

# WHERE THE TON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA FIDDLERS ARE MADE

Two Local Violin Experts Tell of the Freaks and Fancies of the King Instrument and Relate Philosphic Bits on "Trading Fiddles"—A Violin That Hears With Its Eyes—A Master Maker of Violin Varnish and His Book of Revelations.

**A Violin Home.**  
There is something in the term that appeals to all lovers of the beautiful and the refined in human nature. Boston's typical violin comes from a place that is the cradle of all New England come in confidence of an appeal that is a matter of judging or rejuvenating an old instrument.

There is probably no musical instrument in existence that contains such an unlimited supply of "freaks" as does this violin. Up in a street shop on one of the principal business streets of Boston, there is a house of all grades, types and combinations of the king instrument, the violin studio of Orin Weeman. Over in one corner an old, dismantled violin, long since abandoned by the late Josephello, surrounded by a conglomeration of ancient and retired fiddle boxes, parking cases, etc., unfolds a tale of costly significance.

Against its worn and battered old head, as if in fond remembrance of better days, stands a hairless and much-scarred bow, its long, probable companion in many long years of hard service.

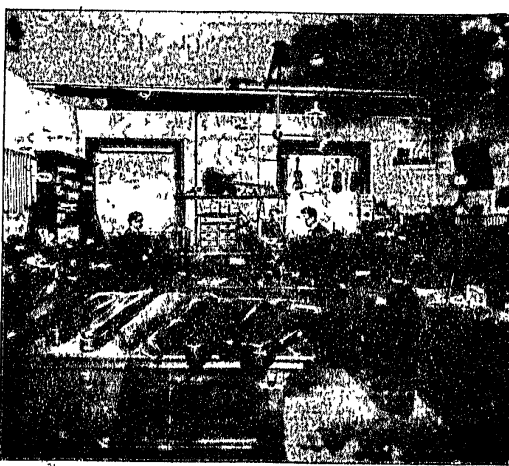
**Army of Fiddle Boxes.**  
If it should take the form of a view of this studio, you would find so many stopping places that attention that could hardly know when to move on. Here are three table running round with an army of fiddle boxes. Each doublet contains a pair of fiddle boxes, one of spruce and maple. Beyond the table and close under the large windows is a row of everything that pertains to the royal instrument, including white hairs of the bow to be frayed out ends of an F string.

"As to the battalions of tools, they brownies of secret intent, some of which are drawn up in battle line, others are in the process of being resting on their arms, as it were, waiting for the hand of the violin maker and repairer to direct them.

**From a Genuine Strad.**  
"When I first saw a violin of Stradivarius pattern that pleased from an upper shelf."  
The instrument entirely reminded Mr. Weeman, without in the slightest interrupting his work of how repairing. Mr. Weeman brought down the instrument to the workbench, and, after a moment's study, he pointed to detail that could be produced. Even those dents and black scratches, he says, are to be found on the violins of the old and authentic Stradivarius are identical to a nicety. The yellow-gold shading of Stradivarius instruments, he says, nothing of the varnish, the intricate archings and edges, have been executed with a perfection that is almost the searchlight of a microscope.

"The top of this violin," said Mr. Weeman, as he put it back in its place, "was out of all other violins that used to stand on South street, of this city. When the wood was in the shop, I found several samples of the old-fashioned hand-made maple, indicating an age of at least a century. The bottom came out of the front drawer of an antique chest, I wouldn't want to say how old it is.

**Old Violins Not Always Best.**  
It is his opinion that the age of a violin has much to do with the character of the tone."  
"Well," replied Mr. Weeman, with a smile and a quizzical twinkle in his eye, "I have had to make a question in a way that may cause you to think that I haven't sufficient admiration and veneration for the old



**A Typical Violin Home in Boston**

re their eyes. In other words, they are prejudiced. I have tried in a few instances to make a friend for some new violin which I have had in my keeping. In "no" instance I have succeeded. "No" going, but I have also caused many disturbances in the circle of personal friendships. Hence, I have learned by experience to let prejudice have its way."

**Good Makers in This Country.**  
"You do not think then, that violin-making is to be reckoned among the lost arts?"

"Far from it. We have today in this country several excellent makers whose names I could mention. Then there are several worthy disciples of the art in Vienna today. Of the modern French school, so called, there are the Vuillaume and Lupot violinists, twenty all of which stand high today. Then a host of violins are being turned out today which will some day get credit by being genuine old instruments from the hands of the masters, so perfect are the imitations in point of tone and workmanship."

**Silver-Lined Violins.**  
"Speaking about violin imitations," laughed Mr. Weeman at this point, "I see in the course of a year many silver-lined coils of high bore who have to lose their line. I always try to get down on every."  
"Only the other day I had a caller who thought he had a genuine Stradi-

varius Violin. He came in here just to give me a private peek at it free of charge. It was sure it was a genuine Strad, because he had been offered \$500 for it. Finally I had to tell him just what it was that had led me to believe it was not, but a common French imitation."  
"Well," said he, "I know it. I know it is a piece, and I will not believe a word of it."  
"It is a kind of miracle," added Mr. Weeman, with a smile of philosophic reflection, "that just as much comfort out of owning a fifteen dollar piece as your professional violin collector does out of possessing a fine old Magari or Amati."

"At this point Mr. Weeman returned to his task of rehaling two bows for two prominent first violinists of the Boston Symphony orchestra, and he carefully combed a bundle of long white hair through his fingers he remarked by way of after-thoughts:  
"I have made just one rule for myself in judging old violins for other people. If the instrument is really valuable, I never make a price on it simply say 'It is a valuable instrument' and stop right there."  
"A fine old Magari,"

Mr. Weeman has recently added to his personal collection of rare old violins a genuine Francesco Ruggeri, a French violin, which he will be remembered, is considered by the authorities to have been one of the very

Orin Weeman and Jerome B. Squier Have Many Rare and Valuable Instruments That Delight the Cranks Who, From All New England, Come to Their Shops With Confident Appeal in All Matters Pertaining to the Violin.

best of this famous line of violin makers. He is also the first of his family to attain distinction in the art. He flourished between 1629 and 1725. The specimen in Mr. Weeman's possession is one of the finest of that kind. It represents the golden color and the beautiful carrying-tone of this celebrated maker.

**Immortal Appala.**  
"One of the special delights of my business," remarked Mr. Weeman, as he looked against the back bench "comes from the music of the violinists. Frequently they take up the violin and play upon them for hours, testing the tone, up and down the finger board. At such times you could be surprised to see the people who finger as they pass our door—people of hard-headed business career whom you would never dream could be interested in the music of the violin as they stay at the door until the last note has been sounded and sometimes they go so far as to applaud when some famous player is drawing the bow. One of the greatest charms of the violin to my mind is its power of appeal to all classes of people."

**Mr. Squier's Studio.**  
A violin studio of equal interest with Mr. Weeman's is that of Jerome B. Squier of Boston. Here you will find on the various benches and shelves of the quaint rooms a bewildering array of bottles of all kinds.

not only more beautiful than the "Messiah" Strad," but it has more powerful tone. It is evidently one of those brilliant experiments in which occasionally the great master indulged, and like most of his more celebrated or renowned violins, among them a picture of the "Messiah" Stradivarius. Mr. Squier has submitted for publication this picture, together with several others of like value.

"The original picture of the 'Messiah' Strad," said Mr. Squier, "was also called the 'Nabuco' Stradivarius. Subsequently it was known as the 'Vollantino' Strad. A story goes along with all these titles. It is said that Stradivarius so loved the instrument that he would have others of the same kind friends to play upon it. The violin was constructed according to the original design of the late Stradivarius, but for that reason. At any rate, he kept it as long as he lived and his two sons kept it as long as they lived. It was then sold to Count Cosio of Milan, who kept it in his collection of fine instruments as long as he lived. Then the instrument came into the hands of Tereso, who was the greatest violin collector of all times. He also kept it as long as he lived, and every time he went to Paris to visit Vuillaume, the great French violin maker, he would take it with him to tell him about his beautiful Strad."

"On one of his visits he took his violin and left it in the studio of Vuillaume. Alari, the great French virtuoso, was present by invitation, and he succeeded in thoroughly testing the instrument. He was so overcome by the beauties of the violin. After the great French violinist had finished his playing, he said to Alari: 'This is the best violin I have ever heard of. It is said that he spoke these words:  
"This violin is like the Messiah, whose playing was such a revelation to me." It was with a great appreciation from Alari that first gave the name to the instrument. When Tereso died, the violin was sold to Mr. Vuillaume, who set out immediately for the home of Tereso. There he found the violin, and he was so overcome by its beauties that he immediately set it after his death. Alari kept it until his death, and he was sold to Mr. Crawford, an English collector, who paid \$10,000 for it. Mr. Crawford yet lives, and he is now in the hands of Mr. Crawford was recently approached by an agent with a view to purchasing it, and presenting it to the great violinist, Joseph, who is now \$12,000, and it was declined with thanks.

**The Glory of Being Born Right.**  
The chief glory of the "Messiah" Strad, as it exists today, is that it hasn't a scratch or a blemish on it. It yet has every sort of exquisite workmanship, just as it left the hands of Stradivarius. It is related that the violin never had a "base-line" in its original condition. It was made when it immediately sent forth the same fervor of tone that characterized the Stradivarius that had already been played by master hands for more than a hundred years. I mention this to prove that it is construction and not age that is the supreme thing in the making of a violin. Indeed, I know of violins that are completely new, and yet they are better by playing."

**King of the Stradivari.**  
"To me," continued Mr. Squier, "there is one other genuine old violin more of more interesting than the 'Messiah' Strad, and that is the 'Dolpchin' Strad, so called. My Louisa, the wife of the late Jerome B. Squier, formerly owned this instrument. The back has a beautiful finishing figure. In fact, the instrument is not only more beautiful than the 'Messiah' Strad," but it has more powerful tone. It is evidently one of those brilliant experiments in which occasionally the great master indulged, and like most of his more celebrated or renowned violins, among them a picture of the "Messiah" Stradivarius. Mr. Squier has submitted for publication this picture, together with several others of like value.

**A Rare View of Notable Violins in Boston**  
Beginning at the left, one sees a so-called Dulligrosser; the next is a copy of Magari, made by Mr. Squier in 1890; the next is a copy of the Paganini Josef Guarnerius, made by Mr. Squier in 1890; and the last is a Soabi Strad, lately called the Messiah