

**Provenance; Christopher Ruening
Plowden DG
Willemotte Strad
Titian Strad**

**Giuseppe Guarneri “del Gesu”
1735 “Plowden”**

By 1735, Giuseppe Guarneri, the last of the great dynasty, had become the most productive and creative maker in Cremona. He made nearly a dozen violins every year from the finest available materials covered with the most spectacular varnish imaginable. By this point, he had developed his own personal style, breaking away from the traces of his father’s model. Perhaps it was Guarneri’s success that revitalize the waning days of the Stradivari workshop and the other exceptional local talent, Carlo Bergonzi, for these three workshops in the 1730s made Cremona once again the epicenter of great violin making.

The “Plowden” represents Guarneri’s middle period, the most recognizable and imitated since the 19th century. The harmonious form demonstrates the balance of earlier Cremonese designs and foreshadows del Gesu’s later and more expressive work.

The violin was named for its first recorded owner, the London collector C.H. Chichele Plowden, who was called “the most reputed amateur of his day” by Arthur Hill. Plowden purchased the violin from London dealer John Hart; he also owned the D’Egville, King Joseph, Dushkin, and Ole Bull Guarneri’s. In 1866 collector Louis D’Egville Sr. purchased the Plowden and the now named “D’Egville” from the London dealer George Hart.

The Plowden remained with the D’Egville family until 1900 when W.E. Hill & Sons sold it to the greatest collector of all, the Baron Johann Knoop. Ten years later, Hill & Sons sold it to the Madrid violinist Enrique Fernandez Arbos who, “has taken a violent fancy to our fine Guarnerius,” according to the Hills. In 1924, they sold it to the famed collector Richard Bennett who owned throughout his life no less than 15 of the finest del Gesus. In 1929, Hills sold the violin to the Connecticut collector John T. Roberts. In 1944, the Rembert Wurlitzer firm sold it to William Rosenwald. Finally, in 1987, though J. & A. Beare of London, it found its way to its current owner, Dr. Mark Ptashne, whereupon it was reunited with the D’Egville.

Antonio Stradivari 1734 “Willemotte”

It is a mystery why three elderly men in the Stradivari workshop, Antonio and his two sons Omobono and Francesco, somehow reversed their decline to make a series of bold and expressive creations in their final seven years. The late Stradivari violins have been the favored concert instruments by a veritable who's who of important artists.

Stradivari's "Willemotte" is characteristic in its masculine edgework and sound holes, full archings, and large form. Despite the somewhat less precise craftsmanship, this violin and others of its period are robust both tonally and visually, the maker having returned to foreign wood rather than the local "oppio."

The Willemotte is named for an early owner, the distinguished 19th century collector, connoisseur, and amateur, Charles Willemotte of Antwerp. During his lifetime he owned no less than twenty of the finest Stradivaris and other instruments too numerous to list. Willemotte acquired the violin in 1886 from Gand & Bernardel in Paris. Gand reported the previous owner was a French amateur named Cartier. Upon the dispersal of the Willemotte collection in 1894, the violin passed to Charles Edler in Frankfurt. In 1928 the violin was sold by Hill & Sons to Gerhard Fischar of Cologne, and in 1955, by Henry Werro to the German born violinist Maria Lidka, who taught at the Royal College of Music.

By 1983, Bein & Fushi had sold the Willemotte to Albert Overhauser and five years later to its present owner, Dr. Mark Ptashne.

Antonio Stradivari
1715 “Titian”

The French violin dealer Albert Caressa dubbed this violin the “Titian” because its clear orange-red color reminded him of the famous Venetian painter.

It is among Stradivari’s most important works from his golden period and is similar to the 1714 “Dolphin” on account of its compact dimensions, soft broad flames, wide purfling, and transparent ground. The two violins have two-piece backs with flames in opposite directions and share an interesting detail: the upper pins of the back show on the outer side of the purfling.

The Titian’s earliest known owners were two 19th century French noblemen, first the Comte D’Evry and then the Comte de Sauzay, an amateur player who was the son-in-law of violinist Pierre Baillot. In 1872, the Titian landed in America in the hands of William Baker of Boston. In 1922, the important violinist Efrem Zimbalist purchased it from Erich Lachman.

Several years later, the violin was sold through the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company to Felix Warburg and remained in the Warburg family through the next generation. It was heard as the first violin in the Stradivari Quartet. The Rembert Wurlitzer firm in 1965 sold it to Samuel Mehlman and later to J. Irwin Miller. Today, the Titian is played by the international soloist Cho Liang Lin.