

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITALIAN MAKERS OF EXTANT VIOLS, WITH BRIEF SURVEYS OF THEIR SURVIVING WORK

The following notes are for the most part simply compilations of information available in several standard reference books (omitting or amending anything known to be incorrect), especially

- Willibald Leo, Freiherr von Lütgendorff, *Die Geigen- und Lautenmacher vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main, 6/1922) and Thomas Drescher, *Nachtragsband* (Tutzing, 1990)
- René Vannes, *Dictionnaire universel des luthiers* (Spa, Belgium, 3/1999; first published in 1951–59)
- Laurence Libin, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2014)

These have been supplemented by two excellent and more recent studies devoted to makers from specific regions of Italy, namely the collaborative volume *Liutai in Brescia, 1520–1724* (Cremona, 2008) and Stefano Pio's *Viol and Lute Makers of Venice, 1490–1630* (Venice, 2011).

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AMATI, Antonio & Girolamo

Antonio and Girolamo were sons of Andrea Amati (c. 1505–1577), the Cremonese maker widely credited with having established the design of the violin family of instruments as we know them today. Commonly known in the violin world as the Brothers Amati, they worked together until at least 1588, when Girolamo bought out Antonio's share of the family home and workshop; however, for the rest of his life he continued to use labels giving both their names.

Antonio, the older brother, was born in or shortly before 1540 and died in 1607. The date of Girolamo's birth is uncertain: a document of 1584 supposedly gives his age as 23, implying a date of 1561, but this must be an error because in 1574 he married Lucrezia de Cornetti, with whom he had three children; perhaps the true date was a decade earlier, c. 1551. In 1584, after Lucrezia's death the previous year, he married Laura Lazzarini, with whom he had nine more children, including a son Niccolò who became his successor and is considered the best maker of this illustrious dynasty. Girolamo died of the plague in 1630.

In addition to numerous instruments of the violin family, the Brothers Amati (but in reality probably Girolamo alone) made a certain number of viols, three of which survive today. Two, a tenor and a bass both dated 1611, are thought to be the remnants of a set of five made for the Medici family in Florence; the third is another bass dated 1597. All three have cello-like body outlines, F-holes, and backs that are both arched and sloped, but they differ significantly in appearance from Amati-family cellos, with the basses being much shorter (63 cm body length) and significantly wider in proportion to their length.

ANTONIAZZI, Riccardo

Antoniazzi was born in Cremona in 1860 and learned violin-making from his father, Gaetano, who in turn had studied with Enrico Ceruti. Also a performing musician in his younger years, Riccardo spent most of his career as a luthier working for his former pupil Leandro Bisiach in Milan. Subsequently, from 1904 until his death in 1912 he worked as shop foreman for the firm of Monzino and Sons, also in Milan. It was during this period, in 1908, that he made a viola da gamba described on its label (in Italian) as a "copy of Peligrino Zanetto of Brescia, the property of Count Borromeo." The original 16th-century viol is still owned by that noble family, and contains an internal inscription revealing it was restored in the Monzino shop in 1906, which explains how it was available for Antoniazzi to study. Comparison of the two instruments reveals that his copy is slightly larger (having a body length of 62.9 vs. 59.6 cm) and has an arched but unfolded back, unlike the flat-and-folded back of the original.

BELLONE, Pietro Antonio

Bellone worked in Milan during the latter part of the 17th century. Although a little-known maker, it seems his labels have been placed inside a number of violins not made by him, or even in Italy. A very large bass viol, having a body length of nearly 85 cm, contains a label reading "Pierantonio Bellone / Mediolani Anno 1661."

Currently it has 7 bowed and 5 sympathetic strings, but this disposition, along with its neck, is probably not original. One modern observer has suggested that the instrument—or at least its body—is 18th-century French, while another felt that it could be an example of a 17th-century English Great Dooble Bass viol (with the lowest of 6 strings tuned to AA or GG), a size of which no verifiable specimens are extant.

BERTOLOTTI, Francesco (II)

Born in Brescia in 1565, Francesco was the eldest son and pupil of Gasparo Bertolotti, with whom he continued to work until the latter's death in 1609. Soon thereafter he seems to have stopped making instruments, instead selling the shop to Gasparo's former apprentice, Giovanni Paolo Maggini, and moving to his wife Flora Pasini's nearby home town of Calvagese, where he died between 1615 and 1617. Only two viol-related instruments by him are known, both having a body type (also used by his father) with carved ridges in the table pointing toward the four body corners. Although these instruments were probably originally liras da gamba, they may later have been played as viols before succumbing to cello conversions in more recent times.

BERTOLOTTI, Gasparo

Better known as Gasparo da Salò (after his native town on the shore of Lake Garda, about 25 miles northeast of Brescia), he was born in 1540, the son of a painter and musician named Francesco Bertolotti. By 1564 Francesco had died and Gasparo had moved to Brescia, where he married Isabetta Casetti and where their first son, named Francesco after his grandfather, was born in 1565. The following year he is referred to as a master violin maker, and a decade later he was sufficiently prosperous to purchase a house, followed in 1581 by a small property outside the city. In 1598 Giovanni Paolo Maggini became one of his apprentices, and after Gasparo's death in 1609 it was Maggini (rather than Francesco II Bertolotti) who ultimately took over the workshop.

Although no longer considered to be the inventor of the violin, Gasparo unquestionably played a significant role in its development and today is regarded as highly important both musically and historically. Partly as a result of his fame, his name has been attached to many instruments he never made, including several viols as well as greater numbers of violins, violas, cellos, and contrabasses. Extant viols likely to be genuine include at least four tenors, five basses, and a violone; the majority of these have a cornerless outline, but two have square bodies with carved ridges in the table pointing towards the sharply pointed corners, of a type seen in El Greco's 1596 painting *The Annunciation*. Two similar instruments by Francesco II were probably originally built as liras da gamba, and the same may be true for those signed by his father as well.

One of Gasparo's contrabass-sized instruments, now in a Roman museum, is said to have a pegbox originally drilled for six pegs, but this is not included in the accompanying database of viols, nor is an instrument identical in appearance to a cello (and currently being played as such) whose pegbox, according to John Dilworth, is original and has bushed pegholes for six pegs.

BISIACH, Leandro

Considered the most important Italian luthier of his day, Bisiach was born in 1864 and trained initially as a violinist. In 1886, after making his first instrument as an autodidact, he became a pupil of Enrico Ceruti in Cremona and then of Riccardo Antoniazzi, with whom he later opened a shop in Milan. Known as an astute businessman, he earned an international reputation as a maker, restorer, dealer, and connoisseur, while continuing to perform as concertmaster of various local orchestras. Numerous makers of the next generation received their training in his workshop, including his four sons who assisted him there for many years, with the two youngest continuing in business as Giacomo and Leandro Bisiach until 1973. Leandro Sr. died in 1945 at his country villa in Venegono Superiore, about 25 miles northwest of Milan.

Bisiach's connection to the world of viols comes from having made at least two copies of the unique treble-sized viol by Giovanni Maria of Brescia now at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. One of these remains in Milan, at the Castello Sforzesco, while the other is in the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, its authorship confirmed by William Monical's discovery, during restoration work in 1988, of the words "L. Bisiach Milano" stamped on the upper faces of the top block and neck foot.

BONORIS, Cesare

This name is known only from a label inside a bass viol now in the Museo Civico in Modena, which reads “Cesare Bonoris di Mantova 1568.” It has been suggested that everything but the table of this instrument may be the work of Leopold Franciolini, the notorious 19th-century dealer and faker of antique musical instruments, in which case the name found within it may also be a modern fabrication.

BRENSIO, Antonio and Girolamo

No biographical information is available about either of these makers, except that labels bearing their names identify them both as from Bologna. The University of Leipzig’s museum contains an instrument with a printed label reading “Antonius Brensius Bonon,” to which a handwritten date of 1592 has been added. Its pointed body corners and ridged table resemble those found on several instruments by Gasparo and Francesco Bertolotti, and although currently set up as a lira da gamba it may or may not originally have been built as such. A cornerless bass viol in Bologna (with a replacement table) is signed simply “Antonius Bononiensis,” while a similar tenor in Milan adds a date, “Antonius Bononiensis 1612.” It is provisionally assumed that all these names refer to the same person.

Additionally, a cornerless tenor viol of almost exactly the same size, formerly owned by August Wenzinger and now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, is labeled “Hieronymus Brensius Bonon.” Any relationship between these two makers is purely speculative, but conceivably they could be father and son, or perhaps brothers like their contemporaries, the identically-named Brothers Amati in Cremona. Other possible attributions include a violin-size instrument with 3-shaped soundholes and a printed label “Ant Brensius Bonon” in the municipal museum in Nice, which identifies it as a lira da braccio; and an instrument in Bologna described as a “viola da braccio a 5 corde” and labeled “Hieronymus Brensius Bonon,” with 3-shaped soundholes and “El Greco” style table ridges, of which however only the neck and scroll are verifiably old.

CICILIANO, Antonio and (Giovanni) Battista

Nearly a dozen extant viols bear the name of one or the other of these two makers, active in Venice during the 16th century. On his labels, Battista identified himself as the son of Antonio: “Batista fiol de Ant[oni]o Cicilian”. And a certain “Messer Ioanbattista Cicilan” is described by Sylvestro Ganassi, in a treatise published in 1543, as a “most expert” player of the viola da gamba, “worthy of the greatest praise.” Mostly likely these are the same person, because in the 16th century it was not uncommon for musicians to be capable of making their own instruments. For Battista to have achieved such a reputation by this date, he must have been born in the early years of the 16th century, and his father therefore probably in the last quarter of the 15th century; no information is available as to when either of them may have died.

Establishing a chronology for the Ciciliano viols is not entirely straightforward, because none of the family’s labels is dated. However, two quite distinct body types are associated with their output. One, in which only Antonio’s name is found (apart from a misplaced Gasparo da Salò label in one example), has F-shaped soundholes and shoulders that slope both steeply downward and also forward, while the other has what today seems a less archaic, more “classic” outline with C-shaped soundholes. Dendrochronological dating of their tables confirms that the latter group uses newer wood than the former, and indeed three of them contain Battista’s label, but the other three bear Antonio’s name. A possible explanation for this situation might be that the newer design was Battista’s idea, but that all instruments made during Antonio’s lifetime were signed with the father’s name as the head of the workshop, regardless of who actually designed or built them.

A further complication is that in 1975 Laurence Witten reported the existence of documents mentioning Antonio with dates ranging from 1566 to 1581, but because he did not cite specific sources these have not been available for further study. It is plausible to suppose that Battista had a son whom he named after the child’s grandfather, a custom often followed in those days, and that these late-century documents refer to him.

In any case, three of the family’s dozen extant instruments are tenors, all of them signed by Antonio and having steeply-sloping shoulders with body lengths between 45 and 50 cm. He is also credited with a small and a large bass, both similar in appearance to the tenors but distinctive in having original necks that give them string lengths much longer than their bodies. The other six Ciciliano viols are all basses with body lengths between 60 and 64 cm, and are assigned to Battista in the accompanying database despite the presence of Antonio’s label in three of them.

DALLA COSTA, Pietro Antonio

Dalla Costa is perhaps best known today as the maker of a violin owned by Mozart during the years he lived in Vienna, which in 2013 was donated to the Salzburg Mozarteum Foundation. Born in the town of Alba near the end of the 17th century, Dalla Costa was active in Treviso—and perhaps also in Mantua and Venice—between at least 1733 and 1768, making violins in the style of the Brothers Amati (as he explicitly acknowledged on some of his labels) and Stradivari. He has been described as a craftsman of superb ability, and in 2012 one of his violins sold at auction for nearly \$100,000. Dalla Costa's name is associated with a single bass viol, which according to its label was made in 1757 in Parma. Since other evidence is lacking for his presence in that city, perhaps the label is false, and thus the attribution as well.

DE FANTIS, Stephanus

Nothing is known about the person behind this name, which appears together with the date 1558 (but no place) inside a large bass-size instrument that has been owned by Nikolaus Harnoncourt since 1954. Only the body is original, having been converted to a cello some time before 1783, when it is listed as such in an inventory that adds "Cremona" after the maker's name. Harnoncourt has been quoted as calling it "not a cello and not a gamba but grandfather of both"; more recently it has been given a speculative set-up with five strings. A much smaller bass viol in Geneva's Musée d'art et d'histoire contains a similar label dated 1551 and may therefore be by the same maker, whoever he was, even though the two instruments look nothing like each other.

EBERT, Heinrich

Ebert was a maker of lutes, probably of German origin, who worked in Venice during the third quarter of the 16th century. His activities are documented from at least 1554 until his death in 1575 at the age of 58, meaning that he was born about 1517. Several plucked-string instruments once in well-known 19th-century collections bear his name, but with dates fully a century too late. A single small viol now at the Musical Instrument Museum in Brussels has a printed label that gives only his name, without place or date. The researcher Karel Moens has called attention to a number of features suggesting that this instrument has been significantly reworked from something larger, perhaps an early 17th-century bass violin. Especially since there is no other evidence that Ebert made bowed as well as plucked instruments, it is quite possible that the label inside this viol, while itself genuine, has been taken from one of his lutes.

GAGLIANO, Raffaele & Antonio

Members of the Gagliano family worked as violin makers in Naples from about 1700 to the middle of the 19th century. More than a dozen different craftsmen were part of this dynasty, but reliable information about their dates is hard to find. The line began with Alessandro (1665–1732), whose work is said to differ from all the others, especially in the varnish he used. His sons Niccola and Gennaro worked in the middle decades of the 18th century and were influenced by Antonio Stradivari's designs for both violins and cellos. Nicola had four sons who became luthiers, active during the last quarter of the 18th century: Ferdinando, Giuseppe, Antonio, and Giovanni.

Somewhat surprisingly, a label naming two of Giovanni's sons, Raffaele (1790–1857) and Antonio II (1778–1860), is found inside a bass viola da gamba now owned by a professional player in Italy. Though undated, the instrument must have been made during the first half of the 19th century, when the viol's popularity was at its lowest ebb. When found in the 1980s it had been converted into a cello (still retaining its distinctive Gagliano scroll) but has since then been restored as a viol.

Another bass viol with an undated label crediting it to Gennaro Gagliano is owned by a museum in Hamburg, which currently describes it as probably made in Southern Germany during the first half of the 18th century.

GERLE, Georg

In 1548 Gerle achieved the status of *Bürger* (citizen) in Füssen, the well-known South-German center of stringed instrument building, and by 1569 he held a position as instrument maker at the court of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in Innsbruck, where he died 20 years later. It is not known whether or how he may be related to the better-known Hans Gerle of Nuremberg (c. 1500–1570), a highly-regarded lutenist, fiddle player, and instrument maker who in 1532 published a treatise entitled *Musica Teutsch*. According to the present-day lute-maker Stephen Barber, an ivory-backed lute by Georg Gerle in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna is one of only two six-course lutes

to survive almost intact, with its original soundboard, neck, pegbox, and even bridge. A viol in the Musical Instrument Museum in Brussels contains a label that has been read as “Jerg Gerle” (using what is presumably an alternative spelling of “Georg”), but questions have been raised about both the age of the instrument and whether the label belongs to it.

GOFFRILLER, Matteo

Born about 1659 in the Tyrolean city of Bressanone (Brixen), Goffriller relocated to Venice in 1685 to work for Martin Kaiser (1642–95), whose daughter Maddalena Maria he married the following year and whose workshop he took over soon thereafter. For the next two decades he was the main violin maker in Venice; evidently his activity tapered off after about 1720, though he lived until 1742. Today he is best known for his cellos, which have been played by many famous soloists including Pablo Casals. His instruments are said to resemble those of Carlo Bergonzi, and because a good many are unlabeled (perhaps for reasons of tax avoidance when they were first made), they have sometimes been misidentified as works by that Cremonese maker of the next generation.

Three bass viols are associated with Goffriller’s name. One contains the label of Matheus Albani but has been attributed to Goffriller based on its distinctive varnish. Another, with a label dated 1689, elicited some doubts as to its authorship when it was sold at Christie’s in 2009. The third, in the University of Leipzig’s museum, has a striped back of palisander and maple, a feature not found on any other Italian viol, and therefore seems more likely to be German, despite its label dated 1711.

GRANCINO, Giovanni (Battista)

There is considerable confusion about the lives and identities of the members of this family. Earlier reference works stated that Giovanni lived from about 1675 to after 1737 and was the son and pupil of Paolo Grancino, but more recent researchers say he was born in 1637, the son of Andrea Grancino. He apparently worked for a time with his brother Francesco, as documented by labels bearing both their names and dates from the mid-1660s to the mid-1680s. Thereafter Giovanni worked alone, becoming the most important maker of his time in Milan, whose violins and cellos today sell for upwards of \$250,000. He died in 1709, and instruments bearing later dates were presumably made by his son and namesake, Giovanni II (1673–after 1723).

Three viols of different sizes are presently associated with Giovanni Grancino’s name. One, a bass dated 1697 and owned by a professional player in Europe, has had its body outline significantly altered in the process of conversion to a cello but has now been reconstructed as a viol. Another, a small violone with a body length of 91.7 cm, was offered for sale by Sotheby’s in 1986, but its present whereabouts is unknown. Finally, an instrument with a body length of about 61 cm is owned by a professional Italian gambist and played by him as a large tenor. Although the latter two are both cornerless, their body outlines are completely dissimilar to each other, as are the shapes of their F-holes; the tenor is perhaps more likely to have been made in Germany or Bohemia.

GRAPPELLO, Giovanni Marco

A person of this name, identified in a Ferrarese court document of 1566 as a *maestro da istromenti*, is assumed to be the maker of two cornerless bass viols whose labels read simply “Joannes Marcus,” a Latinized version of his two given names. One is a cornerless bass viol belonging to the conservatory of music in Milan that was largely destroyed by bombing during World War II. However, some fragments remain and have recently been subjected to extensive high-technology analysis, resulting in a cautious conclusion that, although neither the table nor the varnish is original, “many characteristics of this viol seem typical of Northern Italy in the second half of the sixteenth century.” A similar instrument is privately owned in Switzerland, while a third viol belonging to the municipal museum in Nice is described as a composite containing a prestigious label and was probably not made by him.

GUARNERI FAMILY

This well-known family of violin makers spanned three generations, starting with Andrea (1623–1698), continuing with his sons Pietro Giovanni and Giuseppe Giovanni Battista, and culminating with Giuseppe’s sons Pietro and Giuseppe. The latter is commonly known as “del Gesù” and considered one of the finest makers of all time.

The first **Giuseppe**, self-identified on his labels as “Josef Guarnerius filius Andreae” (son of Andrea), was born in 1666 in Cremona and remained there for the rest of his life. Experts have detected his hand in work signed by his father as early as 1680, and after Andrea’s death in 1698 he inherited the family house and business. In 1690 he married Barbara Franchi, with whom he had six children. From about 1715 he received substantial help from his sons, and no instruments bearing his name are known after 1720, though he lived until about 1740.

A small bass viol containing his label dated 1702 is very similar to a pair of instruments by Antonio and Girolamo Amati made about a century earlier (in 1597 and 1611), having pointed body corners and a back that is both arched and folded. This resemblance could be a consequence of Andrea Guarneri having apprenticed with Girolamo Amati’s son Nicolo in the late 1640s and early 1650s. In 1697 Nicolo’s son and successor, Girolamo Amati II, left Cremona for Piacenza, at which time Giuseppe Guarneri could have acquired various templates and molds that Amati had inherited from his grandfather, including those for a viol of this by-now obsolete type.

Giuseppe’s older brother **Pietro** was born in 1655 and probably began working in their father’s shop during the early 1670s. In 1677 he married Caterina Sassagni, and when their son Andrea Francesco was born the following year they were still living in Cremona. Soon thereafter, however, Pietro left his native city, and by 1683 had settled in Mantua, where two years later he received an appointment as a court musician, while continuing to make instruments, primarily violins rather than anything larger in size. In 1694 he married Lucia Guidi Borani; in 1700 a document describes him as “publicus mercator,” i.e. a merchant (he held a monopoly for selling musical instrument strings in Mantua) and in 1708 he became an official citizen of his adopted city. In 1714 he is identified as a “chitarraro,” or guitar maker, and indeed the estate inventory prepared after his death in 1720 includes listings of guitars, theorbos, lutes, and gambas. He is not known to have had any pupils, but his work was strongly influential on later Mantuan makers such as Camillo Camilli and Tomasso Balestrieri.

Two viols are currently associated with his name. One is a bass in the Vazquez collection, with pointed body corners and F-holes but sloping shoulders and a flat back, that was attributed to him as recently as a few years ago; the other, at Yale University, is a cornerless instrument of small tenor size (body length 45.7 cm) with five strings and a label dated 1689. It is unclear what this was originally intended to be: by that date viols in general were quite rare in Italy, and smaller-than-bass sizes almost non-existent, yet the instrument is not likely to have been made as a viola d’amore, because its ribs are fully 8 cm in depth.

In addition, an instrument resembling a small double bass, with a body length of 82.8 cm and currently set up with 5 strings, belongs to the Lisbon conservatory and has a 1692 label of **Andrea** Guarneri but is of questionable authenticity.

GUIDANTI, Giovanni Floriano

Guidanti was born in 1687 in Bologna, where his father, Floriano, was luthier to the Accademia Filarmonica, a position which Giovanni took over after Floriano’s death in 1715. He was evidently highly regarded as a maker and repairer, being especially esteemed for his cellos; overall, his work is said to show the influence of fellow Bolognese luthiers Giovanni and Carlo Tononi. His labels give the Latin form of his name, Johannes Florenus Guidantus, and violin-family instruments by him turn up with some regularity at violin auctions. Additionally, violas d’amore are owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and by museums in Nice and Geneva. His only known viol, a bass dated 1728, is now at the National Music Museum in Vermillion, S.D.

HEEL, Martino

Heel was a violin maker of German origin, active in Genoa during the second half of the 17th century. He was born in Weißensee, just west of Füssen, in 1620, and is assumed to have lived at least until 1706, the date found in a treble-sized instrument now at the Musée de la musique in Paris. Because this has a festooned body outline and flame-shaped soundholes, together with an arched back and shallow ribs, on balance it is more likely to have been made as an early viola d’amore (of the type without sympathetic strings) than as a treble viol, especially since Italian musicians and makers had by this time long since abandoned the smaller sizes of viols. Nevertheless, because it is currently set up as a 6-string viol, it is included in the accompanying database as one of only a handful of plausibly Italian trebles.

LINAROL, Francesco and Ventura

Although both father and son were always known as “Linarol” (meaning dealer or worker in flax; modern Italian *linaiolo*), their family surname was actually Machetti. Born in Venice about 1540, Ventura was the eldest son

of Francesco Linarol, originally from Bergamo and himself a musician and instrument maker, and his wife Caterina. In the record of Ventura's interrogation on charges of heresy in 1566 he is described as "a tall young man, with a little bit of a black beard ... of about 27 years of age." In his opening statement he said, "My name is Ventura, son of Master Francesco Lirer or Linarol, and I am Venetian, and my occupation is music and playing, and I [work] with [the ensemble] I Bresciani, and I am married and I have two children." His wife Zeffirina was the illegitimate daughter of a priest named Francesco di Giovanni, nicknamed Zeffiro, who was a bass singer at St. Mark's basilica from at least 1522 to 1573. They went on to have a total of 16 children, in whose baptismal records Ventura is usually identified as "Venturin dalle lire," though sometimes as "Venturin dalle viole."

Already in 1553, as a young teenager, Ventura was paid to play the *violone* for the Scuola Grande (or confraternity) of San Marco, and from 1587 to 1604 he played regularly at the basilica on important feast days, identified in the pay records as "Ventura dal violon." In addition to his activities as a performer, Ventura made instruments, of which the earliest known example is a lirone dated 1577. The Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna owns a violin and a lira da braccio by him, and also a violone dated 1585 that is exceptional both for its body length (102.5 cm) and because its label gives Padua rather than Venice as the place where it was made. Five bass viols are also extant, four of them with dates ranging from 1582 to 1604, the year in which Ventura is assumed to have died.

An undated tenor signed "Franciscus Linarolus Bergomensis Venetiis faciebat," also in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, resembles the viols made by Antonio Ciciliano in having steeply sloping shoulders. Initial dendrochronological testing suggested that it could not have been made before 1582, but newer results yield a date nearly 150 years earlier for the youngest annual growth ring present on its table, meaning that it could indeed have been made by Francesco, who died in 1567.

MAGGINI, Giovanni Paolo

Described by Lütgendorff as "unquestionably the best maker of the Brescian school," Maggini was born on August 25, 1580, in the nearby village of Botticino Sera, the son of Giovanni and Giulia Maggini. By the spring of 1598, a few years after his father's death, Giovanni Paolo had begun an apprenticeship with the luthier Gasparo da Salò in Brescia, for whom he worked at least until 1604. In 1606, after his mother's death and using money inherited from her, he purchased a house of his own and presumably opened his own business at that time. In 1615 he married Anna Foresti, whose father Fausto was a furrier; they had ten children, only three of whom survived him. In 1622 the family and shop moved to a larger house, and a tax valuation document from 1626 reveals that his business was prospering. Maggini was still alive on July 5, 1630, when an infant son died, but he probably succumbed soon thereafter to the plague; in any case he was definitely deceased by 1632, though Anna survived until 1651.

Although primarily famous today as a maker of violin-family instruments, Maggini also built at least a few viols. Three extant examples are basses, of which one has a "classic" outline with unpointed body corners, another has pointed corners but sloping shoulders, and the third has pointed corners and (at least today) square shoulders; all have flat backs and F-shaped soundholes. Two somewhat larger instruments are here classified as violones, one with a cornerless outline and body length of 90 cm, the other with cello-style pointed corners and a length of 96.5 cm. (The latter is comparatively well-known from having formerly been owned by the Dolmetsch family and used as a model by many modern makers.) In addition, among as many as a dozen contrabass-size instruments currently attributed to Maggini, all with cello-like body corners and lengths greater than 100 cm, at least three are thought to have been set up originally with six strings. However, they are not included in the accompanying database.

MARIA, Giovanni

Giovanni Maria da Brescia stated in 1591 that he was 61 years old, so he was born about 1530, probably in or near Brescia; his father's given name was Antonio, but their family name remains unknown. The son was mainly employed as a musician by the confraternity of San Rocco in Venice, in whose records he appears during the last quarter of the 16th century, usually as "Zan Maria dei violini." It was not uncommon in those days for players also to make instruments, and Giovanni Maria is known today for two unusual specimens, both in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, one a lira da braccio and the other a small viol with a cornerless body outline. The latter is said to have "endured much damage and repair" over the years, and moreover may originally have been conceived for 5 strings rather than the 6 it has now, but it remains an extremely rare, indeed almost unique, example of a treble-size viol-like instrument from 16th-century Italy.

MARIANI, Antonio

Mariani worked in Pesaro during the last three quarters of the 17th century. Lütgendorff described his cellos as praiseworthy and remarked that some of his violins have been passed off as the work of Gasparo da Salò, while others are of lesser quality. Vannes noted that he also made guitars and viols, but the only guitar known today is in the University of Leipzig's museum (dated 1680), while the only candidate for the second of these categories is an instrument in the museum of the Naples conservatory (dated 1646) that appears—at least in photos—indistinguishable from a large viola except for the presence of an extremely long endpin presumably designed to permit playing it in “da gamba” position. For this reason, it has been omitted from the database, despite its continued designation as a viol in the new catalogue of the conservatory's collection.

MARTELOZIO, Zantino

This is a name known only from the label of a G-violone owned by the Austrian gambist Lorenz Duftschmid, which reads “Zantino Martelozio fece in Crema, 1722.” A photo on his website shows it to have a “normal” body shape with F-holes and (at least currently) 6 strings; no measurements are available. Crema is a town about 25 miles northwest of Cremona.

MICHELI, Pellegrino

Pellegrino (or Peregrino) Micheli was probably born in Brescia about 1522, because in 1588 he described himself as being 66 years old. He was the son and pupil of Zanetto Micheli, with whom he worked until the latter's death in the early 1560s, and was himself still alive in 1606 but had died by 1615. His labels read “Peregrino filius quondam maestro Zanetto” (Peregrino son of the late master Zanetto), using a series of abbreviations for the three middle words of the inscription that have misled some writers to suppose that his surname was Zanetto; and indeed the name “Peregrino Zanetto” is reported to appear in many violins that almost surely were not made by him. (Similarly, a label reading “Peligrino Zanetto in Brexia / Anno Domini 1547” is found inside a festoon-shaped bass viol in the Musée de la musique in Paris that is likely to have been made in the late 19th century, perhaps by the French cellist and luthier Auguste Tolbecque.) Pellegrino's sons Giovanni, Battista, and Francesco worked with him, but may have turned to other activities after his death, because no instruments signed by any of them are known to exist.

Surviving instruments of the viol family include a small bass with pointed body corners owned for many generations by a noble Italian family, and another in the National Music Museum in Vermillion, S.D., that is currently attributed to Pellegrino despite containing a label naming his father. Additionally, Jordi Savall owns a cornerless bass listed in his programs and on his recordings as made by “Pellegrino Zanetti, 1553”; this degree of chronological specificity (in contrast to a suggested date of, for example, “circa 1550”) implies that has a dated label, which would be very unusual for a maker of the Brescian School.

MICHELI, Zanetto

Born about 1489 in Montichiari (a small town about 15 miles southeast of Brescia) and active until the early 1560s as a maker of both plucked and bowed string instruments, Zanetto Micheli is the earliest Brescian luthier from whom instruments are extant today. He is documented (as “Ioannettus de li violettis”) as early as 1527, and in 1533 the music theorist Giovanni Maria Lanfranco praised him as a maker of lutes, “violoni,” liras, and similar instruments. A small bass viol with cornerless outline whose now-lost label read “Zanetto in Bressa” is in the Brussels Musical Instrument Museum, and another of similar size but with pointed body corners, labeled “Zanetto da Bre[ssa],” is in the National Music Museum in Vermillion, S.D. (attributed to his son, Pellegrino), but the authenticity of both has been questioned by Karel Moens.

POSTIGLIONE, Vincenzo

Born in Naples in 1835, Postiglione became one of the leading Neapolitan violin makers of the 19th century, in general following the Gagliano school but also making copies of Stradivari and Guarneri violins. He retired in 1914 and died in 1916. A precise record of his output exists and states that he made 14 violas da gamba, of which only two tenor viols are known today, both of them made, according to their labels, at the request of the Duca del Balzo (1845–1930, an aristocratic collector of musical instruments) but quite different from each other in size and appearance. One is claimed to be a copy of a 17th-century instrument by Antonio Mariani, but since that appears (at least in photos) to be simply a large viola, both it and Postiglione's copy have been omitted from the database.

RUGERI (or RUGGIERI), Francesco

Francesco Rugeri was born in Cremona about 1630. Previously he was thought to have been one of the first apprentices of Nicolo Amati, based on the stylistic similarity of their work, but recent archival research has cast doubt on this assumption, for which documentary evidence is lacking. He is perhaps best known today for having been one of the first to build cellos in a smaller size made possible by the invention of overspun bass strings in the mid-17th century. He had three sons who assisted him starting some time in the 1670s, of whom only Vincenzo went on to have a significant career of his own, inheriting the business when their father died in 1698.

Three bass viols have been associated with Francesco Rugeri's name. One, whose reproduction label is dated 1697, currently has a 7-string setup on an unusually small body (only 60 cm in length) and is said to show French stylistic influence, though clearly of Cremonese origin. Another, also with 7 strings, is significantly larger but questionable because its label is dated 1726, nearly three decades after Francesco's death. The third was formerly owned by the Casadesus family and now belongs to the Musée de la musique in Paris, which states that the attribution provided by its 1699 label is "difficult to authenticate"; its flame-shaped soundholes suggest a Germanic origin, and specifically resemble those found on viols by Johann Heinrich Ruppert, who worked a generation later in Erfurt.

Additionally, a bass viol in the Musical Instrument Museum in Berlin has a label of Vincenzo Rugeri dated 1702 that likely does not belong to it: not only does the body have cello-like pointed corners, flame-shaped soundholes, and an arched back, but dendrochronological testing reveals the wood of the table was still growing in 1727.

RUSSO, Domenico

This name appears uniquely inside a bass viol now in a museum in Innsbruck. Like a handful of other early Italian viols, it is notable for the presence of ridges in the table that point toward the four body corners. Because several others like it were made by Gasparo da Salò and his son Francesco, it has been suggested that Russo may also have worked in Brescia. Even more distinctively, Russo's viol has a set of ten diamond-shaped inlays placed around the edges of the upper and lower bouts. These are also found on a viol in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (Boyden no. 3, Fleming Ash.02), which appears so similar to Russo's that it is likely to be his work as well, though it remains unattributed in the most recent catalogue of that collection.

STRADIVARI, Antonio

Perhaps the most famous string instrument maker of all time, Stradivari was born in Cremona about 1644 (a date deduced from notations of his age on several late violin labels) and died there in 1737. One early label describes him as a pupil of Nicolo Amati, but there is no evidence of a formal apprenticeship, though his early output clearly reveals the influence of Amati's models and methods. In light of the extremely high level of his craftsmanship, some writers have speculated that Stradivari's initial training may have been as a woodworker or marquetry artisan. He also differed from contemporary Cremonese luthiers in producing plucked as well as bowed string instruments, including lutes, guitars, mandolins, and harps.

In 1667 Stradivari married Francesca Feraboschi, a young widow, with whom he had six children. After her death in 1698 he married Antonia Maria Zambelli, who bore him five more children. The so-called Golden Period of his output encompasses the first two decades of the 18th century, but he was active as a builder until the very end of his life, assisted by his sons Francesco (1671–1743), and—to a lesser extent—Omobono (1679–1742). In all, it has been estimated that they made approximately a thousand instruments, of which some two-thirds survive today, mostly violins but also a dozen violas, sixty-plus cellos, five guitars, two mandolins, and a harp.

In addition to various paper drawings and wooden templates for making viols, at least three instruments are still extant that were originally built as bass viols, though all have been converted into cellos. One, known as the "Visconti," is dated 1684 and was formerly owned by Mstislav Rostropovitch; another, whose label gives a spurious date of 1667, is thought to have been made about 1690 and a generation ago belonged to the cellist Ko Iwasaki, its original flat back replaced by a carved one but still kept with the instrument. The third, now at the National Music Museum in Vermillion, S.D., is attributed to Francesco Stradivari c. 1730 and still clearly shows its original sloping-shouldered body outline, to which additional wood was added when it was turned into a cello.

TESTORE, Carlo Antonio

Carlo Antonio Testore was born about 1688, the older son, pupil, and successor of Carlo Giuseppe, and lived until some time after 1764. Although his younger brother Paolo Antonio is said to have made lutes and guitars, even citterns and pochettes, in addition to violin-family instruments, none of the standard reference books mentions viols by any member of the family. However, José Vázquez owns a cornerless bass viol with a printed label reading “Carlo Antonio Testore figlio maggiore / nel fu Carlo Giuseppe in Contrada larga al segno dell’Acquilla Milano 1716.” On his website he attributes it to Paolo Antonio, noting that its scroll and F-holes are both characteristic of this maker’s work, but either way the date cannot be correct, because their father—here described as deceased—in fact lived until the late 1730s.

TIEFFENBRUCKER, Wendelin

Tieffenbrucker was a lute maker who worked in Padua during the late 16th and early 17th centuries, part of a large family whose members made stringed instruments (both bowed and plucked) in various locations in southern Germany, northern Italy, and France. On his labels he identified himself as the son of Leonardo, from whose hand no instruments are known to survive, in contrast to more than two dozen by Wendelin. All of these are members of the lute family, except for a lira da gamba now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. With its festoon-shaped body and 13-string set-up this is only tangentially a viol, but the arching of its table suggests it may have been reworked from a different instrument, which may have been a more conventionally-strung viol.

VALENZANO, Giovanni Maria

Valenzano was born about 1750 in Asti (about 35 miles east of Turin) but led an unusually peripatetic life, working in various cities not only in Italy but also in Spain and France before dying in Rome in 1825. His violins are said to be modeled variously after Milanese and Neapolitan examples, and he is credited with making guitars and citterns as well as bowed instruments. The only known viol attributed to him must be an early work (assuming it is genuine), for its label reads “Maria Valenciano Paduensis 1767.”

VIMERCATI, Pietro

Vimercati was a Brescian maker active in the middle decades of the 17th century. According to one recent reference book, no authenticated examples of his work are currently known. A viol now in the National Music Museum in Vermillion, S.D., has a printed label reading “Pietro Vimercati / Fecit Bresciae 16” (with the last two digits not filled in by hand). Only the back and ribs are thought to be original, with the table as well as the neck, pegbox, and scroll being later and described as showing rather crude workmanship.

VOHAR, Hans

This name is known only from the label in an exceptionally narrow bass viol that was found in a Paris music shop in the 1920s by one of Arnold Dolmetsch’s patrons and is now owned by the Dolmetsch Foundation; previously it had belonged to the French collector Léon Savoye. Writing in 1930, Gerald Hayes described it as having very high-quality workmanship, with an arched back and an integral bass bar carved out of the table rather than glued to it. The label gives no information about place or date, and while the name seems Germanic, the instrument’s cornerless outline is more suggestive of Italian origin. However, its unusual body proportions could point to a date closer to the late 19th than the early 17th century.

ZANETTO, Pietro

According to labels found in various instruments of the violin family, a maker by this name worked in Brescia in the late 17th century, but nothing is known of his life. A bass viol dated 1693, now in a museum in Riga (Latvia), has a back and ribs elaborately decorated with painted designs in gold and black and an extremely ornate carved pegbox and head, all of which may be later additions to the original body, though they could also be signs of a more modern and fanciful fabrication. In that case, the name “Pietro Zanetto” could be a variant spelling—either careless or intentional—of “Pietro Zenatto,” a name that appears on labels inside about a third of the 21 viols of all sizes attributed to him that are now in the Brussels Musical Instrument but currently considered to have been made no earlier than the late 19th century.

ZENATTO, Pietro

This name is known primarily from labels found in 8 of the 21 viols in the Brussels Musical Instruments Museum that have been attributed to him. Seven of these labels read “Pietro Zenatto fece in Treviso anno 1683” (all with the same year), while the eighth gives 1684 as the date. This large group of viols, which has been misleadingly described as comprising “a complete 17th century orchestra,” consists of 6 trebles, 5 tenors, 7 basses, and a violone, together with two 5-string contrabasses; all but the last two have cornerless body outlines. They have been at the museum since 1886, when they were purchased as part of a larger collection from Count Pietro Correr in Venice, but the museum’s website describes them as of unknown authorship and nowadays they are widely considered to have been made in the 19th rather than the 17th century. As such, however, they still qualify for inclusion in the accompanying database of viols made before the 20th century, and for convenience of reference the name “Zenatto” (with a question mark) has been retained in the Maker Name field.

Several instruments in other collections also contain a label naming Pietro Zenatto, including a bass viol of very unusual shape at the Lisbon conservatory (whose date has been transcribed as 1643, probably a misreading for 1683) and another (dated 1693, unless this is also a misreading for 1683) of completely different but equally implausible appearance in a museum in Riga, Latvia. There is also a guitar dated 1684 in the Brussels museum and a lute at the Musikmuseet in Stockholm whose date is given as 1631, again probably due to a misreading of the third digit. All of these instruments are likely to come from the same source and to have been made with an intent to deceive unwary purchasers. The probably fictitious maker’s name has even infiltrated the violin world, appearing in “an interesting composite violin labelled Pietro Zenatto fece in Treviso anno 1704” that was auctioned by Christie’s in 1997 and in a “rare old Italian 4/4 violin, Pietro Zenatto 1861” [*sic*, perhaps correctly 1681?] offered on eBay in 2013.

It is important to note that these spurious attributions to Pietro Zenatto have nothing to do with the handful of extant viols by the 16th-century Brescian makers Zanetto Micheli and his son Pellegrino Micheli, nor in all likelihood with various violins bearing the equally made-up name of “Pellegrino Zanetto.”