

## Niccolò Paganini's *Cannone* violin and David Laurie's "Canon" violin; some considerations

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Within the Palazzo Tursi, in Genoa, Italy, is exhibited a Guarneri *del Gesù* violin. The information card within the glass display-cabinet states:

Bartolomeo Giuseppe Guarneri detto "del Gesù"  
Violino detto il "Cannone", Cremona 1743,  
appartenuto a Niccolò Paganini  
Legato alla città di Genova da Niccolò Paganini e consegnato  
dagli eredi al Comune di Genova al 4 luglio 1851  
Genova, Galleria di Palazzo Bianco, inv. PB820

This information is translated, on the same information card, as:

*Bartolomeo Giuseppe Guarneri known as "del Gesù"*  
*Violin called the "Cannone", Cremona 1743,*  
*owned by Niccolò Paganini*  
*Bequeathed to the City of Genoa by Niccolò Paganini and given*  
*by his heirs<sup>1</sup> to the City of Genoa on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1851*  
*Genoa, Galleria di Palazzo Bianco, PB 820*

In a brochure published by the Comune di Genova in 2003 – *Violini a Genova* – it is stated:

*Seconda una precisa disposizione contenuta nel testamento redatto a Genova nel 1837,*  
*il "Cannone" venne legato "alla città di Genova perché fosse perpetuamente conservato".*

This text is translated in the brochure as:

According to a definite disposition in Paganini's will made in 1837 in Genoa,  
the "Cannone" was left to "the City of Genoa to be preserved forever".<sup>2</sup>

The first part of the following historical study contrasts the apparent certainty of identification of Paganini's *Cannone* violin (as above) with the uncertainties which surround the events which took place prior to 1840 (when Paganini died) as well as those which took place between 1840 and 1851 (when a Guarneri violin was handed over to the Genoese authorities by Niccolò's only son, Achille Cyrus Alessandro). The second part of the study examines the curious emergence of a "Canon" violin in London in the latter part of the nineteenth century and how two historical narratives may be intertwined.

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<sup>1</sup> Niccolò Paganini had only one heir – his son Achille[s] (1825-1895).

<sup>2</sup> The brochure, which is not paginated, is hereafter cited as *Violini a Genova*. Full identification of all quoted sources will be found in the Bibliography at the end of this study. Paganini, in his Will, does not mention a *Cannone* violin; his bequest states, simply: *Lego il mio violino alla Città di Genova onde sia perpetuamente conservato*. The reason for the alternative wording published in the *Violini a Genova* brochure is unknown.

## Part 1

In the first decades of the nineteenth century there were very few violin aficionados, practitioners, or dealers who possessed anything more than the vaguest understanding of the generational relationships within the Guarneri families of Cremona. No researches had been carried out in church archives and/or parish records and nothing had been published. Even in 1855 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume was chiding the curate at the cathedral in Cremona: 'You give me very few details about J. Guarnerius del Gesu whose instruments are so highly regarded.'<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly the best-informed investigator was Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue (1755-1840). In a lengthy document written in 1816 Count Cozio outlined his knowledge of the history of violin-making in northern Italy, charting (as far as he knew) the identity and chronology of various violin makers who represented different schools of practice.<sup>4</sup> Even though the Count's historical knowledge was more extensive and more reliable than that which was professed by any of his contemporaries he still approached the writing of his document with circumspection and humility:

*Memorie per servire alla disertazione sulla conoscenza delli instrumenti a corda delle diverse scuole italiane, e specialmente de più celebri autori di Cremona, e della sua scuola, che possono essere di qualche utilità a chi desiderasse di formarsi una raccolta de medesimi, e per indirizzo a quelli che volessero imparare per teorica una tale arte che pur troppo è d'assai declinata, tanto più nella sostanza [...].<sup>5</sup>*

[These] commentaries are a contribution towards the understanding of string instruments of the various Italian schools, especially the most celebrated authors of Cremona, and their school, which may be of some use to those who wish to form a collection [of instruments] of these people, as well as guiding those who wish to learn about the theory of an art which for too long has been in great decline, even more in its substance [...].<sup>6</sup>

Count Cozio provides an overview of the Brescian school of *lutherie*, followed by an overview of the Cremonese school. At the start of this latter section Cozio writes about the *Autori di prima classe* (these being the Amatis, Antonio Stradivari, and Francesco Stradivari) and then moves on to the *Autori di seconda classe*, beginning with Andrea Guarneri (1623-1698) who is followed by Andrea's youngest son, Giuseppe Giovanni Battista Guarneri *filius Andreae* (1666-1740); the latter is followed by Francesco Rugieri, Pietro Guarneri (of Mantua), and then another Giuseppe Guarneri:

*Il Guarnerio Giuseppe, che qualche volta ne biglietti si qualificò per nipote d'Andrea ma che mai fece menzione di suo padre ...*

Giuseppe Guarneri, who sometimes on his labels identifies himself as the nephew<sup>7</sup> of Andrea but makes no mention of his father.

*Questo Giuseppe Guarnerio, per distinguerlo dall'altro Giuseppe Guarnerio figlio d'Andrea, che sarebbe stato cugino germano del primo, si denomina del Gesù [...].*

This Giuseppe Guarneri, to distinguish himself from the other Giuseppe Guarneri, [i.e. the] son of Andrea, who would have been the cousin of the first-named, was known as *del Gesù* because in the majority of the labels found in his violins, especially the most ordinary, they have the following cipher 'IHS' [Count Cozio draws a four-pointed cross above the three letters].<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Bonetti *et al.*, p. 103; present author's translation.

<sup>4</sup> All Cozio's documents are archived at the Biblioteca Statale di Cremona.

<sup>5</sup> Biblioteca Statale di Cremona [BSCr], Libreria Civica [LC], ms. Cozio 1.

<sup>6</sup> i.e. the instruments themselves were declining in quality.

<sup>7</sup> In Giuseppe Baretto's *Dizionario delle Lingue Italiana, ed Inglese* (Venice, 1795) *nipote* is translated as 'nephew, niece', likewise in the subsequent 1820 edition of his dictionary.

<sup>8</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 1, folios 17-18; present author's translation.

Count Cozio's firm belief, therefore, was that Giuseppe *figlio d'Andrea* and Giuseppe *del Gesù* were cousins, and the latter was Andrea Guarneri's nephew, not Andrea's grandson. In a subsequent manuscript Count Cozio re-visits his Guarneri information, discusses the work of Andrea Guarneri in more detail, and then moves on to Giuseppe Giovanni Battista Guarneri *figlio d'Andrea*:

*Guarnerio Giuseppe figlio d'Andrea non si crede abbia lavorato molti anni, poichè finora non risultano dal più volte citato registro che si siano veduti biglietti ne suoi instrumenti posteriori al 1712.*<sup>9</sup>

Giuseppe Guarneri, son of Andrea, is not thought to have worked for many years, because in the oft-cited register [Count Cozio's register of instruments] there are none of his instrument labels which are dated later than 1712.

*Ignorasi ancora è l'epoca del suo decesso, e se abbia lasciato prole, però non si ritrovano instrumenti con biglietti d'alcun suo discendente.*

We still do not know when he [Giuseppe *figlio d'Andrea*] died and if he left behind any offspring; no instruments have been found with labels of any of his [male] descendants.

Count Cozio would undoubtedly have wished to know that Giuseppe *figlio d'Andrea* lived until 1740 and was the father of three girls and three boys. It is the last-born boy – thus a *grandson* to Andrea – who is usually identified as Giuseppe *del Gesù*.

*Vi fù bensì in Cremona altro Giuseppe Guarneri il quale per diversi anni del suo primiero lavorare, cioè dal 1727 circa al 1735 inclusive, che ne biglietti apposti a suoi stromenti si qualificò nipote di Andrea avendo tacciuto quello del padre forsi perchè non fabricante li violini.*

It is certain that there was in Cremona another Giuseppe Guarneri who, for several years at the start of his career – thus from about 1727 to 1735 inclusive – indicated on the labels of his instruments that he was the nephew of Andrea. His father is not mentioned, perhaps because he did not make violins.

Since Count Cozio knew that Giuseppe *filius Andreae* was a violin-maker and therefore could not have been the father who 'did not make violins' his unavoidable conclusion was that the father of 'another Giuseppe Guarneri' had to be a brother to Andrea. Andrea Guarneri certainly had a brother, namely Giovanni Battista Guarneri (?-c.1693-4), who is identified in the first version of Andrea's Will (15 June 1687) and also, posthumously, in the final version (28 October 1694).<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Giovanni Battista Guarneri's son – i.e. Andrea's nephew (and, according to Count Cozio, Giuseppe *del Gesù*) – cannot have been born later than 1695. The 'traditional' Giuseppe Guarneri *del Gesù*, i.e. the last-born son of Giuseppe *figlio d'Andrea*, is normally identified as having been born on 21 August 1698.

With respect to the oft-cited ambiguity surrounding the Latin word *nepos* – 'nephew' or 'grandson' – and the Italian equivalent, *nipote*, the Latin label-text which is repeatedly found inside Nicolò Amati violins dated 1640-1680 is particularly helpful:

**Nicolaus Amatus Cremonen. Hieronymi**

**Fil. [filius] ac Antonij Nepos Fecit. 16xx**

Nicolò Amati, Cremonese, Hieronymus

son and Antonio nephew, made in 16xx

Nicolò Amati (b. 1596) was the son of Girolamo (a.k.a. Hieronymus); Girolamo's brother was Antonio and therefore Nicolò was Antonio's nephew – exactly as stated on the labels; see also footnote 7.

Thus in Cremona, in the mid-seventeenth century, the Latin word *nepos* was consistently being used by the luthier whose Europe-wide fame formed the historical context in which worked Stradivari and the various Guarneris, and Nicolò Amati's usage of *nepos* unequivocally denoted 'nephew', not 'grandson'. For later Cremonese luthiers to not follow Nicolò's linguistic policy is implausible.

<sup>9</sup> All Italian text is transcribed from BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 2 and translated by the present author.

<sup>10</sup> See Hill (1931), pp. 20-22.

The Hill brothers, in their 1931 study, *The Violin-Makers of the Guarneri family (1626-1762)*, acknowledge the translation of *nepos* as 'nephew' but reject all *Andreae nepos* labels:

[Joseph-François] Fétis adds that the master himself inscribed on certain of his labels 'Joseph Guarnerius, Andreae nepos', thus indicating that he was a nephew of Andrea. [...] no *original* [Hill emphasis] Guarneri label so worded has ever been seen by the present writers [...].<sup>11</sup>

The Hills add a footnote – 'We have seen fictitious labels so worded' – but do not provide any details or illustrations of these labels and do not explain how they were able to establish their 'fictitious' status. The Hills further comment:

Only after long observation do we venture to state our conviction that most of the instruments of the last period of Giuseppe filius, and also a considerable number of those of del Gesù – notably his earliest works – were sent into the world without labels, and the labels which these instruments bear to-day were inserted during the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

According to the 1998 *Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù* publication 'the earliest unquestionable label extant comes from 1731, bearing the IHS device from which Guarneri's common epithet "del Gesù" derives.'<sup>13</sup> The label is that which is inside the violin known as the *Baltic*:

The violin bears a good label, with the IHS symbol which gives del Gesù his common title. Under ultraviolet light two pen strokes appear just behind the last two handwritten figures of the date. Similar marks are found on most of the genuine labels, of which this is the earliest example.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, in the first decades of the nineteenth century there was little known with any certainty about Giuseppe *filius Andreae*, even less known about Giuseppe *del Gesù*, and there was confusion about the familial relationship between these two men;<sup>15</sup> in addition (according to the Hills) there were Guarneri instruments sporting labels which, very likely, were created and inserted long after both men had died. In these circumstances it would be understandable, if a violin's label displayed the words 'Joseph Guarnerius', that only this limited identification would be noted in written records and commentaries – the label's remaining text would likely have been ignored, as seems to have been the case with a Guarneri violin owned by Niccolò Paganini's lawyer and agent, Luigi Germa, who, in 1823, entrusted the violin (together with two other instruments) to Niccolò for him to deliver to Francesco Mantegazza (1762-1824) in Milan for overhaul and restoration. Paganini writes to Germa with great enthusiasm for the latter's Guarneri but does not provide any further identification of the instrument's maker:

18 Giugno 1823: [...] *Il tuo Guarneri ha fatto un superbo incontro a tutto Milano, e Mantegazza ci lavora con straordinario impegno [...] Il tuo Amati non è d'Amati ma è di Cappa di Saluzzo [...] il tuo Cappa è uno dei più belli che si conosca [...]*.

18 June 1823: [...] Your Guarneri has had an incredible reception from everyone in Milan, and Mantegazza is working on it with extraordinary diligence. [...] Your Amati is not genuine but was made by [Goffredo] Cappa of Saluzzo [1644-1717] [...] your Cappa is one of the most beautiful violins ever seen [...].

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66. See Fétis (1856), p. 106: ... *il était neveu d'André*. Count Cozio owned at least three 'Joseph Guarnerius' violins which contained *Andreae Nepos* labels; it is not known from whom the Count obtained these instruments; see the present writer's research article 'Searching for Giuseppe Guarneri *del Gesù*'; a paper-chase and a proposition' ([www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk)).

<sup>12</sup> The evidence which underpins the Hills' final phrase is unknown.

<sup>13</sup> Chiesa *et al.*, Vol. One, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> For an extensive examination of the relationships within the Guarneri families see the present writer's article, 'Searching for Giuseppe Guarneri *del Gesù*; a paper-chase and a proposition' ([www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk)).

*Tanto i tuoi violini, viola, ed il mio violoncello sono stati esaminati dal celebre conoscitore, ed anzi il solo intelligente Signor Zanaboni, ed il suo giudizio è sacro.*

Your violins and your viola, and my cello, were examined by the celebrated and uniquely intelligent connoisseur Signor Zanaboni, and his opinion is sacred.

*La tua viola è di Gasparo di Salò. Il mio violoncello è bellissimo ed è di Stradivario, e ci ha pure lavorato il suo aiutante Bergonzi [...].<sup>16</sup>*

Your viola is by Gasparo di Salò. My cello is really beautiful and is by Stradivari assisted by [Carlo] Bergonzi [...].

Evidently Francesco Mantegazza completed his restoration and repair of Germi's Guarneri violin by the end of August 1823 for on 2 September Paganini wrote to Germi:

*[...] ed in grazia mia troverai eccellente il Guarneri. Non muovere il ponticello, nell'anima [...].<sup>17</sup>*  
 [...] and in my opinion you will find [your] Guarneri [is now] excellent. Do not move the bridge nor the soundpost [...].

Fifteen months later, on 27 November 1824, Paganini wrote again to Germi:

*Come stà il tuo famoso Guarnerius?<sup>18</sup>*  
 How is your famous Guarneri?

Even five years later (12 December 1829) Paganini is still asking Germi about his Guarneri violin:

*Che fà il tuo Guarneri?<sup>19</sup>*  
 How goes your Guarneri?

Paganini's comments suggest that he may have been rather covetous of Germi's Guarneri violin; it is plausible that it was a *del Gesù* instrument (but of unknown date).<sup>20</sup>

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In early 1828 Paganini stored some of his instruments with Carlo Carli in Milan before setting out for Vienna; the full receipt sent by Carli to Paganini on 4 March identified the following instruments:

*Un Violino di Antonio Stradivario di forma grande, vernice gialla col biglietto del 1724.<sup>21</sup>*  
*Un Violino con vernice rossa col biglietto di Giuseppe Guarnerio del 1704, con arco in una cassa da due.<sup>22</sup>*  
*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>23</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> Grisley, p. 218.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 598.

<sup>20</sup> The Cozio Archive of the Tarisio.com website does not identify Luigi Germi as the owner of any Guarneri instrument (website accessed February 2018).

<sup>21</sup> It is this violin which Paganini had bought from Count Cozio in July 1817. See the present author's historical study of this violin – '*Fortissimo di voce, e quasi tenore*' – which can be accessed through a link from [www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk).

<sup>22</sup> Carlo Carli's simple identification – 'Giuseppe Guarnerio' – fits with the present author's proposition that uncertainty and confusion with regard to the violin makers of the Guarneri family prompted the omission of label-information other than the bare name.

<sup>23</sup> The original manuscript of Carli's receipt is archived at the Biblioteca Comunale di Trento (Fondo Anzoletti MA 62); the present author wishes to thank Roberto Grisley for making available a photographic copy of this receipt.

Carlo Carli's handwriting suggests that the third numeral in the label-date for the 'Giuseppe Guarnerio' violin with red varnish is a zero, i.e. '1704', but the numeral may be an incomplete '2', i.e. '1724'.<sup>24</sup> If the label-date is '1724' then 'Giuseppe Guarnerio' could indicate Giuseppe Guarneri *filius Andreae* (1666-1740), or Giuseppe Guarneri (the last-born son of Giuseppe *filius*, 1698-1744), or Giuseppe Guarneri (cousin to Giuseppe *filius* and, according to Count Cozio, Giuseppe *del Gesù*).

If the label-date inside the 'Giuseppe Guarnerio' violin was '1704' then the maker of the violin was either Giuseppe *filius Andreae* or his cousin (assuming a date of birth c.1680).

The instruments which Paganini stored with Carlo Carli are evaluated by the former within the information which he conveyed to Julius M Schottky:

[I possess] a veritable treasure-hoard of valuable instruments, of which I take only the smallest part with me on my travels.<sup>25</sup> The [1724] Stradivari which I have left in Italy, and which I consider to be the father of all violins, 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 – not even for the 3800 francs that was paid for Viotti's violin in 1824.<sup>26</sup> Side by side with this I place my excellent cello (also by Stradivari [1728]). At Milan I have also left a beautiful Amati and a Guarneri, the latter a little on the small side, but still possessing a charming tone.<sup>27</sup>

See p. 18 of this account for the correspondence from 1839 which relates to the restitution of (some of) Paganini's instruments.

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The identity of the person from whom Paganini (1782-1840) obtained his concert violin is unproven, likewise the date when he obtained it. In previous commentaries the source has been identified as either a French merchant by the name of Livron, or the Italian painter Antonio Pasini, or Domenico Pino (an Italian soldier who served under Napoleon). With respect to M. Livron, Paganini conveyed the following information to Schottky:

*Einer meiner Ausflüge, der keine Kunst sondern nur eine Lustreise war, führte mich einst auch wieder nach Livorno, wo man mich zu einem Concerte nöthigte. Der kunstliebende reiche Kaufmann, Herr Livron, lieb mir eine Guarneri, da ich keine Violine bei mir hatte; nach geendigtem Spiele jedoch lehnte er es ab, sie zurückzunehmen: ich will sie nicht profaniren, ries er aus, daher behalten Sie, lieber Paganini, das Instrument und bleiben Sie meiner eingedenk!*<sup>28</sup>

One of my excursions – which was not for the sake of art but just a pleasure trip – took me once again to Livorno, where I was obliged to give a concert.<sup>29</sup> The rich, art-loving merchant, M. Livron, lent me a Guarneri as I had no violin with me. However, when I had finished playing he declined to take it back. "I cannot profane it," he exclaimed, "therefore keep the instrument, dear Paganini, and keep me in your thoughts."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>24</sup> It is absolutely clear that the numeral is not a '3', i.e. '1734', which is the date identified by Geraldine de Courcy (Courcy, II, pp. 297 and 389). Grisley, p. 341, transcribes the date as '1724'. The violin may be that which was gifted to Paganini by General Pino; see p. 18 of this account for Paganini's identification of Pino's violin as a *del Gesù* instrument.

<sup>25</sup> Just one violin?

<sup>26</sup> The Hills (1902), p. 270, report that in 1824 'Viotti's fine violin was sold after his decease at the Hôtel Bouillon in Paris for 3,816 francs.'

<sup>27</sup> Schottky, pp. 281-282, translated in Pulver, p. 320. It is unclear whether the small 'Guarneri' violin was the 1704/1724 Giuseppe or the 1675 Andrea. Note that Paganini does not identify his concert violin.

<sup>28</sup> Schottky, p. 254.

<sup>29</sup> A solo recital?

<sup>30</sup> The present author wishes to thank Kai Dase for his help in translating Schottky's texts which present, in German, Paganini's Italian-language narratives. G I C de Courcy dates this Livron gift to 'the autumn of 1802' (Courcy, I, p. 68); Flavio Menardi Noguera (Noguera, p. 56) states '1804'.

A variant account appeared, in Italian, in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* (issue dated 19 May 1830, columns 324-327) the text having been dictated by Paganini to Peter Lichtenthal on 28 February 1828:

*Trovandomi una volta a Livorno per diporto senza violino, un Monsieur Livren m'imprestò un violino per sonare un concerto di Viotti, e me ne fece poi un regalo.*<sup>31</sup>

Finding myself once in Livorno, for pleasure, without a violin, a M. Livren lent me a violin to play a Viotti concerto, and then he gave [the violin] to me as a present.

Paganini, through Schottky, also mentions Antonio Pasini's violin:

*Auf ähnliche Weise erging es mir zu Parma: Herr Pasini, ein ausgezeichnete Mater, hörte von meiner Fertigkeit, Alles a Vista zu spielen: er legte mir ein sehr schwieriges Concert mit der Aeusserung vor, mir eine geschäste Geige als Geschenk zu geben, wenn ich die Ausgabe genügend löste: Die Violine wurde mein Eigenthum.*<sup>32</sup>

I had a similar experience in Parma. Signor Pasini, an excellent painter, had heard of my ability to play anything 'at sight'. He put before me a difficult concerto and remarked that he would give me a valuable violin as a present if I met the challenge satisfactorily. The violin became my property.<sup>33</sup>

The Lichtenthal version of the same event is:

*Un proprietario di un Violino di Guarnerio mi disse: se sonate prima vista questo concerto di violino, vido questo istrumento, ed io lo guadagni.*<sup>34</sup>

An owner of a Guarneri violin said to me: "if you play 'at sight' this violin concerto [you will receive] this instrument", and I won it.

Paganini, perhaps through indifference, is imprecise with regard to the identity of the violin which M. Livron gifted to him: it was 'a Guarneri' but was it a Guarneri made by Andrea, or Giuseppe *filius Andreae*, or Pietro of Mantua, or Pietro of Venice, or Giuseppe *del Gesù*? Antonio Pasini's gift was 'a valuable violin' according to Schottky but 'a Guarneri violin' according to Lichtenthal. The impression is created that Niccolò regarded his violins as tools of his trade rather than as rare and irreplaceable examples of Cremonese craftsmanship which should be protected at all times. Paganini's casual attitude towards other instruments in his possession is perhaps illuminated through his letter of 15 February 1840 to Luigi Germe in which the former identifies his ownership of an Amati viola and 'My Amati cello, or Rugeri, or whatever make it is [...]'.<sup>35</sup>

In their 1931 *Guarneri family* publication the Hill brothers provide (p. 94) a footnoted comment:

The published statement that Paganini was indebted for his (Guarneri) violin to the generosity of a French amateur, M. Livron of Leghorn, has been hitherto accepted without demur. But if we can believe the contents of a letter written by the violinist himself in April 1839 and addressed to his friend and lawyer Luigi Germe,<sup>36</sup> an extract from which is contained in the procès-verbal drawn up at Genoa on the occasion of the reception of the violin by the City Authorities in the year 1861, it was given to him by the Italian General Pino. [...] We can express no definite opinion in connexion with the above statement, but here again it should not be overlooked that Paganini owned various fine violins, and it is therefore quite conceivable that he may have been presented at some time with a second Guarneri del Gesù.

<sup>31</sup> The Italian text is here reproduced exactly as printed in *AMZ* (column 325); present author's translation. Giovanni Battista Viotti was born in 1755 and died in 1824; most of his 29 violin concerti were composed before the turn of the century. Viotti's mature concerti require a full orchestra of double woodwind, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings.

<sup>32</sup> Schottky, p. 254.

<sup>33</sup> Pulver, p. 39, states that Pasini's instrument was 'a fine example of Stradivari's workmanship'.

<sup>34</sup> *AMZ*, column 325.

<sup>35</sup> Courcy, II, p. 312.

<sup>36</sup> The Hill brothers do not explain why the contents of Paganini's letter might not be believed.

The Genoese reception of Paganini's violin took place in 1851, not 1861, and the official report of the proceedings (i.e. the Hills' 'procès-verbal'), written by the notary Giacomo Borsotto, does not contain any text sourced from Paganini's 8 April 1839 letter to Germi (from which letter the Hills do not quote the extract which they claim to have identified).<sup>37</sup>

Doubtful historical chronologies were still being proposed as recently as the last decade of the twentieth century:

Since 1804 the virtuoso had played, almost exclusively, the famous violin made by Guarnerius del Gesù in 1742, which was nicknamed *Il Canone* because of its great power. According to legend, this violin was presented to him at Livorno by the wealthy French amateur Monsieur Livron, after the great violinist had lost his André Amati at the gambling tables. In their publication *The Guarneri* (London 1932) the Hill brothers quote a letter written by Paganini in 1839 to his lawyer Luigi Germi, in which he says that the Guarnerius had been given him by his friend the Italian general Pino. One thing is known for certain: Vuillaume opened this celebrated violin to repair it and copy it in 1836.<sup>38</sup> Paganini, the enthusiast, bought the copy for 500 Swiss francs.<sup>39</sup>

The multiple inaccuracies within this narrative render it of little value. A 1998 publication offers another version of events:

Paganini told his biographer that he was presented with the [*Cannone*] Guarneri around 1802 by M. Livron, a French merchant then living in Livorno, after the young virtuoso had gambled away his own violin. However, a letter exists, written by Paganini to his friend Luigi Germi in 1839 which implies that the violin was given to him by General Pino of Milan.<sup>40</sup>

As already shown, Paganini's accounts of his meeting with M. Livron make no mention of the former having gambled away his violin prior to his 'pleasure trip' to Livorno; neither does Paganini's letter of 8 April 1839 to Germi imply that 'the Guarneri' – i.e. the violin which is identified by the anonymous author of the above-quoted text as that which is exhibited in Genoa – was given to him by Domenico Pino (see also p. 18 of this account).

Within the 539 letters written by Paganini between 1810 and 1831 there are just eight which include the simple expression *il mio violino*; the name of the maker of Paganini's violin is never specified.<sup>41</sup> The soubriquet *cannone* is used by Paganini – for the first time? – within a letter dated 16 July 1833 (sent from London to Luigi Germi):

*L'orrido inverno a Parigi mi tenne indisposto sei mesi. Qui, per cabala del maligni, non feci affari; però ho saputo resistere alle congiure, ed ottenni col mio procedere ed il mio cannone violino l'onta loro e il mio trionfo.*

The horrible winter in Paris kept me indisposed for six months. Here, [in London,] as a result of malicious intrigues, I've done nothing. However, I knew how to counter the conspiracy, and achieved, through my behaviour and my *cannone* violin their shame and my triumph.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See later in this account for the transcription by Angelo Boscassi of Borsotto's text. Paganini's letter of 8 April 1839 to Luigi Germi is discussed on p. 18 of this account.

<sup>38</sup> Paganini was not in Paris at any point during 1836.

<sup>39</sup> Lebet, p. 17. Vuillaume gifted his copy-violin to Paganini.

<sup>40</sup> Chiesa *et al.*, Vol. One, p. 125. The quoted text continues by stating that the city of Genoa 'received the gift [of Niccolò's violin] from his brother, Achille, in 1851.'

<sup>41</sup> Geraldine de Courcy (Courcy, II, p. 298) states that Paganini 'never identified his Guarneri by date'.

<sup>42</sup> Present author's translation from Neill (1982), pp. 167-8. See p. 34 for the proposition that Paganini had recently bought his *cannone* violin from Luigi Tarisio.



Following his tour of England and Scotland in the summer and early autumn of 1833 Paganini returned to Paris where he arrived at the beginning of November. Three months later, on 17 February 1834 Paganini wrote (from Paris) to Luigi Germa, and included a postscript:

*P.S. Non so se ti dissi che in Inghilterra dando concerti nel giro le mie cantanti inglesi, due maladette signorine, consegnarono (nell'entrare in carrozza per portarsi al concerto al Teatro) il mio violino al cocchiere, invece di metterselo in mezzo alle gambe. La cassetta cascò e si guastò detto violino che ora l'ho dato ad un celebre per accomodarlo. Spero bene.*

P.S. I don't know if I told you that in England, during my concert-tour, my English singers, two cursed women (on entering the carriage to go to the concert at the theatre) gave my violin to the coachman instead of putting it between their legs. The case fell down and this damaged the violin which I have now given to a celebrated man to repair. I hope for a good outcome.<sup>43</sup>

Geraldine de Courcy comments, pertinently:

The damage to his violin could not have been serious enough to prevent Paganini using it at the concert [to which he was travelling], nor at those that immediately followed.<sup>44</sup>

Paganini's penultimate comment – 'I have now given [the violin] to a celebrated man to repair' – suggests that it was only in early February 1834 that he took his violin to a Paris *luthier*; Geraldine de Courcy assumes that the *luthier* was Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume. However, de Courcy dates Paganini's meeting with Vuillaume to 'as soon as [Paganini] arrived in Paris', i.e. at the beginning of November 1833.<sup>45</sup>

[A]s soon as [Paganini] arrived in Paris, he took [his violin] to Vuillaume and it was probably at this time that the latter made the copy that Sivori purchased from Paganini in 1840 and [which Sivori, at his death,] bequeathed to the city of Genoa.<sup>46</sup>

The repair of Paganini's violin is confirmed in a further letter (9 March 1834) from Paganini to Germa: *Il violino è stato bene accomodato* ('The violin has been well repaired') but Paganini does not identify which part of his violin needed repairing nor does he mention the name of the repairer. With Germa having been the owner of a Guarneri violin as recently as 1829 (see p.5 of this account) as well as a Goffredo Cappa violin and a Gasparo di Salò viola one might have expected Paganini to be rather more informative with respect to his own instrument's accident; he was not writing to someone who had no awareness of, or familiarity with, the structural fragility of wooden string instruments.

The (limited) evidence points towards the damage to Paganini's violin being more than just superficial but not fundamental; the repair could therefore wait, especially since, during the winter months of 1833-34, Paganini was extremely ill. On 24 November he informed Germa that he was 'so ill that I don't know if I'm going to recover. My lungs are affected. I've had a hemorrhage [...]'.<sup>47</sup> It is difficult to believe that, during this desperate period, Paganini would have been much interested in playing his violin. The spring of 1834 saw some level of recovery in Paganini's health which enabled him to set off on a concert

<sup>43</sup> Why Paganini should have expected the two singers – Charlotte Watson and 'Miss Wells' – to hold and protect his violin is not explained.

<sup>44</sup> Courcy, II, p. 144. Paganini gave 44 concerts in the provinces and eight in London (see Courcy, II, p. 134 fn. 1); neither the date nor the location of the concert referred to by Paganini can be identified. In a letter dated 22 January 1825, sent by Paganini from Rome to Luigi Germa, he reports that the shaking suffered by his violin case during his journey from Genoa had resulted in the fingerboard on his violin becoming detached from the neck; at the same time the violin's soundpost had fallen over. Paganini reports that, 'having been very patient', he himself restored both items; see Grisley, pp. 266-267.

<sup>45</sup> Dubourg's *The Violin* (1836; 5<sup>th</sup> ed. 1878) is cited by Courcy in her bibliography (Courcy, II, p. 393).

<sup>46</sup> Courcy, II, p. 146, also reports that the Genoese violin maker Antonio Gibertini (1797-1866) 'made a copy of his [Paganini's] Guarneri (probably in 1835)'. The evidential source for Courcy's statement is not identified and the current location of the copy-violin is unknown.

<sup>47</sup> Courcy, II, p. 137.

tour of Belgium on 9 March – the day on which he wrote his ‘The violin has been well repaired’ letter, which continues:

... but I injured the third finger of my left hand in cutting at table some very delicious cheese; it happened the other evening just when I wanted to do a little practicing for the promised concerts [...].<sup>48</sup>

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A narrative which describes Vuillaume's repair of a Guarneri violin belonging to Paganini, and Vuillaume's making of a copy-violin, appears within George Dubourg's *The Violin: some account of that leading instrument and its most eminent professors* (4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1852, pp. 359-360).<sup>49</sup>

Of the marvellous accuracy, as a copyist of the old models, that was attained years since by Vuillaume, there is amusing proof, in a story related by M. [François-Joseph] Fétis, on the authority of the great Violinist himself, who figures in it:–<sup>50</sup>

“On his return-journey Paganini, with dismay, observed the case containing his admirable *Guarnerius* to fall from the roof of the diligence [a stage-coach]. The instrument had sustained manifest injury; – but Vuillaume was in Paris; and Paganini, fixing on *him* all his hopes, entrusted the violin to him, on descending from the vehicle [when it arrived in Paris]. The repairs were made with all the care demanded by the beauty of the instrument and the immense talent of its owner. Every minutest trace of the accident was obliterated – and that which had been the confidant of Paganini's inspirations was restored to its full charm and power. Whilst yet the depositary of so excellent an instrument, Monsieur Vuillaume was tempted by opportunity to make a copy of it – *such* a copy as nobody might distinguish from the original. On the day appointed for putting the renowned performer again in possession of his instrument, Vuillaume went to him, and, placing two violins on the table, thus addressed him: “I have so completely succeeded in obliterating every vestige of the accident sustained by your fiddle, as to be quite unable to distinguish it from the *other* Guarnerius, now beside it, which has been entrusted to me, and which bears a striking resemblance to it. *You*, who are well acquainted with your own instrument, will relieve me from this embarrassment.” At these words, Paganini changed countenance – stood up in haste – seized a fiddle with each hand – scrutinized and compared them both – and was struck dumb by their perfect similitude. *One* hope remains; – he snatches up his bow – sends it dancing over the strings of the two instruments – draws prodigies from each. Instead of dissipating his anxiety, this experiment does but increase it. He strides about the room – his hands are clenched – his eyes are on fire! Vuillaume's triumph had reached its acme. “Compose yourself,” said he, – “*here* is your violin! – and *there* – is the *copy* I have made of it. Keep them *both*, as memorials of this adventure – and think, sometimes, on the *restorer* of your instrument!””

[all italicised text is as printed in the 1852 publication]

Dubourg does not identify the place from where Paganini set out ‘on his return journey’ nor does he provide a date for the events which he relates; he does not explain where or when Fétis voiced (or wrote?) his story nor does he provide any further information regarding what must be assumed to be

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>49</sup> Published by Robert Cocks & Co. in London. The first edition of Dubourg's book was published by Henry Colburn, London, in 1836; it contains a lengthy chapter on Paganini (pp. 89-133) but the story of Vuillaume's repair to Paganini's violin (as related by Dubourg) does not appear therein. A second edition was published in 1838; a copy of the third edition has not been located. The fourth edition is described as ‘revised and considerably enlarged’ and Dubourg writes: ‘I have been called upon to prepare [my book] anew for the press, incorporating with it the additional matter necessary for the extension of the subject to the present time.’

<sup>50</sup> Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume was the most important violin maker and dealer in Europe in the mid nineteenth century. François-Joseph Fétis was a musicologist who was Vuillaume's close friend, colleague, and collaborator. It is Fétis who is identified as the author of the booklet *Antoine Stradivari, Luthier Célèbre* (published by Vuillaume in 1856) but it is very likely that much of the text was actually provided by Vuillaume.

Paganini's permission (or 'authority') for Fétis to distribute the story. Moreover, Dubourg's account is quite extraordinary, portraying Vuillaume as a cruelly manipulative liar, revelling in Paganini's distress in order to secure his own 'triumph' over him. It is difficult to believe that Paganini would have permitted the dissemination of such a story, especially after Vuillaume had repaired Paganini's concert violin. Dubourg's reference to the violin having suffered 'manifest injury' could indicate almost anything.

The publication of the multi-volume *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens*, written by F-J Fétis, had begun in 1835.<sup>51</sup> Volume Seven, published in 1841, includes his article on Paganini (pp. 119-129) but there is no mention therein of the violin-repair story. Subsequently, Fétis wrote an expanded version of his article – *Notice biographique sur Nicolo Paganini* – which was published in 1851 by Schonenberger (Paris); again, there is no mention of the violin-repair story. It seems, therefore, that Dubourg must have received the story, orally, from Fétis, and Dubourg's 1852 presentation of the story constituted its first appearance in print (in English, at least).

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Another version of the violin-repair story appeared within *Notice of Anthony Stradivari, the celebrated violin maker, known by the name of Stradivarius*, translated by John Bishop from the original French of F-J Fétis (*Antoine Stradivari, Luthier Célèbre*, 1856) and published by Robert Cocks & Co. in 1864. This translated publication included a three-part Appendix provided 'by the Editor'; Appendix III (pp. 129-132) has the title 'Some Account of Paganini's Celebrated Guarnerius Violin':

Having made enquiry of M. Vuillaume respecting the anecdote of Paganini's violin, as related by Mr. Dubourg, the following was the interesting reply obligingly furnished, with permission to [translate Vuillaume's French text and] print it in this place:<sup>52</sup>

#### TRANSLATION

In the year 1838, Paganini, on his return from London to Paris, disembarked at Boulogne. He took a coach, in which his violin case, being badly placed, fell, and the concussion was sufficiently violent to unglue one of the inner blocks of the instrument.<sup>53</sup>

On arriving at Paris, Paganini came to me in great distress, his violin having lost its tone. I told him the cause, and said it would be necessary to open the instrument. To this he would not at first consent and manifested extreme anxiety; at length, however, I induced him to allow it to be done, there being no other remedy. He therefore consented, on the express condition that I would do the work myself at his house, and under his own eyes. Although such a delicate operation is more agreeable to accomplish without a looker-on and in the retirement of one's own workshop I acceded to his desire, and went to his house for the purpose of taking off the belly of his violin. It is impossible to describe the torture which Paganini endured during the progress of the work. He twisted about on his chair, made grimaces, and suffered like a martyr; uttering exclamations which plainly showed the affection he entertained for his instrument, and the dreadful fears which he experienced at each crack, caused by the breaking away of the glue, as it yielded to the action of the thin knife used in removing the belly. The task having been accomplished with unexpected success, he entrusted me with this violin, the renown of which was equal to that of its master.

<sup>51</sup> Published by Meline, Cans et Compagnie (Brussels).

<sup>52</sup> Perhaps the editor at Robert Cocks & Co. 'made enquiry of M. Vuillaume' precisely because of the nature of Dubourg's story (which Robert Cocks had published 12 years earlier).

<sup>53</sup> Paganini was not in London at any point during 1838. Note that, according to Vuillaume, the damage to Paganini's violin occurred on French, rather than English, soil (thus contradicting the information in Paganini's letter to Germi). Note also that an unglued inner block would certainly render a violin entirely useless for concertising.

I then resolved to analyse this famous instrument in every part, to take the precise dimensions of it, and to make a similar one. I had some woods of first-rate quality and very old, *and could find a back and belly so exactly like those of Paganini's violin, as regards the figure of the maple and the grain of the deal* [spruce], that I felt assured I should attain a satisfactory result as to quality of tone.<sup>54</sup>

Paganini allowed me three days for the repair of his instrument, and that time sufficed for making mine – at least, the essential parts of it. I then returned him his violin, with which he was enchanted, and begged me to call again to see it. On proceeding to do so, a few days afterwards, I met him on the Boulevards, when he took my arm and said to me: "I thank you, my dear friend; it is as good as it was before." He then drew from his waistcoat pocket a little red morocco box, saying, "I have had two pins made, the one for the doctor of my body, the other for the doctor of my violin." I opened the little box, and found the pin was ornamented with a capital P. formed with twenty-three diamonds. Astonished at such generosity for so small a labour, and wishing to testify my appreciation of it, I concluded by saying to Paganini I would offer him the violin which I had commenced making like his and on the model of it.<sup>55</sup>

Some months afterwards, I went to his house. He was practising, but, on seeing me enter, he laid his violin on the table. I took mine from its case, and placing it by the side of his, begged that he would accept it. The scene was strange and unaccountable. Paganini became serious and immovable. A look of doubt and fear overspread his features. Then he seemed surprised. He turned about the violins; changed their places; and, more than once, took the imitation for the original. He was evidently but little pleased to see a violin so similar to his own. At length he seized his bow to try the new violin, and, on sitting down, exclaimed, "It is very good, it is like mine, it has the same tone – the same quality; it is my violin, leave it with me". Some time afterwards, he came to express his entire satisfaction, and asked me how much I would charge to make him another violin exactly like the former. I replied 500 francs (£20). He then went to Nice, and wrote to me from that place [see later, p.16, letter of 25 February 1840] in the kindest and most friendly manner, enclosing a cheque for the above sum, for another instrument, which I made with the same care as the first, and forwarded to him at Nice; but Paganini had just expired as the violin arrived there [Paganini died 27 May 1840]. This [second] instrument is either at Genoa, or at Parma, at the residence of Baron Achilles Paganini, the son of the illustrious master.<sup>56</sup>

The first of the two violins which I made for Paganini is that on which [Camillo] Sivori plays.<sup>57</sup>

The sober and thoughtful tone of Vuillaume's detailed account suggests that it is an entirely reliable narrative but it is curious that he never mentions the name of the maker of Paganini's 'famous' violin, nor its label-date. If the date given by Vuillaume for the events which he narrates – 1838 – is correct then his reference to Paganini practising is implausible since the latter had not given any public performances since June 1837 and his physical health was rapidly deteriorating, destroyed by tuberculosis and syphilis; moreover, it was in 1838 that Paganini's mental stability was wrecked by the actions of the speculators who embroiled him in their 'Casino Paganini' project. It must be concluded, therefore, that Vuillaume's memory of the date was faulty. Nonetheless, the chronological proximity between the J-BV/Paganini conversation in 1838 regarding the price for making another instrument, and Paganini's letter of 25 February 1840 ('he then went to Nice and wrote to me from that place'), is

<sup>54</sup> Present author's italics; see also p. 16 of this account.

<sup>55</sup> The phrase 'I would offer him the violin which I had commenced making' suggests that Paganini could decline acceptance of Vuillaume's violin if he so wished; if he decided to keep the violin it would effectively become a gift.

<sup>56</sup> Vuillaume's information regarding the location of his second copy-violin probably came directly from Achille during one of the post-1840 meetings between the two men (how else would J-BV have known that his second copy-violin was no longer in the town to which it had been sent?).

<sup>57</sup> Camillo Sivori (1815-1894), when very young, received some violin lessons from Paganini.

a proximity which is undermined if J-BV's making of the first copy-violin dates from the winter-spring of 1833-34.

Would J-BV, writing to Robert Cocks in 1864, have mis-remembered the date when he repaired the concert violin which belonged to Europe's most famous virtuoso?

Robert Cocks subsequently published a fifth edition (1878) of Dubourg's *The Violin*; Dubourg's exact same scurrilous tale is printed once again (pp. 278-279).

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In 1877 the second volume of Antoine Vidal's *Les Instruments à Archet* was published in Paris by J. Claye; Vidal's article on Paganini begins on p. 184. On p. 185 Vidal writes (present author's translation):

He [Paganini] has been characterised a dreadful miser, yet several acts of liberality prove that on occasion he knew how to be generous. We will begin by quoting on this subject an unpublished anecdote which we guarantee as entirely authentic (*Nous commencerons par citer à ce sujet une anecdote inédite et dont nous garantissons l'entière authenticité*).<sup>58</sup>

One day in 1836[!] Paganini, carrying his violin case, called on Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume in the rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs.<sup>59</sup> The famous Guarneri [violin] which, for so many years, was the delight of Europe under the marvellous fingers of its master had been hit by a sudden illness: it no longer spoke! Both tender and powerful sounds had been replaced by a muffled and muddled noise. What was it that had brought about this change? The mystery required an explanation.

Vuillaume, after a detailed examination, could not discover any external clues, and declared that the problem lay inside the violin; to remedy the situation, therefore, it would be necessary to dismantle it, i.e. remove the table [front plate]. Paganini shuddered. After much hesitation he authorised Vuillaume to go ahead but on the express condition that the operation should take place at Paganini's house.

The next day, therefore, Vuillaume made his way to the Néo-Thermes [sanatorium], rue de la Victoire, bringing with him the necessary tools.<sup>60</sup> He entered and the violin was handed over. Paganini – trembling with emotion, sitting at the far end of the room, clasping one of his long legs with crossed hands and pulling the knee up to his chin – feverishly observed the operation.

Dismantling an instrument, basically, consists of introducing a chisel [a thin knife] between the table and the ribs, separating them with a series of carefully-calculated twists and cuts [thus splitting the glue which holds the two pieces of wood together]; the result is a series of loud cracking noises which, for the spectator, are truly terrifying. It requires consummate skill to carry out this apparently simple operation; one false move could cause irreparable damage.

Vuillaume seizes his knife and firmly inserts it into the flanks of this magnificent violin – cracking noises result; Paganini leaps from his chair! Each movement of the knife produces a convulsion from the unhappy artiste; it is as if the knife is entering his own flesh.

<sup>58</sup> Vidal's text echoes that which he presents in *Les Instruments à Archet* (Vol. I, p. 124, fn. 1) which provides an account of Vuillaume's journey to Italy in January 1855 to obtain Luigi Tarisio's instruments: *Nous tenons tous ces détails de M. J.-B. Vuillaume lui-même, qui nous a autorisé à les publier comme parfaitement exacts* ('We hold [have received] all these details from M. Vuillaume himself, who has authorised us to publish them as absolutely accurate'). If Vuillaume was the source of the information presented by Vidal in *Les Instruments à Archet* then it is curious that J-BV did not inform Vidal that his violin-repair story had already been published, in London, in 1864.

<sup>59</sup> To repeat (from footnote 38): Paganini was not in Paris at any point during 1836.

<sup>60</sup> Paganini was not resident at the sanatorium during 1836.

The cutting and twisting of the knife continues; eventually a strident noise is heard; the table is separated from the ribs; the operation is successful.

After examination, an internal repair was judged absolutely necessary and Paganini consented to be separated from his violin – his companion.<sup>61</sup>

Everything was soon made good again and the instrument was returned to its illustrious owner who, with great joy, was reunited with his beloved Guarnerius.

At this point in his narrative Vidal adds a footnote:

Vuillaume, as soon as the violin was in his hands, made an exact copy – volute, plates, contours, thicknesses, ribs, ears, varnish – everything was copied with a rare perfection. When this masterpiece was finished Vuillaume presented it to Paganini who, seeing the spitting image of his favourite violin, hesitated for a moment, and, having played the violin, said to Vuillaume: 'It is marvellous; will you sell it to me?' The transaction was completed at a price of 500 francs.

A little later Vuillaume went to see Paganini. 'Everything is fine' said Paganini, 'the cure is complete.' From his bureau Paganini took out a beautiful golden box [decorated] with precious stones which he presented to the *luthier*, saying: 'I have had two identical boxes made; one for the doctor of my body, the other for the doctor of my violin. My gratitude [in each case] is the same; the souvenir must be the same.'<sup>62</sup>

Vuillaume, delighted with this magnificent present, returned home and related the story to various persons who responded: 'You are naïve if you think that Paganini would have given you a valuable present. You are ignoring the fact that he is a miser who never gives anything to anybody. The box, undoubtedly, is not made of gold and the precious stones are fakes.'

Our great violin-maker, disturbed by these comments, promptly visits a jeweller at the Palais-Royale and submits to him the object in question; its value is estimated at between 1,500 and 1,800 francs.<sup>63</sup>

Paganini, at his death, bequeathed this [exact copy] violin to his pupil Camillo Sivori [see overleaf, p.15], and from then on the eminent artiste played no other. At the conclusion of a concert Sivori was asked what was the marvellous violin on which he had been playing; he answered 'Always the same [violin]! Always my Vuillaume!'

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Edward Neill provides an 'essential chronology of the life of Paganini's violin':

[...]

1833 – During a concert-tour of Great Britain the violin, unwisely entrusted to the driver of Paganini's coach, suffers a ruinous fall (*subisce una rovinosa caduta*). The instrument is entrusted to the care of the *luthier* Vuillaume in Paris.

1838 – Vuillaume completes the repairs (*Vuillaume completa le riparazioni*) [...].<sup>64</sup>

[...]

<sup>61</sup> The vagueness of 'an internal repair' is noticeable.

<sup>62</sup> Vuillaume's narrative of 1864 describes a pin with the letter 'P' created out of 23 diamonds.

<sup>63</sup> Vidal's narrative is paraphrased in Pulver (pp. 294-295) but the latter does not identify the source and he places the events 'probably during this year [1838]'.  
<sup>64</sup> Neill (1990), p. 313; present author's translation.

Elsewhere in the same publication Neill expands his commentary:

[...] the famous Guarneri, entrusted to the postilion<sup>65</sup> (and as a result of that person's carelessness) had fallen and had been "seriously injured" (... *era caduto e si era "ferito in modo grave"*).<sup>66</sup> [...] The damaged violin was placed in the skilful hands of the violin-maker Vuillaume on condition that Paganini personally assisted in the repair.

Vuillaume took advantage of the opportunity to create a perfect copy-violin which was then passed to Camillo Sivori, receiving in compensation a gold snuff-box, the value of which, however, was less than the cost of the copy-violin. (*Vuillaume profitò dell'occasione per ricavarne una copia perfetta che fu poi ceduta a Camillo Sivori, ricevendo in compenso una tabacchiera d'oro, il cui valore era comunque inferiore a quello del costo della copia.*)<sup>67</sup>

Writing of events in 1838 Neill also states:

Various biographers indicate that Paganini's violin [at this time] had 'lost its voice' and once again was taken to Vuillaume for the necessary repairs, but in Paganini's letters there is no mention of this singular circumstance.<sup>68</sup>

Flavio Menardi Noguera dates 'the period necessary to effect an unavoidable internal repair to the violin's sound-box' to the year 1838.<sup>69</sup>

In light of the many discrepancies and inaccuracies included in the narratives and statements quoted above it is probably unwise to trust any of them; even the information which Paganini includes in his letters of February and March 1834 may not be entirely reliable. Nonetheless, in a letter to Vincenzo Merighi (12 January 1838) Paganini refers to the accidents which can occur when string instruments are transported, and he appears to be alluding to a personal experience from the past when he writes that the cello which he is buying from Merighi should be 'well wrapped up and placed in a strong box which, should it fall from the roof of a carriage, or a cart, will protect the instrument.'

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Antoine Vidal's statement – that Paganini, at his death, bequeathed his Vuillaume copy-violin to Camillo Sivori – is incorrect.

Early in 1840, Sivori, having learned that Paganini intended to sell his instruments, 'asked Germi to obtain for him the Vuillaume copy of the Maestro's Guarneri, which was still in Parma and as a "copy" did not seem to interest him [Paganini] particularly.'<sup>70</sup> Germi seemingly approached Paganini on this matter for Paganini replied on 1 February 1840:

*L'artista fabbricante d'istrumenti, M. Vuillaume, nell'epoca ch'io stavo a Parigi faceva pagare i suoi violini, ad imitazione del mio Guarnerius, 300 franchi i comuni, e sino 500 fr. i più finiti e sonori, e quello che a me diede era, e sarà forse il migliore, di tanti altri; ma tu puoi disporre, molto più trattandosi di compiacere il valentissimo ed amabile Camillino [...].*<sup>71</sup>

The violin maker, M. Vuillaume, at the time when I was in Paris [1833-34 or 1838?], priced his violins – imitations of my Guarnerius – at 300 francs for ordinary copies and up to 500 francs for those which were more perfect and sonorous, and the one he gave me was, and perhaps [?always]

<sup>65</sup> Postilion: a person who rides the left horse of the leading (or only) pair of horses drawing a carriage.

<sup>66</sup> The reason why Neill places this text in double quotation marks is unclear.

<sup>67</sup> Neill (1990), p. 242. Neill's commentary is entirely contrary to Vidal's information.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>69</sup> Menardi Noguera, p. 57.

<sup>70</sup> Courcy, II, p. 311.

<sup>71</sup> Neill (1982), p. 299.

will be, the best of all of them; but you can dispose of it, particularly as it will please the most skilful and charming Camillino [...].<sup>72</sup>

In a subsequent letter to Germi (25 February 1840) Paganini wrote:

Please be kind enough to remit to M. Vuillaume the 500 francs that you receive from Signor Sivori, along with the enclosed letter. [...]

*My dear Vuillaume: I have been obliged to deprive myself of the copy of my violin that you gave me as a souvenir. I did so because a friend of mine [Germi] asked me to let an artist [Sivori] have it. [...] Enclosed herewith you will find the sum of 500 francs, the proceeds of the sale of the violin. I have thus done a favour to a friend and have given pleasure to an artist, and I believe you won't be displeased at my disposing of the instrument for 500 francs, the price you told me you asked for your finest instruments. The thought that you could make me another one at your convenience has also induced me to part with your dear souvenir, since you will replace it by another of equal value.*<sup>73</sup>

Paganini's instruction to Germi clearly identifies the 500 francs which Sivori would be sending to Germi – 'the proceeds of the sale of the violin' – but it should be noted that Paganini himself was not receiving any payment from the transaction; the 500 francs would be passed to Vuillaume. Nonetheless, perhaps J-BV was not entirely happy at discovering that his gifted violin had been transferred to another player without him being given any advance notice (surely common courtesy would demand such a communication) and although J-BV was now 500 francs better off Paganini was expecting him to make a second copy-violin (see earlier, p.12).

The present author has not been able to locate any reliable information relating to the post-Paganini history of Vuillaume's second copy-violin.<sup>74</sup>

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The Glasgow-based violin dealer David Laurie (1833-1897) includes an entire chapter about Sivori – 'Paganini's Pupil' – in his *Reminiscences of a Fiddle Dealer* and includes (pp. 66-67) a detailed description of the copy-violin which Vuillaume gifted to Paganini and which Paganini then passed through Luigi Germi to Camillo Sivori:

I will here describe this Vuillaume fiddle of Sivori's which was, of course, the Paganini copy. [...] This violin was made of wood which had been carefully chosen for its beauty, and also with regard to the quality of the tone. There is little doubt that the wood had been prepared by dry heat, which gave it a soft and matured tone with a tendency, in the hands of an ordinary player, to become muted if played on continuously for a long time. It was well covered with a thin brown varnish, over a yellow coating in the wood, to give it the appearance of an old instrument. [...] *It was by no means a copy as I have before said of Paganini's Guarnerius,*<sup>75</sup> which was in all points the crowning glory of Joseph; indeed I never saw a Joseph to compare with Paganini's though I have, of course, seen many whose owners held a different opinion.

One immediate difference between the *Cannone* violin and the Vuillaume/Sivori violin is that whereas the flames on the two-piece back plate of the *Cannone* violin ascend slightly from the centre-joint, on

<sup>72</sup> Present author's translation. The *Violini a Genova* brochure states: *nel 1840, l'avvocato e amico di Paganini, Luigi Guglielmo Germi, propose al grande virtuoso di cedere il "Vuillaume" al suo allievo Camillo Sivori* (translated therein as 'in 1840, Luigi Guglielmo Germi, a lawyer and friend of Paganini, did propose him to sell the "Vuillaume" to his pupil Camillo Sivori').

<sup>73</sup> Courcy, II, p. 313, fn 8.

<sup>74</sup> No Vuillaume violin is posthumously listed as having been a Paganini possession; see Courcy, II, pp. 388-391.

<sup>75</sup> Present author's italics. It is noticeable that Laurie does not use the soubriquet *Cannone*.



the Vuillaume/Sivori violin the flames descend slightly. If J-BV was making a replica, an exact copy (see the third paragraph of Vuillaume's 1864 narrative, p.12, top), why did he make the back plate 'the wrong way round'? For Paganini not to have noticed the orientation of the back-plate flames of his favourite Guarneri violin seems most unlikely.

In addition, the body length of the Vuillaume/Sivori violin is 4mm longer than that of the *Cannone*, and both the upper- and lower-bout widths are 3mm wider; nonetheless, Vuillaume reports that Paganini 'more than once, took the imitation for the original.' Given the symbiotic relationship which develops between a performer and instrument when ownership continues for many years Paganini could not have failed to notice the extra length and width of the Vuillaume/Sivori violin.

Measurements – taken with callipers on the back plate – are provided in the aforementioned *Violini a Genova* brochure (see p. 1 of this account):

	"Il Cannone"	"Il Sivori"
Upper Bout maximum width:	168mm	171mm
Centre Bout minimum width:	111	111.1
Lower bout maximum width:	206	209
Body length:	353	357
Body 'stop':	197	196
Bass <i>f</i> -hole length:	76	75
Distance between <i>f</i> -hole upper eyes:	40.5	41.9
Distance between <i>f</i> -hole lower eyes:	111	110.7

Following Camillo Sivori's death in 1894 his heirs presented his Vuillaume violin to the city of Genoa where it is now displayed at the Palazzo Tursi, sitting in a glass case opposite another glass case in which sits the violin identified as Paganini's *Cannone*.

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On 27 April 1837 Niccolò Paganini finalised his Last Will and Testament and appointed as his executors Giambattista Giordani, Lazzaro Rebizzo and Pietro Torrigiani. Towards the end of his document he writes:

I name as guardian of my dearest son [Achille, then aged 12] Marquis Lorenzo Pareto of the late Marquis Agostino. [...] I make no mention in this testament of my old friend the lawyer Luigi Guglielmo Germi, because he has so desired: however, I recommend to my son to follow his counsel. [...] I bequeath my violin to the city of Genoa in order that it be perpetually conserved [*Lego il mio violino alla Città di Genova onde sia perpetuamente conservato*]. I recommend my soul to the infinite mercy of my Creator. This is my testament.<sup>76</sup>

Even within this particularly personal and terminal document Paganini still only specifies 'my violin' – no name of the instrument's maker and no label-date is mentioned. Paganini's seemingly habitual lack of precision in instrumental matters causes endless difficulties for historical researchers; conversely, his imprecision could have allowed someone who had access to his instruments post-1840 to manipulate that collection for their own purposes.

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<sup>76</sup> Present author's translation. The complete text of Paganini's Will is presented by Neill (1990), pp. 266-267.

On 19 March 1839, Paganini (in Marseilles) wrote to Luigi Germa (in Genoa):

*i sei strumenti sono giunti sani, ma perché il tuo Giuseppe Guarneri in luogo del mio Andrea? The six instruments are safely received, but why is your Giuseppe Guarneri in place of my Andrea?*<sup>77</sup>

The six instruments included a recently-bought Stradivari violin and cello, an Amati violin, and three of the instruments which Paganini had deposited with Carlo Carli in 1828 (see p. 5 of this account). From his inspection of the contents of the carriage-case Paganini observed that his 1675 Andrea Guarneri violin was missing; he also observed that the case contained a 'Giuseppe Guarneri' violin which he mistakenly identifies as being Germa's violin (see pp. 4-5 of this account). Paganini evidently assumed – again, mistakenly – that this violin had been included as a substitute for his Andrea Guarneri; did Paganini think that his Andrea might have been lost, or stolen? Three weeks later (8 April 1839) Paganini wrote again to Germa, concluding his letter with a corrective postscript:

*P.S. Il violino che trovi in luogo dell'Andrea Guarnieri, è un violino che mi fu dato dal Generale Pino, e che ora riconosco essere di Giuseppe Guarneri di Gesù: ma che fu del mio Andrea? Che sia a Parma o che sia presso i Carli? A Parma vi deve essere il violino di Vuillaume copiato dal mio violino; e non so se ho ritirato dai Carli il suddetto Andrea. Se tu ne sai qualche cosa dimmi, prima che lo domandi ai Carli inutilmente.*<sup>78</sup>

The violin that I find in place of the Andrea Guarneri is a violin that was given to me by General Pino and now I see that it's a Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù: but what has become of my Andrea? Perhaps it's in Parma [with Achille?], or perhaps with the Carlis [in Milan]. Vuillaume's copy of my violin must be at Parma; I do not know whether or not I retrieved the Andrea from Carli. If you know anything, tell me before you ask the Carlis, unnecessarily.<sup>79</sup>

Paganini's postscript demonstrates his realisation that the Guarneri violin which he thought was Germa's instrument was actually the violin given to Niccolò (on an unknown occasion) by Domenico Pino (d. 1826).<sup>80</sup> Paganini is able to recognise the violin despite not having seen it since 1828 but only now, in 1839, does he identify it as a *del Gesù* instrument (of unspecified date). The manner in which Paganini immediately passes on from the Pino violin to his missing Andrea Guarneri violin suggests that, for him, the unknown location of the latter was a matter of greater concern; seemingly he held his Andrea Guarneri violin in higher esteem than his Pino/*del Gesù* violin.

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Following Paganini's death an obituary appeared in the pages of the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* (21 June);<sup>81</sup> the obituary gives details of the monetary bequests that Paganini had bestowed upon various relations, and upon Achille's mother, but makes no mention of the bequest of his violin to the city of Genoa. Subsequently, a brief commentary in the same journal (12 July) simply states: *C'est la ville de Gènes qui doit héritier de son violon.*

According to Geraldine de Courcy, a posthumous inventory of Paganini's instruments listed seven Antonio Stradivari violins, two by 'Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù' ('1734 Pino gift',<sup>82</sup> and '1742 Palazzo Civico, Genoa'), one by 'Giuseppe Guarneri' ('1734, present owner unknown'), one Andrea Guarneri

<sup>77</sup> Neill (1982), p. 271 (letter 334); 'your Giuseppe Guarneri' is surely a reference to the Guarneri violin belonging to Germa about which Paganini had enthused in 1823; see pp. 4-5 of the present account.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274 (letter 336).

<sup>79</sup> Present author's translation.

<sup>80</sup> Since the Pino/*del Gesù* violin was stored with Carlo Carli it could not have been used in any of Paganini's post-1828 concerts; equally, it cannot have been *il mio cannone violino* identified by Paganini in 1833 (see p. 8 of this account).

<sup>81</sup> In retaliation for Paganini's refusal, in his final days, to seek absolution, Church officials forbade Italian newspapers from publishing any obituaries.

<sup>82</sup> See footnote 24.

(the mis-placed Andrea of 1675?<sup>83</sup>), two by Niccolò Amati, one by Carlo Tononi, and one by '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').<sup>84</sup>

Yet more instruments which are associated with Paganini (the descriptions of the instruments appearing within the sales ledgers of 'Jacques Francais Rare Violins Inc.'<sup>85</sup>) include a Guarneri *del Gesù* violin of 1740 (known as the *Boissier/Paganini/Arbos*) and three Stradivari violins – of 1672, 1712, and 1726 (the *Hubay*).

In the years immediately following Paganini's death all his instrumental possessions were in Achille's hands. Achille's commercial strategies during this period are unknown but it is documented that in 1846, at the age of 21, he took (or sent) a quartet of his father's Antonio Stradivari instruments – two violins, a viola, and a cello – to Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume in Paris for restoration and sale. Achille's proposed price for all four instruments (which were to be sold in one transaction) was 20,000 French Francs, an extremely high price for the time. In both 1849 and 1850 Vuillaume reported to Achille that no offers had been received for the four instruments. In March 1851 Vuillaume offered to buy the instruments himself, for 12,000 FF, but subsequently withdrew his offer. In September 1851 a revised agreement between Vuillaume and Achille was drawn up in which the unity of the quartet of instruments was dissolved in favour of each instrument being for sale individually. The two violins and the viola were priced at 2,500 FF each while the cello was priced at 5,000 FF.<sup>86</sup>

Perhaps Achille consigned yet more instruments from his father's collection – including Guarneri violins? – to other violin dealers across Europe.

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The most detailed account of the events which took place between 1840 and 1851 in Genoa is a substantial essay – *Il Violino di Niccolò Paganini conservato nel Palazzo Municipale di Genova* – written by Angelo Boscassi (1846-1918), Inspector of the Artistic Heritage of the Municipality, and published by Fratelli Pagano in 1909.<sup>87</sup>

Boscassi illustrates his essay with a miniature portrait of Paganini (created by Paul Pommayrac in 1838) followed by three monochrome photographs of the violin – front plate, bass side ribs, and back plate. The violin appears to have a ribbon tied around the scroll as well as a piece of card; see later in this account for information about these items. The illustrative sequence concludes with a photograph of the violin (and bow) as then displayed in Genoa – standing upright inside a glass bell-jar but with a large gold medal (which had been presented to Paganini in 1834 by the city council) positioned in front of, and thus somewhat obscuring, the lower bout of the violin.

Boscassi provides an overview of the correspondence between Achille Paganini and the Genoese city officials (the texts of three letters – 15, 28, and 30 June 1851 – are transcribed in appendices) followed

<sup>83</sup> Courcy dates this violin to 1670.

<sup>84</sup> See Courcy, II, pp. 388-391, 'List of instruments in Paganini's possession at the time of his death'. Note that Courcy does not use the *Cannone* soubriquet for the 1742 'Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù' violin at the Palazzo Civico, Genoa. It seems likely that the two 1734 Guarneri violins have become mistakenly entangled with each other.

<sup>85</sup> Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA; see the link from [www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk)

<sup>86</sup> See Lebet, p. 46 *et seq.*

<sup>87</sup> A copy of Boscassi's essay is held at the National Art Library (Victoria and Albert Museum) in London. Alberto Giordano (Giordano, p. 32) describes Boscassi as simply a *funzionario del Comune* – a Genoese city official.

by a transcription of the complete notarial document created on Friday 4 July 1851. Boscassi also provides some post-1851 history and some measurements of the violin.

The following paragraphs are carefully paraphrased by the present writer from Boscassi's text.<sup>88</sup>

Boscassi quotes from a letter dated 3 October 1845 in which Marquis Ignazio Alessandro Pallavicini and Giuseppe Moro, having 'reminded the heir Achille Paganini of his father's last requests, implored him to carry them out and "not to defraud the country of a token of that love that its son gave to it, a son whose celebrated name will live on for many years after his body has been laid to rest."' (*a non defraudare la patria d'un pegno di quell'amore che le portò un figlio, il cui nome celebrato sopravviverà per lunghi anni alla spoglia mortale.*) The forcefulness of the Pallavicini/Moro text suggests that previous (fruitless?) correspondence had already passed between the Genoese officials and Achille. On 15 October Achille replied that he had authorised the release of his father's violin to the city of Genoa 'to whom it belongs', but no violin was delivered to the city authorities. On 11 December 1845 Pallavicini and Moro, wanting to give precise instructions to their municipal successors with respect to receiving the violin, wrote again to Achille; again no violin was delivered.

Almost two years later, on 23 September 1847, Achille informed Marquis Pantaleo Giustiniani that he had commissioned the making of a glass cabinet in which the violin could be displayed. On 4 December Giustiniani replied, saying that while the municipal government was grateful for Achille's initiative 'the City considers itself able to satisfactorily arrange a place for the violin in one of the rooms of the [Palazzo Civico]' and therefore asked, once again, for the precious instrument to be delivered to the authorities.

At this point in his text Boscassi writes: 'Meanwhile, the executors of Paganini's Will had deposited the violin with the Genoese councillor Signor Luigi Bartolomeo Migone.'<sup>89</sup> Since, according to a postscript at the end of a letter from Achille (15 June 1851; see p. 22 of this account), the responsibilities of the Will's executors terminated in 1844 it is unclear when they deposited the violin with Migone and on what authority or instruction that deposit was made.<sup>90</sup>

On 29 November 1850 the mayor of Genoa, Antonio Profumo, therefore instructed that Luigi Migone should himself deliver the violin to the authorities, thus fulfilling Niccolò Paganini's wishes. On 2 December Migone replied that even though he was the trustee of Paganini's instrument the single key to the cupboard in which the violin had been stored was not in his possession but, instead, was with Achille. Migone further indicated that Achille, having been made aware of the mayor's instruction (i.e. that Migone should hand over the violin), had responded by saying that he (and only he?) would have the honour of handing over the violin – but no violin was handed over.

Six months later (31 May 1851) Achille wrote again to Antonio Profumo saying that it was difficult to preserve a violin in perpetuity and therefore he proposed an alternative memorial, namely 'that the City might accept a huge marble bust of his father', and, to this end, Achille had 'commissioned the [Genoese] sculptor [Santo] Varni [1807-1885] to make the bust which, placed appropriately, would remain as an eternal monument, more in keeping with the objective of perpetual conservation.' The mayor – whose patience, presumably, was being sorely tried – wrote again to Achille (Boscassi does not provide any details of this letter); Achille replied on 12 June 1851 that he would hand over his

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<sup>88</sup> The present author wishes to thank Matthew Reza (University of Oxford) for his considerable help in translating Boscassi's essay.

<sup>89</sup> Luigi Bartolomeo Migone (1795-1865) was Niccolò Paganini's banker in Genoa.

<sup>90</sup> According to Geraldine de Courcy (Courcy, II, p. 298, fn 12) the executors delivered the *Cannone* violin to Luigi Migone on 4 December 1847 (the same date as the letter from Marquis Giustiniani); the documentary source of Courcy's information is not specified.

father's violin at a time and place to be determined by the city authorities. On 15 June Achille sent another letter to the mayor, the content of which indicates that the latter now wanted any violin handed over by Achille to be authenticated and positively identified by appropriate experts and witnesses. Achille writes:

To indulge your wish to have my father's violin identified it would be an excellent idea to call upon a few of his friends; however, the majority of them are dead and the few who are still living and whom I have contacted do not remember enough of the aforementioned violin to be able to distinguish it from another.

Those who could positively confirm the violin's identity would be the lawyer [Luigi] Germi and G B [Jean-Baptiste] Vuillaume; the former was a friend of my father since childhood, the latter an instrument maker, also an acquaintance of my father; both are experts in matters of instruments, and therefore, as they have seen this violin many times, are able to verify the identity with complete certainty.<sup>91</sup>

However, the lawyer Germi currently resides in Sarzana, and Vuillaume, who lives in Paris, is currently in London. Their absence makes it such that I would not know how to achieve the desired outcome, since it would be necessary for them to be in Genoa at the handover.

[see below - § - for the continuation of Achille's letter-text]

Sarzana is a municipality which lies to the east of the Italian port of La Spezia; it is no more than 60 miles from Genoa. Even allowing for the then unstable social situation in northern Italy (and the discomfort of travelling by stage-coach) it would surely have been entirely reasonable for the Genoese authorities to write to Germi asking him to come to Genoa, at any time that was convenient, to inspect Achille's to-be-handed-over violin (which, it is assumed, was still stored in Luigi Migone's cupboard). As already indicated (see p. 19 of this account) Achille had already been corresponding with Vuillaume, and, in a letter to Achille (10 December 1850), Vuillaume writes: 'I am at present preparing for the Great Universal Exhibition in London. I will spend two months there next spring.'<sup>92</sup> The Great Universal Exhibition, at Crystal Palace, ran from 1 May to 15 October 1851; if Vuillaume arrived in London in advance of the opening of the Exhibition, and stayed for two months, he would have been in London between approximately mid-April and mid-June 1851. Achille's information (in his 15 June 1851 letter) regarding Vuillaume's whereabouts is thus entirely accurate. Nonetheless, there was no reason why the Genoese authorities could not have contacted Vuillaume on his return to Paris, and, if the authorities had known that Vuillaume had repaired one of Paganini's violins the incentive for them to obtain his services as an expert authenticator would have been compelling. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Achille's information might have been deliberately phrased in such a way as to suggest that Vuillaume's services would not be obtainable for the foreseeable future.

§ I would therefore not know how to find another method [of authenticating the violin] other than that of carrying out the delivery of the violin through a *notary deed* in addition to my sealing on the violin my signed attestation that verifies the identity of the violin.

After such a legal and sacred formality no gentleman will doubt that the delivered violin is not the true one<sup>93</sup> [*Dopo una formalità così legale e così sacra nessun galantuomo metterà in dubbio che il violino consegnato non sia il vero*] and if the malice of any wicked person manages to nurture even the suspicion of such an idea I need only receive notice of this and I will immediately print in the *Gazzetta* a declaration in which the author of such slander will be named by me as a fraudster [*impostore*].

[...]

<sup>91</sup> Note that Achille does not mention that Vuillaume repaired Paganini's concert violin.

<sup>92</sup> Lebet, p. 55.

<sup>93</sup> i.e. no gentleman will have any grounds for thinking that the consigned violin is not the true one (but, apparently, only Luigi Germi and Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume could identify 'the true one'). Achille does not mention Camillo Sivori.

Your most devoted,  
 A. Paganini  
 p.s. the mandate for the Will's executors terminated in 1844.<sup>94</sup>

The mayor replied to Achille on 28 June:

It was with great delight to me and this committee that we received your letter of 15th June. [...] It is of concern to us, and to you, that in years to come, as we gaze upon that instrument which is so rich with many unheard harmonies, that not even the faintest suspicion of a wicked substitution should arise [*non nasca il timore di una malvagia sostituzione in principio*].

To that end, and after having gathered some information, I have had the draft of a deed drawn up, more to indicate the general terms of our agreement than to determine the details, which still need to be amended after receiving better information and no-one can provide those [details] better than you. I enclose this draft [...] and I have asked councillor Bixio to act on behalf of the Municipality (our interests also being yours, as I have already said) to definitively check the draft of the deed. [...] the violin will be placed in this Palazzo Civico and in the same room as the bust of King Carlo Alberto and nearby there will be the autographs of Christopher Columbus.

[...]  
 A. Profumo, Mayor.

Clearly, serious suspicions about Achille's honesty and integrity were circulating among the Genoese city officials, and Achille's protestation with respect to 'any wicked person' is hollow bluster.

Angelo Boscassi then transcribes the entirety of the notary's deed of transfer which was enacted on 4 July 1851 'at seven o'clock in the evening in one of the rooms of the house of the main residence of Signor Luigi Bartolomeo Migone [...] in the presence of me Giacomo Borsotto, Royal notary, certified, and member of the college of notaries, resident in this city and in the presence of the undersigned witnesses.'<sup>95</sup> Borsotto continues:

That Baron [Niccolò] Paganini, the finest violinist of all time, has, in his last will and testament, which was delivered to his Excellency the Royal Senator of Genoa on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1837, opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1840 and verified on the 4<sup>th</sup> of said month, left his violin to the city of Genoa in order that it be preserved in perpetuity, establishing as his only heir his son Achille.

That City Hall, still not having determined on a specific room in which [the violin] could be permanently and satisfactorily placed (as was fair and as Baron Achille legitimately desired) the delivery of the bequeathed instrument could not quickly be put into effect.

That, moreover, Baron Achille, desirous that the violin's identity was guaranteed and could never be put into doubt any further, chose Signor Luigi Bartolomeo Migone – at that time Decurion of the City and today municipal councillor, a highly responsible person of great integrity – and therefore, having affixed on the said instrument a green ribbon with the seal bearing the Paganini coat of arms, the violin was delivered to the same Signor Migone and placed in a wardrobe, or cupboard, from which Baron Achille immediately withdrew the key [*di cui il signor Barone Achille ritirò subito la chiave*] a key which up to now has been kept by him and still is thus kept.

[...]

Then Baron Achille presented the key to the cupboard, or wardrobe, in which the bequeathed violin was locked away, and, having opened the cupboard, that very violin was indeed found therein, [a violin] which was identified in the presence of the parties and the witnesses, bearing a green ribbon with the seal (representing the Paganini coat of arms) intact, a seal that was left just as it was found;

<sup>94</sup> Presumably the Mayor had enquired about the duration of the Executors' responsibilities.

<sup>95</sup> Borsotto's text is also presented by Neill (1990), pp. 313-316.

with another seal [then being] added bearing the seal of the City with a small piece of card attached carrying the signatures of all the parties and witnesses.<sup>96</sup>

Then Baron Achille formally handed the violin into the hands of the Mayor who accepted it and to the Baron Achille gave his acknowledgement of this 'payment of debt' [*quitanza*]. The aforementioned Baron Achille, in a gesture of thoughtfulness, wanted to add the following declaration:

Baron Achille Paganini attests that the now-delivered violin is [was?] definitely the favourite of the most eminent violinist and of which he constantly made use.

*Il signor barone Achille Paganini attesta che l'ora consegnato violino è positivamente il prediletto del chiarissimo violinista e del quale constantamente faceva uso.*

Similarly, Signor Luigi Bartolomeo Migone attests that the violin is the same instrument which was entrusted to him in the manner mentioned above.

*Il signor Luigi Bartolomeo Migone attesta del pari essere il detto violino quello stesso che a lui venne consegnato, nel modo per altro detto di sopra.*

Signor Giovanni Serra [...] currently director of the city orchestra and for many years director of the theatre orchestra, and Signor Filippo Bolognesi [...] professor of music and very experienced in matters of harmonic instruments, who both participated in the present transfer in their capacity as witnesses, also declare and attest to knowing the aforementioned instrument as that on which they saw Niccolò Paganini play when he was alive[!] and to having examined the same violin many times and to having held it in their hands.

Signor Serra, however, stated to have made this attestation as far as he was able to remember given the period of time that had elapsed.<sup>97</sup>

*Dichiarando però il signor Serra di fare detta attestazione per quanto possa ricordarsene dopo il periodo di tempo decorso.*

The notarial document then concludes with a list of the officials and witnesses whose appended signatures confirmed the notary's text as being accurate and agreed by all.

In 2004 Alberto Giordano described Achille's 1851 attestation in alternative terms:

*Il figlio di Paganini, il barone Achille, esige che nel documento scritto sia confermata la sua integrità e la suona buona fede di gentiluomo nell'attribuire lo strumento esattamente all'autore, Guarneri 'del Gesù', e soprattutto afferma: "questo è stato lo strumento che mio padre usò per tutta la vita".*<sup>98</sup>

Paganini's son, the Baron Achille, demanded that the written record [of the transfer] should confirm his integrity, and his good faith as a gentleman in attributing the instrument, exactly, to the maker Guarneri *del Gesù*, and, above all, affirmed: "this is the instrument that my father used for the whole of his life."<sup>99</sup>

Achille's legally-certified attestation differs significantly from Giordano's embellished text since the former merely states that the 'favourite' violin being handed over was that of which Niccolò 'constantly made use'. Given the frustrating and unsatisfactory correspondence between Achille and the Genoese officials, given the formal (and, quite possibly, unfriendly) situation in which Achille then found himself on the evening of 4 July 1851, given the necessity for Achille (in front of the Mayor of Genoa, a Royal notary, witnesses, and officials) to choose his words with great care – given all these constraints

<sup>96</sup> See p. 26 of this account for the confirming evidence from Edward Heron-Allen.

<sup>97</sup> Niccolò Paganini gave his final concerts in June 1837, in Turin; it was thus at least 14 years since Serra had seen Paganini's concert violin; cf. the first sentence of Achille's letter of 15 June 1851 (on p. 21 of the present account).

<sup>98</sup> Giordano, pp. 30-31. Giordano also states that Boscassi 'interviewed eyewitnesses' to Achille's 1851 transfer of his father's violin to the Genoese officials, but every person present at that event would have died long before Boscassi wrote his essay.

<sup>99</sup> Present author's translation.

perhaps Achille's 'gesture of thoughtfulness' was deliberately limited in its scope; it was up to the recipients of the violin to enquire, if they wished, into what Achille had not said.

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After 'such a legal and sacred formality' it would surely have been the case that any lingering suspicions about the identity of the delivered violin could now be put aside. However, a report appeared in the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* on 15 January 1854:<sup>100</sup>

*Genova 11. Gennaio*

*Ieri 10 corrente nell'ufficio del Sindaco ed alla presenza del celebre nostro Sivori e del bravo maestro Mariani e di alcuni consiglieri municipali, si aperse per la prima volta la cassetta contenente il violino che il sommo Paganini legava alla città di Genova.*

*È un magnifico Guarnerius "del Gesù", e di voce talmente forte e sonante che veniva dal suo possessore denominato il Cannone.*

*Il celebre Sivori, dopo averne riconosciuta l'identità, esegui alcuni brani de' suoi pezzi favoriti su queste corde stesse che tuttora intatte, già servirono a quell'inarrivabile a far meravigliare il mondo intero.*

*Gambini*

Genoa, 11 January 1854

Yesterday (10) in the office of the Mayor and in the presence of our celebrated [violinist, Camillo] Sivori, the admired conductor [Angelo] Mariani, and some municipal councillors, the case containing the violin which the great Paganini bequeathed to the city of Genoa was opened for the first time [opened for the first time since July 1851].

[The violin] is a magnificent Guarneri *del Gesù* and of such a strong and sonorous voice that its owner named it 'il Cannone'.<sup>101</sup>

The celebrated Sivori, after confirming the violin's identity, performed some extracts from his favourite pieces using the same strings – all still intact – which had enabled the inimitable [Paganini] to astonish the entire world.

[signed] Gambini

Clearly, the mayor of Genoa – Domenico Elena – was not satisfied with the circumscribed attestation which his predecessor had received from Achille at the 1851 hand-over, and, perhaps fearing for his civic reputation if a flaw in the violin's claimed authenticity was subsequently discovered, had asked Sivori to authenticate the violin.<sup>102</sup> It is not unreasonable to wonder whether this authentication was something that Sivori could deliver with any greater validity than had been offered by Giovanni Serra and Filippo Bolognesi in 1851. Sivori (b. 1815) had had violin lessons with Paganini between the autumn of 1822 and the spring of 1823, but thereafter studied with Giacomo Costa and Agostino Dellepiane before travelling almost constantly throughout Europe and North America giving concerts. Geraldine de Courcy states that, in the autumn of 1839, Paganini asked Sivori to come and play for him but provides no evidential source for her information.<sup>103</sup> Even if Sivori complied with Paganini's request there is no particular reason why, during his visit, he should have inspected Paganini's concert violin, retaining the details of its physicality in his memory during the ensuing fifteen years.

<sup>100</sup> The report is reproduced in *Violini a Genova*; present author's translation.

<sup>101</sup> See pp. 33-34 of the present account for contrary information provided by J-B Vuillaume.

<sup>102</sup> According to Menardi Noguera (Noguera, p. 135) Sivori then performed on the bequeathed violin at a public concert in Genoa on 20 January 1854.

<sup>103</sup> Courcy, II, p. 311.



It would seem that Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume was never contacted by the Genoese authorities. It is known that Vuillaume travelled to Cremona in 1853;<sup>104</sup> a slight detour to Genoa to see the violin which he had repaired would surely have been an opportunity which Vuillaume would not have missed. Achille, however, might have been anxious to ensure that Vuillaume did not travel to Genoa.

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Notwithstanding all the troubling events which populate the period between 1840 and 1851 it is clear that the violin which was handed over in 1851 is the violin which is now displayed at the Palazzo Tursi in Genoa. Prior to his departure from Vienna in mid-August 1828 Paganini had employed the Polish luthier Nikolaus Sawicki (1792-1852) to fit a new fingerboard to his violin. Paganini then wrote a formal tribute:

*Io sottoscritto confesso che il Signor Sawicki è un genio straordinario per fabbricare i violini, nonché per arrangiare meravigliosamente tutti gl'istrumenti musicali; Io che ho veduti, e scrupolosamente esaminati tanto i Suoi, che quelli d'altri dallo stesso accomodati, mi compiaccio di potere attestare che il prelodato, è il primo artista del mondo; a più, gli affidai il mio violino al quale cambiò la Tastiera, che di qualunque altro artista non mi sarei fidato.*

*Niccolò Paganini, Vienna, 10 agosto 1828.*<sup>105</sup>

I, the undersigned, acknowledge that Signor Sawicki is an extraordinary genius in the making of violins, as well as 'setting up', marvellously, all musical instruments. I, who have seen and scrupulously examined so many of his [instruments], and others, similarly optimised, I am pleased to be able to attest that the aforementioned [person] is the finest artist in the world; moreover, I entrusted him with my violin on which he changed the fingerboard, [a repair] for which I would not have trusted any other artist.

Niccolò Paganini, Vienna, 10 August 1828.

The Sawicki fingerboard was part of the violin which was received by the Genoese officials; the underside of the fingerboard (exhibited today in Genoa) has Sawicki's name, and the date, scratched into the wood.

David Laurie writes about Paganini's Guarneri violin in his *Reminiscences of a Fiddle Dealer* (p. 69), his description clearly indicating that he had visited 'the Council Hall in Genoa' where the violin (and bow) were exhibited:

It is a grand Joseph Guarnerius of the best period 1743 and is, as I have already said, one of the grandest its maker ever produced. It seems to be in perfect condition, shewing neither crack nor flaw although report has it that it had a fall once from a *diligence* in France. It will interest those who have not seen it to learn that it seems to be in its mountings and other details just as it was when Paganini used it. The bridge is low and the hand is almost straight from the body to the head, with little back set, which prevented the use of a higher bridge.<sup>106</sup> The upper line of the bridge on it is very narrow and straight, with small droopings at each side. Both the straightness and narrowness of this top line combined to bring the strings closer together and would, therefore, greatly facilitate the playing of the chords to which the great player was much given, and by means of which he produced some of his finest effects. This close grouping of strings both on bridge and fingerboard would entirely prevent its use by players in these days.

The aforementioned photographs which are included in Boscassi's 1909 essay (these apparently being the earliest official photographs but the date when they were taken is uncertain) show a wider-than-

<sup>104</sup> See Sackman, N., *The 'Messiah' violin: a reliable history?*, p. 105.

<sup>105</sup> Grisley, pp. 408-409 (letter 273, footnote 2). Note, again, the non-specific *il mio violino*.

<sup>106</sup> Present author's paraphrase: 'The neck projects almost horizontally from the body of the violin, there being barely any 'droop'. This almost-flat orientation of the neck obliged the maker of the violin's bridge to restrict its height.'

usual bridge on the bequeathed violin with the four strings having a particularly wide spacing as they pass over the bridge. According to Alberto Giordano the original bridge – ‘it almost looks like a bridge for children’ (*sembra quasi un ponticello per bambini*) – had already been removed and substituted by the time the photographs were taken.<sup>107</sup> Angelo Boscassi includes the names of violinists who played Paganini's violin in the second half of the nineteenth century; the *Violini a Genova* brochure provides the dates when these events took place: Emanuele Preve (in 1868), Giuseppe Bacigalupo (1875), Carlo Moresco (1894), Leandro Campanari (1888 and 1896), Enrico La Rosa (1898 and 1900), Jaroslaw Kocian (1905), and Bronislaw Huberman (1903 and 1909). Alberto Giordano states, confusingly, that ‘the first person to play [the violin] was Angelo Mariani, first violinist of the Carlo Felice Theatre, in March 1868. Camillo Sivori played it from time to time between 1855 and the year of his death 1894.’<sup>108</sup>

David Laurie does not identify the Guarneri/Paganini violin as the *Cannone*; neither does George Hart (*The Violin* (1875), frontispiece illustration and p. 231) nor Edward Heron-Allen in his article *Nicolo Paganini and his Guarnerius: a reminiscence of Genoa* which was published in *The Musical Times*, issue of May 1, 1886, pp. 266-270. Heron-Allen describes how, in 1885, he was allowed to spend three hours carrying out a hands-on inspection of Paganini's violin. The (somewhat inaccurate) historical information provided by Heron-Allen includes:

The instrument was made over to the civic authorities on December 2, 1850, and was sealed up in its present case in July 1851. Since then it has been out of its case for various purposes four times – on March 17, 1868; on June 9, 1875; on January 18, 1877; and on November 6, 1882. It has only once been heard in public, and that was when it was confided to Camillo Sivori, Paganini's favourite pupil, who played it at a reception at the Duc d'Aosta's.

With respect to the instrument itself, Heron-Allen states, *inter alia*: ‘The bridge, which I am assured is the original one, is rather low, plainly cut, and with remarkably small and thin feet.’<sup>109</sup>

Attached to the head of the instrument by green ribbons and the seal of the municipality, is a card bearing the seal of Baron Achille Paganini, and the words “Violino di Nicolo Paganini” in his handwriting. [...] The following document is attached to the holder of the instrument:-  
“Genova: il quattro Luglio Mille otte cento cinquant' uno. Cartolina anessa al Violino del fu' Barone Nicola (*sic*) Paganini, firmata da tutte le parti intervenute nell atto della consegna del Violino medesimo, fatto in questo giorno à rogito del Notare Giacomo Borsotto pure sottoscritto.” Then follow fourteen signatures and the seal of the municipal arms.

Heron-Allen concludes:

I cannot now go into the many incidents in the life of this fiddle, which have been handed down to us by such historians as Fetis, Vidal, and Fleming, how it was once nearly left at an inn by his servant, and the touching story of Paganini's agony of mind when in 1836 it had to undergo a thorough repair. It was on this occasion that Vuillaume made the celebrated copy which Camillo Sivori received as a present from Paganini, and which he has played upon all his life, whether in public or private.

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<sup>107</sup> Giordano, p. 37 and p. 32.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32; cf. footnote 102 of the present account.

<sup>109</sup> Was Paganini's bridge still on the violin in 1885?

## Part 2

John Tiplady Carrodus (JTC) was a distinguished and celebrated English violinist who was born on 20 January 1836 in the village of Braithwaite, near Keighley, in Yorkshire; he was one of six children who survived to adulthood (two further siblings died in infancy). Early violin lessons from his father led to local concerts in which John successfully performed violin solos. In 1848 his father was able to pay for John to have some lessons with the German violinist and composer Bernhard Molique (1802-1869) who was working in London at that time. When financial support could no longer be sustained Molique offered to teach John for free if he could move to Stuttgart (where Molique had been appointed Kapellmeister to the King of Württemberg).

After some years in Germany Carrodus returned to England, and, soon after, was performing at prestigious concerts and rapidly building an enviable reputation. Following his death on 13 July 1895 his second wife, Ada (1852-1910), wrote a memoir of his life and work: *J. T. Carrodus, Violinist, A Life Story: 1838 [sic] – 1895* (A. J. Bowden, London, 1897). In this memoir Ada describes how she initially met JTC:

[...] there were concerts (orchestral, promenade and classical) for two weeks in Brighton [...] they commenced in 1869 and carried on for many consecutive years. Of all the artists who appeared, none was a greater favourite or more appreciated than Mr. Carrodus. The writer [i.e. Ada] can speak of this with authority, never having missed one of the festival performances, and having first been introduced to Mr. Carrodus at one of the meetings in 1872 in order to take accompanying lessons with him, and having had the privilege of intimate friendship with him and his family from that time. (*A Life Story*, p. 68)

Throughout his professional life JTC suffered acutely from a highly-strung nervous temperament, and his ever-increasing responsibilities for teaching and performing created great anxiety, deep depression, and a level of insomnia which meant that, on occasions, he did not sleep for a week at a time. Ada Carrodus writes:

Thus was his life full of work of great importance and his nervous system perpetually on the strain until really he seemed to lose the power to enjoy rest, when he got the chance of it. He has said to the writer, he would lead a much happier life if he could hold a less responsible position, and that if in a back desk of an orchestra with no responsibility – he would be a contented man. (*ibid.*, p. 89)

Ada Carrodus relates that in early 1887, accompanied by a travelling companion, her husband visited the French Riviera, subsequently travelling to Genoa:

He soon picked up strength, was able to walk and sleep well, and take active interest in everything [...]. In Cannes they met many friends, and were able to enjoy a little social life as well as get about and see the beauties of the place. A peep at Monaco, where the gambling horrified him, and the music at the Casino pleased him much, and then on to Genoa, which, being the scene of Paganini's birth and death, was full of interest to him.<sup>110</sup> There they met a Mr. Le Mesurier, a great friend of Mr. Carrodus' fellow traveller, who offered them delightful hospitality and acted as their guide for two days through the city. As he was a man of much importance in Genoa, he was able to shew them much that otherwise they could not have seen, and as a mark of special favour, the violin bequeathed by Paganini to the town was removed from the glass case where it is always kept and submitted for inspection to Mr. Carrodus, who much regretted such a notable instrument could not be made use of; the varnish and form impressed him as incomparable. [...] By the time they arrived back in Paris all his old energy and activity of mind and body returned, and the trip home by Rouen, so full of intense interest to a lover of history, was one of unalloyed pleasure. (*ibid.*, pp. 97-99)

<sup>110</sup> Paganini was born in Genoa but died in Nice.

Towards the end of his life JTC found the time to write a set of short guides for young violinists: *Chats to Violin Students on how to study the Violin*.<sup>111</sup> Within this volume Carrodus includes two chapters on *Violin Makers – The Italian School*. With respect to his journey to Genoa he writes:

Whilst I was on a visit to Genoa some few years ago [1887 – see above], I went to the Museum and saw the violin which was in the possession of Paganini, and almost always (in his later years) played on by him. It is a fine specimen of a “Joseph Guarnerius del Jesu.” It was left by Paganini to the town of Genoa, with the distinct understanding it should only be played on once a year at the town fêtes. [...] The violin is a superb specimen and in first-rate preservation. I was not fortunate enough to handle it or hear its tone, but it is a beautiful work of art, and from its excellent condition and the interest attached to it is, perhaps, the most valuable specimen existing. (*Chats to Violin Students*, pp. 56-59; an illustration lies inbetween)

It is noticeable that Carrodus does not identify Paganini's violin as the *Cannone* (see also footnote 128 on p.33 of this account).

Carrodus continues his commentary by writing about his own Guarneri violins, one of which is identified by him as the ‘Cannon Joseph’, with red varnish:

I myself possess two very fine specimens of his [Guarneri's] work – one, which is known as the Cannon Joseph from its powerful tone, is said to have belonged to Paganini, and to have been gambled away by him (see “The Violin” by Davidson). It is a beautiful specimen of the red varnish which is exceptionally fine. Another which I purchased last year has a tone which almost equals the Cannon Joseph, but, being a yellow varnish, is not quite so beautiful in appearance.<sup>112</sup>

Carrodus provides another description of his two Guarneri violins in an article initially published in the *Strand Musical Magazine*, from which a passage was posthumously reprinted in *Strings: The Fiddler's Magazine*;<sup>113</sup> again, the sobriquet ‘Cannon Joseph’ is used:

To one of the papers in the *Strand Musical Magazine* there attaches a melancholy interest. It is from the pen of the late Mr. J. T. Carrodus. With reference to violins he says:-

[...] I am very fortunate, having a very fine specimen of a Strad, upon which I used always to play and two beautiful Joseph Guarneri del Jesu, upon one of which I invariably play solos now. It is said, by the way, to have belonged to Paganini, and to have been gambled away by him, and is called the “Cannon Joseph” on account of its powerful tone. The varnish is in splendid preservation and dark red in colour; the other violin is almost as fine in tone, but artistically not so beautiful to look at, having an amber varnish.

In February 1895 Ada Carrodus was interviewed by a reporter from *The Leeds Mercury* newspaper. The reporter describes Ada as someone ‘who distinguishes herself on the [concert] platform as an accompanist, is full of information on musical subjects that concern her husband, and fully understands the requirements of the interviewer’, and continues with the following information:

Mr. Carrodus has at present, among his other possessions, two magnificent violins, which, of course, are worth more than their weight in gold. They are fine specimens of the Guarnerius make; *one of them was made in 1744 and the other in 1741*.<sup>114</sup> The former once belonged to Paganini, who, it is said, gambled it away. It has a red varnish, and is worth £1,000.<sup>115</sup> On account of its wonderfully

<sup>111</sup> Serialised in monthly issues of *The Strad* and then combined as ‘Library, no. 11’, and published in 1895 by “‘The Strad’ Office’.

<sup>112</sup> See *The Morning Post*, 22 September 1893, which confirms the purchase, in that year, of the 1741 *del Gesù* violin.

<sup>113</sup> Vol. II, no. 19, September 1895, p. 114.

<sup>114</sup> Italicised emphasis by the present writer.

<sup>115</sup> See also pp.4-5 in the present writer's article *John Tiplady Carrodus: a tale of seven violins* ([www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk)).

powerful tone it has received the name of the "Cannon Joseph". The other one, with an amber varnish, is called the "Yellow Joseph" and it is about half the value of its companion.<sup>116</sup>

Ada Carrodus writes in her memoir of her husband's 1744 violin:

In this year also [the year 1883 is clearly implied by both the preceding and the succeeding text] he purchased through Mr. Laurie of Glasgow, the fine specimen of "Joseph Guarnerius del Jesu" which he used always as his solo violin. The tone is so fine and powerful that it is known as the "Cannon Joseph" and by some authorities is said to have been one of Paganini's violins which he gambled away. It is now in the possession of his son Robert (his sixth son), a violinist of distinction. (*A Life Story*, pp. 88-89)

In the Preface to her memoir, Ada Carrodus writes that 'With no notes from the pen of the subject of these memoirs [i.e. JTC], I feel hesitation in writing them [...]. Working from her historically-limited first-hand knowledge, Ada's identification of David Laurie, rather than the Hills, as the 1883 origin of her husband's "Cannon Joseph" violin is likely nothing more than a simple misunderstanding; JTC's letter to Mary Carmichael (see p.31 of this account) makes clear that he bought his violin from the Hills; the sale, but not the sold violin's label-date, is confirmed by diary entries written by Arthur F Hill.<sup>117</sup>

Ada may have misunderstood the involvement of David Laurie but she could not be mistaken when she identifies Robert George Carrodus as the post-1895 owner and player of her husband's 1744 Guarneri violin. This ownership is confirmed in a letter sent by Ada to the editor of *The Strad* which was published in the February 1896 issue: '[...] the Cannon Joseph is retained in the family by Mr. Robert Carrodus [...]. Robert joined the second violins of the London Symphony Orchestra in 1909 and was promoted to the first violins in 1914. As a soldier he was wounded in action in July 1918 but survived the war and remained a member of the LSO until 1924. Subsequently, in 1934, Robert was leader of the orchestra of the Carl Rosa Opera Company; he died in 1966.

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The evidentially-supported history of the Guarneri *del Gesù* violin – the "Cannon Joseph" which belonged to J T Carrodus – begins with Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume who, in 1855, sold a Guarneri *del Gesù* violin to the violinist Louis Eller (who was born at Graz, Austria, 9 June 1820); the price of the violin was 5,000 francs. As a virtuoso violinist Eller successfully toured the principal European countries and gave many concerts in the south-west of France, especially in and around the town of Pau. In the late 1850s Eller was afflicted with an incurable disease which progressively prevented him from performing. In the spring of 1862 his medical condition worsened rapidly and he died on 12 July 1862 at the age of 42:

*1855 hatte er noch in Paris einem kostbaren Guarnerius (Joseph) für 5000 Francken erstanden, und erst seit er in den Besitz dieses herrlichen Instrumentes getreten war, fühlte er sich in der Beherrschung seines Materials vollkommen unbeschränkt.*

In 1855, in Paris, he bought a precious Giuseppe Guarneri [violin] for 5,000 Francs; only after he came into possession of this magnificent instrument did he feel completely unfettered in the mastery of his [musical] material.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> *The Leeds Mercury*, 5 February 1895, p. 8; a further report was published by the *Leeds Mercury* on the following day, 6 February, p. 3. From the reporter's elegant expression of gratitude – '[Mrs Carrodus] fully understands the requirements of the interviewer' – one can conclude that the entire content of the quotation came directly from Ada Carrodus. Ada's firm knowledge of the label-dates inside her husband's two Guarneri violins is entirely in keeping with the reporter's assessment of her as a person: 'full of information on musical subjects that concern her husband'.

<sup>117</sup> Extracts from A F Hill's diary are presented in David L Fulton, *The Fulton Collection: A Guided Tour*, Peter Biddulph Limited, 2021, pp. 271-274; hereafter cited as *Fulton21*.

<sup>118</sup> Biographical information and quotation (present author's translation) sourced from *Zur Erinnerung an Louis Eller*, Rudolf Kuntze, Dresden, 1864.

David Laurie, in his *Reminiscences of a fiddle dealer* (p. 144), provides the following narrative:

A young and very eminent violinist who lived in Vienna, in the [eighteen] seventies, was ordered to Pau for his health. He went in the early spring, and before the summer came he died there.<sup>119</sup> A marquis and his lady, who were staying at Pau, were very kind to him and previous to his death had him removed to their house, where they tended him with the greatest kindness until the end. He had with him a splendid Joseph Guarnerius del Jesu violin which he bequeathed to his kind friends. In course of time they also died and his violin was for sale. As soon as I heard of it I took steps to procure it and managed to do so, although at a very high price.

See below - § - for the continuation of Laurie's text.

Laurie does not identify the young violinist, nor the names of the kind Marquis and his wife, nor the dates when the couple died, their deaths resulting in the Guarneri *del Gesù* violin (of as-yet unspecified label-date) coming onto the market.

In the January 1896 issue of *The Strad* (p. 276) a full-page letter from David Laurie was published under the heading *The Late Mr. Carrodus's Violins*. In this letter Laurie begins by explaining that it was he who imported into England the Stradivari violin and the Guarneri *del Gesù* violin which were subsequently owned by J T Carrodus. Having written at length about the 1708 Stradivari violin Laurie then turns to the "Joseph Guarnerius" violin, and, through his letter, extends his *Reminiscences* narrative (above):

A few years after [the death of the young violinist] both the Marquis and his lady died, and the violin with other things were to be sent to Paris and sold, but I did not know this until I had gone to Pau, where I got the address of the *avocat* who had charge of the estate, [the *avocat* being] in Paris to whom I applied on my return. He informed me he had sent the instrument to Vuillaume the great [*sic*] to get it valued, and would then treat [negotiate] with me, but as I had never seen [the Guarneri violin] I asked him for a note [addressed] to Vuillaume to allow him to shew it to me. I was very much struck with [the violin], it being different to any other "Joseph" I had ever seen. *It was a rough, carelessly made one, date 1744, but its state of preservation was perfect*, having still its original hand [neck/peg-box/scroll] and the [bass-] bar inside had never been changed. Its wood, although not showy, was perfect in quality for tone.<sup>120</sup>

The Carrodus-Carmichael letter (see p.31) dates the arrival in Paris of the *ex-Elle* violin to the year 1872.

Thus the chronology for this Guarneri *del Gesù* violin, a violin now unambiguously dated by Laurie, and by Ada Carrodus, to 1744, was: Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume, Louis Eller, unidentified Marquis and wife, unidentified Paris lawyer, and, again, J-B Vuillaume. Given the close commercial relationship between Vuillaume and Laurie it is quite likely that the former alerted the latter to the violin's existence ('as soon as I heard of it I took steps to procure it ...'). It would seem that, with Vuillaume's valuation having been established, Laurie bought the Guarneri violin ('at a very high price') through the lawyer who was winding up the estate of the deceased Marquis and his wife.

Laurie continues (*Reminiscences*, p. 144):

§ [The violin with its 'original hand'] had been in my possession only a short time when I sold it [1873-74?] to an artiste in Germany, a pupil of De Bériot, who had carried off first prize and medal from the Conservatoire of Music in Brussels amid general acclamation.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Laurie's narrative is incorrectly located in the 1870s rather than the 1860s.

<sup>120</sup> Italicised emphasis by the present writer. It is unclear whether it was the 'original hand' and the unchanged bass-bar which made the violin 'different to any other "Joseph" I had ever seen'.

<sup>121</sup> Charles Auguste de Bériot (1802-1870) taught at the Brussels Conservatoire between 1843 and 1852.

The Carrodus-Carmichael letter (below) confirms that Laurie's 'artiste in Germany' was Rudolf Gleichauff. Information received from the Brussels Conservatoire shows that Gleichauff entered the Conservatoire in 1846, was taught by de Bériot, and won 'le prix d'honneur' in 1849.<sup>122</sup>

Laurie writes (*Reminiscences*, pp. 144-145):

This gentleman professed to be greatly pleased with the instrument, as well he might, for it was in perfect state of preservation. Even the original hand was on it (although it had been lengthened at the upper inside block in the body by a wedge) a very rare thing in a Guarnerius del Jesu. I drew [the purchaser's] attention to this fact most particularly and begged, as a great favour, that he would not meddle with it as even though its thickness was a little greater than that of a modern hand, he would very soon get accustomed to it. Also I pointed out that although [the violin] had the original bass bar it had been remounted in all other respects by Vuillaume and did not require any further alteration [...].

'Six or seven months elapsed' before Laurie discovered that, despite his implorings, Gleichauff had had the violin's neck replaced, as well as the bass-bar and the sound-post, the last two alterations resulting in the violin having 'the left [bass] side of the table falling in, while the right side was above the level from the centre to the edge of the *f*.' Laurie bought back the violin from Gleichauff and 'brought the violin to Paris and placed it in the hands of MM. Gand & Bernardel to be put right again' (*Reminiscences*, p. 148).

In his letter to *The Strad* (January 1896) Laurie writes: 'I then brought [the *ex*-Gleichauff violin] to London and sold it to an amateur there, who gave it to a dealer in London afterwards to sell for him, and from whom Mr. Carrodus finally purchased it.' Laurie concludes his *Reminiscences* narrative (pp. 148-149) with the same information but expressed slightly differently: 'I sold [the violin] to a well-known amateur who eventually placed it on sale with Mr. Hill. It became the property of the late M. Carrodus.'

A letter written by J T Carrodus on 17 January 1895 to the song-composer Mary Carmichael (1851-1935) contains the following information about his *ex*-Eller, *ex*-Gleichauff, 1744 Guarneri violin:

In reply to your letter I will give you what information I can about my Joseph Guarnerius which is however scanty. In the appendix of a book by Davidson (now out of print) it says "that the Violin is supposed to have been the one gambled away by Paganini". I have never proved this further. I have a certificate which I got with the Violin of Villaume [*sic*] of Paris which says it passed from his hands in 1833 sold to Eller whom he calls a celebrated Violinist. In 1872<sup>123</sup> it was returned to Villiaume [*sic*] & afterwards sold to Mr. Rudolf Gleichauff by Mr. Laurie of Glasgow. I bought it through Hill's of 34 Bond St about 12 years ago [i.e. c.1883].

With kind regards

Yrs very sincerely

J. T. Carrodus

It is thus clearly indicated by JTC that Vuillaume's certificate, with its identification of 'Eller', was with the violin when he bought it from the Hills in 1883. However, it is equally clearly stated in Arthur Hill's diary entry for 9<sup>th</sup> January 1905 (see *Fulton21*, p.271) that only on that date did Arthur (and Arthur's younger brother, Alfred) learn from a colleague that Laurie obtained the violin 'from an artist at Pau. This man was Louis Eller [...]' It is most curious that the Hills apparently did not take note of the contents of Vuillaume's certificate when Meier consigned his violin to them for sale, or when they

<sup>122</sup> In 1878 Gleichauff was appointed a professor at the newly-opened Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt; he died in 1902.

<sup>123</sup> (after the death of the kind Marquis and his wife)

sold the violin to JTC in 1883. Vuillaume's certificate, which was with JTC's violin in 1895 (see his letter), had evidently disappeared by the time that the Hills sold the violin to C E S Phillips in 1904.

One aspect of Vuillaume's certificate – 'which says [the violin] passed from [Vuillaume's] hands in 1833 sold to Eller' – is implausible. It is not likely that Louis Eller bought a Guarneri *del Gesù* violin from Vuillaume when Eller was aged just twelve or thirteen; a purchase in 1855 (as is clearly identified in the 1864 Eller memoir; see p.30) is much more believable. The probability is that Carrodus mis-read Vuillaume's numerals – especially the French 5s – and, as a result, mistakenly wrote 33 in his letter to Mary Carmichael (Vuillaume's slanted and ornate handwriting can be extremely difficult to read). Given the mental and physical strain under which Carrodus was living during these final months of his life – England's most celebrated violinist and constantly at the beck and call of everyone in the musical world – such a mistake, within a hurriedly written response to a letter of enquiry, would be understandable. The spelling mistakes – *Villaume*, *Villiaume* – are likely also attributable to the same debilitating tensions.

The 'book by [Peter] Davidson (now out of print)' was a revised and enlarged edition of his 1871 publication *The Violin: a concise exposition of the general principles of construction theoretically and practically treated* (Porteous Brothers, Glasgow), the new edition being titled as *The Violin: its construction theoretically and practically treated* (F. Pitman, London, 1880). Writing (pp. 278-9) about David Laurie's career, and listing many of the instruments with which Laurie was involved as buyer or seller, Davidson identifies

the "Canon" Joseph Guarnerius Violin, ex Vicomte \_\_\_\_, Pau, now owned by C. G. Meier, Esq. London; a very large and handsomely wooded Violin, with beautiful red varnish, said to have been the Violin Paganini lost at play.

Clearly, the Vicomte (of Pau) connects precisely with the 'kind Marquis and his wife' described by David Laurie, and there is no reason to doubt Davidson when he identifies C G Meier as the pre-1880 owner<sup>124</sup> of the 'very large' Guarneri violin – 'the "Canon" Joseph Guarnerius Violin' – which had 'beautiful red varnish'.

Davidson's pre-1880 information is confirmed within Laurie's *Reminiscences of a Fiddle Dealer* which contains (p. [172]) a partial listing of instruments which he sold:

Prices of Italian Instruments

The following entries are extracted from his sales account

Within the entries is the following item:

Dec. 28, 1877. – Joseph Guarnerius violin ("Canon") £620 [GBP]<sup>125</sup>

Notwithstanding the absence of a purchaser's name all the evidence points towards C G Meier being the purchaser of Laurie's 'Joseph Guarnerius violin ("Canon")';<sup>126</sup> it is Caspar Gottlieb Meier who is Laurie's aforementioned 'amateur' or 'well-known amateur'.

<sup>124</sup> 'Pre-1880' since Davidson's revised and enlarged volume was published in 1880.

<sup>125</sup> The extract of 25 Italian instruments also reveals the sale of a 1740 *del Gesù* violin for £800, two 1739 violins for £650 and £500 respectively, and, on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1879, the sale of a 1744 violin, for £320, to Rudolph Gleichauff; for this last see *John Tiplady Carrodus: a tale of seven violins* (www.themessiahviolin.uk).

<sup>126</sup> Laurie's presentation of the word "Canon" is assumed to be a quirk of his personal style of spelling.



Arthur F Hill writes in his diary, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1910:

[...] a fine Joseph Guarnerius which we sold to [Carrodus] in 1883. We obtained it from C. G. Meier, and this last named bought it from David Laurie, previous to which it belonged to Gleichauff and a violinist of the name of Eller.<sup>127</sup>

A revised narrative for this 1744 violin can be constructed thus:

- Louis Eller, who, in 1855, buys a 1744 Guarneri *del Gesù* violin from Vuillaume
- the Marquis (or Vicomte) and his wife (residing at Pau)
- the Paris *avocat* and Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume who, in 1872, writes a valuation (and in July 1873 reports to his brother that he has 'set up the Joseph [Guarneri violin] which [Luigi] Tarisio called the Gun'; see below).
- David Laurie, who purchases the 1744 Guarneri violin 'at a very high price' (in the autumn of 1873?)
- Rudolf Gleichauff, who allows the violin to be damaged
- David Laurie, who retrieves the violin from Gleichauff, has it repaired in Paris, and brings it to London
- C G Meier, who, in December 1877, buys from Laurie the violin which the latter identifies in his sales register as the 'Joseph Guarnerius violin ("Canon")'; Meier pays £620 for the violin.
- Meier subsequently consigns this violin to the Hills for sale. Evidence from JTC's probate documents indicates that the violin was priced at £1,000; it is assumed that C G Meier would have received c.£800.
- the Hills sell the violin to J T Carrodus in 1883; *Carrodus was therefore the owner of Laurie's "Canon" violin four years before he travelled to Genoa and saw Paganini's bequeathed violin.*<sup>128</sup> Arthur Hill, in his diaries, repeatedly identifies the Guarneri violin which the Hills sold to JTC as having belonged to Paganini.<sup>129</sup>
- the 17 January 1895 letter from JTC to Mary Carmichael identifies his violin as that which Vuillaume sold to Louis Eller
- the information given in February 1895 by Ada Carrodus to the reporter from the *Leeds Mercury* confirms JTC's violin as being dated 1744 and as having red varnish
- following the death of JTC on 13 July 1895 his 1744 "Cannon Joseph" violin passed to his son, Robert George.

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The catalogue for the 1998-99 exhibition *violons, Vuillaume: un maître luthier français du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* at the Musée de la Musique in Paris illustrates (pp. 182-83) a Vuillaume violin which is stated to be an imitation of Paganini's *Cannone* violin. The associated commentary, written by Emmanuel Jaeger, states:

*D'après une lettre de Vuillaume à son frère Nicolas-François du 27 juillet 1873, il s'avère que le surnom du violon de Paganini (le Canon), légué à la ville de Gênes par le virtuose en 1837, ne lui avait pas été donné par son propriétaire:*

<sup>127</sup> *Fulton21*, p. 273.

<sup>128</sup> Italicised emphasis by the present writer. Having bought the Laurie-Meier-Hill "Canon" violin in 1883, JTC would have had some serious questions to put to those gentlemen if, in 1887, he had discovered that the violin shown to him in Genoa was being identified as *Il Cannone*; JTC would surely have told his Genoese hosts that *he* was the owner of the 'Joseph Guarnerius "Canon"' violin.

<sup>129</sup> Diary entries for 26<sup>th</sup> October 1908, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1908, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1908, and 11<sup>th</sup> January 1909; see *Fulton21*, p.272.

« J'ai monté le Joseph [Guarneri] que Tarisio appelait le Canon.<sup>130</sup> En effet il a une puissance qui justifie ce sobriquet et il fera joliment l'affaire d'un grand artiste. »

From a letter sent by Vuillaume on 27 July 1873 to his brother Nicolas-François we learn that the nickname for Paganini's violin (the Cannon), the violin which was bequeathed to the town of Genoa by the virtuoso in 1837, was not one which was bestowed upon it by its owner:

"I have set up the Joseph [Guarneri violin] which [Luigi] Tarisio called the Gun. Indeed it has a strength of tone which justifies this sobriquet and it will do nicely for a great artiste."

Vuillaume's comment resonates powerfully within the present historical study, in no small part because the date of Vuillaume's letter to his brother fits robustly with the previously-described movement of the *ex-Elter* violin during 1872. It is here proposed that Luigi Tarisio, having obtained a 1744 Guarneri *del Gesù* violin from an unknown source and at an unknown date, sold the violin (which he had named *Il Cannone*) to Paganini, possibly while the latter was in Paris in 1833.<sup>131</sup> Following Niccolò's death in 1840, his son, Achille, sells the Tarisio-*Cannone*-Paganini violin to Vuillaume who then sells it to Louis Eller in 1855; see previous page for the continuation of this chronology.

**Clearly, this 1744 *del Gesù* violin – *Il Cannone* – ‘the Gun’ – cannot be that which was delivered to the city of Genoa on 4 July 1851 by Achille Paganini.**

When the Tarisio-*Cannone*-Paganini-Vuillaume-Elter violin returns to Paris in 1872 it is through J-BV that it is then sold, ‘at a very high price’, to David Laurie. J-BV conveys the violin's sobriquet to Laurie together with an indication of a connection between the violin and Paganini. Laurie, in turn, passes Vuillaume's information onto C G Meier, and, eventually, both the 1744 violin and its historical association with Paganini reach John Tiplady Carrodus.

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## SUMMARY

Achille Paganini delivered a Guarneri *del Gesù* violin to the Genoese authorities in 1851 and the violin was exhibited from 1859 onwards (thus apparently fulfilling the terms of Niccolò's Last Will and Testament).

David Laurie's 1744 “Canon Joseph” Guarneri *del Gesù* violin was with John Tiplady Carrodus in 1883 and with Robert George Carrodus in 1896 (when Ada Carrodus wrote her letter to the editor of *The Strad*).

Unresolved questions are:

1. whether the violin which Paganini described in July 1833 as *il mio cannone violino* was a different instrument to that which he had previously referred to as *il mio violino*.
2. which violin was it that Paganini intended should be preserved by his native city?
3. whether it was the ‘Sawicki’ Guarneri (see p.25) – ‘retired’ in favour of Tarisio's *Cannone* violin? – which was retrieved by Achille after his father's death and presented to the Genoese authorities in 1851 as ‘the favourite of the most eminent violinist and of which he constantly made use’.

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<sup>130</sup> Luigi Tarisio would have used the Italian word *cannone* (‘gun’) rather than *canone* (‘norm’, ‘rule’); in French the word *canon* is used for both meanings.

<sup>131</sup> Charles-François Gand's 1816-1831 business ledger (Musée de la Musique, Paris) lists Paganini's purchase, on 12 March 1831, of four violin E-strings. Paganini was also in Paris between March and June 1832, and between September 1832 and April 1833. Paganini's ‘*cannone* triumph’ letter from London is dated 16 July 1833; see p.8 of this account.

For further information about the violins used by John Tiplady Carrodus please see *John Tiplady Carrodus: a tale of seven violins* ([www.themessiahviolin.uk](http://www.themessiahviolin.uk)).

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