



ANTONIO STRADIVARI

*The Empress Caterina*  
of 1708



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of 1708

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Antonio Stradivari  
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# ANTONIO STRADIVARI

## VIOLINS



Antonio Stradivari is almost universally regarded as the greatest violin maker in history, and the value of his instruments reflects that exalted status. He was born in circa 1644, and his 71 year career is a vivid account of early mastery, fluid and ingenious innovation, and indelible craftsmanship and artistry. With the help of his sons Francesco and Omobono, Stradivari made nearly a thousand instruments, of which about 650 survive. They are distinguished equally for their exquisite craftsmanship, materials and unsurpassed tone quality.



# ANTONIO STRADIVARI

## VIOLINS



Stradivari may initially have worked as a woodcarver, but his earliest known label is dated 1666. There is no evidence of a direct connection between Stradivari and Nicolò Amati, but Amati's dominant role in the Cremonese tradition is evident in the work of numerous makers of the period, and the early works of Stradivari show the marked influence of Amati's models and methods.

In 1680 he moved to the Piazza San Domenico in Cremona, and began to work more consistently building instruments, which over the next 20 years began to depart from the Amati school in conception.

In the 1690s Stradivari introduced a new form known as the "Long Pattern" in an effort to equal the sound quality of earlier Brescian instruments.








# ANTONIO STRADIVARI

## VIOLINS



The pinnacle of Stradivari's career is known as the Golden Period and lasted roughly from 1700 to 1720.


Numerous superlative instruments that stand as emblems of the Stradivari legacy were constructed during this period, including the 'Messiah' and 'Lady Blunt'. Special qualities of Golden Period violins include increased breadth, flatter arches, beautifully flamed maple backs, and a lustrous red varnish.

Stradivari's sons were active in their father's shop throughout this period, but their influence is not readily detectable before about 1720.



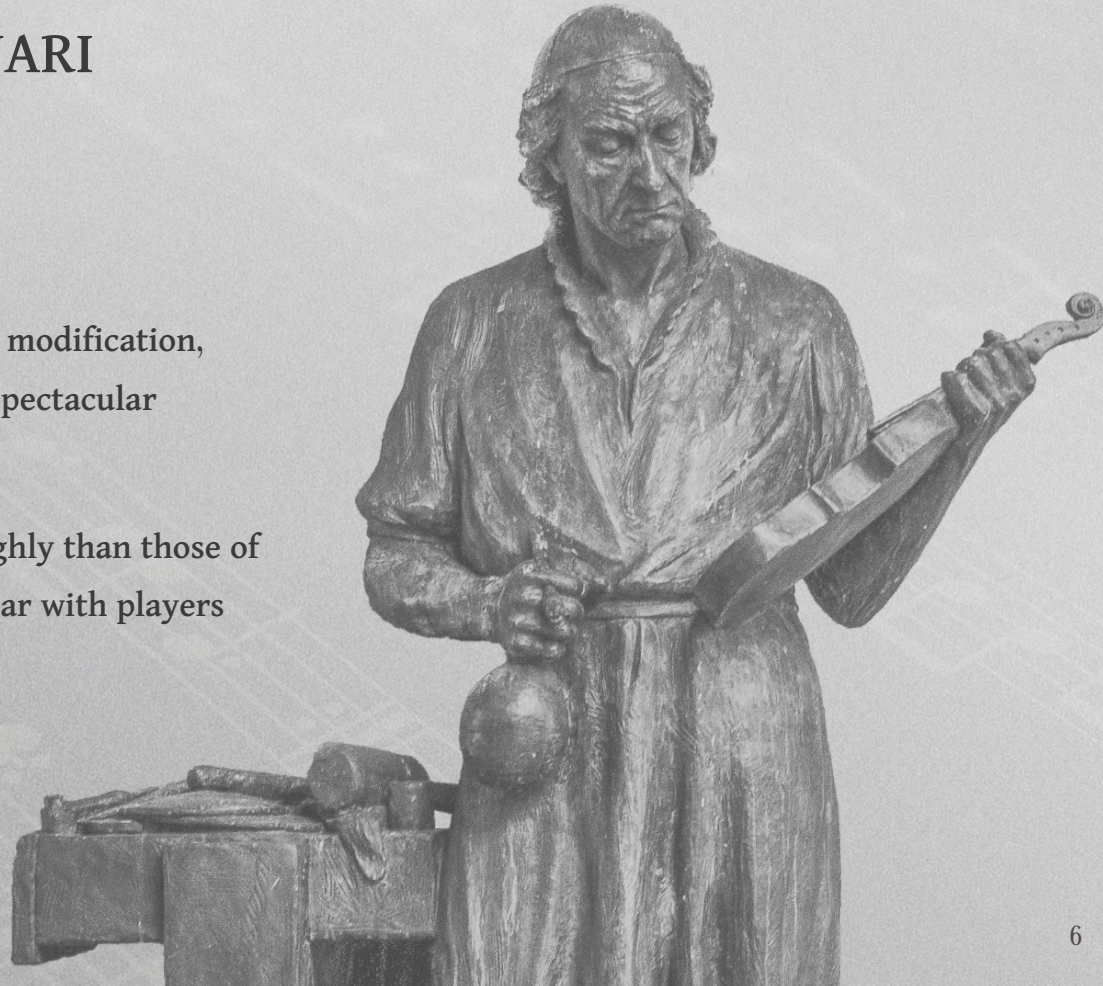
# ANTONIO STRADIVARI

## VIOLINS



The late period is marked by further design modification, evident especially in fuller arches and less spectacular materials.

The violins of this period are lauded less highly than those of the Golden Period but remain equally popular with players and command high prices.







# ANTONIO STRADIVARI

## VIOLINS



While most of the remaining Stradivari instruments are violins, he also built violas and cellos. The violas, of which only about 11 remain, are almost all built on a contralto model of about 40cm in length.

Early cellos are built on the larger dimensions of the 17th century, and most have been cut down, but starting around 1707 Stradivari adopted a new model known as 'forma B', which he used for the prized 'Duport' and 'Davidov' cellos. About 20 'forma B' cellos survive, and they are among the best examples of the craft, rivaled only by those of Montagnana.





History of the

# *Empress Caterina*





## History of the 'Empress Caterina'



Complete in all parts, in good condition and with important provenance reaching back nearly 300 years, the 'Empress Caterina' is a highly attractive Golden Period Stradivari.

Using the resources of the Cozio Archive, specifically the archives and business records of W. E. Hill & Sons, Rembert Wurlitzer, Caressa & Français and William Moennig & Son we have documented the provenance of this important violin.



# History of the 'Empress Caterina'



The history of the 'Empress Caterina' Stradivari was first recorded in 1898 in the Business Records of W. E. Hill & Sons. In April of that year Alfred Hill visited Russia with Baron Johann Knoop, who had extensive business dealings in Russia and was one of the Hills' best customers.

In St. Petersburg and Moscow, Alfred cataloged the collections of Prince Youssapoff and "brought back intelligence concerning the existence of 16 more instruments by Stradivari that were unknown to us before." Among these instruments was the 1708 'Empress Caterina' which Alfred bought for the firm.







## History of the 'Empress Caterina'



According to Alfred Hill, in the mid-18th century, the Russian ambassador to Venice procured this instrument for the Empress Elisabeth Petrovna who reigned over the Russian Empire from 1741-1762.

When Elisabeth died, the violin passed to her successor Catherine the Great, under whose rule the arts prospered and western Enlightenment ideals flourished.



## History of the 'Empress Caterina'



One of Catherine's secretaries of state was Adrian Moïsevitch Gribovsky, an ambitious colonel and court advisor who was a lover of music, an amateur violinist and had his own serf orchestra. The Stradivari passed to Gribovsky and then to his son-in-law, Vasily Yakovlevich Guberti.







## History of the 'Empress Caterina'



Alfred Hill brought the 'Empress Caterina' back to London in 1898 and a year later the Hill firm sold the violin to Mrs. Marie Douglas Stothert, a French violinist who had studied in Brussels and married a wealthy English engineer, Arthur Kendall Stothert.

The Hills noted that Mrs. Stothert was "a fairly brilliant player." A portrait of Mrs. Stothert with her violin, painted by Hubert von Herkomer, is in the collection of the Royal Holloway, University of London.



## History of the 'Empress Caterina'



Twelve years later, Mrs. Stothert traded the 1708 back to Hills and purchased the 1714 'Dolphin' Stradivari, later the concert instrument of Jascha Heifetz.

Two months later the Hills sold the 1708 to Henri Belville, a professional violinist from Bois-Colombes near Paris. The Hills reference the violin in their 1902 monograph on Stradivari, but the date of the instrument was mistakenly recorded as 1706.







## History of the ‘Empress Caterina’



In 1919 the violin was acquired by the French businessman, Prosper Maurel, the owner of the Malt Kneipp company.

Two years later it was sold by Caressa & Français to the violinist Leo Guetta of Venice. While in Guetta’s possession it was exhibited at the 1937 Stradivari Bicentennial exhibition in Cremona and illustrated in the book that followed. After Guetta’s death in 1945, the violin passed to his daughter Peggy Guetta Finzi.



# History of the 'Empress Caterina'



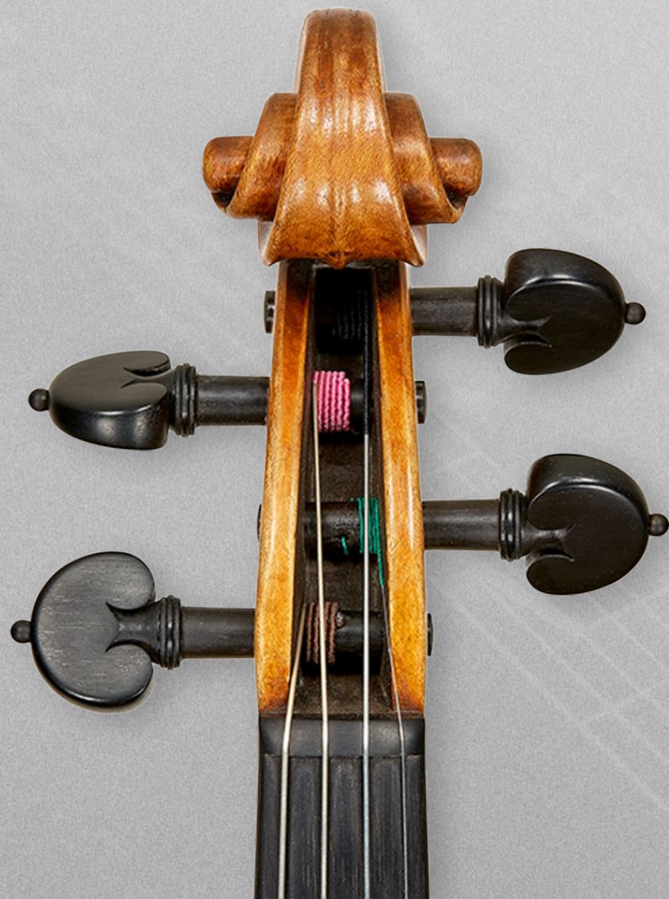
By 1951 the Stradivari had arrived in New York and was certified by Rembert Wurlitzer.

A year later it was sold by William Moennig & Son to Dr. Jacob Gershon-Cohen, a prominent Philadelphia radiologist who pioneered techniques in mammography.

In 1971 the 'Empress Caterina' was bought by the American collector Herbert Axelrod, and in 1982, it was acquired by the German-Italian industrial entrepreneur, Giorgio Feige. The instrument is being sold by Feige's heirs.







## History of the 'Empress Caterina'

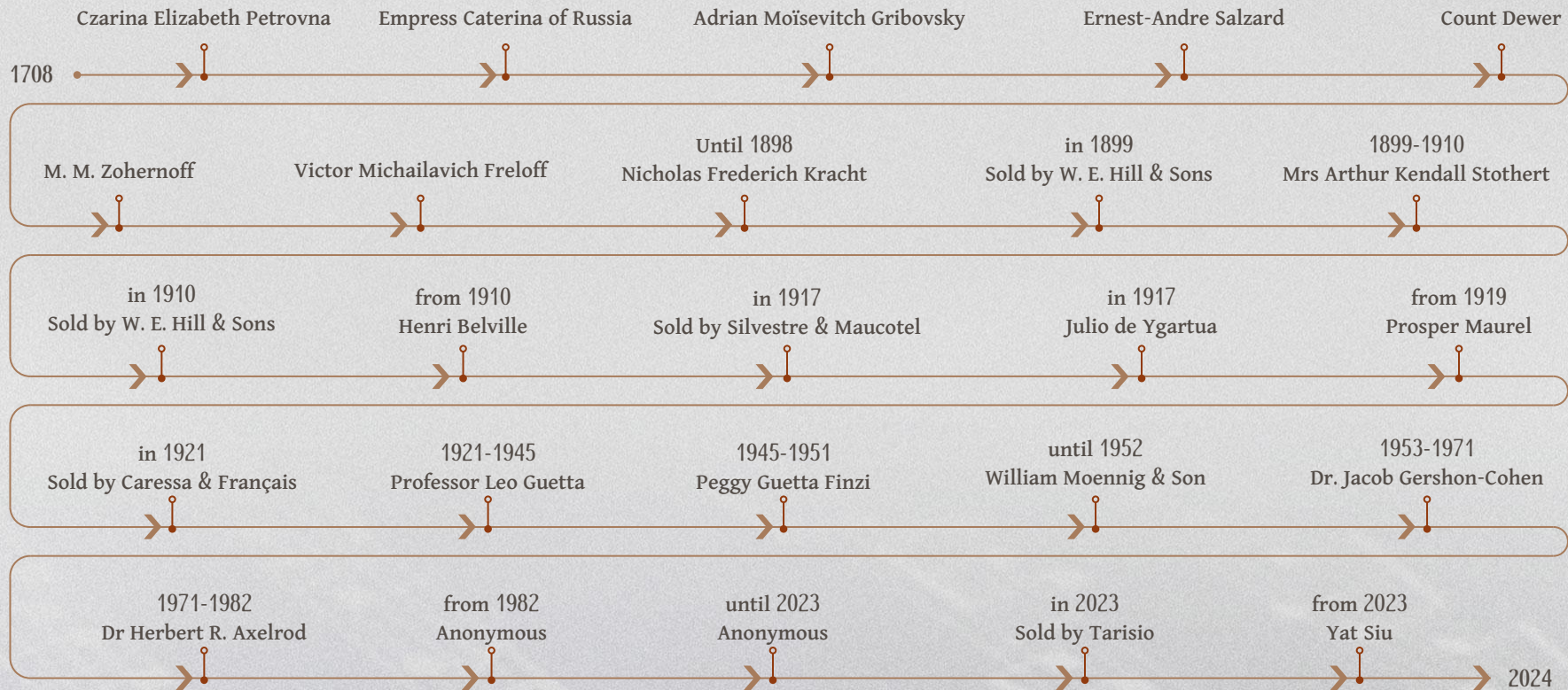


The 'Empress Caterina' is sold with certificates from Tarisio, Rembert Wurlitzer, William Moennig & Son, Silvestre & Maucotel, and Caressa & Français.

A dendrochronology examination dated the latest annual rings for the treble and bass sides of the top to 1700 and 1702 respectively. Significant cross matches were found with the 1713 'Rothschild-Kux', 1719 'Rappoldi', 1718 'Szekely', 1715 'Alard', 1714 'ex-Joachim', 1712 'Hrimaly', 1716 'Baron Wittgenstein' and others.



# Provenance





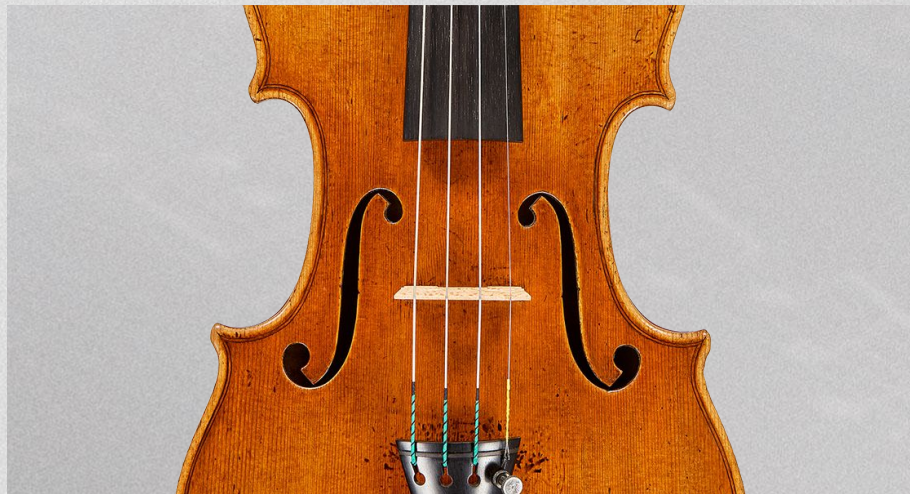


ANTONIO STRADIVARI

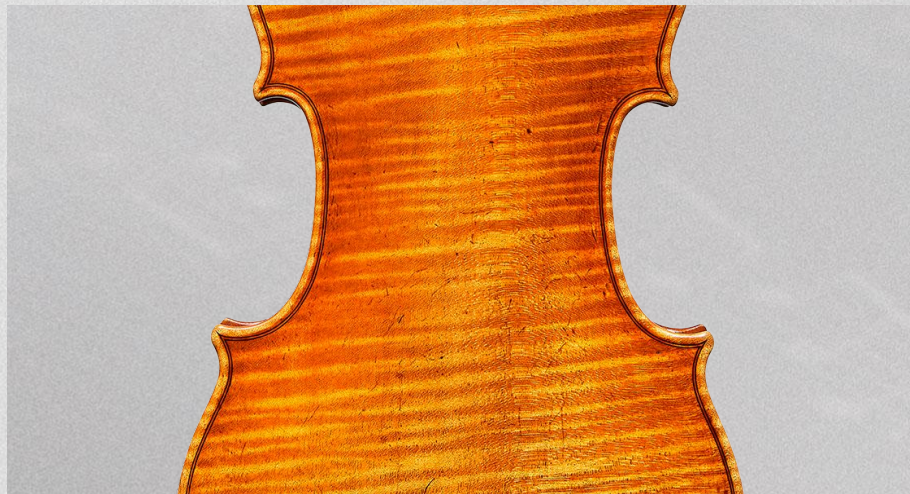
# *The Empress Caterina*

Photos by Taxisio













ANTONIO STRADIVARI

*The Empress Caterina*

Certificates



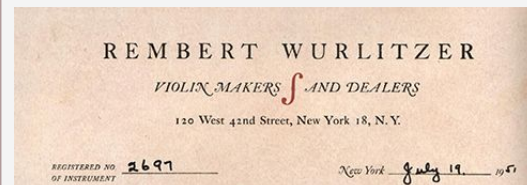
Tarisio, New York, NY (2023)



William Moennig & Son,  
Philadelphia, PA (1952)



Rembert Wurlitzer Inc.,  
New York, NY (1951)



Pierre Vidoudez, Geneva (1946)



Caressa & Français, Paris (1921)



Silvestre & Maucotel, Paris (1917)





# Tarisio

FINE INSTRUMENTS & BOWS

## Insurance Appraisal

June 12, 2023

We have today examined the following property in the possession of True Desire Limited of 414-417 Cyberport 2 Pok Fu Lam, HWUFU Hong Kong:

**A VIOLIN BY ANTONIO STRADIVARI, CREMONA, 1708 "Empress Caterina"**

**Bearing its original label, "Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis, Faciebat Anno 1708."**

The back is in one piece of quarter cut maple with medium-width flame descending from the treble bouts. The top is in two pieces of spruce with narrow-width grain broadening toward the edges. The ribs and head are of similar wood. The varnish is of a reddish golden orange-brown color. Pictures of this violin are available in our records under catalog #41340.

### MEASUREMENTS:

Length of back: 35.5 cm

Upper bouts: 16.7 cm

Middle bouts: 10.75 cm

Lower bouts: 20.7 cm

### VALUE:

Based on comparable market data the above property should, in our opinion, have a current replacement value of **\$9,000,000**. This appraisal is meant for insurance purposes only.



Jason Price

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+1 212 307 7224	+44 (0)20 7354 5763	+49 (0)30 9404 5443

[tarisio.com](https://tarisio.com)

## Current Valuation



Based on comparable market data the above property should, in our opinion, have a current replacement value of **\$9,000,000**.





*The End*

Thank you!