

**THE VIOLIN AND THE ART
OF ITS CONSTRUCTION. A
TREATISE ON THE
STRADIVARIUS VIOLIN**

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The violin and the art of its construction. A treatise on the Stradivarius violin by August Riechers

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AUGUST RIECHERS

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THE VIOLIN

AND THE ART OF ITS CONSTRUCTION.

A Treatise on the Stradivarius Violin

by

AUGUST RIECHERS,

Bow and Violin Maker.

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With four lithographed plates.

A. C. Liebmann
BEAUFORT ST. & BAKER AVENUE
ROMOND HILL, L. I.

1895

GOETTINGEN.

CARL SPIELMEYER'S NACHFOLGER.

FRANZ WUNDER.

1895.

Copyright entered at Stationers Hall, London.
A. A.

L. Stolenschan

To his highly revered Friend and Patron

DR. JOSEPH JOACHIM

this work is humbly dedicated

by

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

1895

The highly esteemed author of this treatise, a renowned violin maker and clever repairer, of old instruments, having been denied the pleasure of publishing the same himself, death intervening on January 4th, 1893, his work on the violin and the art of its construction is now published, in accordance with his last wishes.

This treatise will, no doubt, be all the more welcome to professionals and amateurs alike, as to my knowledge no such work has yet been published treating the subject in such an able and thorough manner.

May, therefore, the valuable labours of the deceased author meet with that universal acknowledgment, which in a very high degree they deserve.

Göttingen, April 1895.

The Editor.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN giving publicity to this treatise on the construction of the violin, I believe I am only meeting the wishes of many, both professionals and amateurs, who are desirous of learning more particulars concerning the construction of their instruments, but am also giving a few practical hints to my younger comrades in the art of violin-making. I hope also to induce some of my older colleagues to give forth other works of the same kind, which may serve to ennoble and promote our art.

Times without number I have been asked by friends of the violin, during my 40 years' work as a violin maker, to recommend books giving more exact information on the construction of that instrument, but the only answer that I have been able to give has been that German technical literature on the subject is very meagre, and that information from foreign works is mostly impoverished by feeble translations.

Very few authors understand the general build of the violin thoroughly, they pay most attention to individual points, those most calculated to attract the attention of amateurs; for example, the proportions of single parts, their size, etc. There is only one work I can recommend which forms an exception to this rule and that is "The Memoirs of Antonio

"Bagatella" (Padua 1786) which has been published in a German translation by Franz Wunder at Göttingen.

It contains not only rules for the construction of violins, violas, violincellos and basses, as well as distinct instructions for the restoration of the outline of the belly and back of these instruments, but also enters into particulars concerning the adjustment and renovation of the same.

Just as the celebrated violin makers of the last century took the work of Amati as their model, I have found my master, to whom I, in common with all my colleagues, look up with admiration, recognising in him not only the gifted artist, but also the industrious workman and far-sighted observer — I mean Antonio Stradivarius. Even as a boy I was very fond of listening to the tales told me by my father, who was a musician in Hanover and as an autodidact occupied himself with violin work, tales in which he described to me the wonderful productions of the old Italian masters and more particularly those of Amati, Stradivarius, and Guarnerius. He regarded it as a great distinction shewn to him, and often referred to the fact, that he was allowed to open and repair the Guarnerius violin of Paganini. After a time, however, he altered his tone and cursed the Italian as well as his violin, for the great artist, although he praised my father's work and expressed himself perfectly satisfied with it, objected to the payment of three Thalers for the repairs, considering it an exorbitant charge, and this, coupled with similar experiences at the hands of others, so incensed my father that he would not give his consent to my earnest wish to enter the violin factory; consequently I was apprenticed at the age of 13 years to a pianoforte manufacturer with whom I remained for two years, in spite of having shown aptitude in the other direction by constructing a violin with my own hands at the age of 12 years.

Being released from my apprenticeship at the beginning of my fifteenth year, I wandered away to Markneukirchen, there to study violin-making under Hans Ficker; later on I was occupied for a longer period as assistant to Ludwig Bausch, senior, in Leipsic, to whom I owe a great deal, for he strengthened me in my love of the art and settled my belief in the unequalled excellence of Stradivarius. My admiration for this great master increased even more and more, and in my fifteenth year, when I began to work for myself in Hanover, I learned even more of his works and had the happiness to find that my reverence for him was shared by my friend and patron Dr. Joseph Joachim. Ten years later, the latter exchanged Hanover for Berlin, and as I was no longer contented in the former town after his departure in 1872, I gladly responded to a call from him to prosecute my work in the Prussian capital and to continue to study the works of Stradivarius, in order to handle them more worthily and to infuse his ideas into my own productions. I venture to hope that I have succeeded in the first part of my undertaking, for, a great number of instruments have passed through my hands in the course of years, including the incomparable violins belonging to Dr. Joachim. The second part of my task I do not consider accomplished. I am ever taking more and more trouble in working, in the hope of bringing my attempt nearer and nearer to the hitherto unattained excellence of Stradivarius. I therefore beg my readers to regard the following chapters with a favourable eye and to accept them in a friendly spirit as the result of long years of experience, the confirmation or rectification of which I shall accept with joy.