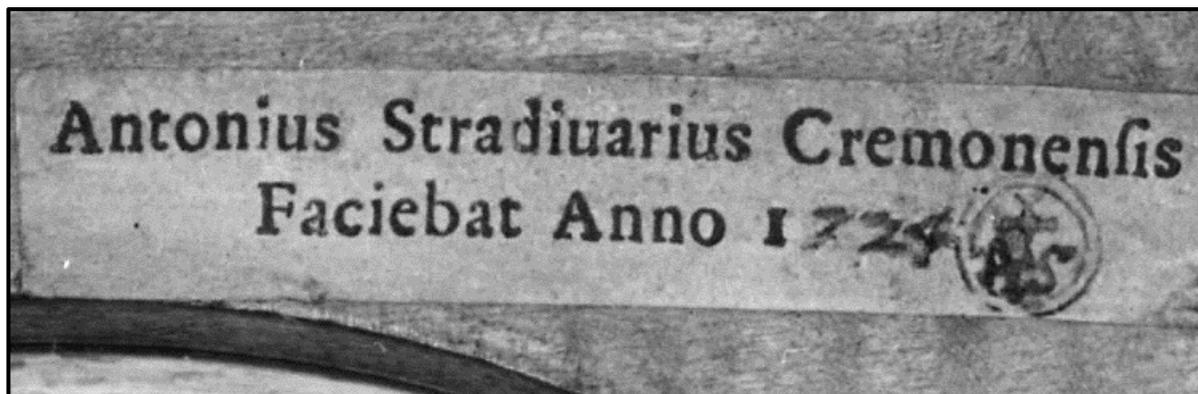
with, underneath, the annotation *Oct 3 1941* (which possibly indicates the date when Herrmann acquired the violin (but from whom?)). Herrmann's duplicate certificate includes a pasted-in set of photographs of the 1727/1724 violin. These photographs are titled – again in Herrmann's handwriting – *Antonio Stradivari Cremona 1727 Paganini* – but the fourth numeral of the date – 7 – has been over-written with a 4 (**Figure 5**; exactly the same overwriting pen-strokes can be seen in **Figure 4**):



**Figure 5:** Jacques Francais Collection, NMAH Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>33</sup> Herrmann seems to have difficulty keeping the dating of the Paganini-Bernardel-Ford violin consistent.

Herrmann's certificate-photographs include one which shows the inside face of the violin's back plate; the violin's label is clearly visible and the date on the label is I724. The first numeral is printed in Roman form, the remaining three numerals are inked in Arabic form, rather untidily (**Figure 6**):



**Figure 6:** Jacques Francais Collection, NMAH Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

The imprecise and smudged appearance of the three inked numerals (quite unlike the sharp outlines of the printed text) raises the suspicion that the numerals might not be the originals. Perhaps the original final numeral was deliberately obscured – washed out? – and overwritten to change ...7 to ...4 but then the two preceding numerals needed to be 'roughed up' to achieve consistency of appearance. It is instructive to compare the numerals of **Figure 6** with the four labels of 1720, 1722, 1723, and 1727 which are presented as 'Facsimile labels (two plates)' by the Hills (*Antonio Stradivari*, (1902), between pages 216 and 217).

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Claude Lebet also writes about the *Paganini-Comte Cozio di Salabue 1727* violin:

*Ce magnifique instrument porte une étiquette originale de 1724; les experts, eux, s'accordent sur la période de construction de 1727.*

This magnificent instrument has an original label from 1724; the experts are agreed on 1727 as the date of its manufacture.<sup>34</sup>

Lebet's statement regarding an 'original' label of 1724 is clearly incorrect. He does not indicate which physical and/or stylistic features of the violin robustly justify the agreement of 'the experts' with regard to a manufacturing date of 1727, and he does not identify the experts or indicate where their agreement is published. The photographs provided by Lebet show the same violin as illustrated by W R Ford, E Doring, and Emil Herrmann.

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The Anna Clark quartet of Stradivari instruments subsequently became the property of the Corcoran Gallery of Art and was then acquired by the Nippon Music Foundation of Japan. On the NMF (Instruments) website (accessed January 2021) their '1727 *ex Paganini*' violin is presented without any mention of an internal 1724 label.

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It is clear that the violin under discussion in **Part Two** was label-dated 'I727' until it reached the hands of Emil Herrmann. At an unknown point during the 1940s the I727 label was altered to show as I724.

Il Conte Cozio di Salabue did not sell a 1727 Stradivari violin to Niccolò Paganini in June 1817.

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<sup>34</sup> Translation by Peter Thomas Hill, in Lebet, *Le Quatuor* ..., p. 25.