

## Chapter 3

### Deaths, acquisitions, inventories, and descriptions

By 1716 Antonio Stradivari was the most famous violin maker in Italy and, probably, Europe. Despite being approximately 67 years old<sup>1</sup> he was at the height of his powers of craftsmanship. The instruments he produced between 1700 and 1720 are regarded by most as the finest he made. Commentators identify this twenty-year period as his ‘Golden Period’, and his skills were sought by the aristocracy of Europe:

The instruments made by Stradivari were for the most part distributed throughout the Courts and noble houses of Europe. We have records of several concertos [sets] of instruments made by him upon the commission of the Courts of Spain, Modena, Tuscany, Poland, and others, from the time when he began to acquire a European reputation.<sup>2</sup>

No-one can be certain exactly how many string instruments were made by Stradivari in 1716 but recent listings have identified the following violins (known by their soubriquets): *Berthier/Vecsey, Booth/Sin, Busch, Cessole, Colossus, de Durandy, Fau/Haas, Baron Gutmann, Medici, Milstein/Goldman, Nachez, Oppenheim/Exner, Provigny*, and the *Wittgenstein* – fifteen in total if the *Messiah* violin is included.<sup>3</sup> The Hills indicate their knowledge of fifteen instruments from the year 1716.<sup>4</sup>

If no-one is entirely sure how many instruments Stradivari made in 1716 then his total lifetime production of string instruments is equally uncertain. The Hills suggest a ‘grand total’ of 1,116 instruments spread over a 73-year working life between 1664 and 1737<sup>5</sup> but other commentators (and some internet resources) have leaned towards a rather smaller total, of approximately 700 violins, violas, and cellos. It seems likely that the first purchaser of most of Stradivari’s instruments will never be known (other than the aristocratic, or royal, commissioners of sets of instruments). Antonio is said to have kept a notebook – a register – of clients and instrument sales but this register was never delivered, as apparently agreed, to Count Cozio di Salabue as part of his mid-1770s purchase of the Stradivari workshop materials. Subsequent searches initiated by the Count failed to locate the register, which, if it ever existed, remains lost.

As already indicated, many commentators allege that Antonio kept in his workshop one particular 1716 violin (that which, later, would be known as the *Messiah* violin) and never allowed it to be sold. It is claimed that this violin was still in the Cremona workshop in the 1770s, and was one of the violins sold by Paolo Stradivari to Count Cozio on a date between 1773 and 1775.

Once made, he [Antonio] never parted from it [the *Messiah* violin]. Death came, and the violin passed successively to his sons Francesco and Paolo; the latter retained it until 1775, in which year he sold it to Count Cozio di Salabue.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (depending on which birth year is adopted)

<sup>2</sup> Hill (1891) p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Details from Doring pp. 201–208.

<sup>4</sup> Hill (1902) p. 231.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 226. In 1891 the Hills had stated (Hill (1891) p. 9) that Stradivari ‘may safely be credited with the construction of not less than two thousand instruments’.

<sup>6</sup> Hill (1902) pp. 64–65.

However, within Count Cozio's papers there are no documents dating from 1775 which mention the purchase of a 'special' Stradivari violin of 1716. An 1891 comment by the Hills, indicating a personal visit to Cremona by Count Cozio, is unsupported by evidence:

This remarkable violin [the *Messiah* violin], received at first hand from the very workshop of its great maker, remained carefully preserved in the Count Salabue's collection at Milan, until after his death.<sup>7</sup>

In the summer of 2013 an exhibition of Stradivari instruments was held at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The exhibition catalogue contained a commentary on the *Messiah* violin, written by Dr Jon Whiteley:<sup>8</sup>

It [the *Messiah* violin] is said to have been acquired by the Milanese collector Count Cozio di Salabue from the maker's family in 1775 but there is no firm evidence of this.<sup>9</sup>

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In 1729, at the (probable) age of 80, Antonio Stradivari drew up his Last Will and Testament. This document itemised the various belongings which would in due course pass to his heirs, together with various financial distributions. Omobono Stradivari would receive six violins, together with various monetary gifts, paintings, and household items, but the Will specifically forbade Omobono from removing any workshop items and tools 'as used in the profession of the said Signor Testator [Antonio Stradivari] and of said Signor Francesco'.<sup>10</sup> Omobono was quite capable of making his own violins and Antonio possibly wanted to prevent commercial conflict between Omobono and Francesco. The tension that apparently existed between Antonio and Omobono can perhaps be deduced from the effusive praise heaped upon Francesco:

Signor Francesco Giacomo<sup>11</sup> has always been, as he presently is, the principal support of the profession of said Signor Testator, having always been, as he is, obedient and obsequious to the Testator's commands.<sup>12</sup>

Antonio intended that his workshop and its contents would become Francesco's responsibility, and, through his eldest son's craftsmanship, the name of Stradivari would continue (an intention that is confirmed in an early version of the text of his Will):

I command that my son Francesco be my heir and I wish that he remain together with my daughter Catterina and my wife and Giuseppe<sup>13</sup> and Paolo my son until death in this house, and I wish Francesco to be the master of the Workshop [...].<sup>14</sup>

Antonio Stradivari died on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1737. Francesco (by then a bachelor of 67) outlived his father by only six years, dying in 1743; Omobono, also a bachelor, had died in the previous year. Thus only the youngest son, Paolo (b. 1708), would carry the Stradivari name forwards into the second half of the eighteenth century, but Paolo had no connection with violin making and made his living as a cloth merchant. Nonetheless, it would be with Paolo, and then, after his death in 1775, with

<sup>7</sup> Hill (1891) p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Senior Curator of European Art at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

<sup>9</sup> Beare *et al.* (2013) p. 178.

<sup>10</sup> Chiesa and Rosengard p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Over the course of time the two given names seem to have swapped positions.

<sup>12</sup> Translation by Chiesa and Rosengard p. 100. Since Antonio has already used the word *ubbediente* (obedient), the subsequent *ossequioso* appears to carry negative connotations relating to Francesco's character and his relationship with his father (but this may be a 21<sup>st</sup>-century rather than an 18<sup>th</sup>-century interpretation of 'obsequious').

<sup>13</sup> Assumed to be Giuseppe Antonio (1704-1781) rather than Alessandro Giuseppe (1677-1732).

<sup>14</sup> Translation by Chiesa and Rosengard p. 84.

Paolo's son, Antonio (II), that Count Cozio would negotiate to buy the remaining instruments and workshop artefacts.

After the death of Antonio in 1737, followed by the deaths of Omobono in 1742 and Francesco in 1743, the operational conditions of the Stradivari workshop in Cremona are difficult to ascertain. Certainly the Bergonzi family (previously living next door) moved into the Stradivari house in 1746 and remained there until 1758.<sup>15</sup> Carlo Bergonzi (1683-1747)<sup>16</sup> had two sons, Michele Angelo (d. 1758) and Zosimo (d. 1779), who continued the violin-making tradition but with limited distinction.<sup>17</sup>

If approximately ninety unfinished instruments were still in the Stradivari workshop after Francesco's death in 1743 (see below) those instruments could have been 'fitted up' – 'mounted' – by Carlo Bergonzi and/or his sons (either acting unilaterally or under instruction from Paolo) and then sold (bearing who-knows-what labels). From approximately 1758 onwards, following the departure of the Bergonzis, it seems that the workshop fell silent and the pre-eminence of the entire Cremonese violin-making tradition rapidly declined. The (Stradivari) house was rented by various tenants until 1777 when it was sold by Antonio (II) Stradivari shortly after the sale of the workshop artefacts to Count Cozio had been concluded.<sup>18</sup>

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In the early 1770s the condition of the Stradivari/Bergonzi workshop came to the attention of Count Ignazio Alessandro Cozio di Salabue who was already devoting some of his wealth to the acquisition of the finest string instruments and artefacts from northern Italy in order to establish a repository through which the technical knowledge and practical skills of the Cremonese violin makers might be saved for the benefit of future generations. The young Count purchased instruments, moulds, drawings, and tools from the Stradivari workshop (and, from elsewhere, instruments by the Amatis, Grancino, Andrea Guarneri, Jacob Stainer, Rugeri, Cappa, Bergonzi, and others) and spent much of his time cataloguing, evaluating, measuring, and, importantly, playing the instruments which he owned.<sup>19</sup> Probably guided by the Mantegazza brothers of Milan (and also by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini) the Count learned all he could about the construction of string instruments, and all this information was included in his memoirs and documents together with his extensive correspondence and his historical account of north-Italian *lutherie*.

The Hills offer an appreciation of Count Cozio's importance as a collector of instruments, materials, and information:

Endowed with great wealth and rare judgment, he formed an unrivalled representative collection of the works of the great masters of the craft, and by his careful researches amassed an amount of information which might well have served as an invaluable tradition of an apparently vanishing art. To such a man the acquisition of ten undoubted specimens of the incomparable Stradivari must have been one of the greatest events of his life.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Hill (1902) p. 288. In 1745-46 Paolo Stradivari and most of his family moved away from what had been their family home; see Chiesa and Rosengard p. 44.

<sup>16</sup> Thus, within ten years, Antonio (1737), Omobono (1742), and Francesco Stradivari (1743), together with Giuseppe Guarneri *del Gesù* (1744) and Carlo Bergonzi (1747) had all died.

<sup>17</sup> In 1816 Count Cozio commented: 'Michelangelo produced a few violins, a few violas, and some cellos, but they were quite inferior to his father's instruments' (translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 33).

<sup>18</sup> See Hill (1902) p. 288.

<sup>19</sup> Count Cozio writes (BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 41; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 219) of a 1730 Stradivari violin: *Il mio favorito che io suonava* ('My favourite [violin] that I played'). See later in this chapter for the Count's descriptions of the tonal qualities of other violins.

<sup>20</sup> Hill (1891) p. 11. The Hills' commentary closely echoes that of George Hart, writing in 1884 (Hart p. 346): '[Count Cozio] appears to have exerted himself to obtain as much information as possible relative to the art, and to collect

The circumstantial evidence which indicates that Count Cozio began buying the remaining Stradivari instruments in 1773 (and, almost certainly, continued buying throughout 1774) includes a letter sent by Paolo Stradivari to Giovanni Battista Guadagnini on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1773:

I see that you desire two violins of my late father (as you mentioned to me in an earlier letter). I am still waiting for Signor Spagnoletto Francesco Diana, virtuoso violinist, to come and make the choice. I shall proceed according to what he says.<sup>21</sup>

If Paolo found it curious that Guadagnini wanted to buy Antonio Stradivari violins (and had the funds to pay for them) he makes no comment on the matter. If Paolo suspected that Guadagnini was acting as an intermediary for a private buyer he was entirely correct since Paolo's letter was evidently forwarded to Count Cozio and retained by him. Count Cozio also used the services of Giovanni Michele Anselmi, from the firm of Briatta & Co. (a trading company with offices both in Casale-Monferrato and in Turin). It is possible that the Count's use of two intermediaries was deliberate, with each carefully buying only one or two instruments at a time; if Paolo had been approached with a single order for all of his father's remaining instruments he surely would quickly have realised how high a price he could demand. The purchase of Paolo's remaining instruments appears to have been completed by the spring of 1775 since (as shown later in this chapter) Count Cozio wrote out a brief listing of his Stradivari violins on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1775:

*Stradivari: violini di forma grande 11, mezzana 1, piciola vecchio 1: totale 13*<sup>22</sup>

Stradivari: large violins 11, medium 1, small, old 1: total 13

The most contemporaneous commentary written by Count Cozio about his purchases is a document – an un-ordered listing of assorted names and addresses, together with some brief comments – simply dated 1775:

Paolo Stradivari is alive, but in the profession of a merchant, and no longer has any instruments, except a *viola d'amore*<sup>23</sup> seen by Signor Giovanni Michele Anselmi of Turin, and two small violins.<sup>24</sup>

Many years later, in various documents, Count Cozio referred back to his 1773-75 purchase of Stradivari instruments, but his memory, as might be expected with the passage of time, is sometimes inconsistent. In a letter to the violin maker Giovanni Antonio Marchi,<sup>25</sup> dated 10<sup>th</sup> May 1804, Count Cozio writes:

In 1774 I bought all the instruments remaining with the heirs of the late Antonio Stradivari, the moulds, models, designs, and measurements of this celebrated maker.<sup>26</sup>

Four months later, in a letter of September 1804 to Count Alessandro Maggi (of Cremona), Count Cozio repeats this information:

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masterpieces that they might in some measure be the means to recovering a lost art. When in the year 1775 he secured ten instruments out of ninety-one which Stradivari left in his shop at the time of his death he must surely have considered himself singularly fortunate, and the happiest of collectors.'

<sup>21</sup> Translated from BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 89/1; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 364 and Santoro (1993) p. 55. Renzo Bacchetta transcribes the date of this letter as 8<sup>th</sup> October 1775 but the manuscript is clear: *Cremona li 8 9bre 1773* ('9' is 'Nove' and therefore '9bre' is 'Nove[m]bre').

<sup>22</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 26; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 173. Count Cozio does not clarify whether 'Stradivari' refers to Antonio, or Francesco, or both. Since the Count did not receive the Stradivari moulds until the autumn of 1776 his *forma grande* is impressionistic.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 4 for further information about this instrument.

<sup>24</sup> Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 176.

<sup>25</sup> Marchi is best known for his treatise on violin making, *Il manoscritto liutario*, published in 1786.

<sup>26</sup> Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 409. The purchase of Stradivari's workshop equipment was not initiated until 1775 and not completed until 1776.

[...] the violins that I bought in 1774 from the merchant son of Antonio, all made after 1700 [...]!<sup>27</sup>

Twelve years later, in 1816, the Count mentions a 1737 Stradivari violin:

[...] which, with another twelve [instruments] was acquired in 1773 and 1774 from the now deceased cloth merchant Paolo Stradivari, son of Antonio and [half] brother of Francesco [...].<sup>28</sup>

Count Cozio thus appears to have purchased thirteen instruments (a total which is indicated in the aforementioned ‘brief listing’ of 18<sup>th</sup> June 1775). Confusingly, on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1816 the Count measured a Stradivari violin label-dated 1736, which he identifies as one of the violins obtained not from Paolo but from Antonio (II) – and in 1775 rather than 1773 or 1774 – and now the purchase seems to total eleven (possibly only ten) instruments:

This is the strongest of the ten others [*dieci altri*] of the grandfather [?] that I obtained in Cremona from the grandson in 1775.<sup>29</sup>

A purchase date of 1775 (rather than 1773 or 1774) reappears in a *Postscript Nota Bene* of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1823; unexpectedly, the Amati family of violin makers is now also mentioned:

[...] in 1775, at the time when I obtained from him [Paolo] the remaining violins, moulds, models and designs of this celebrated maker [Antonio], and those of the Amati [family],<sup>30</sup> which enhanced his [Paolo’s] collection.<sup>31</sup>

The Count subsequently adds:

[...] left, at his [Antonio’s] death, were 91 [instruments], and in 1775 there were no more than 10, bought from the son, Paolo, by the aforementioned Count Cozio, together with two masterpieces of his son Francesco.<sup>32</sup>

This statement follows on from a document written seven years earlier, in 1816:

There is no need to mention the fame of the violins, violas, cellos of this maker [Antonio] [...] following his death, he left to his son Francesco a quantity of absolutely new [instruments], to which a few more were added in 1742 by the merchant Paolo, [also] son of Antonio, [giving a total of] 91 violins, 2 cellos, and violas [...].<sup>33</sup>

The documentary evidence suggests that, between the autumn of 1773 and, probably, the spring of 1775, Count Cozio, acting through his two intermediaries, bought from Paolo Stradivari ten Antonio Stradivari violins as well as two Francesco Stradivari violins.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 425.

<sup>28</sup> Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta pp. 41-42.

<sup>29</sup> Translated from BSCR, LC, ms. Cozio 47, folio 28v; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 254.

<sup>30</sup> See also Chapter 2, footnote 5.

<sup>31</sup> Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 66. The Count’s *Postscript* is part of a lengthy historical account of violin making in northern Italy.

<sup>32</sup> Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 67. The Count’s reference to himself in the third person singular is explained by his text, which is a series of corrections, additions, and improvements to material which had been compiled by the Cremonese biographer Vincenzo Lancetti regarding celebrated violin makers. Count Cozio expected that Lancetti would include all the additional information which the Count supplied, but Lancetti’s book was never completed.

<sup>33</sup> Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta pp. 42: [...] una quantità tutti nuovi a quali aggiunti alcuni pochi di questi, il mercante Paolo figlio di Antonio, nel 1742, novantun violini, due violoncelli e viole [...]. The Count’s specification of the number of instruments appears to have been sourced from a 20<sup>th</sup> August 1775 letter from Paolo Stradivari (BSCR, LC, ms. Cozio 89); see Chapter 4.

<sup>34</sup> See later in this chapter for details of the purchased instruments.

On 26<sup>th</sup> February 1774 Count Cozio wrote out a descriptive inventory of instruments in his possession: *Nuovo inventario de stromenti [...]* ('New inventory of instruments').<sup>35</sup> This document – a single, folded, sheet of paper – includes descriptions of eight violins made by the Amatis and by Gioffredo Cappa (1644-1717); violins made by Antonio Stradivari are not listed.

Sixteen months later, on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1775, the Count wrote out the aforementioned brief listing of the instruments which he had by then acquired:

<i>Stradivari: violini di forma</i>	<i>grande</i>	11
	<i>mezzana</i>	1
	<i>piciola vechio</i>	<u>1</u>
		13 <sup>36</sup>

Stradivari: large violins 11, medium 1, small, old, 1: [total] 13

It is probable that these are the violins which the Count had bought from Paolo Stradivari between the autumn of 1773 and the spring of 1775.

Eight months later, on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1776, the Count updated his 18<sup>th</sup> June 1775 inventory; again, a single sheet of paper. Amongst the additions – *Agiunta* – are:

<i>Stradivari violini:</i>	<i>Forma grande con coperchio Amatis vechio</i>	1
	<i>Piciola nuove</i>	1 2 15 <sup>37</sup>
<i>Stradivari violins:</i>	Large size with Amati front plate, old	1
	Small, new	1 [sub-total] 2, [Total] 15

This 1776 update further indicates that the Count, aged 20, also owned another sixty-three violins, five cellos, and a small double bass.<sup>38</sup> Forty-two of these violins were made by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini.<sup>39</sup>

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The first Cozio document – a single, folded, sheet of paper – which includes a description of a Stradivari violin of 1716 is an undated inventory, simply entitled *Stradivari*, which begins with descriptions of six violins, label-dated 1731 (see Plate 6), 1716, 1724, 1730, 1717 and 1720.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 25; see also Cozio/Bacchetta pp. 169-172.

<sup>36</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 26; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 173.

<sup>37</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 28; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 178.

<sup>38</sup> Renzo Bacchetta's transcription (Cozio/Bacchetta p. 178) specifies 48 violins in total but either he has misread the Count's numerical notations or there has been a typographical error.

<sup>39</sup> Count Cozio had initiated a commercial relationship with Guadagnini in 1771, when the Count, aged 16, was enrolled at the military academy in Turin.

<sup>40</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 41; see also Cozio/Bacchetta pp. 199-200.

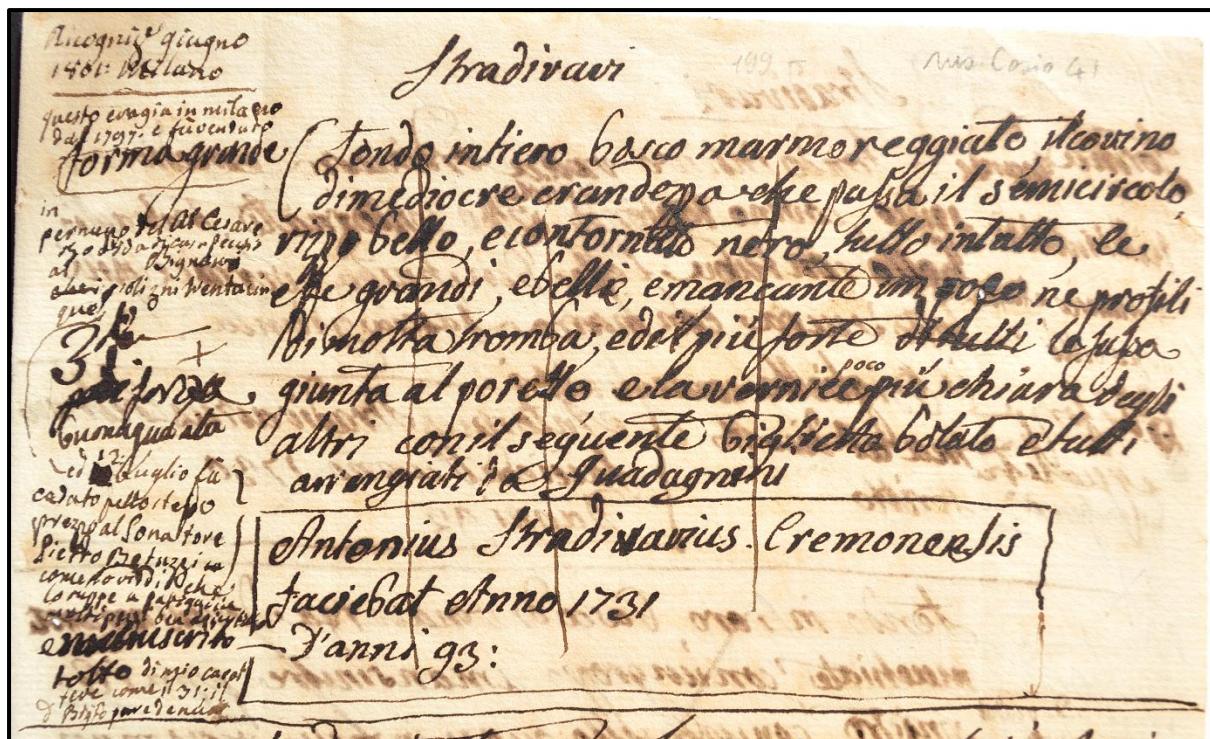


Plate 6: BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 41

The numbering of this manuscript, archived at the Biblioteca Statale di Cremona – ms. Cozio 41 – appears to date this inventory to 1801 since the next manuscript, ms. Cozio 42, is clearly dated by Count Cozio, 1801. However, at the top-left corner of the first page of ms. Cozio 41 the Count has added *Ricognizione giugno 1801: Milano – questo era già in Milano dal 1797 e fu venduto* ('Verified, June 1801: Milan – this [violin of 1731] was already in Milan from 1797, and was sold'); i.e. the date of the verification was June 1801 but the main body of descriptive text was written prior to that year.<sup>41</sup>

The Count's handwriting in this ms. Cozio 41 inventory is very similar not only to the 'New inventory' of 26<sup>th</sup> February 1774 (ms. Cozio 25) but also to that of the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1775 'brief listing' inventory (ms. Cozio 26) as well as the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1776 update (ms. Cozio 28). In addition to the similar handwriting, the inventories also display a high level of similarity in the layout of the text, and it is here suggested that the undated ms. Cozio 41 inventory is closely related, chronologically, to the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1774 inventory (ms. Cozio 25); i.e. the ms. Cozio 41 inventory probably dates from late 1774 or early 1775, and the six violins described therein are part of the group of thirteen Stradivari instruments listed in the brief document drawn up by Count Cozio on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1775 (ms. Cozio 26). The likelihood is that these six violins comprise the first group of 'left over' instruments purchased from Paolo Stradivari.<sup>42</sup>

Five of the six descriptive entries at the start of ms. Cozio 41 are crossed through with pen strokes. The sale details for each instrument (the details being added to the page margins during the succeeding decades) are:

- the 1731 Antonio Stradivari violin was sold to *Cesare Rovida*, and then to *Pietro Bertuzzi*

<sup>41</sup> The 26<sup>th</sup> February 1774 ms. Cozio 25 inventory also has an annotation in the top-left corner: *Ricognizione 12 Luglio [July] 1801; Milano.*

<sup>42</sup> A subsequent inventory within ms. Cozio 41 lists another five Antonio Stradivari violins label-dated 1730, 1715, 1730(34?), 1730, and 1730, together with a Francesco violin of 1730 – *questo è del Francesco figlio*. All the descriptive entries are crossed through apart from that of the 1730 Francesco violin (see also this volume’s Appendix). If these six violins represent the second, final, group of instruments purchased from Paolo then the total is twelve.

- the 1724 violin – *il più forte* ('the strongest' [in tone]) – was sold in 1817 through the Count's banker, Carlo Carli, *al celebre suonatore genovese Paganini* ('to the celebrated player from Genoa, Paganini')
- the 1730 violin was sold to *Francesco Molere* of Milan
- the 1717 violin, made by Francesco Stradivari, was sold, in 1805, to *Monsieur Durand*<sup>43</sup>
- the 1720 violin was sold to *Pasquale Odoardo Folli*

The descriptive entry for the 1716 violin (see Plate 7) has not been crossed through, and the violin, evidently, was not sold, since a bottom-left addition made by Count Cozio – *si ha e nel 1823 posto in Collez[ion]e principale* ('I have [it], and in 1823 placed in [my] principal collection') – cannot have been added before 1823.

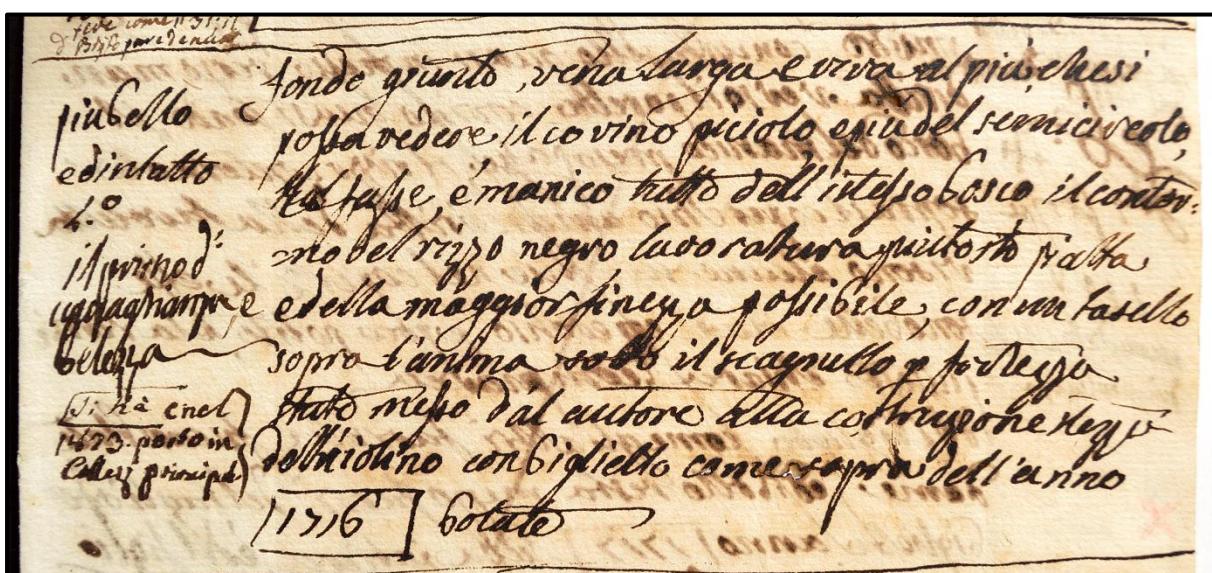


Plate 7: BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 41

Fondo giunto, vena<sup>44</sup> larga e viva al più che si possa vedere, il covino piccolo e più del semicircolo, le fasse, e manico tutto dell'istesso bosco<sup>45</sup> il contorno del rizzo negro<sup>46</sup> lavoratura piutosto piatta e della maggior finezza possibile, con un tasello<sup>47</sup> sopra l'anima sotto il scagnello<sup>48</sup> per fortezza stato messo dal autore alla costruzione stessa del violino con biglietto come sopra dell'anno 1716 bolate.

<sup>43</sup> The descriptive entry for this 1717 violin ends with *è del figlio* ('is of the son'), which indicates Francesco rather than Omobono. See this volume's Appendix for further details of this violin.

<sup>44</sup> The Count's *vena* literally means 'vein', but, figuratively, can mean a 'streak' – thus the back-plate 'flames'. Occasionally, Count Cozio uses *vena* when referring to the growth rings of a spruce-wood front plate.

<sup>45</sup> Count Cozio's use of *bosco* – 'a forest', 'a wood', or 'a copse' – instead of *legno* – is curious. Since maple wood was imported from the Balkans, through Venice, it is unlikely that the Count would have been able to identify the wood used for the ribs and neck of the violin as being sourced from a specific location. His comment, more likely, simply indicates his recognition that the ribs and the neck use the same type of wood. See also footnote 73.

<sup>46</sup> Count Cozio's manuscript has *rizzo* rather than the modern *riccio*. The 1831 Italian-English dictionary compiled by Giuseppe Baretti offers 'curled, or frizzled lock' for *riccio*; thus 'the outline of the curl [scroll] black'.

<sup>47</sup> Baretti translates *tassello* as 'a piece of wood to stop a hole', suggesting either (a) a custom-shaped piece of wood – perhaps circular – inserted through the entire thickness of the wood, or (b) an infill for a (resin) pocket within the thickness of the wood. The piece of wood here described by Count Cozio was glued to the underside of the violin's front plate, extending from the point where the upper end of the sound-post pushed against the underside to the point where the treble-side leg of the bridge pressed down on the outer surface of the front plate. In this case, therefore, Count Cozio appears to be describing a strengthening patch – *pezza*. Perhaps, to the young Count, the terms were interchangeable.

<sup>48</sup> *Scagnello* is a dialect word for the bridge of a string instrument; see Angelo Peri, *Vocabolario Cremonese Italiano*, Cremona, 1847.

Subsequently added in the left margin:

*Più bello ed intatto 1º il primo d'uguaglianza e bellezza  
si hà e nel 1823 posto in collezione principale.*<sup>49</sup>

Joined [two-piece] back, wide flames, as vivid as one could [hope to] see. The neck button is small<sup>50</sup> but more than a semicircle. The ribs and the neck are all of the same wood. The outline of the scroll is black. The working [of the plate arching] is rather flat and of the finest possible quality. With a patch above the sound-post, under the bridge, for strength, placed there by the maker during construction of the violin. With label as above,<sup>51</sup> 1716, stamped.<sup>52</sup>

The most beautiful,<sup>53</sup> and undamaged;<sup>54</sup> number one; the best for equality [of voice?] and beauty. I have [it], and in 1823 placed in [my] principal collection.<sup>55</sup>

Comparing Count Cozio's description of this violin with the present-day physical reality of the *Messiah* violin reveals some similarities but also many differences:

1. With respect to the back-plate flames, Count Cozio regrettably makes no mention of their angle or direction, so comparison between this feature on the Count's violin and on the *Messiah* violin is not possible.
2. The 'rather flat' arching is certainly a characteristic of the *Messiah* violin but it is equally true of many other Stradivari violins from his 'golden' period.
3. Count Cozio's 1716 violin has a strengthening piece of wood glued by Antonio Stradivari to the underside of the front plate where the upper end of the sound-post bears against the underside of the plate. With respect to such strengthening Simone Sacconi comments:

In new instruments it is advisable to increase the thickness of the front plate by about 0.8mm for a small circular area of about 2.2cms in diameter – no more – corresponding to the position of the sound-post, in order to avoid the wear produced by the shifting of [the post] when adjusting it.<sup>56</sup>

Sacconi includes a monochrome photograph of the underside of the front plate of the 1709 *La Pucelle* violin to illustrate the scuffed and worn area of the wood where the upper end of the sound-post has pressed against the underside.<sup>57</sup> Sacconi further illustrates his advice with a photograph of the underside of the front plate of the *Delfino* violin of 1714 showing, very clearly, a substantial elliptical

<sup>49</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 41; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 200. It is noticeable that Count Cozio makes no mention of the dimensions of the violin, nor does he identify a source mould. This non-identification may, in turn, help to confirm the proposed late-1774 or early-1775 date for ms. Cozio 41 since Count Cozio did not obtain the Stradivari moulds until the autumn of 1776.

<sup>50</sup> The fact that Count Cozio describes this neck button as 'small' cannot safely be connected to the small neck button on the *Messiah* violin since it has been shown (John Dilworth, 'Pure thrill', *The Strad*, August 2001, p. 845) that the neck button of the *Messiah* violin was reduced in size when the neck was raised, lengthened, and re-angled (apparently by Vuillaume). The *Strad* magazine's photograph of the neck button (*ibid.*) has unfortunately been reversed, from left to right.

<sup>51</sup> The 'above' descriptive entry (see Plate 6) is for the 1731 Stradivari violin.

<sup>52</sup> 'Stamped' very likely refers to Stradivari's circular monogram, normally imprinted at the bottom right of the label.

<sup>53</sup> One difficulty with interpreting the Count's descriptions of instruments is when the superlative phraseology – *il più bello* – is suspected to have been the intended understanding but only the comparative form – *più bello* – was written.

<sup>54</sup> In describing Paganini's 1724 Stradivari violin (ms. Cozio 42) Count Cozio writes: *con manico dato indietro dal G B Guadagnini: intatto pero con una piciol marca di fissura nel coperchio a destra* ('with the neck tilted backwards by G B Guadagnini: undamaged, but with a small fissure on the top plate to the right'). Count Cozio also, and frequently, uses the word *sano* which translates (in a slightly more generalised manner) as 'in good condition'.

<sup>55</sup> Count Cozio's 27<sup>th</sup> February 1823 'principal collection' of instruments – *la Collezione (Primo Inventaro)* – is discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Having gathered together his finest instruments, totalling 28 violins, 3 violas, and 3 cellos, Count Cozio then had the collection delivered to his Milanese banker, Carlo Carli, to be sold.

<sup>56</sup> Translated from Sacconi (1972) p. 103.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 105.

patch (approximately 60mm × 22mm) covering the area where the upper end of the sound-post would meet the underside of the plate. The elliptical patch also encompasses the point on the underside of the plate where the treble-side foot of the bridge would be pressing down from above.<sup>58</sup> An even larger elliptical patch (67mm × 33mm) is present on the underside of the front plate of the 1715 *Titian* violin, together with a 20mm-diameter circular patch below where the bass-side foot of the bridge would be pressing down.<sup>59</sup>

4. Count Cozio makes no mention of

- the condition of the pegs and tail-piece (which he describes in his subsequent 1808 description of a 1716 Stradivari violin)
- the colour or texture of the varnish
- a longitudinal resin-pocket repair such as is clearly visible on the *Messiah* violin's front plate to the right of the fingerboard (see Plate 8)<sup>60</sup>
- anything unusual about the profile of the plate borders
- anything unusual about the angle of the f-holes
- any lettering on the internal front face of the peg-box<sup>61</sup>
- any asymmetric carving of the 'eyes' of the scroll.

The bass-side eye of the scroll on the *Messiah* violin, viewed from the front, is significantly higher than the treble-side eye. When, in 1890, the Hills had the *Salabue/Messiah* violin in their workshop it is inconceivable that they did not observe this asymmetry, yet it is the descriptive account of the violin written by Reverend H R Haweis which the Hills quote in their 1891 monograph: 'one side of the scroll is slightly lower than the other'.<sup>62</sup> Notwithstanding their use of Haweis's commentary, the Hills, in their subsequent 1902 monograph, write:

He [Stradivari] invariably carved both faces of the scroll with strict accuracy, and also maintained absolute similitude between them.<sup>63</sup>

5. Count Cozio's phrase – 'In 1823 it was placed in my principal collection' – almost certainly identifies this violin as the 1716 violin listed in the subsequent *la Collezione (Primo Inventaro)* document of 27<sup>th</sup> February 1823.<sup>64</sup> In that inventory the 1716 violin is defined as *f[orm]<sup>a</sup> P.G.*, which refers to the now-lost *Più Grande* mould, not Stradivari's 4<sup>th</sup> June 1689 *PG* mould (see Chapter 2).

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p. 97.

<sup>59</sup> See the February 2009 *Titian* poster published by *The Strad*. See later in this chapter for further consideration of patches (and their non-existence inside the *Messiah* violin).

<sup>60</sup> This repair would involve excavating all the resin from the knot in the wood, shaping a sliver of spruce to exactly fit the 'scooped' cavity, and then glueing the sliver into the cavity.

<sup>61</sup> See Chapter 11 for further information on peg-box letters.

<sup>62</sup> Hill (1891) p. 28. Haweis's descriptive account is in Haweis (1884) pp. 302-304; see also Chapter 12.

<sup>63</sup> Hill (1902) p. 201.

<sup>64</sup> See Chapter 6. The 27<sup>th</sup> February 1823 was the same day on which Count Cozio wrote out his inventory of the Stradivari moulds (see Chapter 2).



Plate 8: The *Messiah* violin resin-pocket infill. Image © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

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The second Cozio inventory which includes a description of a 1716 Stradivari violin begins with a title page:

1801: 8 Ap[ri]l<sup>e</sup> Milano e seguenti<sup>65</sup> *Inventario de Violini, Viole, e Violoncelli*<sup>66</sup>

This document is a stitched notebook, rather than loose sheets of paper. Count Cozio provides an index of various violin-makers' names, and the folio number on which their details can be found: the entries for Antonio Stradivari begin at *folio 4*, those for Carlo Bergonzi at *folio 20*, Guadagnini at *folio*

<sup>65</sup> 'and subsequently'

<sup>66</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 206.

46, etc. Being a notebook it suggests the amalgamation into one document of various earlier individual documents – ms. Cozio 25 and ms. Cozio 41 for example – and perhaps one should expect to see some repetition of earlier descriptive texts.<sup>67</sup> On page 4<sup>68</sup> of this notebook is a subtitle:

*Violini di Stradivario Antonio da molti anni accomperati dal suo nipote a Cremona.*<sup>69</sup>

Violins of Antonio Stradivari, of various years, obtained from his grandson [Antonio (II)] in Cremona.

Underneath this title is a description of an Antonio Stradivari 1731 violin, and the description includes the phrase – ‘Part of the twelve large and one a little smaller [...]’ – which would appear to align this inventory with the aforementioned brief listing of 18<sup>th</sup> June 1775 (ms. Cozio 26). The subsequent descriptive entries are for twelve Stradivari violins carrying labels dated 1715, 1716, 1717, 1720, 1724, 1730 (five violins), 1731, and a twelfth violin with a label date of 1730 or 1734. The label dates of all the Stradivari violins from ms. Cozio 41 therefore reappear within this ms. Cozio 42 inventory of April 1801, and thus this inventory is likely to be of all the instruments bought from Paolo Stradivari.<sup>70</sup> Several of the descriptive entries closely echo the information previously given in the 1774-75 inventory (ms. Cozio 41); the new descriptive entry for a 1716 Stradivari violin (Plate 9) is:

*Viglietto stampato come retro col bollo bellissimo<sup>71</sup> come retro anno 1716: (il 716: manoscritto)  
Voce tonda, forte, eguale, e belissima. Conotati: forma più grande: intatto: Vernice rossa forte,  
fina tirante nel pastello: Lavoro finissimo in tutte le parti con bellissime profilature: Coperchio e  
fondo con mezzana elevazione tirata bene ai bordi: Coperchio di vena dritta e gradate di larg<sup>a</sup>  
mezzana – con tasello di rinforzo sopra l'anima postovi dall'autore<sup>72</sup> – fondo gionto Vena larga  
brillante ed agionto non per vena e risvoltante essa un poco in sù: Covino 2/3 del circolo: fascie,  
e manico d'equal bel legno:<sup>73</sup> Stato dato indietro nel manico e postovi la tavolettta, ed una pezza  
larga quadrata sopra l'anima per una crepatura che è invisibile, e forse per necessario rinforzo  
dal G. B. Guadagnini. Riccio bello e profilato di nero al solito Vale almeno zecchini cento  
cinquanta, 150.*

Label printed, as above [as previous entry], with beautiful stamp [monogram]; as above, the year 1716 (the 716 handwritten). Well-rounded voice, strong, uniform, and very beautiful.<sup>74</sup> Characteristics: larger type; undamaged. Varnish deep red, finely shaded into a paler [colour]. Very fine workmanship everywhere with beautiful purfling. The front and back have medium

<sup>67</sup> As already indicated, ms. Cozio 41 was ‘verified’ in June 1801, and ms. Cozio 25 in July 1801. The spring and summer months of 1801 appear to have been a period when Count Cozio engaged in some serious ‘house-keeping’ with respect to the documentation of his instrument collection.

<sup>68</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42 is fully paginated by Count Cozio.

<sup>69</sup> Count Cozio’s reference to Antonio Stradivari’s grandson – Antonio (II), son of Paolo – implies that these violins were purchased after the death of Paolo on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1775, but, if so, there is no extant correspondence relating to such a purchase. It is probable that Count Cozio, after 25 years, had simply forgotten that his dealings with Antonio Stradivari’s grandson related principally to the purchase of the workshop tools and equipment.

<sup>70</sup> The 1717 violin is now clearly stated by Count Cozio to have an ‘Antonius Stradiyarius’ label. See this volume’s Appendix for consideration of the 1717 violin’s altered identity.

<sup>71</sup> This opening phrase is written as an annotation in the top-left corner of the sheet of paper.

<sup>72</sup> The text – *con tasello di rinforzo sopra l'anima postovi dall'autore* – in smaller handwriting, was subsequently(?) squeezed in between the already-written lines of text. Note that the Count writes *ta[s]sello*, but subsequently *pezza larga*, to describe the reinforcing pieces of wood glued to the underside of the front plate.

<sup>73</sup> *Bosco*, in the previous description, has now been replaced by *legno*.

<sup>74</sup> Count Cozio’s description of the tonal qualities indicates that he played this violin. But, if this is the same instrument as the *Messiah* violin, he managed to play it without causing any wear to the varnish, either to the left or the right of the tail-piece, or on the back plate, such wear being inevitable before chin rests and shoulder rests were developed. Louis Spohr’s invention of the chin rest was not until c1820. The Rev. H. R. Haweis (Haweis (1898) p. 159) comments: ‘Quite within the last thirty years the cult of chin rests has become almost universal.’ Shoulder rests have only been commonplace in the last seventy or eighty years.

arching, tapering smoothly towards the edges. The front has straight grain expanding to medium width, with a reinforcing patch above the sound-post inserted by the maker.<sup>75</sup> Jointed back. The flames are wide and brilliant, but do not match [across the centre joint] and incline slightly upwards.<sup>76</sup> The neck button is two-thirds of a circle. The ribs and neck are made of equally good [matching?] wood. The neck inclined backwards, the [new, longer?] fingerboard positioned, and a wide square patch [set] above the sound-post for a crack which is invisible, and perhaps for necessary reinforcement, by G. B. Guadagnini. Good scroll and black rim – as usual. Value at least one hundred and fifty zecchini.

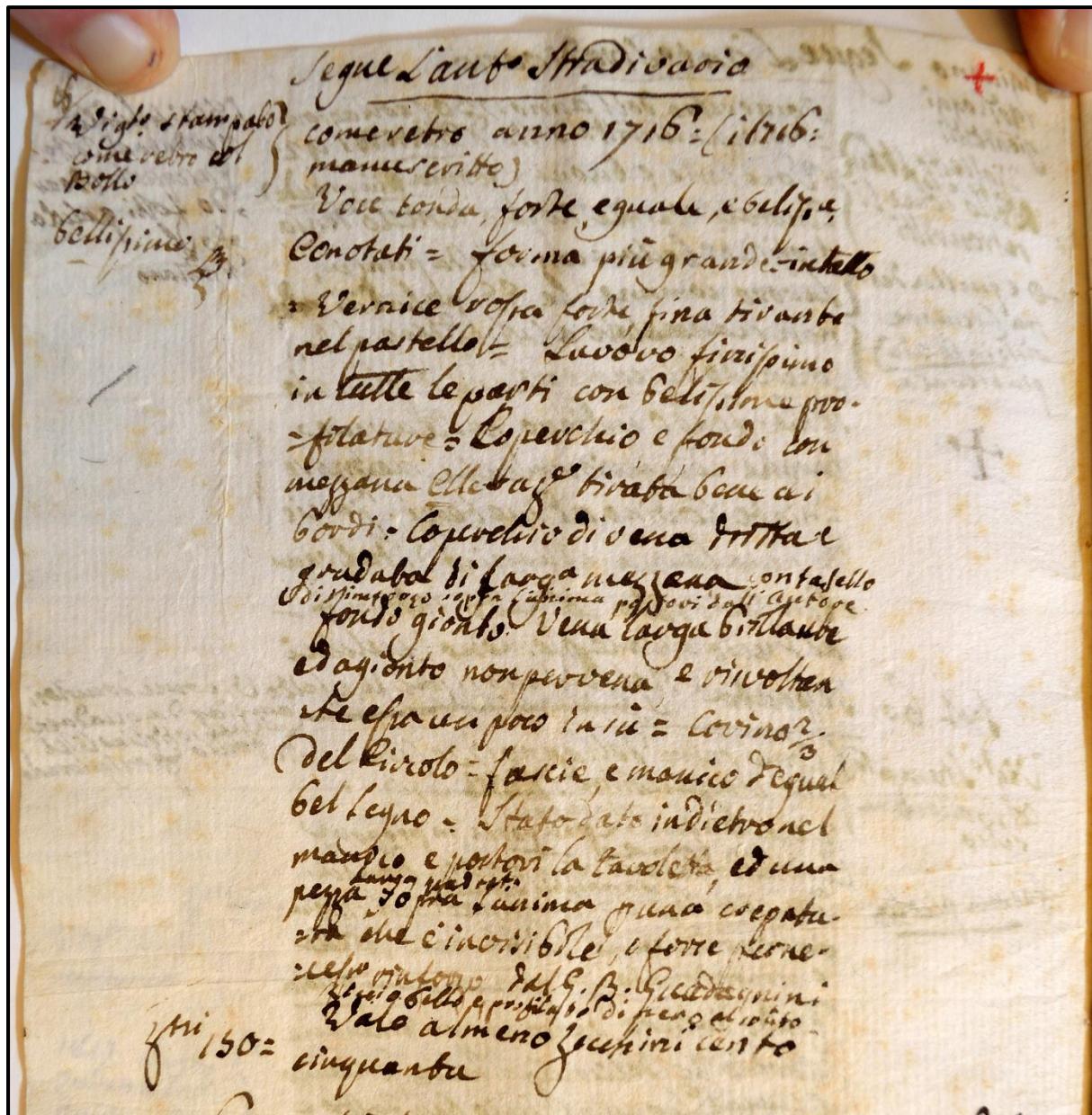


Plate 9: BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42, p. 8

<sup>75</sup> ‘Squeezed in’ text. Cf. the aforementioned 1774-75 description: con un tasello sopra l’anima sotto il scagnello per fortezza stato messo dal autore.

<sup>76</sup> The ambiguity here is whether one defines the flames on the back plate of an instrument as angled upwards *towards* the centre joint or angled upwards *away* from the centre joint. The *Messiah* violin has back-plate flames which are angled upwards towards the centre joint.

The present author's translated description – ‘tapering smoothly towards the edges’ – is not matched by the physical reality of the *Messiah* violin. The Hills draw particular attention to the following aspects of their *Salabue/Messiah* violin:

The violin has several unmistakable characteristics. The most original and distinctive is the height and pronounced sharpness of the wave-like ridge, bordering the surfaces of the back and the belly close to the outline. In other instruments of the same maker this *ridge*<sup>77</sup> is much rounder in form. Let us further illustrate the point. [...] In our example the surface [of the belly] rises outwards from the purfling in a concave curve to a greater height and to a more sharply defined ridge than in any other Stradivari instrument known to us.<sup>78</sup>

To reinforce the point about the ridge, the Hills add:

In the Brescian instruments, for instance, there is, as a general rule, no hollowing near the edges of the backs and bellies, nor any *bordering ridge*<sup>79</sup> like that discussed above.<sup>80</sup>

In their subsequent 1902 monograph the Hills provide illustrations of the bass-side *f*-hole and the adjacent C-bout for eight Stradivari violins.<sup>81</sup> In all cases the profile and prominence of the border – on the outside of the purfling – can be seen and understood through the illustrator's skilful use of shading; the convex edge of the 1680 violin, for example, is clearly much less pronounced than that of the 1690 *Tuscan* violin (see Plates 10a and 10b). The Hills' illustration of the front-plate bass-side lower corner of the *Messiah* violin (see Plate 10f) makes clear the non-rolled, ‘ski-ramp’ edge – quite unlike any of the other examples.<sup>82</sup> Since this edge is so unusual one might have expected Count Cozio to draw attention to it if it was part of a violin in his possession, but, within his 8<sup>th</sup> April 1801 description, there is no such mention.<sup>83</sup>

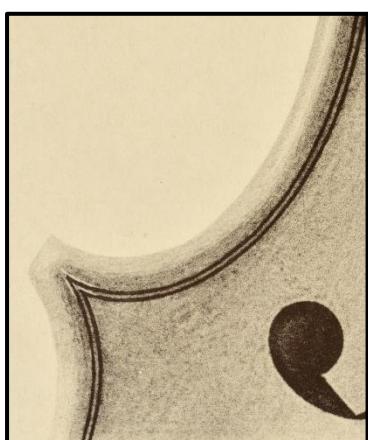


Plate 10a: A 1680 violin  
(Hill (1902). p. 34)

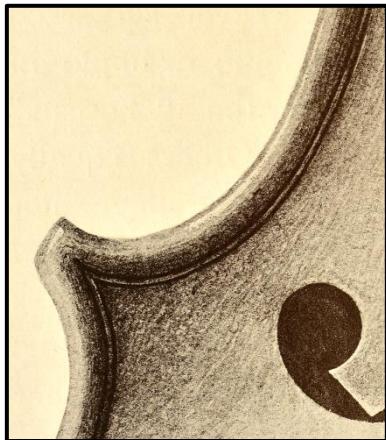


Plate 10b: The 1690 *Tuscan* vln  
(Hill (1902) p. 42)

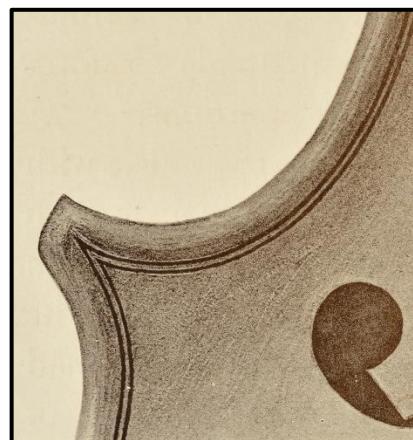


Plate 10c: A 1694 ‘Long Pattern’ vln  
(Hill (1902) p. 46)

<sup>77</sup> Hill emphasis.

<sup>78</sup> Hill (1891) pp. 21-22.

<sup>79</sup> Hill emphasis.

<sup>80</sup> Hill (1891) p. 25.

<sup>81</sup> Hill (1902) pp. 34, 42, 46, 52, 62, 64, 82, and 88.

<sup>82</sup> For photographic confirmation, in colour, see *The Strad*, August 2001, front cover. Alternatively, see *The Strad*, March 2011, p. 33 for a photograph of the edge of the *Messiah* front plate at the same bass-side C-bout; the diagonally-rising ‘ski-ramp’ edge is explicit. A longitudinal view of the edges of the *Messiah* violin can be found in MIAM:CC/Milnes p. 162 where the lighting of the photograph is most helpful in revealing the profile of the edge.

<sup>83</sup> Not one of the thirty-five violins which are label-dated between 1709 and 1722 and photographed in high resolution by Jan Röhrmann in Volume III of *Antonius Stradiuarius* (Jost Thöne Verlag, 2010) shows an edge-profile which is similar to that of the *Messiah* violin.

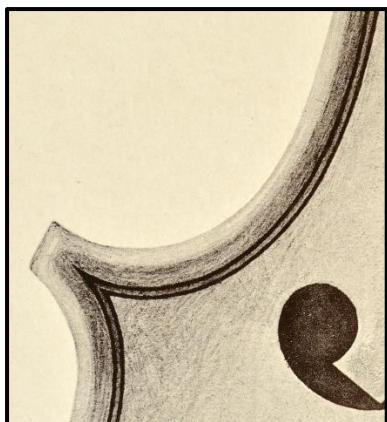


Plate 10d: The 1704 *Betts* violin  
(Hill (1902) p. 52)

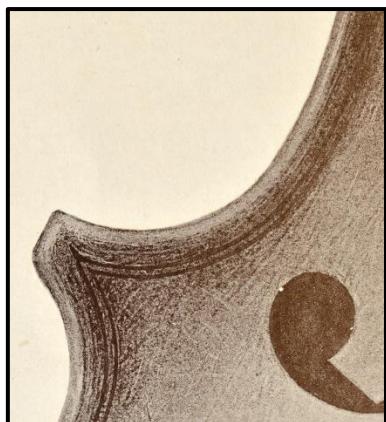


Plate 10e: The 1714 *Dolphin* violin  
(Hill (1902) p. 62)

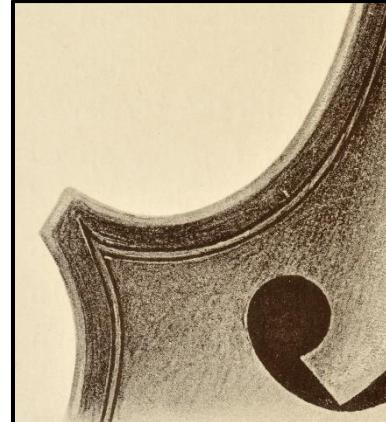


Plate 10f: The 1716 *Messiah* violin  
(Hill (1902) p. 64)

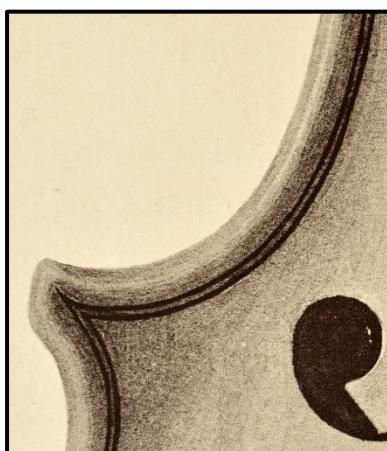


Plate 10g: A 1726 violin  
(Hill (1902) p. 82)

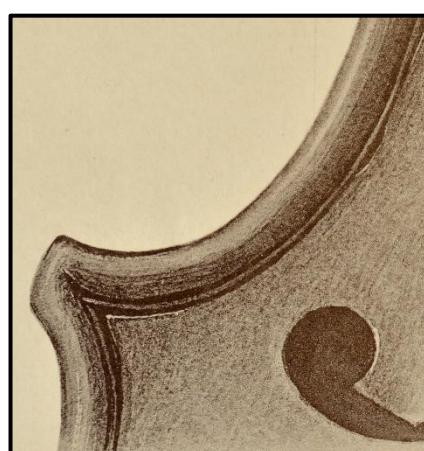


Plate 10h: The 1736 *Muntz* violin  
(Hill (1902) p. 88)

In his technical writings (transcribed and grouped by Renzo Bacchetta into the *Liutologia* section of the *Carteggio*) Count Cozio comments on Stradivari's treatment of his plate borders:

The arching of the violins of Antonio Stradivari, especially those made during the 18<sup>th</sup> century – which are the best for power – [...] have no less arching elevation than [the violins] of the Amatis. However, this [Stradivari's] arching, in every direction [both longitudinally and transversely] fades away [to nothing] a short distance away from the purfling, and since there is no contrary curvature or excavation [concavity] in the vicinity of the purfling, this makes it look as if the arching is low and has minimal elevation.<sup>84</sup>

The 'ski-ramp' edges of the *Messiah* violin (Plate 11) do not correspond with Count Cozio's 8<sup>th</sup> April 1801 description of a 1716 Stradivari violin.

<sup>84</sup> Translated from BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 9; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 95.



Plate 11: The *Messiah* violin: front plate, upper bout, bass-side border  
Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

As in his 1774-75 description, Count Cozio mentions a reinforcing patch above the sound-post, inserted by Stradivari, and also a ‘wide square patch’ also above the sound-post, fitted by Guadagnini (*una pezza larga quadrata sopra l’anima*). An explanation for this apparently contradictory situation might be that when the Count asked Guadagnini to raise the violin’s neck and to incline it backwards at a slightly steeper angle (by inserting a wedge at the foot of the neck – see Chapter 11) and to fit a (longer?) fingerboard Guadagnini discovered on the underside of the front plate a small protective patch which he assumed to be the work of Antonio.<sup>85</sup> Guadagnini might have decided that, with the increased tension generated by the strings running above a re-angled neck, and therefore with increased downward pressure on the bridge (and the sound-post), Antonio’s patch would not be strong enough to protect the underside of the front plate where the upper end of the sound-post would be bearing against it, and so he removed the patch and replaced it with a larger, square, piece of wood of his own manufacture.<sup>86</sup> This large square piece thus covered up all residual traces of the previous,

<sup>85</sup> To raise and re-angle the neck would require the prior removal of the neck by extracting the three iron nails holding the neck to the body. To gain access to the nail heads would require the removal of the front plate.

<sup>86</sup> In his description of a medium-sized 1717 Stradivari violin ‘with a new label’ (BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 41; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 202) Count Cozio writes: *stato arrangiato da Guadagnini, cioè messa uno gran tasello che tiene sotto lo scagnello per tutta la lunghesa delle FF* (‘arranged by Guadagnini; that is [he] put a large supporting patch under the bridge for the entire length of the f-holes’).

smaller, patch. Guadagnini duly reported his modification to the Count, who noted the details in his descriptive entry.

With respect to a patch, or patches, within the *Messiah* violin, the Hills state:

The necessity of opening the instrument [their *Salabue* violin] in order to insert a stronger bass bar, gave us an opportunity of examining the inside, which is as remarkable as the outside. [...] everything inside is as Stradivari left it.<sup>87</sup>

Given that, to carry out this bass-bar alteration, the Hills had to work directly on the underside of the detached front plate it is inconceivable that a patch (or patches) – or the faintest evidential trace of a patch once having existed – could have been present yet not seen (assuming, for the moment, that Count Cozio's violin and the Hills' violin are one and the same). Furthermore, if, prior to the Hills' purchase of the *Le Messie* violin in 1890, someone removed the wooden patch (or patches) and dissolved away all traces of the glue used to hold the patch(es) in place then the ‘invisible’ crack which was apparently being supported by the ‘wide square patch’ would have lost its necessary support. Despite various commentators poring over the *Messiah* violin in recent years no-one has identified any sort of front-plate crack or weakness in the vicinity of the sound-post. John Dilworth<sup>88</sup> has probably handled the violin most often – see the descriptive detail included in his *The Strad* article of August 2001, or his subsequent eulogy in *The Strad*, March 2011.<sup>89</sup> Dilworth’s extensive familiarity with the violin is matched by Roger Hargrave,<sup>90</sup> who has stated:

For what it is worth I have probably handled the ‘Messiah’ more than anyone else alive [...] a total of twelve sessions with this instrument in the Ashmolean before 1980.<sup>91</sup>

Neither of these experts has expressed any concerns about the structural integrity of the *Messiah* violin’s front plate in the area around the sound-post.

Thus there was at least one internal patch, possibly two, in the area of the sound-post of the 1716 violin described by Count Cozio in April 1801; in 1890, when the Hills inspected the inside of the violin they had bought from Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume’s descendants there were no patches and no evidence of any patches ever having been present.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, if the neck of the violin which belonged to Count Cozio had already been raised, lengthened, and re-angled by Guadagnini why, according to the usual accounts, would Vuillaume have needed to repeat this operation in 1855?<sup>93</sup>

Again, within Count Cozio’s 1801 description, there is no mention of any longitudinal resin-pocket repair to the right of the fingerboard. Some commentators have endeavoured to explain this omission by suggesting that Count Cozio simply did not see the wooden infill – nearly 30mm in length and 2mm wide and of a noticeably lighter colour than the surrounding wood. John Dilworth and Carlo Chiesa have commented:

Given the location, close to the fingerboard on the treble side and partially hidden, it seems a perfectly reasonable decision [for Antonio Stradivari] to seal and patch the flaw. The question is why the Count did not record it, while at the same time he did make note of a similar repair in a

<sup>87</sup> Hill (1891) pp. 23-24. The tone of the Hills’ text suggests that inlays, or patches, were not seen. See Chapter 12 for further consideration of the Hills’ 1890 inspection of their “*Salabue* Stradivari”.

<sup>88</sup> Violin maker and restorer, who worked at the J & A Beare violin dealership for twelve years.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Pure thrill’ *The Strad*, August 2001, pp. 838-845; ‘Silent witness’, *The Strad*, March 2011, pp. 33-40.

<sup>90</sup> Hargrave graduated from Newark School of Violin Making in 1978 and was then employed by W. E. Hill & Sons.

<sup>91</sup> Letter from Roger Hargrave to *The Strad*, October 2001, p. 1071.

<sup>92</sup> It surely cannot be the case that the patches *were* present but that the three Hill brothers, and their elderly father, just ignored them.

<sup>93</sup> See Chapter 12 for the commentary, from Rev H R Haweis, which identifies Vuillaume as being responsible for the modification of the neck of the *Le Messie* violin through the insertion of a wedge at the foot.

1742 Francesco Stradivari violin.<sup>94</sup> The simple answer is probably that the repair on the later instrument is very prominently located on the front beneath the bass soundhole and the patch clearly visible.<sup>95</sup>

The resin-pocket repair on the *Messiah* violin is not ‘partially hidden’ and Count Cozio could not have written his extensive description of his 1716 violin without having looked closely at every part of the instrument. The proposition that the visibility of the resin-pocket infill on the front of a Francesco Stradivari violin explains why Count Cozio did not mention a resin-pocket infill on his Antonio Stradivari violin lacks plausibility.

Count Cozio makes no mention of any identification letter(s) written inside the 1716 peg-box, letters that he specifically mentions in the next entry of the same inventory (ms. Cozio 42) where he describes a 1717 violin in his possession (see Plate 12):

*Conotati: forma assai grande con marca in capo al manico nel scartoccio P.G.*<sup>96</sup>

Characteristics: a very large type, with a mark at the head of the neck, in the cavity: *P.G.*<sup>97</sup>

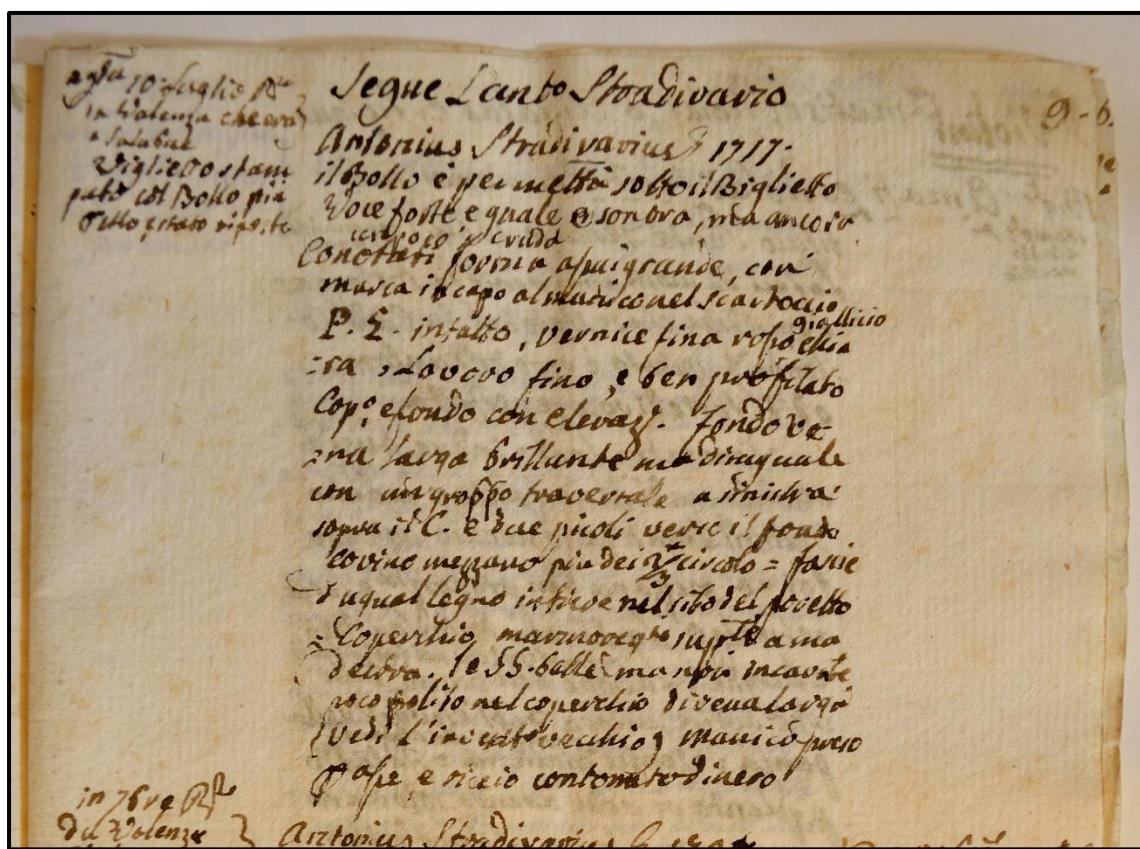


Plate 12: BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42

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In the first description of 1774-75, the neck button of the 1716 violin was described as ‘small, but more than a semicircle’; in the subsequent 1801 description the neck button is ‘two-thirds of a circle’.

<sup>94</sup> The Francesco Stradivari *Salabue* violin; see the Appendix.

<sup>95</sup> MIAM:CC/Milnes p. 160.

<sup>96</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 212. The verb *scartocciare* means ‘to empty out’, or ‘to unpack’, which relates to the carving out of the wood when creating the peg-box cavity.

<sup>97</sup> Bacchetta transcribes these letters as ‘P.E.’ but examination of Cozio’s manuscript indicates that the thickly-inked lettering is clearly intended to be understood as *P.G.*. See Chapter 2 for further information about the *P.G.* mould.

The likelihood is that these very slightly different specifications are nonetheless of the same neck button. In a similar manner:

the 1774-75 description has *le fasse e manico tutto dell'istesso bosco*  
the 1801 description has *fascie e manico d'egual bel legno*

the 1774-75 description has *vena larga e viva*  
the 1801 description has *vena larga brillante*

the 1774-75 description has *con un tasello sopra l'anima sotto il scagnello per fortezza  
stato messo dal autore*

the 1801 description has *con tasello di rinforzo sopra l'anima postovi dall'autore*

the 1774-75 description has *lavoratura [...] della maggior finezza possibile*

the 1801 description has *lavoro finissimo in tutte le parti*

Since, as indicated, some of the 1801 descriptive entries are elaborations of entries which were written by Count Cozio in 1774-75, it is very likely that the 1716 violin described in 1801 is the same as that which was described in 1774-75. This violin is also the ‘most beautiful’, ‘number one’, ‘the best in equality [of voice?] and beauty’, and was of a ‘larger type’. In 1823, defined as *forma P.G.*, it was placed in the Count’s principal collection (i.e. Count Cozio kept this violin for nearly fifty years). However, neither the 1774-75 description nor the 1801 description indicates a convincing physical agreement between the violin described therein and the present-day *Messiah* violin.

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The third descriptive entry for a 1716 Stradivari violin is dated 16<sup>th</sup> January 1808 (Plate 13) and appears in Count Cozio’s *Inventario degli strumenti nella guardarobba alta di noce nel gabinetto* (‘Inventory of the instruments in the tall walnut wardrobe [cupboard] in the closet’).<sup>98</sup>

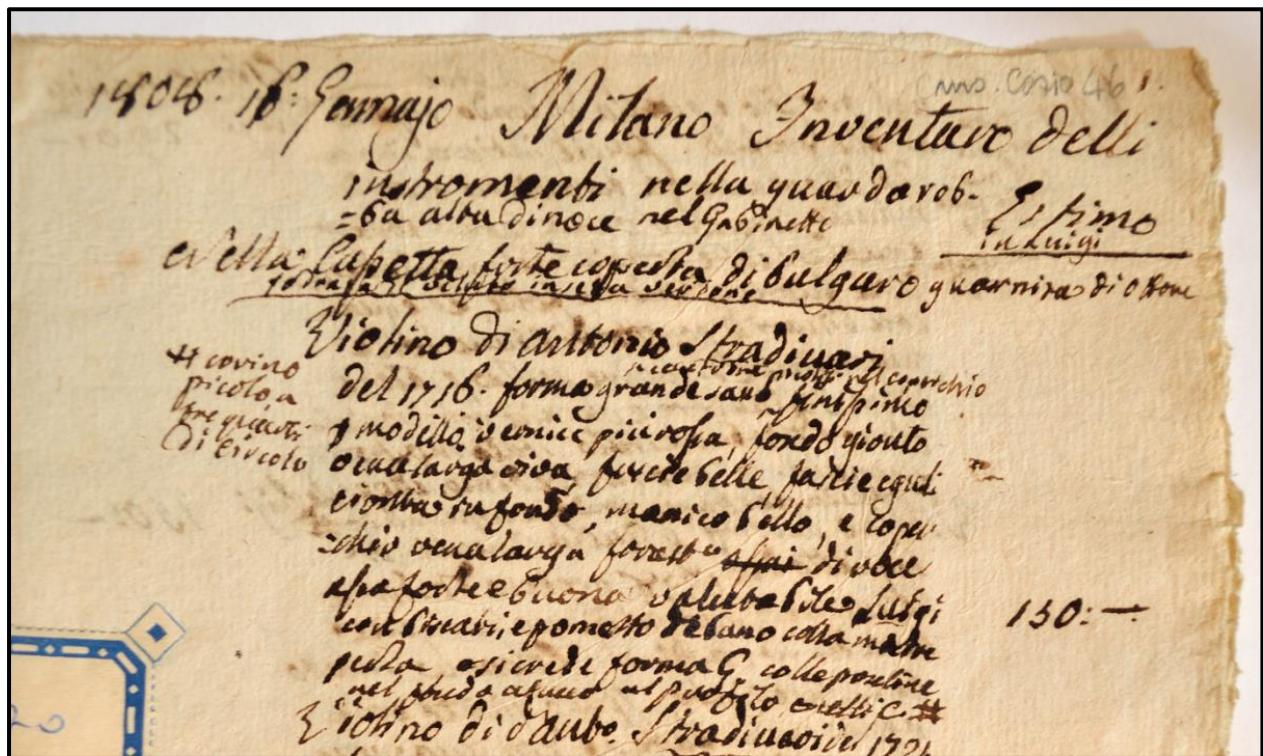


Plate 13: BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 46

<sup>98</sup> ‘Closet’ – perhaps a small, private, room – is Giuseppe Baretti’s translation of *gabinetto*.

*Violino di Antonio Stradivari del 1716. Forma grande sano – contorni picoli nel coperchio<sup>99</sup> – finissimo per modello. Vernice più rossa, fondo gionto vena larga viva, fascie belle, fascie eguali gionta in fondo, manico bello, e coperchio vena larga a forast[ier]<sup>o assai</sup> [sic] di voce assai forte e buono valutabile luigi 150 con biscari, e pometto d’ebano colla madreperla, si crede forma G. colle pontone nel fondo e [?] al profilo, [...] covino picolo a tre quarti di circolo.<sup>100</sup>*

Violin of Antonio Stradivari of 1716. Large type, in good condition – the borders of the front plate are small<sup>101</sup> – the finest of this type. Deep red varnish. Jointed back, wide and lively flames, beautiful ribs, equal ribs [i.e. the ribs are made from the same wood as used for the back plate], jointed at the bottom [end-pin], beautiful neck, and the front has wide grain [and is made of] foreign [wood]. Its voice is very strong and good.<sup>102</sup> Worth 150 *Luigi*.<sup>103</sup> With pegs and end-pin<sup>104</sup> of ebony with mother-of-pearl. It is believed [to be from the] *G* mould, with dowels [locating pins] in the back and [?] in the purfling [...? the neck-button is small, three-quarters of a circle.

Note that Count Cozio writes *si crede forma G* which plausibly identifies Stradivari’s large *G* mould; Renzo Bacchetta transcribes the text as *si crede forma grande*.<sup>105</sup> Examination of the manuscript (Plate 13) reveals a strongly-inked, upper-case, letter *G*. The admiration expressed by Count Cozio for this violin, the specific identification of the ‘deep red varnish’, the valuation of 150 *Luigi* – these features match the information given in the descriptive text written in 1801 (see p.12 of this chapter); clearly this is the same violin as before.

Renzo Bacchetta makes another error of transcription with the next entry in the manuscript where he presents Count Cozio’s information concerning the aforementioned 1724 Stradivari/Paganini violin (see Chapter 2). The Count writes *Violino di d’Ant<sup>o</sup> Stradiuarius 1724 forma più grande P.G. [...]* but Bacchetta offers only *forma più grande*.<sup>106</sup>

Further evidence appears in the ‘grandson’ inventory drawn up by Count Cozio in April 1801 and its description of a Stradivari violin from 173[?] (the final numeral is obliterated by inked alterations).<sup>107</sup> The Count writes: *Conotati: forma grande G marcato nel scartoccio* (‘Characteristics: large mould *G* marked in the [peg-box] cavity’) and has drawn the letter *G*, initially rather thinly and faintly inked and, in appearance, more akin to a ‘6’ with a long, curved, upper tail (see Plate 14). However, to avoid any ambiguity, the Count has then carefully drawn a capital-letter *G* on top of the ‘6’ and used the

<sup>99</sup> The text – *contorni picoli nel coperchio* – has been squeezed into the main body of text.

<sup>100</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 46; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 227. The text – *covino picolo a tre quarti di circolo* – appears as a side-margin addition with a ‘hash’ mark which corresponds with another ‘hash’ located at the end of the descriptive entry. Count Cozio’s handwriting is difficult to decipher but *quarti* is more likely than *quinti* (which is the transcription by Renzo Bacchetta). What might be the ‘*n*’ of *quinti* is shaped very differently to the ‘*n*’ which, shaped normally, appears elsewhere on the manuscript; in addition, ‘three fifths of a circle’ is an unusual proportion.

<sup>101</sup> This indication of a ‘small’ dimension between the outer line of the purfling and the extremity of the plate does not correlate with the *Messiah* violin which has a full-size border-width of 3.75mm (measurement sourced from the poster-supplement published by *The Strad* in March 2011).

<sup>102</sup> Thus the violin had been played.

<sup>103</sup> ‘Luigi’ was the colloquial name used in Italy for ‘Louis d’or’ gold coins issued by the Kings of France. The coins continued to be issued after the French Revolution, and the 20-franc coin was known as a ‘Napoléon’ – see also Chapter 6, footnote 82). Thus Count Cozio’s price of 150 *Luigi* was equivalent to 3,000 francs.

<sup>104</sup> *Pomo* can mean a ‘door knob’ and the Count’s *pometto* agrees with the circular shape of a violin’s small end-pin (around which the loop of gut from the tail-piece is secured).

<sup>105</sup> Cozio/Bacchetta p. 227.

<sup>106</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 46; Cozio/Bacchetta p. 227. Count Cozio has placed ink dots, indicating ‘handwritten’, under only the last two numerals of the label date; thus the date was ‘1724’. Either this is yet another fraudulent label or the belief that all Stradivari’s labels from 1700 onwards had only the first numeral printed is questionable (see Hill (1902) p. 218).

<sup>107</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42.

width of the nib to ensure that almost all of the 6 is covered up and the *G* becomes unmistakable.<sup>108</sup> Bacchetta's transcription is *forma grande incavato nel scartoccio*.<sup>109</sup>

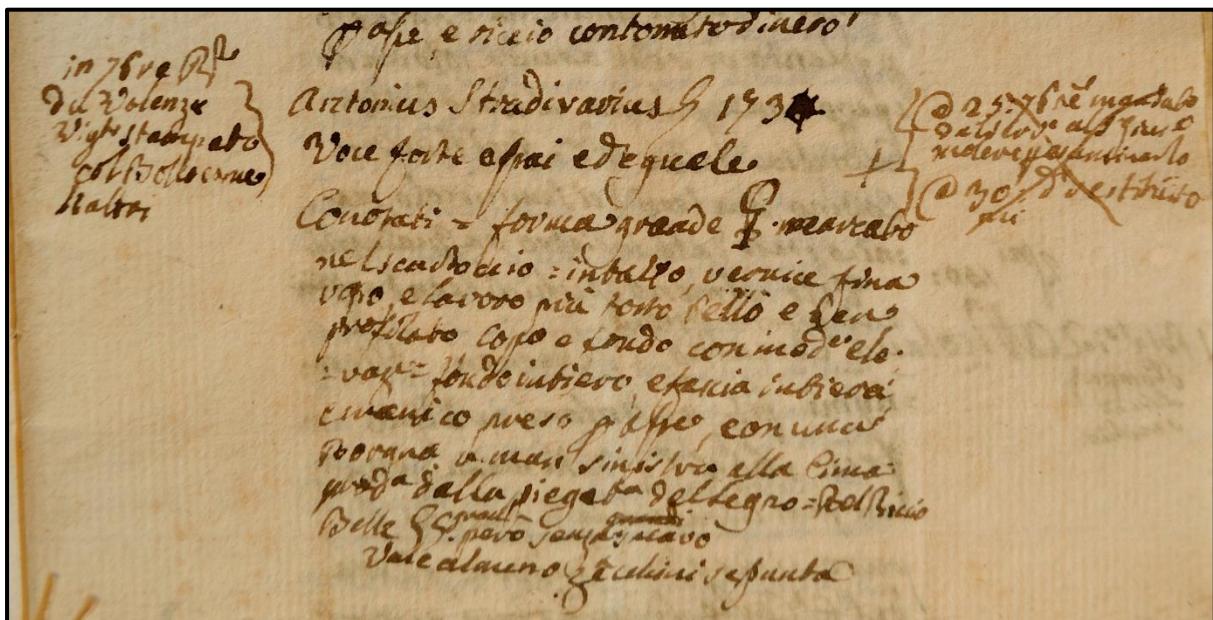


Plate 14: BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 42

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Within the Count Cozio archives in Cremona there are further brief, but important, descriptive references to Stradivari violins label-dated 1716:

1. A March 1776 Memo: *Nota de stromenti de migliori autori [...]* ('Note of the instruments of the best makers') in which Count Cozio writes:

*Milano veduto forma grande<sup>110</sup> vero altro ai Mantegazza del Antonio Stradivari con una picola rottura dell'anno 1716 gigliati 20.<sup>111</sup>*

Milan, seen, large mould, genuine, another [owned by] the Mantegazzas, by Antonio Stradivari, with a small crack, of the year 1716, [price] 20 gigliati.

2. An inventory of instruments, dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 1816, and entitled *Elenco ragionato* ('Annotated listing'):

*No 5. Altro della forma più grande, e capo d'opera d'antonio Stradivari Cremonese altro alievo del su[dett]o Nicola Amati, dell anno 1716. Lavoro finissimo, e di qualità, e forza straordinario di voce, fondo giunto di acero di vena larga vernice rossa belissima pur esso intatto effettivi ongari trecento.<sup>112</sup>*

No. 5. Another [violin] of the larger mould, and masterpiece of Antonio Stradivari, Cremonese, another pupil of the aforementioned Nicolò Amati, of the year 1716; of the finest workmanship and quality, and extraordinary strength of voice; joined back of maple with wide flames, beautiful red varnish, also undamaged; nominal price three hundred ongari.

<sup>108</sup> It is noticeable that the Count's capital-letter *G* is very similarly shaped to the *G* which is inked on Stradivari's *G* mould and on the *PG* mould (see Chapter 2).

<sup>109</sup> Cozio/Bacchetta p. 212.

<sup>110</sup> In March 1776 Count Cozio had still not received the box of moulds and tools from Antonio (II) Stradivari; since this violin was owned by the Mantegazza family perhaps *forma grande* simply indicates the Count's acknowledgement that the violin was of a 'large type', or a 'large model'.

<sup>111</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 30; see also Cozio/Bacchetta p. 180.

<sup>112</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 82; not transcribed by Bacchetta. *Ongari* were gold coins from Hungary, used in the Balkans area as an alternative to the Italian trade coin *zecchini* (a.k.a. *gigliato*); see also Chapter 4, footnote 5.

3. An inventory of 1822, written by Count Cozio in French, listing instruments held by his banker, Carlo Carli, in Milan:

*Un violon de tres grand patron, et chef d'oeuvre qu'on garanti fait par Antoine Stradivario en tres bon etat avec bilet de l'an 1716, de la plus grand force pour orqueste, e concert.*<sup>113</sup>

A violin of very large pattern, and a masterpiece, which is guaranteed made by Antonio Stradivari; in very good condition, with a label of the year 1716; of the most powerful voice, for orchestral and concert [use].

This violin is probably the same as that listed in description 2.; both descriptions draw particular attention to the size of the violin – *forma più grande*; *un violon de tres grand patron* – and the strength of voice – *forza straordinario di voce*; *de la plus grand force pour orqueste*. To these correspondences can be added the commentaries which Count Cozio wrote in 1816 and 1823:

I still own two [Stradivari] violins, of the year 1736 [...] which are undamaged and of an astonishing force and quality of voice, barely any less than his undamaged masterpiece, of even greater force and beauty,<sup>114</sup> dated 1716, which stands out with the Amatis in my collection.<sup>115</sup>

[...] two of the principal masterpieces of this celebrated Antonio Stradivari, namely one of larger mould [*di forma più grande*], very beautiful workmanship and wood, and of perfect equality of voice<sup>116</sup> and of great power, carrying a label affixed there, 1716; and the other, although of medium size, carries a label of the year 1736 [...] which comes very close to the perfection and the sonority of the former.<sup>117</sup>

It is plausible that these documents are referring to the same large, powerful, 1716 violin – quite probably that which was described in 1774-75, described again in 1801, and, in 1823, placed by Count Cozio in his principal collection. Given the Count's admiration for this violin it is likely to be the 1716 P.G. violin which he measured on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1816 (see Chapter 5).

4. An inventory of October 1820 ('verified' in October 1822) which includes:

*No. 5. Antº Stradivari bellmo f. [forma] G, 1716 intatto vi è*<sup>118</sup>

No. 5. [violin of] Antonio Stradivari, most beautiful, mould G, 1716, undamaged, it is there.

5. An inventory of 15<sup>th</sup> January 1823:

*Stradivari Antonio f<sup>a</sup> P.G. fondo da due sano capo d'opera 1716*<sup>119</sup>

Stradivari Antonio, mould P.G., two-piece back, in good condition, masterpiece, 1716.

In evaluating, through playing, the tonal qualities and concert-hall power of his violins Count Cozio would undoubtedly have left marks on the varnish of the instruments, especially chin marks next to the tail-piece, and abraded areas on the lower part of the bottom plate. The *Messiah* violin is devoid of such markings: 'The varnish is a study in itself, for it is untouched and unrubbed, as if it had been laid on yesterday.'<sup>120</sup>

<sup>113</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 65; not transcribed by Bacchetta.

<sup>114</sup> ... *della più gran forza e bellezza*; again, therefore, this 1716 violin was played.

<sup>115</sup> Translated from Cozio/Bacchetta p. 42.

<sup>116</sup> ... di perfetta uguaglianza di voce. Cf. il primo d'uguaglianza e bellezza (in the description of 1774-75) and voce tonda, forte, eguale, e belissima (in the description of 1801).

<sup>117</sup> Translated from *Postscript Nota Bene*, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1823; see also Cozio/Bacchetta, p. 67. Note, again, the reference to the quality of voice (sonority) of this 1716 violin.

<sup>118</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 60; not transcribed by Bacchetta.

<sup>119</sup> BSCr, LC, ms. Cozio 68; not transcribed by Bacchetta.

<sup>120</sup> Hill (1891) p. 23. The comments written by Rev. H. R. Haweis (Haweis (1898) pp. 76-77) regarding the condition of the varnish on the *Messiah* violin are similar: '[The violin was] covered throughout and uniformly with thick rich red-brown varnish, laid on with a firm brush, level and lavish. It seemed to have left the workshop only the day before.' See Chapter 12 for further consideration of the varnish on Stradivari's violins.