

# Domenico Dragonetti, the Milanollo sisters, and some violins

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2020

Domenico Dragonetti was born in Venice in 1763. Displaying an astonishing facility for playing the double-bass he became leader of the bass section in the S. Marco orchestra when only 24 years of age. In 1794 Dragonetti left Venice for London; apart from one brief return to Venice in 1799 he was based in London for the rest of his life. Dragonetti became famous as a result of his scarcity value as a performer, and wealthy as a result of his business acumen. When he died, in 1846, the musical world sang his praises:

Dragonetti was not only the greatest performer of his age on the double bass – possessing the finest instinct of true excellence in all that concerns his art – but he had moral qualities of a high order, a benevolent and generous disposition, and an inclination to friendship which he exercised with judgment and discrimination in men and things.<sup>1</sup>

Dragonetti's wealth is in part demonstrated by the number of instruments which he owned, his 'generous disposition' demonstrated by the gifting of these possessions to musician friends. Within his Last Will and Testament of 6 April 1846 he states:

[...]

12. I leave the violin made by Stradivarius (and which was once used by Paganini) to Miss Teresa Milanollo the violinist and I leave likewise as a gift to her younger sister Maria Milanollo who is also a violinist my violin made by Gasparo di Salo.

13. I leave to Signor Camillo Sivori the renowned musician one of my violins made by Amati and the aforesaid Signor Sivori shall make choice thereof at his pleasure.

14. I leave to my dear friend Augustin Joseph Tolbeque another of my violins made by Amati [...]

15. I leave to Mr Broms [...] the tenor [viola] made by Gasparo di Salo [...]

[...]

17. I leave my Double Bass made by Amati to my friend Mr Appleby [...]

18. I leave my Double Bass [...] to Signor Anfossi [...]

19. I leave my small Double Bass (made by Gasparo di Salo) [...] to Mr Salomon [...]

20. I make a present of my tenor made by Amati to Mr Hill [...]

21. I make a present of my tenor made by Hill to Signor Moralt [...]

22. I leave a violin [...]

23. I leave a Violoncello [...]

24. I leave a Violoncello [...]

25. I leave a Violoncello [...]

[...]

27. I leave my Double Bass made by Mangini [Maggini] [...]

28. I leave a Violoncello [...]

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<sup>1</sup> *The Musical World*, 9 May 1846, p. 163 (archived at the British Library).

29. I leave a violin made by Lafont [...]

[...]

31. I leave as a gift a Violin [...]

32. I leave a violin as a gift to each of the following professors comprising at present the orchestra of the Theatre Royal of the Italian Opera, namely a violin to [25 names are then listed.] These violins shall be taken from among those which I have[,] and distributed entirely at the discretion of my Testamentary Executors to the above mentioned professors belonging to the orchestra of the Theatre Royal of the Italian Opera in London.

33. I leave as a gift a Tenor to [6 names are then listed] The said tenors are to be taken from among the instruments which I have[,] and distributed entirely at the discretion of the Testamentary Executors.

[...]

37. I bequeath a Violoncello to [...]

38. I bequeath a Violoncello to [...]

[...]

I William Webb Venn of the City of London Public Notary [...] do hereby certify and attest unto all whom it may concern that the writing in the English language contained on the four sheets of paper hereto annexed under my Notarian Seal is a true and faithful translation or the original Last Will and Testament of the late Domenico Dragonetti written in the Italian language also hereto similarly annexed [...]²

The sheets of paper on which Dragonetti wrote, in Italian, his Last Will and Testament are still preserved at the National Archives (Kew).³ Dragonetti's text for items 12 and 13, including his underscores, is:

12. *Io lascio il violino fatto da Stradivarius (e che fu già\* usato da Paganini) alla Sig:<sup>ra</sup> Teresa Milanollo suonatrice di violino. E lascio egualmente siccome dono alla sua sorella minore Maria Milanollo suonatrice di violino anch'essa, il mio violino fatto da Gaspare di Salò.<sup>4</sup>*

13. *Lascio al Signor Camillo Sivori celebre suonatore, uno de miei violini fatti da Amati, ed il suddetto Sig:<sup>r</sup> Sivori farà la scelta a suo piacere.*

\* In Giuseppe Baretto's Italian-English dictionary of 1820 the word *già* is translated as *formerly; once; in former days; before*.<sup>5</sup>

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Claude Lebet writes:

*Parmi les quelques 30(!) violons qu'il laissait, il donna son Stradivarius 1728 à Teresa Milanollo, sa soeur Maria recevant un Gasparo da Salò; Camillo Sivori, l'élève de Paganini, reçut un Amati, [...]* <sup>6</sup>

The published translation of this passage is:

Of the thirty-odd violins which he left behind, Dragonetti's 1728 Stradivarius went to Teresa Milanollo and his Amati to her sister, Maria, [...] <sup>7</sup>

It will be noted that Lebet's translator:

<sup>2</sup> Domenico Dragonetti, *Last Will & Testament*; National Archives (Kew), PROB 11/2035/304, folios 297r–299v.

<sup>3</sup> National Archives, PROB 10/6385; Wills proved during May 1846, surnames C to E.

<sup>4</sup> The Italian-language text for item 12 is also presented by Arthur Pougin in his *Les soeurs Millanollo*, *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, Vol. XXIII (1916), p. 384.

<sup>5</sup> G Baretto, *Dizionario delle Lingue Italiana et Inglese*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, London, 1820.

<sup>6</sup> Claude Lebet, *Les deux Stradivarius de Domenico Dragonetti* (1992), p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

1. has omitted all mention of the Gasparo da Salò violin which was bequeathed to Maria Milanollo
2. has omitted Lebet's information about Camillo Sivori
3. has used the expression 'his Amati', which implies that Dragonetti owned only one such violin; the evidence of items 13 and 14 in Dragonetti's Will demonstrates otherwise.

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Even in the year of his death, Dragonetti's bequests were already being misrepresented in publications of the day; the following was published in *Revue et Gazette Musicale* on 15 November 1846, p. 367:

*Les sœurs Milanollo excitent ici un véritable enthousiasme. [...] Dragonetti, en mourant, leur aurait laissé deux stradivarius, comme témoignage de reconnaissance pour le plaisir qu'il avait éprouvé à les entendre six mois auparavant.*

Here, the Milanollo sisters excite genuine excitement. The dying Dragonetti would have[?] left them two Stradivari [violins] as a token of gratitude for the pleasure he experienced hearing them [perform] six months beforehand.

In their 1902 monograph on Antonio Stradivari the Hills (London violin dealers) identify two of the three primary recipients of Dragonetti's instrumental bequests:

Dragonetti brought several Stradivari and other violins from Italy, and at his death in 1846 he left by will to the then well-known lady player, Teresa Milanollo, a fine specimen dated 1728; also a violin by A. and H. Amati to Sivori.<sup>8</sup>

With respect to Dragonetti's bequest of a Brothers Amati violin to Camillo Sivori it is reported by Flavio Noguera that Sivori was performing in London during 1846 but in September of that year left for a concert tour of America; he did not return to Europe until 1850. Noguera makes no mention of the Amati/Dragonetti/Sivori violin; its subsequent history is unknown.<sup>9</sup>

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Teresa Milanollo was born 28 August 1827, her younger sister, Maria, on 19 June 1832; their parents were Giuseppe Antonio Milanollo and Antonina Rizzo. Like so many others, both before and after, Teresa's precocious ability in learning and playing the violin brought her to public attention at a very early age. Her family having moved from Savigliano (Piedmont, Italy) Teresa began her exhaustive and never-ending tours of European countries, their concert halls and their salons. Teresa began teaching Maria how to play the violin and Maria joined her elder sister in concerts when aged just six. In 1841 Henri Blanchard reviewed their joint concert at the Salles des Concerts Herz in Paris:

*Certainement Maria Milanollo est un phénomène musical; mais ce n'est qu'un délicieux joujou, une contrefaçon, une gentille imitation qui procède de Teresa Milanollo déjà grande artiste; et cependant Maria avec sa figure large, régulière, avec son grand œil bleu au regard assuré, semble encore plus sûre de l'avenir que sa sœur. Quoi qu'il en soit, ce sont deux enfants charmantes, qu'on écoute en pleine sécurité, sans souffrir, même en pensée, des efforts qu'elles ont dû faire pour arriver à ce degré de perfection. Quelque jaloux qu'on soit des prérogatives de son sexe, on doit se féliciter de voir ainsi tomber l'art en quenouille et en enfance.<sup>10</sup>*

<sup>8</sup> Hill, *Antonio Stradivari; his life and work* (1902), pp. 260-261. It seems unlikely that anyone from the Hill family was allowed sight of Dragonetti's Last Will and Testament; their statement that Teresa Milanollo received a 1728 Stradivari violin was probably the result of informed gossip among the string-instrument community in London (but apparently not informed enough to know about Maria's Gasparo da Salò violin). Antonio and Girolamo (Hieronymus) Amati – the 'Brothers Amati' – were sons of Andrea Amati. Nicola (or Nicolò) Amati (1596-1684) was Girolamo's son and the finest *luthier* in the family.

<sup>9</sup> See Flavio Menardi Noguera, *Camillo Sivori, La vita, i concerti, le musiche*, Graphos, Genova, 1991, pp. 112-116.

<sup>10</sup> *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, 11 April 1841, p. 223; present author's translation.

Undoubtedly, Maria Milanollo is a musical phenomenon, but she is nothing more than a delightful toy, a forgery, a simple imitation born of Teresa Milanollo, [she] already a great artist; nevertheless, Maria, with her large, regular face, with her big blue eye[s] and confident expression, seems even more sure of the future than her sister.

In any case, they are two charming children, to whom we listen without a trace of anxiety, we being quite unable to imagine the effort required to reach this level of perfection. No matter how protective one is of the prerogatives of one's sex, one should be pleased to see such artistry found on the female side and[, moreover,] in childhood.

Maria may have given the impression of confidence and resilience but, following years of touring and concerts, she died of tuberculosis on 21 October 1848, aged sixteen.

In 1857 Teresa Milanollo married Théodore Parmentier, a military engineer. In later years she gave many charity concerts:

During the lifetime of Mari[a], the sisters had already put themselves into direct personal relations with the poor of Lyons, but after Teresa had roused herself from her mourning for her sister she established a system of 'Concerts aux Pauvres' which she carried out in nearly all the chief cities of France, and part of the receipts of these concerts was used for the benefit of the poor. Her plan was to follow up the first concert with a second, at which the audience consisted of poor school-children and their parents, to whom she played in her most fascinating manner, and, at the conclusion of her performance, money, food, and clothing, purchased with the receipts of the previous concerts, were distributed.<sup>11</sup>

Teresa Milanollo died on 25 October 1904. A recently-published biography includes the following narrative in which the author, like others, mis-represents the identity of the violins bequeathed by Domenico Dragonetti to the sisters:

*Nel testamento lasciò due fondi al conservatorio parigino e a quello milanese per l'istituzione di borse di studio, documenti e memorabilia alla città di Savigliano e, in beneficenza, quasi tutti i violini di grande valore che le appartenevano, compresi l'Amati e lo Stradivari che con la sorella aveva ereditato dal contrabbassista D. Dragonetti nel 1846 e che tuttora portano il nome Milanollo.*<sup>12</sup>

In her will she left two endowments to the music conservatoires of Paris and Milan for the establishment of scholarships, left documents and memorabilia to her home city of Savigliano, and, for charity, almost all the highly valuable violins that belonged to her, including the Amati and the Stradivari which she, with her sister, had inherited from the double-bass player D. Dragonetti in 1846 and which still carry the name Milanollo.

Arthur Pougin indicates that in the first version of her Last Will and Testament Teresa bequeathed her 1728 Stradivari (*ex* Dragonetti) violin to the Milan Conservatoire. She is said (by Pougin) to have changed this bequest after being advised by a member of the Hill family that a violin such as hers, if bequeathed to an institution such as a conservatoire or a museum, would be 'destined for certain ruin'. As a result, Teresa agreed that the violin should be sold commercially, with the money received from the sale being added to the financial gifts which she had already pledged to the conservatoires of Paris and Milan. See p.10 of this account for details of the profit made by those who were involved in the subsequent acquisition and sale of the 1728 Stradivari violin.

Pougin states that Maria's Gasparo da Salò violin was bequeathed by Teresa to a cousin, Adélaïde.

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<sup>11</sup> Henry C. Lahee, *Famous Violinists of To-day and Yesterday*, Boston, 1899, pp. 311-312.

<sup>12</sup> Piero Faustini, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 74 (2010); online text for 'Milanollo', accessed 10 February 2020; present author's translation.

## 1. The *Dragonetti* Stradivari violin of 1700/1706

This violin is owned today by the Nippon Music Foundation. A lengthy description of the violin is provided by William Henley, the instrument identified as ‘1700 The Dragonetti’:

Passed through the hands of the well-known English dealer, Betts, then into the possession of Dragonetti in the early part of the last century. In 1818 it passed to Mr. Rivaz (well-known amateur player of his time) and in 1835 into the hands of Mr. De Rougement, thence into the possession of Charles Reade. In 1852 it was sold by Alvey Turner of Cheapside, London, to Mr. Bashall; Hill’s [*sic*] purchased it from this family in 1910. In 1912 it passed into the hands of Mr. Richard Bennet [*sic*] of whom it is said, possessed the most famous collection of Italian instruments of this century. Purchased by Hill’s from the family in 1929. It was again sold to a well-known collector from whose widow Hill’s again acquired the violin within recent times. Exhibited at the Antique Art Treasures, held at Bath in 1958.<sup>13</sup> Back is 14 inches long and in one piece, varnish being a rich red colour. The neck is still the original one, the pegholes have never been re-bushed and are still original. The violin is now in the possession of the well-known concert violinist Alfredo Campoli and is valued at £15,000.<sup>14</sup>

Further owners followed until the violin became the possession of the Westdeutsche Landesbank Girozentrale; when the bank was declared bankrupt, in 2002, the violin was bought by the Nippon Foundation which, on its website, dates the violin as ‘1700’. Claude Lebet states that the date-specification of ‘1700’ was simply because no-one could see the curving upper tail on the final ‘0’:

*L’étiquette marque la date de 1706, avec la queue du 6 très timidement marquée, confondant ainsi de nombreux experts qui ont daté ce violon de 1700.*

The label bears the date 1706, though for a long time many experts dated it at 1700, due to the faintness of the top stem of the “6”.<sup>15</sup>

According to Lebet’s commentary the *Dragonetti* violin was owned by Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue but there are no documents within the extensive Cozio Archive at the Biblioteca Statale di Cremona (Italy) which support this statement; nowhere does Count Cozio record his ownership of *any* Stradivari violin label-dated 1700 or 1706. Lebet further states that the *Dragonetti* was bought from Count Cozio by an English merchant and that the same merchant then sold the violin to Dragonetti:

*Le “Dragonetti” fut certainement acheté par le marchand anglais Betts au Comte Cozio di Salabue [...] Betts vendit le violon à D. Dragonetti peu après l’arrivée de ce dernier à Londres.*

Lebet’s translator presents this commentary as :

It seems certain that the “Dragonetti” was bought from the Count by the English dealer Betts, the man who sold it to Domenico Dragonetti on the latter’s arrival in London [in 1794].<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Art Treasures Exhibition* (British Antique Dealers’ Association), The Octagon Room, Bath, 29 May–7 June 1958. Exhibit 184, ‘The “Dragonetti” Stradivari, dated 1700’; plate 66 in the exhibition catalogue (two portrait photographs – front and back of the violin). The violin was loaned to the exhibition by William E. Hill & Sons.

<sup>14</sup> W. Henley, *Antonio Stradivari: Master Luthier* (1961), p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> Translation as published by Lebet, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> It is unclear which member of the Betts family of violin makers and dealers is being identified by Lebet. Lebet’s identification of Count Cozio is necessitated by Henley initially placing the *Dragonetti* violin with Betts; a supplier to Betts is required and Count Cozio conveniently fulfils that requirement. Note that Lebet dates the transfer of the violin from Betts to Dragonetti even before 1800 (but provides no evidence to support his statement); cf. Henley. In 1801 and 1803 Count Cozio placed French- and English-language advertisements for the sale, in Milan, of some of the instruments from his collection (instruments made by the Amatis, Stradivari, Rugeri, Andrea and Giuseppe Guarneri, Carlo Bergonzi and J-B Guadagnini); Betts had no need to respond to these advertisements; there were supplies of Italian violins in London.

There are no documents within the Cozio archive in Cremona which mention the name 'Betts'. Lebet continues:

*Celui-ci le conserva jusqu'en 1818, date à laquelle il le revendit pour 200 guineas à M. Rivaz, violoniste et collectionneur [...].*

Dragonetti kept [the violin] until 1818, then resold it for 200 guineas to a Mr. Rivaz, an amateur violinist and collector [...].<sup>17</sup>

Lebet's information appears to be based on a statement made by the Hills in 1902:

A [Stradivari] violin dated 1700 [was] purchased in 1818 from Dragonetti by Mr. F. Rivaz, for 200 guineas.<sup>18</sup>

Vincent Francis Rivaz died in 1834; his Last Will and Testament<sup>19</sup> shows that he left all his possessions 'to my beloved wife, Willielmina':

I bequeath to my aforesaid wife all my plate, jewels, [...?], furniture, *liutio*, wearing apparel, pictures, books, and everything that I may possess at my death.

It was presumably Willielmina Rivaz who, in 1835, sold the 1700 violin to M. de Rougemont (see the Henley text quoted on p.5 of this account).

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Regrettably, Ernest Doring confuses the situation by listing and describing a Stradivari violin of 1707, identified as 'The RIVAZ or *ex* BARON GUTMANN':

Fritz Meyer speaks of this instrument in glowing terms stressing its remarkable state of preservation, perfection of workmanship, and rich orange-red varnish. He recorded that it had passed from Hamma & Co. to the Berlin dealer Hammig. Probably it is the same violin mentioned under recordings of 1700 as having been purchased by F. Rivaz from Dragonetti in 1818.<sup>20</sup>

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Lebet's photos of the 1700/1706 *Dragonetti* violin show that the one-piece back plate has vivid flames crossing the plate diagonally (ascending to the right). An alternative photograph of the back plate (as provided on the Tarisio.com website) also reveals a group of gently wandering 'claw' marks running down the back plate next to the centre-joint. The violin still has its original neck but this has been lifted, re-angled, and lengthened by a triangular block of wood inserted at the neck-foot (this modification is demonstrated by a photograph on the Nippon Music Foundation website).

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## 2. The Milanollo/Hembert Stradivari violin of 1703

Ernest Doring provides the following information for a 1703 Stradivari violin which is associated with the Milanollo sisters:

THE MILANOLLO – 1703

The earliest known owner was Ronald Stephenson, a London banker and amateur whose collection was dispersed about 1840. The French luthier Nicolas Darche [1815-1873] sold the violin to J. [Joseph/Giuseppe] Milanollo, the father of the renowned violinists, Teresa and Maria. Milanollo

<sup>17</sup> Lebet further states that Mr. Rivaz owned the Stradivari *Archinto* viola of 1696 but this information is incorrect.

<sup>18</sup> Hill (1902), p. 268.

<sup>19</sup> National Archives (Kew), PROB 11/1839/86.

<sup>20</sup> E Doring, *How many Strads?*, Bein & Fushi, Chicago, 1999, p. 129.

sold the violin in 1851 to Amadée Berthe de Pommery<sup>21</sup> of Nancy who in turn sold it to Georges Floch in 1880. Prior to World War II, the Casadesus family acquired the violin. This is probably the violin referred to without illustration in the Goodkind listing as the “Hembert” of 1703.<sup>22</sup>

Henley provides a more extensive and detailed history for this violin – ‘1703 The Hembert’:

The musical instrument maker, Nicolas Darche of Aix la Chapelle, stated<sup>23</sup> that this instrument had been owned by Ronald Stephenson, a London banker and collector who had possessed several Strads, the collection having been dispersed by public sale in 1840.<sup>24</sup> Nicolas Darche sold the violin to Mr. J. Milanollo, father of the famous virtuoso, who bought it for his daughters who played it for five years in their concerts. In 1851 Mr. Milanollo re-sold the instrument to Comte de Pommery of Nancy, who in turn sold it in 1880 to Mr. Georges Florch, a lawyer of that town. It later passed to Mr. J. Lombard, the violinist, then to Mr. Koenig, a collector of St. Marie aux Mines in Alsace. After the latter’s death the violinist Marius Casadesus acquired it using it for several years at concerts. He then gave it over to Monsieur G. Hembert, French collector, who was his pupil. A very beautiful instrument with reddish-orange varnish. Length 357mm; back of maple in two pieces, sides to match. Table in two pieces of pine, open grain towards the edge. The head of maple, good wavy characteristics of the maker. Certified by Hill’s, Maucotel & Deschamp, Caressa & Français. 120,000 New Francs, today’s value.<sup>25</sup>

Charles Gand’s *Catalogue descriptif des Instruments de Stradivarius et J. Guarnerius*<sup>26</sup> contains the following entry (p. 95):

*(année 1880) M<sup>r</sup> Flach, à Nancy*<sup>27</sup>

*Violon Stradivarius, 13 pouces 2 lignes, année 1709*<sup>28</sup>

*Fond de deux pièces beau bois, ondes presque droites. Eclisses un peu plus douces. Table de deux pièces ayant plusieurs cassures au menton et à l’âme. Tête très-usée avec une joue à la cheville du La. Vernis rouge marron doré.*<sup>29</sup>

[JF55.2 only] *étiquette fausse*

*Acheté par Silvestre à l’Exp<sup>ion</sup> 1900, heaxx Vendu à Reifenberg en 1901, amxx*<sup>30</sup>

[JF55.2 and EF55.4] *1936 M<sup>lle</sup> Pressegol, 63 rue du Ruisseau, Paris – 18<sup>e</sup> (16-11-36)*

[EF55.4 only] *M<sup>lle</sup> Pressegol, 63 rue du Ruisseau, Paris, 18<sup>e</sup> (le 16-11-36), faux,*

*ma était pas à elle, a simplement un certificat de A-C pour le propriétaire inconnu*

<sup>21</sup> Comte Charles-Amédée Berthe de Pommery (1832-1916).

<sup>22</sup> Doring (1999), p. 383.

<sup>23</sup> The location of Darche’s statement is not identified.

<sup>24</sup> The Hills (Hill, p. 105) refer to ‘Mr. Stephenson, the banker’ as a one-time owner of the Stradivari *Macdonald* viola. They also quote (*ibid.*, p. 275) from W T Parke’s *Musical Memoirs* (Vol. I, 1830, p. 301) where Parke writes: ‘Mr. E. Stephenson, the banker, had perhaps the best and most valuable collection of Cremona violins of any private gentleman in England.’ Parke’s commentary is dated ‘1802’.

<sup>25</sup> Henley (1961), p. 43.

<sup>26</sup> Les Amis de la Musique, Spa, 1994.

<sup>27</sup> The name ‘Flach’ does not appear in the Gand & Bernardel *Répertoire* ledger (‘Directory’) for 1875-1884 which is archived at the Musée de la Musique in Paris (online file ID: E.981.8.5); this absence means that there is no linked entry in the parallel *Grand Livre* (‘General Ledger’) for the same period (E.981.8.6). This suggests that Georges Flach (a lawyer) took the 1703 violin to Gand purely for an expert evaluation prior to his paying Comte de Pommery (also a lawyer) for the instrument.

<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to understand how Gand could have seen a ‘9’ if the numeral was actually a ‘3’. In Jacques Français’ copy of the Gand/Bernardel/Caressa & Français descriptive notebook (Smithsonian Institution, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Box 55, folder 2 [JF55.2]) Gand’s 1709 is repeated, but subsequently the date been struck through, twice, and *vers 1700-1702* written above. In Emile Français’ copy of the same notebook (*ibid.*, Box 55, folder 4 [EF55.4]) the date is specified as 1709. For full details of the Gand/Bernardel/Caressa & Français notebooks see N Sackman, *The Jacques Français Rare Violins Inc. Photographic Archive and Business Records*, free-to-read at [www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk).

<sup>29</sup> Gand’s 1880 text ends at this point.

<sup>30</sup> The strike-throughs are as in the JF55.2 ledger.

[JF55.2 only] 1937 Marius Casadesus, 125,000<sup>f</sup>

*Vendu en 1851 par M<sup>lle</sup> T Milanollo à Amédée de Pommery 1500<sup>f</sup> qui l'achait parait-il acheté à Darche à Aix-la-Chapelle; Pommery le cède à Georges Flach, avocat à Nancy en 1880 pour 3,500<sup>f</sup>, les héritiers de M<sup>me</sup> V<sup>ve</sup> Flach devenue M<sup>me</sup> V<sup>ve</sup> Lombard le cédent en 1937 à Marius Casadesus.*

(1880) Mr Flach, from Nancy

Antonio Stradivari violin, 13 *pouces 2 lignes* [356.4mm], year 1709

The back plate is made from two pieces; beautiful wood; the flames almost straight. [The flames] of the ribs are slightly milder [i.e. less distinctive]. The front plate is made from two pieces, having several splits at the chin and at the sound-post. The head is very worn, with a cheek [patch] at the A-string peg. The varnish is golden red/chestnut brown.

[JF55.2 only] False label.

~~Bought by Silvestre at the 1900 Exposition, 18,200. Sold to Reifenberg in 1901, 24,000~~

[JF55.2 and EF55.4] 1936 Miss Pressegol, 63 rue du Ruisseau – 18<sup>th</sup> arrondissement (16.11.36).

[EF55.4 only] Miss Pressegol, 63 rue du Ruisseau, Paris, 18<sup>e</sup> (16.11.36), false, but the violin was not hers; she simply wanted a certificate from AC [Albert Caressa?] to give to the unknown owner. [Koenig? – see Henley's history, p. 7 above]

[JF55.2 only] 1937 Marius Casadesus, 125,000 francs

Sold in 1851 by Miss T. Milanollo to Amédée de Pommery for 1,500 francs, [she] having bought it, apparently, from [Nicolas] Darche of Aix-la-Chapelle; Pommery passed the violin to Georges Flach, a lawyer from Nancy, in 1880, for 3,500 francs; the heirs of the widow Mrs Flach (subsequently the widow Mrs Lombard) passed the violin to Marius Casadesus<sup>31</sup> in 1937.

Various conclusions could be drawn from the comments in the Français ledgers – ‘false label’ (JF55.2), and ‘false’ (EF55.4). Perhaps the most reasonable interpretation would be that a ‘I...’ date-label was glued inside the violin by Antonio Stradivari when the violin was completed (i.e the label showed only the first digit of the year-date, in printed, Roman, form); the violin stayed in the Cremona workshop, unsold, until a buyer arrived in 1709, at which point Stradivari detached the front plate and wrote on the label, with pen and ink, the missing three numerals which identified the then year-date: **I709**. If this proposition is correct then the ‘falsity’ is simply a recognition that the violin's physical style more accurately matches Stradivari violins made a few years earlier than the label-date rather than indicating that the label itself is in any way inauthentic.

There is no reason to doubt Charles Gand's identification of the violin's label-date. However, what is beyond immediate explanation is how Gand's ‘1709’ (assumed to be **I709**) came to be **I703**.

Jost Thöne's measurements of the *Milanollo/Hembert* violin are: UB 164/165mm front/back

CB 106/107mm

LB 203/205mm

Length 353.5/353.5mm

The body length does not robustly agree with that which is specified by Charles Gand – 356.4mm – there is a 3mm discrepancy. However, Gand's descriptive text *does* match with the Thöne photos of the *Milanollo/Hembert* violin, especially Gand's identification of a thin piece of wood inserted into the wall of the peg-box above the A-string peg; the patch is just visible in Thöne's photographs.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Marius Casadesus (1892-1981) was a French violinist and composer.

<sup>32</sup> Jost Thöne and Jan Röhrmann (eds.), *Antonius Stradiuarius*, 2010, Vol. II, pp. 192-199. The measurements are provided on an accompanying DVD.

Further distinguishing features of the *Milanollo/Hembert* violin include two black pin-heads on the underside of the neck-foot button, and two pale semicircular areas of varnish-less wood on the front plate, one patch on each side of the tail-piece, showing clearly where players of the violin have abraded the varnish with their chins/beards/sweat.

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### Summary

Around 1841 Signor Milanollo bought a 1703 Stradivari violin from Nicolas Darche. With Maria Milanollo then being just 8 or 9 years old it must surely be the case that the violin was bought for Teresa. Arthur Pougin quotes a review of the concert given by Teresa, aged 13, at the Paris Conservatoire on 18 April 1841; the writer of the review was Hector Berlioz:

[...] *Voici venir mademoiselle Teresa Milanollo, charmante jeune fille de douze ans, à la physionomie sérieuse et pleine cependant de grâces enfantines. Elle prend un violon, un grand violon comme celui d'Artôt, et joue une grande Fantasia à grand orchestre, composée par M. Habeneck [...].*<sup>33</sup>

Berlioz's very particular comment about the size of Teresa's violin is noteworthy – *a large violin, like that of [Alexandre] Artôt* – especially since Pougin, contrarily, states that the violin used by Teresa was a three-quarter size violin with the following internal label: *Ferdinandus Gagliano filius Nicolai fecit. Neap. 1702.*<sup>34</sup> Pougin further states that once Teresa received 'the Bergonzi' (see 5.) the so-called Gagliano violin was passed to her younger sister, Maria, who used it until she received the Amati violin which her father bought for her in 1844 (see 6.)

It is assumed that Teresa's father bought the 1703 Stradivari as a replacement for the three-quarter 'Gagliano', and that Teresa used the Stradivari between 1841 and 1842 (including at the Paris Conservatoire concert), at which point her father bought her a Bergonzi violin, then bought a second Bergonzi violin (see p.12 of this account), and then, in 1851, sold the Stradivari violin to the Comte de Pommery. Pougin makes no mention of a 1703 Stradivari violin.

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Until recently the Cozio Archive of the Tarisio.com website stated that the *Milanollo/Hembert* violin (ID 41326) had an 'original label [dated] 1703, the last three digits written in manuscript'. The website provided reproductions of three photographs of the violin (the photographs made, perhaps, by Jacques Francais); all three photographic prints had written upon them the following text:

*Violon de Stradivarius 1703  
Marius CASADESUS  
Photo pour Monsieur Alfred Hill*

Within the Cozio Archive, and as at February 2020, the identification number '41326' did not connect to any violin; the name 'Hembert' did not connect to any violin.

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<sup>33</sup> Pougin, p. 357, does not identify the printed location of the review; the present author's searches have been unsuccessful. Alexandre Artôt (1815-1845) was a distinguished French violinist; for an account of the violins which he owned and played see the present author's article *Alexandre Artôt and his Stradivari violins*, free-to-read at [www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk).

<sup>34</sup> Pougin, pp. 385-386. Ferdinando Gagliano was born in 1738.

### 3. The *Dragonetti/Milanollo Stradivari violin of 1728*

This violin is ID 40875 in the Cozio Archive of Tarisio.com and appears in Charles Gand's *Catalogue descriptif* (p. 61). Gand's text was subsequently copied and extended in JF55.2 and EF55.4 (see footnote 28):

*(année 1871) M<sup>me</sup> Parmentier, Paris*

*Violon Stradivarius, 13 pouces 1 ligne, année 1728*

*Fond de 2 pièces, veines très-serrées remontant légèrement. Table de 2 pièces ayant 2 cassures à l'endroit de l'âme et 1 du côté de la barre, beau sapin un peu serré dans le milieu, deux trous de vers de 4 lignes environ au menton, belle tête ayant une fente au trou du Ré et une au La du côté des têtes de chevilles. Vernis jaune doré tirant sur le brun.*

*Ex Dragonetti*<sup>35</sup>

[JF55.2 and EF55.4] *Acheté en 1905 entre Hill, Silvestre, et nous, ahxzx*

*Vendu à M<sup>e</sup> Wottmann à Londres par Hill en 1906 mxzxx.*

(1871) M<sup>me</sup>. Parmentier, Paris

Antonio Stradivari violin, 13 *pouces 1 ligne* [354.2mm], year 1728

The back plate is made from two pieces; the flames are very tight/narrow, gently rising [from the centre-joint]. The front plate is made from two pieces, having two splits in the area of the sound-post and one on the bass-bar side. The [front plate] spruce is beautiful, [the rings are] slightly tight/narrow in the middle. There are two worm tracks about 4 *lignes* [9mm] [in length] in the area of the chin. Beautiful head, having a split at the D-string peg-head hole, and one at the A-string peg-head hole. The varnish is golden yellow verging towards brown.

*ex Dragonetti*

[JF55.2 and EF55.4] Bought in 1905 between Hill, Silvestre, and us, 21,000 [francs]<sup>36</sup>

Sold to M. Wottmann [Wilhelm Woltmann] from London, by Hill, in 1906, 40,000 [francs].<sup>37</sup>

The 1728 violin was exhibited at the 1885 International Inventions Exhibition (Loan Collection of Musical Instruments), Albert Hall, London; it was described in the exhibition's *Guide* as:

This was formerly the property of Dragonetti, who bequeathed it at his death in 1846 to Teresa Milanollo, now the wife of M. le General Parmentier.

Pougin quotes a letter he received from Théodore Parmentier in June 1909:<sup>38</sup>

*M. Hill, venu à Paris, m'apportait ses condoléances; puis il revenait quelques semaines après pour m'offrir (comme étant l'exécuteur testamentaire de madame Parmentier) la somme de 20,000 francs comptant pour le Stradivarius. Accablé de chagrin, je n'étais nullement en état moral de faire du commerce et des démarches de surenchères; j'accepterai donc le prix offert, que M. Hill versa le jour même à mon compte au Credit Lyonnais. Je crois qu'il eût facile d'en obtenir un meilleur prix; on m'a dit que M. Hill avait vendu le violon beaucoup plus cher à un amateur écossais.*

Mr Hill came to Paris and extended his condolences to me; he then returned a few weeks later to offer me (my being the testamentary executor for Madame Parmentier) the sum of 20,000 francs, in cash, for the Stradivari. Overwhelmed with grief, I was not in a fit state to engage in financial haggling and so I accepted the price as offered, which Mr Hill paid into my account at Credit Lyonnais on that same day. [In retrospect] I think that it would have been easy to obtain a better

<sup>35</sup> Gand's text ends at this point.

<sup>36</sup> 'us' indicates Caressa & Français.

<sup>37</sup> The sale price of 40,000 francs thus produced a profit of c.6,500 francs for each of the three dealers after just one year of joint ownership of the violin.

<sup>38</sup> Pougin, p. 387, footnote 2.

price. I was told that Mr Hill [subsequently] sold the violin at a much higher price to a Scottish music-lover.

Théodore Parmentier clearly suspected that it was the collector, Robert Crawford, in Edinburgh, who had subsequently bought the 1728 violin, but, as shown earlier, the buyer was in fact Wilhelm Woltmann. It cannot now be determined whether ‘Mr [Alfred?] Hill’ explained to M. Parmentier that a consortium of three dealers, two of whom were French, were buying his wife’s violin; nor can it be determined whether M. Parmentier did in fact add the 20 or 21,000 francs to the financial bequests made by his wife to the Paris and Milan Conservatoires (see p.4 of this account).

The violin appears in Jost Thöne, *Antonius Stradiuarius*, Vol. VIII, pp.152-159.

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#### 4. The Gasparo da Salò violin

In 1906 the Italian author, Angelo Berenzi, published a 45-page book: *Di alcuni strumenti fabbricati da Gasparo di Salò posseduti da Ole Bull, da Dragonetti e dalle sorelle Milanollo*.<sup>39</sup>

The final section of Berenzi’s book (pp. 37-41) is titled *Teresina Milanollo e il suo Gasparo da Salò*. Berenzi states that, at some of her concerts (following the death of her younger sister, Maria) Teresa preferred to use the Gasparo da Salò violin rather than her Stradivari violin.<sup>40</sup> Berenzi continues by quoting part of a letter he received from Teresa with respect to the da Salò violin:

*[...] io ho chiesto alcuni anni or sono dalla insigne artista una breve relazione; ed ella, assai gentile, con sua lettera autografa del 12 luglio 1890, così mi rispondeva da ‘Saint Germain en Laye’ (Parigi):*

A few years ago I requested from the distinguished artist a brief report on the violin, and she graciously replied to me from *Saint Germain en Laye* (Paris) in a letter dated 12 July 1890:

*“ . . . Le violon sur lequel vous désirez avoir quelques renseignements n’est pas daté. Son étiquette porte simplement – ‘Gasparo da Salò in Brescia’.*

*C’est un bel instrument, fort bien conservé, à double filet; les deux filets d’environ un millimètre de largeur sont distants de 3mm. Ce qui donne au double filet une largeur de 5 millimètres. Le fond est d’une pièce; la table d’harmonie en sapin à larges veines. Le vernis a une belle couleur dorée plus foncée sur la table que sur le fond . . .*

*Le violon de Gasparo da Salò que je tiens de ma soeur Maria lui avait été légué en 1846 par le célèbre contrabassiste Dragonetti, en même temps qu’il me léguait un superbe ‘Stradivarius’ qui avait appartenu à Paganini. Dans son testament Dragonetti disait qu’il tenait à laisser ceux deux beaux instruments en bonnes mains, et en mains italiennes . . .*

*Paris, Juillet 1890. T. Milanollo Parmentier”*

. . . The violin about which you wish to have some information is not dated. Its label simply says ‘Gasparo da Salò in Brescia’.

It is a beautiful instrument, very well preserved, with double purfling; the two purflings, each being about 1 millimeter wide, are 3mm apart; this gives an overall width of 5mm. The back plate is in one piece; the front plate is made from spruce with wide veins [rings]. The varnish has a lovely golden color, darker on the front plate than on the back . . .

[This] Gasparo da Salò violin, that I keep [in memory] of my sister Maria, was bequeathed to her in 1846 by the famous bassist Dragonetti, who, at the same time, bequeathed to me a beautiful

<sup>39</sup> Fratelli Geroldi, Brescia.

<sup>40</sup> (but Arthur Pougin states that Teresa preferred to play on her Bergonzi violin; see p.13 of this account)

Stradivarius which had belonged to Paganini. In his Will Dragonetti said he wanted to leave these two beautiful instruments in good hands, and in Italian hands . . .

T. Milanollo Parmentier  
Paris, July 1890.<sup>41</sup>

There are eight Gasparo da Salò violins listed on the Tarisio.com website: it is tempting to think that one of these eight violins is that which was bequeathed to Maria, but among the eight instruments only one – the ‘Ole Bull’ decorated violin (355mm) – has a one-piece back plate as is identified by Teresa, and this violin was bequeathed to the Norwegian violinist Ole Bull in 1842 and kept by him until his death in 1880.

Berenzi continues:

*Mi si dice che in casa Parmentier a Parigi, nei giorni 26 e 27 dell'ottobre 1904, si vedevano entro la cappella ardente i due violini di Gasparo da Salò e di Antonio Stradivari posti con delicato pensiero fra le mani di Teresina Milanollo irrigidite dalla morte.*

*Conforme al desiderio della più insigne tra le violiniste italiane, desiderio che si può facilmente indovinare, vada, unito alla condoglianze, anche un nostro augurio agli eredi Parmentier: l'augurio che i due preziosi istrumenti, fabbricati l'uno a Brescia dall'inventore, e l'altro a Cremona dal perfezionatore del violino, abbiano a passare entrambi 'en bonnes mains, et en mains italiennes'.*

I am told that on 26 and 27 October 1904, in the Parmentier's house in Paris, the two violins, made by Gasparo da Salò and by Antonio Stradivari, came together within the burning chapel [?a private crematorium], placed with delicate thoughtfulness in the stiffened hands of Teresina Milanollo [died 25 October].

In accordance with the desire of the most distinguished violinists in Italy (a desire that can easily be understood) we offer our condolences to the Parmentier heirs together with our wish: that the two precious instruments, one made in Brescia by the inventor [of the violin], the other made in Cremona by he who perfected it, should both pass onwards *en bonnes mains, et en mains italiennes*.

Though his book was published in 1906 it seems that Berenzi was unaware that the 1728 Stradivari violin had been sold the previous year.

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## 5. A Bergonzi violin (or two)

The name *M<sup>r</sup> Milanollo* appears in Charles-François Gand's *Répertoire* ledger ('Directory') for the period 1839-1845;<sup>42</sup> the entry links to p. 238 of the parallel *Grand Livre* ('General Ledger')<sup>43</sup> where the name of *M<sup>r</sup> Milanollo* reappears. The transaction entries show that on 11 August 1842 Signor Millanollo bought *Un Violon Bergonsi, N<sup>o</sup> 2* for 750 francs. On 16 August 1844 he bought a second Bergonzi violin – *un Violon Bergonzi N<sup>o</sup> 32* – valued at 800 francs, as well as *un Violon Amati, N<sup>o</sup> 28*, valued at 1,000 francs;<sup>44</sup> both violins were *envoyé à condition* ('on approval') which suggests that Signor Milanollo paid in full for the two violins but if he returned either the *Bergonzi N<sup>o</sup> 32* or the

<sup>41</sup> Present author's translation. It will be noted that Teresa's final sentence makes a claim which is not supported by the evidence of Dragonetti's Last Will and Testament (and Dragonetti does not specifically state that the 1728 Stradivari violin 'had belonged' to Paganini).

<sup>42</sup> Musée de la Musique, Paris, E.981.8.15

<sup>43</sup> E.981.8.16

<sup>44</sup> *N<sup>o</sup> 2*, *N<sup>o</sup> 32*, and *N<sup>o</sup> 28* are stock numbers. 'Amati' indicates which member of the Amati family?

*Amati N° 28*, or both, his payment would be refunded. Subsequent Gand/Bernardel business ledgers make no mention of any refunds.

Arthur Pougin writes of a Bergonzi violin which belonged to Teresa Milanollo:<sup>45</sup>

*Un des meilleurs violons qui soient, croit-on, sortis des mains de Carlo Bergonzi. Quoique sans nom d'auteur, on le tenait pour parfaitement authentique. On suppose que l'étiquette primitive a disparu lors d'une réparation faite en Allemagne, où elle fut remplacée par celle-ci: Reparavit Andr. Engleder, K. Hof-Saiten Instrumentemacher in München. 1843.<sup>46</sup> Cet excellent violon avait été choisi par Vieuxtemps pour Teresa, chez les frères Gand, à la suite du concert du Conservatoire (18 avril 1841) qui fut l'origine de sa brillante carrière. Il resta toujours son instrument favori, même quand elle reçut le [1728] Stradivarius de Dragonetti, parce que, disait-elle, les qualités particulières de ce Bergonzi répondaient mieux que tout autre à son tempérament.*

One of the best violins out of those believed to have been made by Carlo Bergonzi. Although without an author's name [label], it is considered entirely authentic. It is thought that the original label disappeared during a repair made to the violin in Germany, it being replaced with the following: *Reparavit Andr. Engleder, K. Hof-Saiten Instrumentemacher in München. 1843.*<sup>47</sup> This excellent violin was chosen by Henri Vieuxtemps, from [Charles-François] Gand, for Teresa, following the concert at the Conservatoire (18 April 1841) which marked the start of her brilliant career.<sup>48</sup> This violin was always her favourite instrument, even after she received the [1728] Stradivari violin from Dragonetti, because, she said, the particular qualities of the Bergonzi matched her temperament better than any other [violin].

The name *Parmentier Milanollo* appears in the Gand & Bernardel Directory for 1866-1875<sup>49</sup> with a page-number link to the parallel General Ledger<sup>50</sup> wherein is found the name *M<sup>e</sup> Parmentier Millanollo*. A few transactions, dated between 30 December 1871 and 7 February 1874, are listed, including:

30 December 1871: *réparation du Violon Bergonzi, 5 francs* [but which Bergonzi?]

29 January 1872: *réparation du Violon Stradivarius, 10 francs* [the 1728 violin is assumed]

The name *Milanollo* appears in the General Ledger for the period 1875-1884; a *réparation d'un violon, 18 francs*, is entered against the date of 29 March 1882.

The name *Madame Parmentier, artiste* also appears in the same General Ledger; entries made between May 1876 and April 1883 are almost all for the purchase of strings; no violins are mentioned.

A Bergonzi violin was bequeathed by Teresa to her husband, Théodore, who, in 1908, passed it to his nephew, Georges Vallet;<sup>51</sup> its history thereafter is unknown.

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<sup>45</sup> Pougin, p. 385; present author's translation.

<sup>46</sup> Andreas Engleder (1810-1861).

<sup>47</sup> It is inconceivable that Engleder would remove a genuine Bergonzi label from within a violin. It is much more likely that the violin never contained any label, Bergonzi's authorship being identified purely by the violin's constructional features.

<sup>48</sup> Since, as shown on p.12, Teresa's father bought a second Bergonzi violin in August 1844 it must be the case that Andreas Engleder's 1843 repair was to the Bergonzi violin which was bought in August 1842, i.e. *Violon Bergonsi, N° 2*.

<sup>49</sup> E.981.8.19

<sup>50</sup> E.981.8.14

<sup>51</sup> See Pougin, p. 388, footnote 2.

## 6. A Brothers Amati (Francesco Ruggeri/Ruger) violin <sup>52</sup>

In 1844, when Signor Milanollo bought the *Amati N<sup>o</sup> 28* violin, Maria Milanollo was 12 years of age; if the *Amati N<sup>o</sup> 28* violin is the Brothers Amati violin which is discussed below would Maria's father have bought her an instrument with a back-length of just 344mm?

In writing about this violin Arthur Pougin includes the text of the instrument's internal label:

Un *Amati* [*Antonius et Hieronymus Fr. Amati, cremonen., Andreae fil., F. 163...*]. Ce violon fut acheté vers 1845 pour Maria Milanollo, qui s'en servit dans tous ses concerts jusqu'à sa mort.<sup>53</sup>

A Brothers Amati violin – with a different label-text – was auctioned at Sotheby's on 17 July 1975:

Lot 98. An important violin by Antonius Hieronymus Amati, Cremona, labelled *Antonius & Hieronymus Amati fecit Cremonae 162\** [...] length of back 13<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. bare (344mm), circa 1620-1630.

This instrument is known as the 'Ex Milanollo', The interior of the upper portion of the instrument is inscribed with the initials "M. M."<sup>54</sup> [...] Sold with the certificate of Rembert Wurlitzer, New York, dated July 11<sup>th</sup> 1974, with three photographs on the reverse side. Also with a book on the instrument entitled *Antonius und Hieronymus Amati, Die "Maria Milanollo"*, published by Albert Berr, Bad Wiesee, 1950, number 32 of a limited edition of 50.

This violin was subsequently auctioned by Tarisio Fine Instruments in April 2010 but now it was identified as:

A fine Italian violin by Francesco Ruggeri, Cremona, c.1680.  
Labeled *Antonius Hieronymus Amatis fecit Cremona 16...*<sup>55</sup>  
Length of back 34.4cm.

Sold with certificate from Rembert Wurlitzer Inc, New York (July 11, 1974) and Kenneth Warren & Son, Ltd, Chicago (January 12, 1979) both referring to the violin as the work of the Brothers Amati. Illustrated in a limited edition monograph on this instrument [as cited above] a copy of which (34/50) is included with this lot.

Provenance           Domenico Dragonetti <sup>56</sup>  
                              Maria Milanollo  
                              Teresa Milanollo  
                              Hammig  
                              Konrad Wallfisch  
                              Edgar Wollgandt  
                              Current owner, USA.

The 2,000-word monograph by Albert Berr contains four photographs:

1. A photograph of the back plate of the Brothers Amati violin
2. A photograph of the back plate of a different, unidentified, violin
3. A photograph of the peg-box and scroll on the bass side of the Brothers Amati violin
4. A photograph of the *f*-hole on the bass side of the Brothers Amati violin.

Berr supplies no information regarding the date when Maria Milanollo acquired the Brothers Amati violin, nor any information about the previous owner(s). He indicates that after Maria's death in 1848

<sup>52</sup> This violin appears as ID 21655 in the Cozio Archive of Tarisio.com.

<sup>53</sup> Pougin, p. 385.

<sup>54</sup> Perhaps the inscription 'M. M.' should be treated with caution; would a very young female violinist request that the front plate of a rare violin made 200 years previously be removed so that her initials could be inscribed inside?

<sup>55</sup> Comparison of this label text with the two previous is instructive.

<sup>56</sup> To repeat: Domenico Dragonetti did not bequeath an Amati violin to Maria Milanollo.

the violin turned up in England but he offers no supportive evidence.<sup>57</sup> Subsequent owners are identified by Berr as Hammig (violin dealer), Kurt Schuster, and Konrad Wallfisch. Berr refers to an essay, dated 15 June 1946, written by Edgar Wollgandt (one-time leader of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra) in which Wollgandt discusses the tone of the violin; the present author has not been able to locate this essay. Berr defines the principal measurements of the violin as:

Upper Bout 160mm    Centre Bout 108mm    Lower Bout 196mm    Body Length 343mm.

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In 1823 Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue wrote an evaluation of Francesco Ruger's work as a *luthier*:

*1823: Fu pure scolare, e forse il più esatto imitatore delli istromenti del Nicolao Amati, il Francesco Ruger, che nei biglietti che contrappose nei suoi istrumenti si denominò "detto il Per" ed ancor esso cremonese [...] Fabbricò esso molti istrumenti ben lavorati ad imitazione del sudetto suo maestro [...] in generale per i violini adoperati i buoni legni [...] uno fra essi quello esistente nella suddetta collezione Cozio dell'anno 1684, ancor intatto e come nuovo a servir di modello [...] che questo lavorava già da sè l'anno 1680 e che continuò fino all'anno 1692, notandosi che li più vecchi si sono veduti contenere il biglietto del suo maestro Nicolao Amati.*<sup>58</sup>

Another student of Nicola Amati, and perhaps the most accurate imitator of his instruments was Francesco Ruger, who, on the labels placed inside his instruments, calls himself *detto il Per*. He also was Cremonese. [...] He built many instruments with good workmanship in imitation of his teacher. [...] In general he used good wood for his violins, among which there is one, dated 1684, in the aforementioned Cozio collection. It is still intact, as good as new, and can serve as a model. [...] By 1680 [Ruger] was already working independently, and continued working until 1692. Note that it is in his older instruments [i.e. instruments made when Ruger was young] where one finds the label of his master, Nicola Amati.

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Within a 300-page inventory of his instruments Count Cozio describes a Francesco Ruger violin which featured a 'false' Nicola Amati label of 1661:

*1816, 7 giugno*

*Violino di Francesco Ruger detto il Per, con Biglietto di Nicola Amati falso del 1661 tutte quattro dette cifre stampate della stampa del Mantegazza, ora ritornato del Gavioli, già del sig, Giacomo Carli e prima Carlo Mantegazza. Forma grande, fondo gionto in due, bellissima vena larga, sano, colle due pontine come li Amati [...].*<sup>59</sup>

Violin made by *Francesco Ruger, detto il Per*, with a false Nicola Amati label of 1661; all four of these [date] numerals printed with Mantegazza's stamp-block; [the violin] now returned to Gavioli, previously with Giacomo Carli and, initially, with Carlo Mantegazza. Large model, two-piece back plate [with] the most beautiful wide flames, in good condition, with two [locating] pins as in Amati [instruments] [...].

It is unclear whether Count Cozio is acknowledging that Carlo Mantegazza bought a supply of counterfeit Amati labels, the labels having a blank space where Carlo, as desired, could stamp four appropriate numerals, or whether the Count is pointing out that the label is 'false' because it mis-identifies the name of the maker (so Mantegazza's actions, to an extent, are irrelevant).

<sup>57</sup> Maria's Amati violin was bequeathed by Teresa, in 1904, to a second cousin, Clotilde.

<sup>58</sup> R Bacchetta, *Carteggio* (1950), p. 71; present author's translation.

<sup>59</sup> Biblioteca Statale di Cremona, Libreria Civica, ms. Cozio 47, folio 37r; this leaf has suffered extensive damage, with a large central area of the paper missing; see Bacchetta, p. 260.

In an 1808 inventory of instruments<sup>60</sup> Count Cozio describes two Nicola Amati violins, the first dated 1668 (which had belonged to his father), the second dated 1658. In recording these label-dates the Count has placed an ink-dot underneath every one of the eight numerals; an ink-dot was the Count's method of showing which numerals were handwritten; further documents in which the Count describes yet more Amati instruments record the same all-handwritten-numerals feature. Why did Mantegazza not *write* the four numerals with pen and ink?

With respect to the identity of the violin auctioned by Sotheby's and by Tarisio Fine Instruments, Girolamo (Hieronymus) Amati died in 1635, his brother, Antonio, in 1638 (i.e. when Francesco Ruggeri was c.5 years old); Francesco, therefore, can only have been apprenticed to Nicolò Amati (who, in 1658, was godfather to Francesco's son, Giacinto). It is curious that Francesco should apparently falsify one of his late-in-life violins – made 'c.1680' according to Tarisio.com – by inserting a Brothers Amati label. If Francesco, according to Count Cozio, was 'working independently' by 1680 (when he was approximately 47 years of age) why should he falsely identify his work? By 1680 the Brothers Amati had been dead for more than 40 years and Nicolò had but four years still to live; the Amati family's long-lasting national and international reputation was being overtaken by that of Stradivari. Why would Francesco think it commercially advantageous to insert a *162\** Brothers Amati label inside his violin?

The Cozio Archive of Tarisio.com illustrates five Ruggeri violins label-dated between 1680 and 1693; all five have the text 'Francesco Ruger [or Rugieri or Rugeri] detto il Per in Cremona'.

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Author of *The Messiah violin: a reliable history?* (2015); see [www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk) for details. Author of an historical study of the Stradivari *Habeneck* violin, published in the Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society, 2016, and re-published on the aforementioned website. Author of an historical study of the 'original' neck of the Stradivari *Soil* violin (website). Author of a detailed historical study of the two Guarneri *del Gesù* violins which belonged to John Tiplady Carrodus (website). Author of an extensive and detailed investigation into the reality of the 1724 Stradivari violin which Count Cozio di Salabue sold in 1817 to Niccolò Paganini (website). Author of an historical study of the Stradivari *Chant du Cygne* violin (Journal of the Galpin Society, March 2017). Author of a transcription and translation of the complete sales-ledger archive of Jacques Francais (Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC); see website. Author of a detailed historical examination of the Stradivari quartet of decorated instruments exhibited at the Palacio Real in Madrid, Spain; see website. Author of *The case of the missing mould* ('The Strad', June 2018). Author of a detailed examination of issues which surround both the *Cannone* violin in Genoa and the *Canon* violin sold by David Laurie (website). Author (with Bas Terraz) of a study of the 29 letters sent by Pablo Sarasate to his adoptive mother in Paris; a digest of this study appeared in the June 2020 issue of *The Strad*.

Further investigative articles can be found at the author's website ([www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk)); all are free-to-read.

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<sup>60</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 46.