

Stradivari's *Marquis de Champeaux* violin of 1707

(more accurately identified as the *Podenas-Mathias-Rosen* violin)

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March 2024

(www.themessiahviolin.uk)

Charles N E Gand's *Catalogue descriptif* (pp. 84 and 85) lists two Stradivari violins – label-dated 1707 and 1688 – which are presented under the name of the Scottish violin dealer David Laurie (1833-1897). Gand's descriptions of the two violins are both dated 1876, and his text for the 1707 violin is:

[M^r Laurie]

(année 1876) Violon Stradivarius, 13 pouces 2 lignes, année 1707

Fond d'une pièce, ondes larges remontant à droite, éclisses bois semblable, celle du bas à droite ayant une pièce de 17 lignes. Table de 2 pièces, sapin très-fin au milieu, plus large sur les côtés, ayant pas mal de cassures. Tête ayant été cassée. Vernis rouge doré.

Annotations subsequently added by Gustave Bernardel and by Albert Caressa & Henri Francais (C&F) after copying Gand's text; see image below:

1881 G et B, ioxz – 1881 – Princesse de Podenas 10,000

1892 Mathias 12,000

1918 Wurlitzer p^r Max Rosen \$12,000.

[Monsieur Laurie]

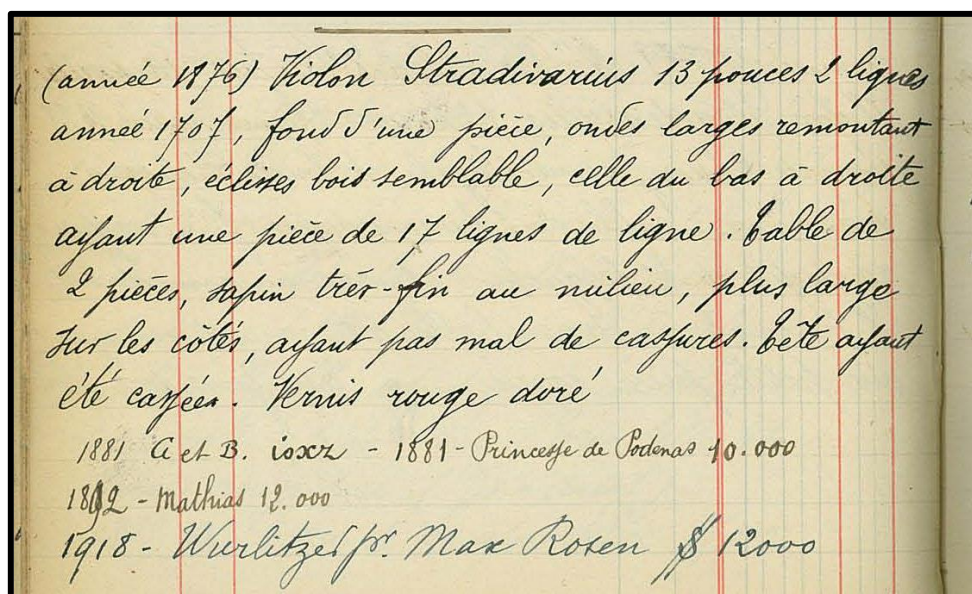
(1876) Antonio Stradivari violin, 13 pouces 2 lignes [356.4mm], year 1707

The back plate is in one piece; the flames are wide, rising to the right. The ribs are made from very similar wood; the lower-right rib having a patch of 17 lignes [38.4mm]. The front plate is made from two pieces; the spruce [rings are] very thin/narrow in the middle [but] wider at the sides, having quite a lot of splits. The head having been broken. The varnish is golden red.

1881 G & B [Gand & Bernardel], 7,500 [francs] – 1881 – Princesse de Podenas, 10,000 [francs]

1892 Mathias, 12,000 [francs]

1918 [sold to] Wurlitzer [then to] Max Rosen for 12,000 US dollars.



Jacques Francais Rare Violins Business Records, Smithsonian Institution, USA; Box 55, folder 2, page 82.

See www.themessiahviolin.uk for further information.

The Gand & Bernardel *Répertoire* ledger for the period 1866-1875 (archived at the Musée de la musique, Paris; ref. E.981.8.19) identifies David Laurie of 6 Rupert Street, Glasgow, Scotland, and defines two page numbers in G&B's parallel *Grand Livre* (E.981.8.14): 523 and 568. The latter location shows all the G&B-Laurie transactions between May 1874 and March 1876. On 11 March 1876 Laurie is recorded (in Gand's handwriting) as having bought two Stradivari violins – one for 9,000 francs (stock number 1154), the other for 5,500 francs (1155); there is no identification of the instruments' label-dates. Laurie paid for these two violins (and for a Tourte bow) with three payments during March and April 1876. It is reasonable to conclude that the 1707 and 1688 violins described by Gand in 1876 in his *Catalogue descriptif* are the two violins bought by Laurie in March 1876.

In light of the first Bernardel/C&F annotation to Gand's descriptive text – '1881 G et B, ioxz' – it is possible that Laurie subsequently sold his 1707 violin to one unknown who, for reasons unknown, sold it (back) to G&B in 1881 for 7,500 francs. If Laurie charged his customer c.12,000 francs for the violin then that customer lost a lot of money when selling to G&B. Without knowing the name of 'the unknown', and without being able to find that name in the relevant *Répertoire* ledger, it becomes impossible to investigate further this proposed sequence of events; the absence of 'ex ...' in the first annotation is problematic.

NB1: The 25 sales which are 'extracted' from Laurie's accounts book and published in *Reminiscences of a Fiddle Dealer* (p.[172]) do not show the sale of a 1707 Stradivari violin but the list covers only the period June 1876-October 1880, and, obviously, is far from complete.

Alternatively: Laurie was unable to sell the 1707 violin and therefore sold it back to G&B in 1881, but, as with the 'one unknown', accepted a significant (but smaller) loss on the transaction. The E.981.8.6 *Grand Livre*, pp.313-315, shows all the transactions between G&B and David Laurie between May 1876 and the end of 1881 (and beyond); there is no mention of any Stradivari violin being returned by Laurie to G&B and a credit note created, or monies refunded, nor any mention of the 1707 violin being returned and exchanged for another violin of the same value.

NB2: The published extracts from Laurie's Sales Account show his sale, on 1 January 1878, of a 1688 Stradivari violin for 350UKPs (equivalent to 8,750 French francs); the name of Laurie's purchaser is unknown. It is here proposed that this violin was the instrument bought by Laurie in 1876, from G&B, for 5,500 francs.

NB3: Note that the two stock numbers (see above) are sequential: 1154 and 1155. Another example of sequentiality can be found in the G&B *Grand Livre* (E.981.8.14) p.523, which shows that on 21 October 1873 Laurie bought four violins: one by Stradivari, one by Giuseppe Guarneri *filius d'Andreae*, and two by Andrea Guarneri. The stock numbers are shown in the ledger as 1103 (Stradivari), 1104 (Giuseppe Guarneri), 1105 and 1106 (Andrea Guarneri). It is unlikely that Laurie should have chosen four instruments which just happened to have already-allocated stock numbers which were sequential; it seems more likely that the numbers were created at the point of sale, simply extending an already-existing numerical sequence which was likely recorded in the G&B/C&F *Signalement* ledgers. Regrettably, the three *Signalement* ledgers wherein all the stock-numbered items are (apparently) succinctly described have not been placed online by the Musée de la musique in Paris despite frequent enquiries and requests; the reason for the Musée's refusal is unknown.

NB4: If the stock numbers were consistently incremented by 'one' when an instrument was sold it becomes entirely plausible that stock numbers 1103/4/5/6 (attached to instruments sold in 1873) could be followed by 1154/5 (in 1876) and by 1247 in 1881 (see overleaf). This incremental sequence indicates the sale of c.18 high-quality instruments each year – approximately one every three weeks.

The *Princesse de Podenas* was H el ene (*n ee* Yermolof) (1829-1883) who, in 1853, married Roger de Podenas (1814-1868), *Marquis de Podenas, Prince romain et de Cantalupo, chevalier de Malte, grand-croix de l'Ordre de Saint-Gr egoire-le-Grand*. The marriage resulted in two sons, the first of whom, Henri Charles, died when just two years of age; the second son, Odon Michel, was born in 1858, outlived both of his parents, became *Marquis de Podenas* in 1889, and died on 6 October 1891.

H el ene's sister, Zo e (1832-1920), married Ludovic de Champeaux (1823-1904) in 1857; thus Roger de Podenas and Ludovic de Champeaux were brothers-in-law. Ludovic was the owner of the Ch ateau de Villeneuve in Essey (C ote d'Or; Burgundy-Franche-Comt e).

The G&B *R epertoire* ledger which covers the period 1875-1884 (E.981.8.5) lists *Podenas M^e de (Princesse)*. In the parallel *Grand Livre* (E.981.8.6) the following transaction with *Madame de Podenas, of 73 Avenue Montaigne* (Paris) appears:

1881 Janvier 9: Un violon Stradivarius ann ee 1707, garanti authentique (N o 1247), 10,000 francs.

This entry is confirmed by the annotation to Gand's text: *1881 – Princesse de Podenas 10,000.*

NB5: At first sight it seems that the 1707 Stradivari violin bought by Laurie in 1876 (no. 1154) cannot be the 1707 violin bought by the Princesse de Podenas in 1881 (no. 1247) because of the conflict between the stock numbers. However, the three lines of annotation to Gand's descriptive text demonstrate that Laurie's violin and the Princesse de Podenas's violin are one and the same. See also **NB3** and **NB4**.

The *R epertoire* ledger for 1881-1887 (E.981.8.39) does not contain the name 'Podenas'; however, the ledger for 1887-1891 (E.981.8.26) identifies *Podenas, C^{te} de* (assumed to be Odon Michel since his father had died in 1868) and cites page 664 of the parallel *Grand Livre* (E.981.8.27). At page 664 there are listed the G&B-*Comte de Podenas* transactions dated between January 1888 and June 1892. Most of these were purchases of strings and hanks of bow-hair, but on 20 April 1889 either Charles Gand or Gustave Bernardel entered in the ledger:

Visit e le Strad^{us}, repoli la touche, repar e les chevilles, et monture
(‘inspected the Stradivarius, cleaned the fingerboard, adjusted the pegs, and re-strung the instrument’).

The violin's label-date is not mentioned but the stock-number evidence shown below suggests that ‘the Stradivarius’ was the 1707 violin which Odon Michel's mother had bought in 1881 for 10,000 francs (see also **NB7:**, overleaf). Odon Michel died on 6 October 1891 and it appears that his 1707 Stradivari violin then passed to Ludovic de Champeaux either as a bequest or, more likely, with an instruction that Ludovic should organise its sale; seven weeks later the violin was in Paris.

The *R epertoire* ledger for 1887-1891 (E.981.8.26) contains the following entry:

Pouilly-en-Montagne Champeaux de Ch ateau de Villeneuve par (C ote d'Or)
12 rue Chateaubriant   Paris 197

On p.197 of the parallel *Grand Livre* (E.981.8.27), under the title *de Champeaux*, is the following text:

1891 Novembre 30: 1 Violon Stradivarius ann ee 1707 (N o 1247) en d ep ot   vendre

The financial agreement between G&B and Ludovic de Champeaux for this 1707 violin required 8,000 francs to be paid to Ludovic when the violin was sold. The violin was deposited with G&B for six months and G&B were free to sell the violin for a higher price (if that was achievable) and pocket the difference. On 13 May 1892 it was noted in the ledger that the sum of money to be paid to Ludovic would be reduced by 1,000 francs. Five days later G&B sold the *ex-Podenas* violin to Jean-Jacques Mathias for 12,000 francs; the *Grand Livre* shows the transaction:

1892 Mai 18: Vendu 1 violon italien de Antonius Stradivarius, N o 1247, ann ee 1707,   Cr emone, garanti authentique, en parfait  tat de restauration, (M^z Reynier, prof^z), 12,000 francs.

Two days later, on 20 May, G&B paid 7,000 francs to Ludovic de Champeaux.

NB6: Clearly, the French violinist Leon Reynier (1833-1895) was involved in this transaction at some level: was Mathias one of Reynier's pupils? – did Reynier recommend the 1707 violin to J-J Mathias? – did Reynier require a 1,000-francs fee for his professional advice?

NB7: Note that the 1707 violin, at its sale to J-J Mathias in May 1892, still carried the stock number *1247* which had been allocated 11 years earlier, in 1881. The stock number was still valid because, technically, the violin had never passed into G&B's possession – G&B were simply selling the violin on behalf of Ludovic de Champeaux.

A ledger (E.981.8.33) created on an unknown date (but *c.*1910?) by Albert Caressa and Henri Français and titled *Répertoire: propriétaires d'instruments* includes, listed under 'Paris', *Mathias, 4 Villa Molitor, violon Stradivarius 1707*.

The name 'Mathias' does not appear in the *Répertoire* ledgers for 1892-99, 1899-1905, and 1905-1912, but does appear in the ledger for 1912-1920, identifying p.122 of the parallel *Grand Livre* (E.981.8.47). At that location there is identified only a 10-franc transaction relating to a bow. No evidence has been found within the *Grand Livre* that J-J Mathias sold his 1707 Stradivari violin back to Caressa & Français, yet such a transaction surely took place (see below).

The 1920-23 C&F *Grand Livre* has also been searched for 'Mathias'; the name does not appear.

The Caressa & Français *Grand Livre* for 1912-1920 shows the enormous number of string instruments and accessories sold between 1915 and 1918 to the Wurlitzer Company of Cincinnati, USA. Within a collection of instruments which was sold to Wurlitzer in March 1918 there are listed three Stradivari violins, label-dated 1685, 1697, and 1707; this last violin is priced at 45,000 francs, equivalent, approximately, to 3,000 US dollars (during this period the international value of the French franc was rapidly collapsing). If this is the Mathias violin, then its stock number, *1247*, had changed, to *2235*. Examination of the 21 pages(!) of the C&F *Grand Livre* (E.981.8.47) wherein all the sales to Wurlitzer are itemised reveals that all the rare and valuable instruments from the best Italian luthiers – Stradivari, Guarneri, Bergonzi, Guadagnini, Montagnana, Amati, Rugeri, etc. – have 4-digit stock numbers which begin with the number 2. Some examples are:

Sales to Wurlitzer in May 1915

Stradivari	2132
Rugeri	2059
Montagnana	2172
Landolfi	2166
Guadagnini	2125 and 2179

Sales to Wurlitzer in March 1918

Carcassi	2241 and 2278
Grancino	2224 and 2240
Bergonzi	2234
Tononi	2236 and 2237
Castelli	2064
Rugeri	2067
Guadagnini	2197 and 2199
Stradivari	2228, 2235, and 2238
Testore	2227.

It thus seems that C&F created a new stock-number sequence which was specifically applied to the first-class instruments sold to Wurlitzer. The ledger evidence points towards the 1707 violin sold in 1918 being the same violin as previously owned by J-J Mathias; the third annotation to Gand's descriptive text supports this identification.

A certificate for the 'Marquis de Champeaux' violin, issued by Emil Herrmann, is available online from the Smithsonian Institution's Jacques Francais Rare Violins Archive. Herrmann writes (in translation):

Sold by Bernardel in Paris to Jean Jacques Mathias on 18 May 92
 Subsequent[?] owners were M. de Pedenas [*sic*], also Marquis de Champeaux
 1918 from Caressa & Francais to Max Rosen in New York for 12,000 US dollars - sold
 6 May 1929 from me to Orr, Philadelphia, 14,500 US dollars - sold
 Edge repair
 Normal soundpost patch
 Lower front – various cracks
 Varnish is orange-red, slightly brownish
 The ground is rather dark, heavily worn
 Tonally very good
 Original label, 1707
 Upper bout: 168mm
 Centre bout: 112mm
 Lower bout: 207mm
 Body length: 356mm

Ernest Doring states (in *How many Strads?*, p.131, and previously in the December 1938 issue of *Violins and Violinists*, p.341, with illustrative plates on pp. 338 and 339) that, after Jean-Jacques Mathias,

later owners [of the 1707 violin] were M. de Pedenas [*sic*] and the Marquis de Champeaux of Paris, whose name it bears. Mr [Max] Rosen [born 'Rosenzweig'] acquired the instrument from Caressa & Francais in 1918.

This claimed purchase in 1918 sits against the C&F ledger information which is presented on page 4 of this account. The C&F *Répertoire* ledgers for the period 1905-1920 have been searched; the name 'Rosen' cannot be found.

Doring continues:

[Rosen] sold it to Emil Herrmann in 1929. From him it passed to George P[ownall] Orr, of Philadelphia, who has retained possession.

G P Orr died in March 1962.

Clearly, Doring's provenance information is sourced from Herrmann's certificate.

The 1707 violin was auctioned at Sotheby's (New York) on 26 June 1979. It was described as being 'The Property of a Lady' and was accompanied by Herrmann's certificate (presumably a copy thereof). The catalogue text provided by the auction house was:

169 **IMPORTANT ITALIAN VIOLIN**, the "Marquis de Champeaux" Stradivari, Antonio Stradivari, Cremona, 1707, bearing its original label *Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis / Faciebat Anno 1707*, the one-piece back of medium curl ascending from left to right, the ribs similar, the head of fainter curl, the table of fine grain opening out toward the flanks, the varnish of a golden-brown colour.

Provenance

Bernadel [*sic*] Paris
 Jean Jacques Mathias, Paris
 M. de Pedenas, Paris
 The Marquis de Champeaux, Paris
 Caressa & Francais, Paris
 Max Rosen, New York, 1918

Emil Herrmann, 1929
George P. Orr

The auction-house personnel evidently followed what had been previously written by Herrmann (and by Doring).

The Jacques Francais archive at the Smithsonian Institution also holds a certificate which was written by JF on an unknown date (but *c.*1983) and has the printed reference number '2293'. The only hand-written information on the certificate is:

Marquis de Champeaux; sold to Charles Castleman in 83.

The present writer sent an e-mail enquiry about the 'Marquis de Champeaux' violin to Charles Castleman (USA) but no reply was received. It is not known whether the violin exhibits the significant physical deficiencies as described by Charles Gand in 1876.

Since it seems that the 1707 Stradivari violin was in the hands of Ludovic de Champeaux for just a brief period of time it is perhaps inappropriate for his name to be used as an identification; '*Podenas-Mathias-Rosen*' would be historically more accurate.
