

PART I

Chapter 1

Dramatis Personae

Antonio Stradivari (c1649¹-18th December 1737)

Antonio Stradivari lived and worked in the Italian town of Cremona, south-east of Milan. His earliest violins date from the mid-1660s and follow the example of his Cremonese predecessor Nicolò Amati (1596-1684) in terms of size, proportion, and style.² Between 1690 and 1700 Stradivari produced violins with sound-boxes which were slightly longer than the norm of 355mm, but this ‘Long Pattern’ style was apparently abandoned at the start of his ‘Golden Period’ – approximately 1700. During the subsequent two decades he produced well-proportioned instruments with gentle and low arching across the front and back plates, the scrolls being outlined with black pigment to emphasise the edges of the spirals, and the instruments varnished with what some have claimed to have been a unique mixture of ingredients.³ By this time Antonio was certainly being helped in his workshop by two of his sons, Francesco and Omobono, and Roger Hargrave has suggested that Giuseppe Guarneri *del Gesù* also worked in the Stradivari workshop.⁴ Charles Beare has indicated that, after 1720, Carlo Bergonzi (1683-1747) also participated in making instruments under Stradivari’s direction;⁵ however, Tim Ingles has stated that ‘Bergonzi was probably working independently in the early 1720s’.⁶

After 1720 Antonio’s energy, manual dexterity, and eyesight diminished (by then he was approximately 70 years old) and instruments from his final years are less well finished, with a more pronounced arch across the body and a distinctively dark tone. Antonio apparently continued to work until his death in 1737.

Stradivari’s first wife, Francesca Ferraboschi, gave birth to six children: Giulia, Catterina, Giacomo Francesco (1671-1743), Alessandro Giuseppe (1677-1732), and Omobono (1679-1742).⁷ His second wife, Antonia Zambelli Costa, bore five children: Francesca Maria, Giovanni Battista Giuseppe (who died in infancy), Giovanni Battista Martino (1703-1727), Giuseppe Antonio (1704-1781), and Paolo (1708-1775).

¹ The date of birth is uncertain; between 1644 and 1649 is the current ‘best guess’. Census evidence from the Cremona parish of S. Matteo shows that Antonio’s age, in 1681, was listed as 32 years. The annual census evidence is consistent from that date through to 1736 when Stradivari is listed as being 87 years old. His death, in 1737, would make him 88 or 89, and therefore instruments showing label-annotations of ‘aged 92’ are questionable (see Bonetti *et al.* pp. 15-25). See also, later in this chapter, the section on Count Cozio di Salabue.

² Count Cozio di Salabue, in his memoirs, comprehensively describes a Stradivari violin – *forma piccola con biglietto giusto carattere mezzano* (‘small form, with a true label, medium[-sized] letters’) – and transcribes the label text: *Antonius Stradiuarius Cremonensi Alumnus Nicolai Amati, Faciebat Anno 1665* (BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 47, folio 40r; see also Cozio/Bacchetta pp. 263-265). Stradivari’s *Serdet* violin of 1666 has an all but identical label. See Chapter 2 for consideration of the *Serdet* violin’s source mould, and Chapter 12 for information about the violin’s label.

³ Stefan-Peter Greiner (Brandmair and Greiner pp. 11-53) has indicated that Stradivari’s varnish utilised a simple combination of spruce resin, linseed oil, and colouring pigments. See Chapter 12 for further information regarding varnish.

⁴ See ‘Comeback Kid’, *The Strad*, April 2012, p. 29.

⁵ See Beare *et al.* (2013) p. 214.

⁶ Ingles p. 79.

⁷ A first-born son, Francesco, survived for only six days during February 1670.

Francesco, the eldest of Antonio's sons by his first marriage, was his father's most loyal and trusted assistant, a position confirmed in Antonio's Last Will and Testament.⁸ It is very likely that from about 1700 Francesco played a significant role in the production of 'Antonio Stradivari' instruments. Francesco outlived his father by only six years and died a bachelor in 1743, aged 72, having apparently produced few instruments label-identified as being entirely his own work.

The contribution to the workshop made by Omobono, Francesco's younger brother, is less obvious yet he apparently left behind more self-made instruments than did Francesco.⁹

Paolo Stradivari, a cloth merchant, was Antonio's youngest son by his second marriage and it was he who, around 1774, began negotiations with Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue for the sale of the remaining instruments and all the workshop artefacts. Paolo died before the sale was completed and final details were left in the hands of Paolo's son, Antonio (II) Stradivari (1738-1789).

Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue (14th March 1755-15th December 1840)¹⁰

Il Conte Ignazio Alessandro Cozio, son of Il Conte Carlo Francesco Cozio (c1715-c1775) and Marchesa Taddea Balbiani,¹¹ was an aristocratic enthusiast for the relatively brief flowering of Italian string-instrument craftsmanship during the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries:

He was placed for a few years in the Military Academy [at Turin], being afterwards commissioned as an ensign in the Saluzzo Cavalry Regiment. His father's early death compelled him, however, to leave the army and to settle in his native town.¹² It is not known whether young Cozio began the study of the violin during his college education but it is certain that when still a youth he showed great interest in it.¹³

Count Cozio – from an extraordinarily young age – began to acquire instruments and materials in order to create a repository of information so that the incomparable art and technique of Italian *lutherie*, particularly Cremonese *lutherie*, might be sustained for the benefit of future generations. Later in his life, though, his interest diminished and most of the instruments from his collection were sold. The extensive writings and memoirs of Count Cozio comprise a critically important source of information from the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century, but the Count's handwriting is often very difficult to decipher, and with the passage of time many of the sheets of paper on which he wrote have been eaten away by the acid in both the paper and the ink he used. Even where the paper has not been damaged the ink from one side of a sheet has often bled through to the other side, thus making the reading of either text problematic. The extant manuscripts are housed at the Biblioteca Statale di Cremona, Italy,¹⁴ within four deep box files (an

⁸ See Chapter 3 for further information regarding Stradivari's Last Will.

⁹ The Tarisio.com website (accessed August 2014) identified 32 instruments made by Omobono and 23 made by Francesco.

¹⁰ The Hills (Hill (1891) p. 12) imply that Count Cozio died in 1827: 'After the death of the Count, his heirs in 1827 sold the Stradivari of 1716 to [Luigi Tarisio] [...].' The Hills' statement probably derives from the (translated) wording inked by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume on the underside of the front plate of the *Le Messie* violin: 'bought by Tarisio from Ct^e Cossio de Salabue in the year 1827' (Hill (1891) p. 24). In their subsequent 1902 monograph – p. 276 – the Hills correctly state that Count Cozio died in 1840. Roger Millant (Millant p. 55) also gives 1827 as the year of the Count's death; since Millant's book (on J-B Vuillaume) was published by W. E. Hill & Sons in 1972 it is curious that the Hills did not editorially correct Millant's error. See also Chapter 6.

¹¹ The marriage also produced a daughter, Paola, who, in 1778, married Conte Silvio Davico of Quittengo and of Fossano. See Chapter 6 for information regarding a Stradivari violin gifted to Conte Pietro Davico by Countess Matilde, the daughter of I A Cozio.

¹² The town of Casale-Monferrato, which lies approximately mid-way between Turin and Milan. The Castello di Salabue lies ten miles south west of Casale-Monferrato.

¹³ Sacchi p. 8.

¹⁴ The Biblioteca Statale di Cremona is part of the Museo Civico, Via Ugolani Dati 4, Cremona, 26100.

additional, large, wrap-around folder includes various loose documents including paper patterns of violins and a number of labels).

There have been three published editions of parts of Count Cozio's manuscripts:

1. a transcription by Renzo Bacchetta (1899-1975) of some – not all – of the Count's documents, published by Antonio Cordani, Milan, in 1950, under the title *Carteggio*.¹⁵ Bacchetta arranged his transcription into four sections: *Storiografia* (History), *Liutologia* (Technical aspects of making violins), *Catalogo* (the Count's descriptions and measurements of his instruments) and *Epistolario* (Correspondence). Since many of Count Cozio's documents are undated, Bacchetta was obliged to make his own decisions as to how they might be chronologically arranged. Documents within the *Storiografia* section are dated 1816, 1822, 1823, and 1825; the *Liutologia* section has dates of 1804, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1809, 1810, and 1816; the earliest entry in the *Catalogo* is dated 1774, with the last entry dated 1823; the *Epistolario* documents commence on 8th November 1773 and conclude on 22nd March 1845 (there are often large chronological gaps in this correspondence, indicating that many letters, or copies, have been lost). There is a considerable increase in the number and extent of Count Cozio's writings around the year 1816 (or, alternatively, many documents dated before and after 1816 have not survived).
2. a more recent transcription of just the Count's correspondence (*Epistolario*), carried out by Elia Santoro (d. 1997) and published in 1993 by Editrice Turriz, Cremona.
3. a 2007 edition of the same Cozio material as transcribed by Bacchetta, published by Brandon Frazier, in which the Count's writings have firstly been rendered into modern Italian and then translated into English – a two-stage transformational process. See www.themessiahviolin.uk for a detailed investigation into the unreliable outcomes generated by this process.

Opinions of Count Cozio have changed noticeably during the past 120 years. In 1891 the firm of W. E. Hill & Sons sang his praises:

The name of this amateur must ever be held in grateful remembrance for his loving care of the Italian masterpieces. It is to such men that we owe the preservation of nearly all the finest existing instruments of the 17th and 18th centuries. Endowed with great wealth and rare judgment, he formed an unrivalled representative collection of the works of the great masters of the craft [...].¹⁶

Indeed, the Hills were so convinced of the Count's aristocratic purity of heart and mind that they could not conceive of any wrong-doing on his part despite the evidence in front of their eyes; they would sooner throw blame onto the nearest and most convenient scapegoats:

Count Cozio di Salabue left a small collection of labels – amongst others, those of Stradivari, Amati, and Bergonzi; and that they were removed from specimens of the works of these makers is certain. [...] It seems impossible to believe that the Count, who was such an enthusiastic admirer of old instruments, could have been guilty of taking the original tickets out of the instruments himself. Possibly [Luigi] Tarisio, who was in frequent communication with him, supplied them, and the copies were probably printed to the order of the dealers and makers living in Turin and Milan at that time. The Count's correspondence shows that he was particularly intimate with the Fratelli Mantegazza of Milan.¹⁷

¹⁵ Copies of this volume are now (2012) very difficult to locate, and extremely expensive to buy.

¹⁶ Hill (1891) p. 11.

¹⁷ Hill (1902) p. 215.

With respect to Count Cozio's habit of removing labels from instruments (or changing them) Charles Beare has commented:

I hate Count Cozio for stealing all those labels [...]. Unfortunately, his kleptomaniac nature got the better of him every time he saw a label, it seems to me, and that's a great shame.¹⁸

Count Cozio's nature appears to have been one in which intense pride in the craftsmanship of his compatriots was mixed with a focused intent to ensure his own commercial advancement, an advancement which flowed from his acquisition of rare instruments at advantageous prices from Piedmontese craftsmen who mostly lived a hand-to-mouth existence and whose products were subject to the vagaries of market-place winds over which they had no control. The relationship between Count Cozio and Giovanni Battista Guadagnini (see later), the most skilful violin maker in northern Italy in the latter part of the eighteenth century, was fraught, and coloured by suspicion and mistrust on both sides. As a young man Count Cozio was as ruthless in his dealings with Paolo Stradivari as, later in life, he was systematic in uncovering and determining the true history of his birthplace, Casale-Monferrato. Federico Sacchi describes the Count's historical endeavours:

[...] he now devoted all the time which he could spare from his public duties to collecting documents bearing upon the subject of his researches. These he set himself with unremitting zeal and assiduity to translate, transcribe and dispose in their proper chronological order. There were numerous errors to correct, facts to elucidate, important epochs to illustrate; and Count Cozio did not shrink from the task. The Government, recognising his special qualifications for the office, elected him a member of the committee formed for the study of early Piedmontese history, and to him was assigned the important undertaking of editing the ancient Statutes of the town of Casale. This work he completed, and it was published by Royal Command in 1838 [...].¹⁹

Intolerant as he likely was towards those from outside the privileged environment of the Italian nobility,²⁰ Count Cozio nonetheless recognised, at least in the case of Antonio Stradivari, the expertise and mastery to which he, despite all his wealth and favoured status, could never aspire:

*Quest'Antonio ... da' suoi disegni non fu un semplice esecutore ma un erudito...*²¹

This Antonio ... his drawings indicate that he was not just a simple maker, but a learned man.

Some less than admirable aspects of the Count's personality are revealed in his documents, where he unashamedly itemises the alterations which he personally made to instruments which he owned, together with the alterations made by the Mantegazza brothers:

I have re-varnished the front.²²

[...] label with seal, as with the others, except that it was cancelled by me (*fu cancellate da me*).²³

[I] changed the label.

(1804, 11 9bre²⁴ *Violino di Anto Stradivari del 1710, cangiato il Biglietto*)²⁵

[this viola] has a counterfeit printed label inserted by Mantegazza the father.²⁶

¹⁸ Spoken commentary, transcribed in JoVSA (XVII, 3) p. 199.

¹⁹ Sacchi p. 15.

²⁰ See Chapter 1 of A L Cardoza, *Aristocrats in Bourgeois Italy: The Piedmontese Nobility, 1861-1930* (Cambridge University Press, 1997) for a discussion of the attitude of Italian nobles towards 'persons of less exalted lineage'.

²¹ Cozio/Bacchetta p. 44.

²² An Amati violin of 1671; translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 171.

²³ Francesco Stradivari violin; translated from BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 41. See also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 202.

²⁴ 11th November.

²⁵ BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 45/2; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 226.

²⁶ Translated from BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 47, folio 111r; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 311.

Description and measurements of the Andrea Amati viola belonging to the Canzi heirs, with a counterfeit label put in by Mantegazza the father; the lettering, although beautiful and large, somewhat faded.²⁷

Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis faciebat Anno 1731 and handwritten underneath this label in my lettering (as is the 31) [of '1731']: *D'anni 93*.²⁸

The violin belonging to the Canzi heirs, judged by Mantegazza to be by Andrea Guarneri [...] with counterfeit printed label: *Nicolaus Amati cremonensis faciebat anno 1642*.²⁹

[a violin label-dated 1730]: changed label (*cambiato biglietto*).³⁰

Medium sized [violin], front plate by the Amatis, 1717, label changed (*biglietto cambiato*).³¹

[...] and [I] inserted the label of Antonio Stradivari of the year 1730 and underneath [the label] there is written, in my hand, *d'ANNI 96 92*.

(*e fraposto il biglietto d'Anto Stradivari dell anno 1730 e sotto vi è manuscritto (di mio carateri), d'ANNI 96 92*)³²

Label with stamp [monogram]: *Antonius Stradivarius Cremonen. faciebat anno 1731 d'anni 92*: the '31' and '92' are in my handwriting.³³

It is likely that the *de Anni 82*, *DANNI 92*, and *D'ANNI 92* annotations made to three of the labels which are illustrated by the Hills³⁴ – labels which are dated 1732, 1736, and 1736 – are from the hand of Count Cozio. The calligraphic evidence from two extant Stradivari letters³⁵ indicates that Antonio shaped his 'd' (in both lower and upper case form) quite differently to the more modern shape used in the Hills' three facsimile labels.³⁶ In addition, the 9 (of 92 – on the Hills' two 1736 labels) is not shaped in Stradivari's habitual manner (with a tiny upwards curl, to the left, at the bottom of the stem). There is also an apparent discrepancy with Count Cozio's linkage of both his 1730 and 1731 violins (see above) to Stradivari's purported age of 92; this discrepancy would be resolved if the Count had known the precise date of Stradivari's birthday, but this is a date which has never been discovered. Even if this date had been known to the Count, for him to further know that his '1730' violin was made *after* Stradivari's birthday in 1730, while the '1731' violin was made during the next calendar year but *before* Stradivari's birthday, seems highly unlikely. A further discrepancy lies with the Hills' two labels which associate 1736 violins with the same age of 92. In addition, the Hills acknowledge that the *D'Anni 93* annotation on a 1737 label is not in Antonio's hand:

²⁷ Translated from BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 47, folio 117r; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 319.

²⁸ Translated from BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 41; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 200. See also footnote 33 (below).

²⁹ Translated from BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 47, folio 125v; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 324.

³⁰ Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 197.

³¹ Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 197.

³² BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 47, folio 136v (20th February 1823); see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 329. This violin is very likely that which is now known as the *Habeneck*. Count Cozio's descriptive entry also mentions the one-piece back, the pronounced arching, the higher position of the treble-side *f*-hole, the 'quite large' size of the upper eyes of the *f*-holes, the size of the neck-button, and the absence of cracks but the presence of scratches within the front-plate varnish; all these features are found on the *Habeneck* violin. The Count had previously described this violin in 1801 (BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42, p. 8): *con agionta sotto manuscritta dicente D'ANNI 92* ('with, added underneath, handwriting stating D'ANNI 92'). For further information on this violin see this chapter's later section on W. E. Hill & Sons. See also www.themessiahviolin.uk.

³³ Translated from BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42, p. 4; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 207. Count Cozio's information suggests that the label is fraudulent since, according to the Hills (Hill (1902) p. 218), Stradivari's labels from 1700 onwards had only the first (Roman) numeral – 'I' – printed whereas the following three (Arabic) numerals were handwritten. The Count's comment implies that the first two numerals – '17' – were printed. The *Habeneck* label also has the first two numerals printed.

³⁴ Hill (1902) between pp. 216 and 217.

³⁵ See Hill (1902) between pp. 174 and 175.

³⁶ See Marco D'Agostini, *La Scrittura di Antonio Stradivari*, Cremonabooks, 2009, pp. 8 and 13.

The label dated 1737 is of quite pathetic interest. Apparently the master could no longer trust himself to add either figures or inscription, so this was done for him by his son Omobono (see the written label of Omobono for comparison).³⁷

From the evidence of his documents it is clear that Count Cozio owned more than one Stradivari violin label-dated 1716, and other Italians also owned such violins. The Mantegazza family had a 1716 violin – ‘with a little crack’³⁸ – and a professor of the cello, Gaetano Zanetti (from Bergamo), *avea un bel violino del Stradivario del 1716 che lo teneva prezioso* (‘had a beautiful violin of Stradivari of 1716 that he treasured’).³⁹

Until recently the name of Count Cozio was used as the web-address of the most extensive database of information about high quality string instruments, their provenance, and their owners: Cozio.com. In June 2014 this database was re-launched by the online auctioneers Tarisio.com (see also the Preface to this volume).

Mantegazza

The Mantegazza family of violin makers and restorers was based in Milan. They had close relations with Count Cozio, often carried out his requirements for alterations to instruments, and it is likely that they were the source of Count Cozio’s technical knowledge of *lutherie*. Like other eighteenth-century restorers the Mantegazzas were quick to remove the front and back plates from almost any instrument (no matter the reputation of the original maker) and alter the thicknesses of the plates if they thought – or were told by Count Cozio – that these were incorrect.

Giovanni Battista Guadagnini (23rd June 1711–18th September 1786)

Guadagnini was the most important Italian violin maker from the second half of the eighteenth century. Guadagnini, according to Count Cozio, was a difficult man:

[...] he was a man of no learning, coarse [*materiale*], obstinate in his opinions, impatient, with not even a small family – for whom he was the sole breadwinner – and so ambitious that his instruments, both for the external workmanship and for the varnish, should be known as having been made by him. I never succeeded in making him work in imitation of the first makers [*de’ primieri autori*], nor follow their forms.⁴⁰

Guadagnini enjoyed only a few periods of financial and artistic stability during his life. He worked in Piacenza, Milan, Parma, and Turin (from 1771 until his death) where he came under the influence, patronage, and control of Count Cozio. The Count used Guadagnini to alter and modernise his instruments:

[...] *con manico dato indietro dal Guadagnini come tutti gli altri del Stradivari*⁴¹

[...] with a tilted neck by Guadagnini as with all the others of Stradivari [which I own].⁴²

³⁷ Hill (1902) p. 92. Both the 1737 label and the Omobono label are illustrated in Hill (1902) between pp. 216 and 217. Ernest Doring (Doring p. 346) states that this 1737 label is from Stradivari’s *Chant du Cygne* violin, normally regarded as the last violin made by Antonio. For a detailed historical study of the *Chant du Cygne* violin see www.themessiahviolin.uk.

³⁸ Translated from BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 30; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 180.

³⁹ Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 334.

⁴⁰ Letter from Count Cozio to Count Maggi, 30th September 1804; translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 426. It is unclear whether Count Cozio’s use of *primieri autori* indicates ‘first makers’ as in ‘oldest’, or ‘first makers’ as in ‘finest’.

⁴¹ BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42, p. 7; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 211.

⁴² See Chapter 11 for further information regarding the raising, tilting, and lengthening of violin necks.

According to Count Cozio, it was Guadagnini who fitted a large square patch to the underside of the front plate of a 1716 Stradivari violin belonging to the Count; today, the underside of the front plate of the *Messiah* violin has no such patch.⁴³

Luigi Tarisio (c1790-c1854)⁴⁴

Luigi Tarisio was a self-taught expert on late-seventeenth-century and early-eighteenth-century Italian string instruments, especially violins. Tarisio, it is alleged, lived a somewhat nomadic life, buying up potentially valuable instruments from their unsuspecting owners in northern Italy and selling them, at profitable prices, to (primarily) the most important violin dealers in Paris, especially Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume.

George Hart (1839-1891), a member of the English family of violin makers and dealers, seems to have been responsible for the suggestion that Tarisio cheated the Italian owners out of their string instruments. It is documented that Tarisio visited London in 1851,⁴⁵ and he apparently discussed his violin collection with the Victorian novelist and violin enthusiast Charles Reade (1814-1884).⁴⁶ George Hart's narrative (below) may be little more than a summary of what Tarisio chose to tell Reade and which Reade conveyed to Hart:

Upon entering a village he [Tarisio] endeavoured to ingratiate himself with the villagers, and thus obtain information of the whereabouts of any inhabitants who were possessed of any member of the Fiddle family, his object being to examine and secure, if possible, such instruments as were possessed of any merit. It can readily be conceived that at the commencement of the present century [1800], numbers of valuable Cremonese and other instruments were in the hands of very humble people. [...] His usual method of trading was to exchange with the simple-minded villagers, giving them a Violin in perfect playing order for their shabby old instrument that lacked all the accessories.⁴⁷

However, the Hills contradict Hart when they state:

It must be remembered that in those days the works of the leading Italian makers had in great part remained in their native country, and in their original condition; but they were not, as is popularly supposed, to be found in the hands of peasants in out-of-the-way villages.⁴⁸

This statement sits against the Hills' earlier opinion that 'The instruments made by Stradivari were for the most part distributed throughout the Courts and noble houses of Europe.'⁴⁹ An 1816 statement made by Count Cozio suggests that the dispersal of at least some (perhaps the majority) of Stradivari's instruments was through normal commercial trading and not through distribution to 'Courts and noble houses':

⁴³ See Chapter 3 for further consideration of patches.

⁴⁴ See Chapter 7 for further consideration of the date when Tarisio died.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 7 for further information.

⁴⁶ In his *Second Letter to the Pall Mall Gazette*, 24th August 1872, Reade wrote of Tarisio: 'The man's whole soul was in fiddles. He was a great dealer, but a greater amateur [music lover]. He had gems by him no money would buy from him. No. 91 [referring to the catalogue number of the *Le Messie* violin at the 1872 South Kensington Museum Exhibition; see Chapter 9] was one of them. But for his [Tarisio's] death you would never have cast eyes on it. He has often talked to me of it; but he would never let me see it, for fear I should tempt him.'

⁴⁷ Hart pp. 332-333. For recent echoes of Hart's narrative see Farga pp. 94-95, and Millant p. 55.

⁴⁸ Hill (1891) p. 13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 10.

[...] *ma sia perchè quasi più nessuno di essi esiste in Italia, essendo quasi tutti stati esportati per tutta l'Europa e che non ve ne rimase che pochi sani fuori di commercio, come tenuti preziosissimi da chi li possiede.*⁵⁰

[...] almost none exist any longer in Italy, almost all having been exported elsewhere throughout Europe, and those few in good condition that do remain are not for sale, and are treasured by those who possess them.

Later, in the same 1816 document, Count Cozio adds:

[...] *piccol numero ve ne resta ora in Italia (e forse più nessuno in Cremona, almeno a cognizione), conseguentemente divennero di grandioso prezzo che si dovette qualche anno pagare per ritrovarne ed accomperare.*⁵¹

[Only] a small number [of Stradivari violins] remain today in Italy (and perhaps none at all in Cremona, at least to my knowledge), consequently becoming so valuable that it took me several years to locate and acquire them.

Forty years earlier, in 1776, the Count had listed many dealers, players, and members of the Italian aristocracy who owned Stradivari instruments.⁵²

As much as one might question Tarisio's acquisition and removal of instruments from their homeland (however that removal was achieved) the fact remains that, without his interventions, many instruments would likely have been discarded, or allowed to disintegrate, and the modern world of classical music performance would be tonally and expressively that much poorer.

François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871)

F-J Fétis was a Belgian musicologist, composer, critic, teacher, and a close friend of Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume. In 1821 he was appointed professor at the Paris Conservatoire and in 1827 founded the *Revue musicale* (the first journal in France to devote itself exclusively to music).⁵³ In 1856 he collaborated with Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume to write *Antoine Stradivari, Luthier Célèbre*. Just how much of the content of this slim book came directly from personal research by Fétis (rather than from what Vuillaume told Fétis to write) is open to question; the obituary for Vuillaume which appeared in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* contained the following assessment:

*Admirateur passionné d'Antoine Stradivarius, il a pour ainsi dire dicté à F.-J. Fétis la notice que cet écrivain érudit a consacrée au premier des maîtres de Crémone.*⁵⁴

Passionate admirer of Antonio Stradivari, he [Vuillaume] virtually dictated to F.-J. Fétis the booklet which that erudite writer dedicated to the first of the Cremonese masters.

The first edition of *Antoine Stradivari, Luthier Célèbre* was published by Vuillaume:

Paris, Vuillaume, Luthier, rue Demours no.3 aux Thernes, 1856.⁵⁵

In an oft-quoted passage describing a 1716 Stradivari violin (evidently Vuillaume's recently acquired *Le Messie* violin) Fétis – or Vuillaume – writes:

[...] *il y a en ce moment à Paris un violon de Stradivarius construit en 1716, lequel, après être resté soixante ans dans la collection du comte Cozio de Salabue, fut acheté par Louis Tarisio en*

⁵⁰ Cozio/Bacchetta p. 40.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* pp. 42-44.

⁵² See BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 30 and Cozio/Bacchetta p. 180.

⁵³ In 1835 the journal was re-launched as *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*.

⁵⁴ *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, 28th February 1875, p. 68, signed 'G. Ch' (Gustave Chouquet).

⁵⁵ Subsequently the book was translated into English by John Bishop and the translation published in 1864 by Vuillaume's London agent, Robert Cocks.

1824,⁵⁶ puis est devenu la propriété de M. Vuillaume, et n'a jamais été joué. Le bois dont il est fait est du meilleur choix et remarquable par la richesse des ondes. La perfection du travail, la beauté du vernis, rien ne lui manque. C'est un violon neuf, qui semble sortir de la main du maître; c'est enfin le seul, l'unique instrument de Stradivarius qui soit parvenu jusqu'à nous en cet état de conservation. Or, ce monument intact de l'ancienne lutherie, cet instrument que l'archet n'a pas fait résonner dans l'espace de près d'un siècle et demi qui s'est écoulé depuis l'époque de sa fabrication, cet instrument vient donner un éclatant démenti à cette opinion d'après laquelle le son ne pourrait se produire libre et pur qu'après le long usage d'un violon ou d'une basse; car ici, dans cet instrument neuf, on trouve toutes les qualités réunies, force, moelleux, rondeur, finesse, vibration facile, son distingué, noble, incisif;⁵⁷ en un mot, ce violon est un type de beauté extérieure et de perfection sonore.⁵⁸

The 1864 translation of this passage into English, by John Bishop, is:

[...] there exists at this moment, in Paris, a Stradivarius violin, made in 1716, which, after having reposed during sixty years in the collection of Count Cozio de Salabue, was purchased by Louis Tarisio, in 1824, and has since become the property of M. Vuillaume: but this instrument has never been played upon. The wood of which it is made is of the choicest description, and remarkable for the richness of its waves. The workmanship is perfection, and the varnish beautiful: in short, nothing is wanting in it. It is a new violin, apparently just out of the maker's hand; and is, finally, the sole instrument of Stradivarius which has come down to us in this state of preservation. Now, this genuine memorial of ancient manufacture – this instrument which has not resounded under the action of the bow during the space of nearly a century and a half which has elapsed since the period of its fabrication – this instrument gives a striking refutation to the idea, that a free and pure tone cannot be produced from a violin or a bass [cello] until after it has been long in use; for here, in this new instrument, we find all the qualities combined of power, mellowness, roundness, delicacy, free vibration, a very superior, noble and penetrating tone. In a word, this violin is a type of external beauty, and of sonorous perfection.⁵⁹

Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume (1798-1875)

J-B Vuillaume was the most skilful and commercially successful French violin dealer and instrument maker of the nineteenth century. Vuillaume made copies of some of the string instruments which he bought from Luigi Tarisio, copies which were often almost indistinguishable from the originals not only in terms of constructional appearance but also, to many listeners, in terms of tone. Vuillaume's reputation has always been compromised by suspicions that he deliberately falsified the identity of some of his own instruments.⁶⁰ Vuillaume was a member of the Executive Committee which organised the Special Exhibition of Ancient Musical Instruments held at the South Kensington Museum, London, in the summer of 1872,⁶¹ and loaned to the exhibition the Stradivari violin which he identified as the mint-condition 1716 instrument he had bought from Tarisio's heirs – *Le Messie*.⁶²

⁵⁶ The quoted text – *resté soixante ans dans la collection du comte Cozio de Salabue, fut acheté par Louis Tarisio en 1824* – is almost identical to that which was subsequently published by Antoine Vidal in 1876 (Vidal (1876-78) Volume 1, p. 124): *resté pendant soixante années dans la collection du comte Cozio de Salabue, et qui avait été acquis par Tarisio en 1824*. Vidal acknowledges in a footnote that this text was supplied by Vuillaume.

⁵⁷ The underlined text is italicised in the original (1856) publication.

⁵⁸ Fétis (1856) pp. 77-78. This French text can be compared to that which appeared in the catalogue for the 1872 South Kensington Museum Special Exhibition of Ancient Musical Instruments (see Chapter 9).

⁵⁹ Fétis (Bishop, 1864) pp. 73-74.

⁶⁰ See Chapter 7 for further information.

⁶¹ The South Kensington Museum later became the Victoria and Albert Museum.

⁶² See Chapter 9 for details of the Special Exhibition.

W. E. Hill & Sons

The firm of W. E. Hill & Sons – string-instrument dealers, restorers, and makers – surpassed all others in England during the twentieth century. William Ebsworth Hill (1817-1895) initially traded from a shop in Wardour Street, London, but following the 1883-84 formation of a partnership with his four sons, the business moved, in 1887, to 38 New Bond Street, London (‘Opposite Grosvenor Gallery’). In 1897 the business relocated to larger premises at 140 New Bond Street.⁶³ An instrument’s certificate of authenticity from the Hills was a powerful document which was much sought after: the following is the text of a certificate issued by the Hills on 12th February 1903 in respect of the Stradivari *Habeneck* violin:

We certify that the violin in the possession of Mr. Haydn Inwards was made by Antonius Stradivarius of Cremona. It is a fine and characteristic example of its maker’s work, and is in a perfect state of preservation. It is known as the “Habeneck Stradivari” having belonged to the well known French player of that name who died in 1849. At his death the violin passed into the hands of the late Mr Andrew Fountaine of Narford, whose remarkable collection of china and other works of art was sold some years ago at Christie’s.⁶⁴

The Hills offer no description of any unique, visible, markings on the violin which might help avoid any future disputes of identification and/or ownership; offer no information on the colour or texture of the wood, or the varnish; offer no information on the measurements of the violin, and no information about the existence, condition, or text-content of an internal label. It is notable that, despite this certificate being written just one year after the publication of the Hills’ monograph on the life and work of Stradivari, the Hills do not repeat the information included in that monograph about the *Habeneck* violin’s label: ‘The “Habeneck” violin, referred to by [George] Hart, we do not cite, as, though unquestionably of the latest period, neither label nor inscription is original.’⁶⁵

In February 1907 the Hills wrote a more informative certificate for the 1709 Stradivari *Hämmerle* violin:

We certify that the violin sold by us to Herr Theodor Hämmerle [...] was made by Antonio Stradivari of Cremona, whose original label dated 1709 the instrument bears. A finely preserved and finely proportioned violin. The back in one piece, of handsome wood, the curl running straight across.⁶⁶ The head⁶⁷ of handsome wood, of small figure. The instrument is covered with varnish of a fine pinkish-red colour. This violin was for several generations the property of the noble family of Clerk of Pennycuik, Scotland.⁶⁸

In May 1928 the Hills supplied to Dr Gerhard Tischer, of Cologne, a comprehensive certificate for his 1734 *Willemotte* violin:

We certify that the violin submitted to us by Dr Gerhard Tischer of Cologne was made by Antonio Stradivari, whose original label dated 1734 the instrument bears. The back, in one piece, is of plain wood marked by a faint curl of medium width slanting slightly downwards to the right, that of the sides is similar, the curl of the head being smaller and more pronounced; the table, of pine of medium grain, is more open on the bass side and the varnish of an orange-brown colour.

⁶³ See Beare *et al.* (2013) p. 33 for further information.

⁶⁴ A reproduction of this 1903 certificate can be found in Rattray p. 38.

⁶⁵ Hill (1902) p. 92. See also footnote 32 of this chapter, and Chapter 12 for further consideration of Stradivari’s labels.

⁶⁶ According to high-resolution photographs of the *Hämmerle* violin (Hopfner pp. 58-61) the flames (curl) of the violin’s back plate clearly slant downwards, from left to right.

⁶⁷ The scroll and peg-box.

⁶⁸ The certificate is reproduced in Hopfner p. 62.

This violin, a characteristic example of the late period, is entirely original⁶⁹ though somewhat worn.⁷⁰

An indication of the reputation of the Hills can be gained by noting that, in May 1890, just three years after opening their first New Bond Street shop, they were responsible for the purchase of the *Le Messie* violin from the descendants of Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume for the then world-record price of £2,000 (the Hills were acting on behalf of Mr Robert Crawford, of Edinburgh). The violin remained with Robert Crawford until 1904 when he sold it back to the Hills.⁷¹ In 1913 the Hills sold the violin to Mr Richard Bennett, a collector of violins, of Southport, Lancashire, who sold the *Le Messie* violin back to the Hills in 1928.⁷² Between 1939 and 1948 a collection of string instruments, including the *Le Messie/Messiah* violin, was donated by the Hill family to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.⁷³

William Ebsworth Hill – father to five sons⁷⁴ – was seemingly a man deficient in social sensitivities. The Reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis⁷⁵ comments:

Some people found him very trying indeed. You never knew whether he heard what you said; but when at last he favoured you with a remark, you discovered that he had not only heard your words, but that he had accurately gauged you.⁷⁶

Haweis partially exonerates W. E. Hill with:

When customers or applicants for advice arrived [at the Hill shop] [...] they were received one and all with the same mild and tolerant inattention, born not of incivility, but of abstraction.⁷⁷

W. E. Hill is further described by Haweis as having ‘a curious sort of inner otherwhereness’.⁷⁸ More critically, Haweis relates accompanying a friend (who possessed ‘a really valuable instrument’) to the Hill shop for the violin to be overhauled and repaired:

We both stood in front of the counter, and old Hill was bending over a scroll that he was fitting on to a new neck. I addressed him on behalf of my friend, but he took no notice whatever [...] no Prince of the blood would have fared any better than we did [...] Again I mentioned my friend’s name [...] Hill looked up, nodded, eyed my friend through his spectacles with cold interest, and then resumed his work [...] At last Hill laid down his tool, and taking [my friend’s] instrument in his hands, gave it one quick glance and a couple of taps; he then deliberately looked in its astonished owner’s face, tore off the fingerboard, loosened the neck, and drove a knife under the belly. The fiddle was soon in pieces, and he threw the loose fragments aside in a heap, took up his repairs again, and said he would attend to the matter by-and-by, and the gentleman need not stop.⁷⁹

⁶⁹ The neck had not been modified? See Chapter 11.

⁷⁰ <http://www.markptashne.com/images/willemotte-certificate.jpg> (accessed July 2012).

⁷¹ Robert Crawford died on 14th January 1912.

⁷² Richard Bennett, at various periods during his life (1848-1930) owned 48 different instruments, including Stradivari’s 1715 *Baron Knoop*, the 1716 *Cessole*, and the 1714 *Dolphin* violins. ‘[Mr Bennett’s instruments] remained in his possession until the year 1928 when, owing to failing health, he became anxious about his future [...]. The entire collection was returned to us [...]’ (Hill (1976) Postscript, p. 33).

⁷³ See Chapter 13 for details of the Hills’ gift.

⁷⁴ William Henry (1857-1927), Arthur Frederick (1860-1939), Alfred Ebsworth (1862-1940), Walter Ebsworth (1871-1905) and Charles Ebsworth (b. 1880). William Ebsworth Hill died in 1895, aged 77, ‘from senile exhaustion of brain power’ (Haweis (1898) p. 145).

⁷⁵ 1838–1901.

⁷⁶ Haweis (1898) p. 136.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 134.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 136.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 136-137.

Two monographs written by the Hills are cited extensively throughout the present volume:

“The Salabue Stradivari”: A History of the famous Violin known as “Le Messie”

W. E. Hill & Sons

38, New Bond Street, London, W.

Novello, Ewer & Co., London and New York, 1891.⁸⁰

Antonio Stradivari: His Life and Work (1644-1737)

W. Henry Hill, Arthur F. Hill, and Alfred E. Hill

William E. Hill & Sons

140, New Bond Street, W., 1902.⁸¹

In 1976 the Hills brought together – and re-published – their monographs on the Stradivari 1690 *Tuscan* violin, and the *Le Messie* violin, including a new Postscript on the latter. This Postscript includes the text of a letter from the violinist Joseph Joachim to Robert Crawford, praising *Le Messie*,⁸² together with monochrome photographs of the front and back of 1) *Le Messie*, 2) a copy of *Le Messie* made by ‘J. B. Rocca which shows that he had access to the violin before it left Italy’,⁸³ 3) one of the copies made by Vuillaume,⁸⁴ and 4) a copy made by the Hills themselves at the time of the 1951 Festival of Great Britain.

William Henry Hill died in 1937, Arthur Frederick Hill in 1939, and Alfred Ebsworth Hill in 1940. The firm was sold to Alfred’s stepson, Albert Edgar Phillips (1883-1981) who changed his name to Albert Edgar Phillips Hill. A E Phillips Hill retired from the firm in 1960. His son, Desmond D’Artrey Phillips Hill (b. 1916) was father to two sons, Andrew (b. 1942) and David (b. 1952), who maintain the total prohibition on anyone playing the *Messiah* violin. The Hills’ 140 New Bond Street shop closed down in late 1974 (partly the result of astronomical increases in rent) followed by the closure, in 1979, of the Hills’ workshop at Hanwell, Middlesex. The company moved to Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, before ceasing to trade in 1992.

⁸⁰ A digital scan of this monograph is available as a free download from some library sites on the internet. The content of the 1891 monograph is discussed in Chapter 12.

⁸¹ Copies of the first edition of 1902 are difficult to find, and very expensive to buy. A digital scan of the 1909 second edition is available as a free download from some library sites on the internet. The 1902 edition has been repeatedly reprinted by Dover Publications, Inc. New York.

⁸² See Chapter 10 for further information about Joachim’s letter.

⁸³ Hill (1976) p. 34. ‘J. B. Rocca’ is Giuseppe Antonio Rocca (1807-1865), son of Giovanni Domenico Rocca (dates unknown). See Chapter 8 for more information on G A Rocca and his relationship with Tarisio, Vuillaume, and the *Le Messie* violin.

⁸⁴ No details of date, or Vuillaume’s numbering, are provided.