

## **Cellos of the Piatigorsky Festival**

**A Digital Exhibition by Cozio**

in partnership with the Piatigorsky Festival

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INTERNATIONAL  
CELLO FESTIVAL  
celebrating its 50th anniversary



Italian Cello Making, Origins to 1750: Cremona & Brescia, by Jason Price	Italian Cello Making, Origins to 1750: Venice, Bologna and Rome, by Jason Price	Ralph Kirshbaum, Montagnana 1729 <i>Coming soon - 18 May 2016</i>	Ronald Leonard, Pietro Guarneri of Mantua 1695 <i>Coming soon - 18 May 2016</i>	David Geringas, Guadagnini 1761 <i>Coming soon - 18 May 2016</i>	Zuill Bailey, Goffriller 1693 <i>Coming soon - 18 May 2016</i>
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As cellists from around the world gather in Los Angeles for the 2016 Piatigorsky Festival, Tarisio presents an exhibition focusing on the historic instruments to be played at this acclaimed festival, drawing on information and images from the Cozio archive.

Tarisio's Founder and Director **Jason Price** traces the development of the cello from the first known example by Andrea Amati in the mid-16th century, through 150 years of modifications in Cremona, Brescia, Venice, Rome and Bologna.

The exhibition will also feature interviews with **Ralph Kirshbaum**, artistic director of the festival, on his Montagnana, **Ron Leonard** on the only existing **Pietro Guarneri** of Mantua cello, and **David Geringas** and **Zuill Bailey** on their Guadagnini and Goffriller cellos, to be published on 18th May during the festival.

Wishing the Piatigorsky Festival great success!

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## Italian Cello Making, Origins to 1750: Cremona & Brescia, by Jason Price

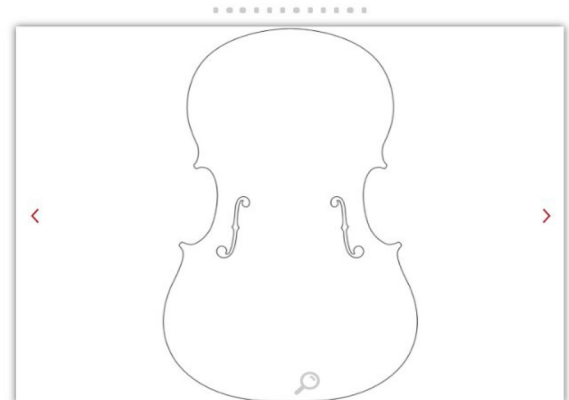
### Italian Cello Making, Origins to 1750: Cremona & Brescia, by Jason Price



Dirck Hals, 1623, Hermitage Museum

#### Introduction

The violin has had the good fortune of being born perfectly formed, with model and dimensions that have remained more or less untouched for nearly 500 years. The viola and cello on the other hand weren't so lucky. Their dimensions, tuning, and intended role in the ensemble remained unsettled and subject to myriad modifications and adaptations for another few hundred years. In the case of the cello, even its name was up for grabs: in Italy alone in the 17th century, printed music and archival sources call instruments of the bass register by a multitude of names: *bassetto*, *bassetto di viola*, *basso da braccio*, *basso di viola*, *basso viola da braccio*, *violone*, *violonzono*, *violoncino*, *viola granda*, *violonzino*, *violonzello*, *violone piccolo*, *violone basso*, *violone grande*, *violone doppio*, *violone grosso*, *violone grande* and *contrabasso*. [1] Such varied terminology suggests both a great variety of existing instruments and extensive ongoing experimentation. It was only in around 1665 that the first music was written to use the specific term 'violoncello'. [2] For the sake of convenience we will refer to all instruments in this survey as cellos, although it is unlikely that either the makers of the earliest of these instruments or the first musicians to play them would have called them by that name.



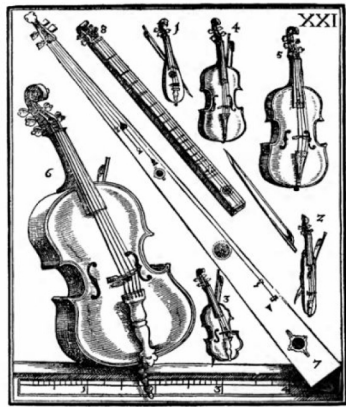
The earliest surviving identifiable cello, the 'King' Andrea Amati cello from c. 1550-1570. (Outline recreated see note 3).

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## Cremona

The earliest surviving identifiable cello was made by Andrea Amati (c. 1505–1577) in Cremona around 1550–70 and it formed part of the collection of decorated instruments made for King Charles IX of France. Its precise original dimensions are unknown although we can extrapolate that it was somewhat longer than 78 cm with widths of around 39 cm and 49 cm. [3] There is some discussion as to the instrument's original number of strings but the size of the pegbox, spacing of the pegs and the substantial width between the sound holes seem to point towards a five-string instrument that was later modified. [4] Given that there are only two other Andrea Amati cellos, which have survived in varying states of alteration and condition, there is much that is unknown about the function and format of Andrea's cellos although we can accept that for Andrea Amati in the mid-16th century the cello was already an essential member of the violin consort.

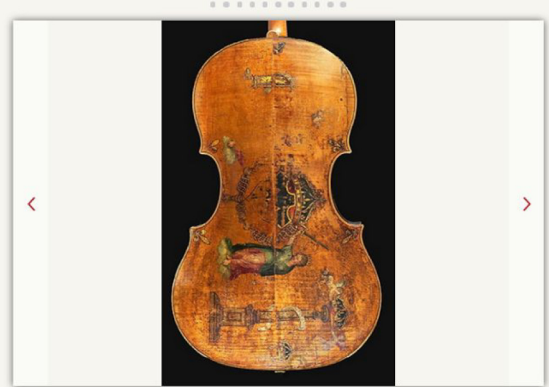


1. 1. Violin. 2. Violon. 3. Violoncello. 4. Violin. 5. Violoncello. 6. Bass-Violen. 7. Triangel. 8. Cymbel.

'Syntagma Musicum', Praetorius, showing a five string bassetto

The sons of Andrea, Girolamo and Antonio (1561–1631, c. 1540–1607), took over their father's workshop in the late 1570s. Again the exact original dimensions of their cellos are unknown beyond the fact that most of them were big, very big, to the point that already in the early 19th century they were deemed unwieldy and many were reduced to more moderate dimensions. There are fewer than 20 surviving cellos by the Brothers together with remnants of several bass viols and at least one smaller-sized five-string cello. [5]

The later cellos of the Brothers Amati workshop show the collaboration of Girolamo's son Nicolò (1596–1684), who took over the Amati workshop in around 1630. Under Nicolò the workshop hired many assistants and produced hundreds of violins, but interestingly only a few dozen known Nicolò Amati cellos survive. For whatever reason the main supply of cellos in mid-to-late 17th-century Cremona appears to have come from two other workshops in Cremona: the Guarneri and the Rugeri.



The earliest surviving identifiable cello, the 'King' Andrea Amati cello from c. 1550-1570

After leaving the employ of the Amati workshop,

Andrea Guarneri (1623–1698) established the first important non-Amati workshop in Cremona. Early cellos by Andrea are of the same grand dimensions as those of Nicolò Amati but in workmanship they are significantly more rustic and less refined. Often made with willow, poplar or beech and rarely with traditionally figured maples, the cellos of Andrea Guarneri have a masculine and almost sculptural beauty that is far from the meticulous elegance of the Amatis but beguiling in its own way. Andrea's son Giuseppe 'filius' (1666–1740) also made exceptional cellos. His early examples follow the general parameters of his father but after around 1700 he made several excellent cellos of a slightly smaller model with narrow f-holes, lower arching and an intense red-brown varnish. [6]

The most prolific cello-making dynasty of 17th-century Cremona, however, was that of the Rugeri. Traditionally presumed to have been a pupil of Nicolò Amati but more likely only tangentially influenced, Francesco Rugeri (c.1628–1698) was extraordinarily productive in the making of cellos. Often featuring plainer and less costly materials such as willow and poplar, Rugeri's cellos were also the first Cremonese cellos to be routinely built on a smaller pattern. As early as the 1670s we see cellos that were built on a smaller form with a back length of 75–76 cm. This is significant in that with the exception of Maggini it appears that Rugeri and his sons were the first to adopt the smaller form cello that would soon become dominant in most of Italy. Recognizable by their narrow, upright soundholes, rich dark-brown varnish, fine edges and characteristic scrolls, the smaller patterned cellos of Francesco Rugeri are often seen as the antecedent to the great 'forma B' cellos that Antonio Stradivari introduced around 1707.

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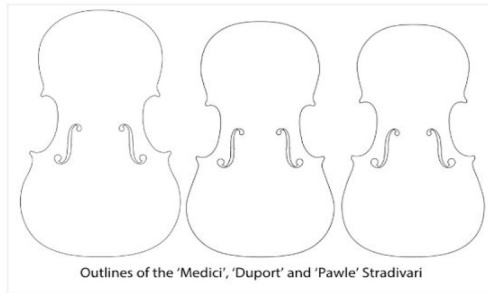
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## Stradivari

The earliest cellos by Antonio Stradivari (c.1644–1737) are bassetos, their long body and stop lengths following the standards set by the Amati workshop. Most of Stradivari's pre-1700 cellos have since been reduced in size but three stunning examples survive with their dimensions unaltered: the 1690 'Medici', the 1697 'Castelbarco' and the 1701 'Servais'. There were at least two cellos made by Stradivari with an arched top and a flat back. [7] These may have been created as a specific commission or perhaps this was an abandoned innovation, a hybrid between a viol and violone.

The reasons why the cello was so large in the 17th century and why a shorter pattern become dominant in the 18th century are complex but can be summarized by two simultaneous developments. First, the advent of wire-wound strings allowed instrument makers to build cellos with a shorter string-length. Secondly, music being written for bass instruments began to demand a more manageable and maneuverable instrument. In the late 17th century the function of the cello and its role in the ensemble were changing rapidly. No longer just the bass voice in a processional or the continuo in a consort, the cello began to come into its own as a solo instrument in the late 17th century. Composers such as Domenico Gabrielli and G. B. degli Antonii began to write virtuosic parts for the cello, leading cellists to seek instruments that they could play with greater agility and with a quicker response.



Outlines of the 'Medici', 'Duport' and 'Pawle' Stradivari

In or just before 1707 Stradivari hit upon his greatest cello innovation, the 75.5 cm long 'forma B'. His wasn't the first small-model cello but it was effectively the model which was most fit for purpose and consequently became the most highly revered and most widely copied over the subsequent three centuries. There are approximately 20 surviving cellos of the forma B pattern and they include some of the most famous cellos in history: among them the 1711 'Duport'

(Rostropovich), the 1712 'Davidov' (Ma, du Pré), 1714 'Batta' (Piatigorsky) and the 1720 'Piatti' (Piatti, Prieto).

The cellos made by Stradivari and his workshop from the mid-1720s onwards become even more compact in form with a shorter body length, narrower widths and shallower ribs. These cellos are thought to be predominantly the work of Francesco Stradivari and the young Carlo Bergonzi. It is unknown why Bergonzi didn't continue making of cellos on his own after the Stradivari workshop fizzled out after the death of Antonio in 1737 but for whatever reason both he and the other last classical Cremonese master, Giuseppe Guarneri 'del Gesù', steered clear of making cellos almost completely.



'Harrell, Du Pre, Guttman' Stradivari of 1673

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## Brescia

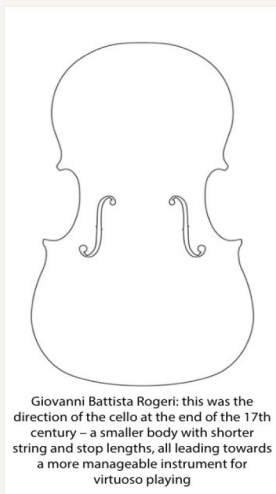
Before 1630 Brescia developed alongside Cremona as the other major city of instrument making in Italy but the types of instruments being made in Brescia were of greater variety. The first notable Brescian maker of violin family instruments was Gasparo Bertolotti 'da Salo' (1540–1609), who made viols, citterns, liras da braccio and other transitional instruments in addition to a number of excellent tenor violas and a handful of violins. Excepting one uncut instrument with a back length of 72 cm, most Gaspar instruments that are currently set up as cellos were probably originally conceived as viols or violones and later converted. Only one of the existing cello-sized instruments by Gaspar is known to retain its original scroll, which probably means these instruments were originally configured for a different number of strings and the heads were discarded upon later modification. The one presumed original Gaspar cello pegbox shows evidence of five peg holes. [8] Gaspar himself was recorded as a player of the violone, [9] and bass instruments seem to have occupied a substantial portion of his output at least in comparison to the ratios of instrument types produced by the first two generations of the Amati family. [10]

The surviving Gaspar instruments currently configured as cellos are rather rustic compared with the refined and carefully composed Cremonese cellos from this period. The arching is full and rises directly from the edges and the outline is broad but highly variable from one instrument to another. The corners are short and the sound-holes are long and variable and undercut into the plane of the table.

Gaspar was assisted by his son Francesco and by Giovanni Paolo Maggini (1580–1632). Cellos by Maggini are extremely rare, with only a small handful of authentic examples surviving. In 1892 the Hills knew of only two Maggini cellos yet they praised these instruments lavishly, referring to Maggini as 'the father of the modern cello' and asserting that 'Stradivari learned from Maggini in the matter of violoncellos.' [11]



Gasparo Bertolotti 'da Salo'



Giovanni Battista Rogeri: this was the direction of the cello at the end of the 17th century – a smaller body with shorter string and stop lengths, all leading towards a more manageable instrument for virtuoso playing

With their long sloping sound-holes and bulbous upper and lower bouts, a direct similarity may be elusive to modern eyes but it is nonetheless true that the surviving Maggini cellos are the earliest known instruments of a 75.5 cm size. The fact that so few cellos have survived from such a relatively prolific maker is odd and warrants further analysis. Sadly Maggini died in 1632, leaving no known followers or assistants.

The death of Maggini meant an irreparable break in the tradition of Brescian instrument making. It wasn't resumed until 30 years later in 1662, when Giovanni Battista Rogeri (c.1642–c.1705) arrived in Brescia fresh from his training in the shop of Nicolò Amati. While the violins of Rogeri are close cousins of Nicolò Amati, the model he used for their cellos is markedly different. With a back length of roughly 71 cm, sloping shoulders, closed C-bouts, hooked corners and narrowly set sound-holes, Rogeri's cellos presented a progressive and forward-thinking divergence from the Amati tradition. Without a doubt this was the direction of the cello at the end of the 17th century: a smaller body with shorter string and stop lengths, all leading towards a more manageable instrument for virtuoso playing.

*In part 2, Jason Price surveys the development of the cello in Venice, Bologna and Rome.*

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Rosette from 1693 Matteo Goffriller cello. Photo: Robertson and Sons Violin Shop

#### Venice

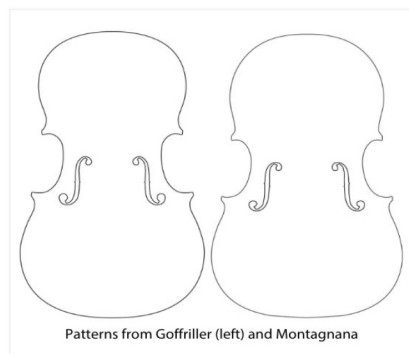
In [part 1](#) we saw how the cello evolved in the 16th–18th centuries through the cello makers of Cremona and Brescia. For the most part, theirs was a homegrown tradition where several generations of family members improved upon each others' work. The proponents of the Cremona and Brescian schools also tended to be native citizens of those cities. The cello making traditions of many other parts of Italy, however, were built by outsiders. Many of the great cello makers of the Venetian and Roman schools came from the Tyrol or from the northern slopes of the Alps: Sella, Kaiser, Goffriller, Tecchler and Platner were all relatively recent arrivals from the north. Even the great Venetian cello makers with Italian origins were foreigners in Venice: Montagnana, Tononi, Serafin, and Pietro Guarneri all came from elsewhere in Italy to ply their trade in the Serenissima Republic.

The great migration of skilled instrument makers to Italy and other parts of Europe in the late 17th century was largely the result of an excess of talent in the Bavarian instrument making city of Füssen. Situated in the foothills of the Alps, next to a limitless supply of excellent spruce, and along a key trade route linking northern Europe with Italy to the south and Vienna to the east, Füssen had developed into a bustling instrument making town by the Middle Ages. In 1562 the Füssen instrument makers organized into a guild – the first of its kind in Europe – and one of the restrictions was that the city would be limited to no more than 20 violin making workshops at any given time.

[1] Naturally this led to the exodus of many talented makers and started the greatest labor migration in the history of violin making. Füssen makers went as far afield as Cremona, Vienna, Paris, Rome and Naples in search of employment, but perhaps the greatest city to benefit from the overabundance of Tyrolean talent was Venice.



Matteo Goffriller of c. 1730



Patterns from Goffriller (left) and Montagnana

The first of the great Venetian cello makers was Matteo Goffriller (c. 1659–1742), who came from the town of Bressanone in the Tyrol to work for Matthias Kaiser. [2] Kaiser was primarily a builder of lutes and other plucked instruments but Goffriller seems to have specialized early on in making cellos. In fact of the instruments attributable to Goffriller the ratio of cellos to violins is approximately 2:3; with Stradivari, in contrast, the ratio is closer to 1:10. Goffriller's cellos range from 70 cm small-sized cellos to larger 77 and 78 cm instruments most of which have since been reduced. The outlines of his cellos are highly variable, which together with variations in the shape and setting of the soundholes gives each instrument a unique

appearance and personality. The heads of Goffriller cellos are easily identifiable: long and graceful with a round and slightly diminutive volute standing proud above a tapered pegbox. Goffriller's varnish is perhaps his most outstanding contribution to Venetian cello making and set the standard for the makers that followed – a rich reddish-brown sauce applied thickly, which after time coagulated into an extremely textured and glorious craquel. Goffriller's son Francesco succeeded him and made excellent although somewhat more rustic cellos but soon moved outside Venice to Udine.

Matteo Goffriller was the presumed teacher of the other great Venetian cello maker, Domenico Montagnana (1687–1750). As Stradivari and Guarneri are to violins, Goffriller and Montagnana are to cellos. Montagnana cellos are shorter in body-length than Goffrillers but they are considerably broader in the bouts and in the waist, making for a compact, maneuverable instrument with a highly resonant, full-bodied tone. The archings are rounded but modest and never exaggerated. The sound-holes are modelled on an Amati pattern and precisely executed. The maple and spruce are of the finest quality and covered in a glorious rich red-brown craqueled varnish.

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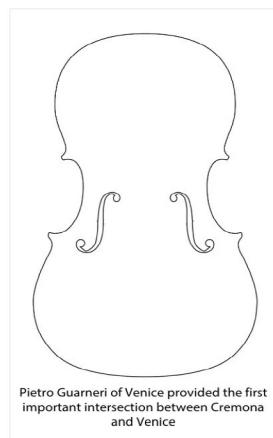
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The Cremonese and Venetian violin making traditions have their first intersection when Pietro Guarneri (1695–1762), the son of Giuseppe Guarneri 'filius Andreae', came to Venice in around 1717. No doubt this made for some useful cultural exchange of working methods, tools and techniques. In fact it is only after Pietro's arrival in Venice that we see the widespread usage of such iconic Cremonese techniques as the internal mold and the central pin. Pietro was a maker of exceptional cellos that perfectly fuse the best parts of the Venetian and Cremonese traditions. The workmanship is careful and controlled but graceful and expressive. The model is reminiscent of 'filius Andreae' but distinctly recognisable with its wide set sound-holes, attenuated stems and high-waisted C-bouts. The lavish maple and stunning deep-red varnish make them among the most noble of Venetian cellos. Altogether there are fewer than 15 surviving Pietro Guarneri cellos. These arguably represent the best cello work of the Guarneri family considering only a pair of cellos have survived from his brother, Giuseppe 'del Gesù', and his uncle, Pietro of Mantua.

Santo Serafin (1699–1776) arrived in Venice from Udine also in the year 1717. There are fewer than a dozen surviving cellos by Serafin

and each is of exceptional quality and craftsmanship. His model shows the inspiration of Stainer in the outline and the head and Amati in the sound-holes, although the back length is a manageable 73–75 cm. The shallow C-bouts and short, pert corners create an effect of compact refinement and graceful elegance. The wood used for the back is invariably of the highest quality quarter-cut maple with a strong, deep figure that was burnished before being varnished so as to create a three-dimensional rippled effect to the touch.

## Bologna

In the 16th and 17th centuries Venice was the most important Italian city for the writing and performance of choral, symphonic and operatic music, but Bologna was arguably of greater importance for the development of music featuring the cello as a solo instrument. Cello composers Giuseppe Maria Jacchini, Giovanni Battista degli Antonii, and Domenico Gabrielli all worked in Bologna and wrote some of the earliest highly ornamented virtuosic music in the cello repertoire.

Bologna was also an important location for the production of strings for bass instruments and is thought to be the first city to produce wire-wound gut strings. In his 1610 compilation of lute music the English composer Robert Dowland instructed that the best strings for bass instruments were 'made at Bologna in Lumbardie, and from thence are sent to Venice [and] called Venice Catlines'. [3] Wire-wound strings first appear around 1660 in Bologna [4] around the same time that the term 'violoncello' was first used explicitly in printed music, also in Bologna. [5] These are perhaps secondary factors but they help to explain why the production of smaller-sized cellos flourished in Venice and Bologna at the end of the 17th century.

**ADVERTISEMENT.**

*There is a late Invention of Strings for the Baffes of Viols and Violins, or Lutes, which sound much better and lower then the common Gut String, either under the Bow or Finger. It is Small Wire twisted or gimp'd upon a gut string or upon Silk. I have made tryal of both, but those upon Silk do hold best and give as good a sound. The Best Choice of these Strings are to be sold at Mr. Richard Hums Instrument-seller at the Lute in St. Pauls Alley near Paternoster Row.*

An early wire-wound strings advertisement from London



Giovanni Tononi of 1680

The Tononi family provides an important bridge between Venice and Bologna. The two principal makers of the family, whose cellos are highly appreciated, are Giovanni (c.1640–1713) and Carlo Annibale (1675–1730).

Giovanni Tononi is an interesting melange of different northern Italian traditions. His cellos are built to an Amati model but with strong Venetian influences including a dark red coagulated varnish. He often used beech and ash for his cellos with rather modest pine for the tables. The heads of his cellos are most similar to Goffriller with a small volute and a tapering pegbox. Giovanni's son Carlo succeeded him in 1713 but left for Venice in 1717, where he was employed in the workshop of Matteo Sellas. Pietro Guarneri was also associated with the Sellas workshop and judging from their work during these years it is evident that there was much sharing of ideas.

The best strings of this kinde are doubleknots ioyned together, and are made at Bologna in Lumbardie, and from thence are sent to Venice from which place they are transported to the Martes, and therefore commonly called Venice Catlines.

The best strings came from Bologna, wrote the English composer Robert Dowland in 1610

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## Rome

The great 18th-century Roman tradition of cello making finds its roots in the workshop of Alberto Platner, whose assistants included his son Michele (1684–1752), Giorgio Tanigher (c. 1665–1717) and probably also David Tecchler (c. 1665–c. 1747). Originally from Füssen, Tecchler established his workshop in Rome at the end of the 17th century. He is best known for his cellos, which were built on a large and broad pattern with a rounded high arch and an overall very masculine and powerful appearance. Most have since been reduced but some extraordinary uncut examples survive.

Tecchler's materials were generally of excellent quality with the cellos in particular often using figured spruce and attractive maple all covered in a distinctive tawny orange-brown varnish. Tecchler sound-holes are a distinctive blend of Stainer and Amati influences with large and often rounded notches, elegant curved stems and tapered wings. They are set wide apart and low in the belly, giving them a unique appearance. The scrolls are also very distinctive with a very narrow width between the ears, a deep and finely carved volute and a chunky eye. Tecchler cellos have long been favoured by soloists for their colourful tonal range and their powerful, commanding resonance.

Alongside Tecchler, Michele Platner is revered for his excellent and attractive cellos. Somewhat more Germanic in styling than Tecchler with slightly rougher workmanship, Platner cellos are found in a large and also a smaller pattern. Platner's assistant and successor Giulio Cesare Gigli (c. 1724–1794) made cellos in the style of Platner's smaller model.

And so by the end of the 18th century, smaller-pattern 'violoncellos' were being made almost universally throughout Italy. The great makers of the late 18th and 19th centuries would make their own experiments, such as the smaller body lengths of Guadagnini, the distinctive slanting sound-holes of Storioni and the wide bouts of Pressenda, but by 1730–750 the cello had reached an accepted form and function that has continued more or less unchanged to the present day.



David Tecchler of 1713, 'Wahl, Soyer'

## Notes

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2. Pio, Stefano, *Violin and Lute Makers of Venice (1640–1760)*, Venice Research, 2012, p. 104.
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4. Bonta, Stephen, *From Violone to Violoncello: A Question of Strings?*, Journal of the American Instrument Society 3, 1977.
5. In Giulio Cesare Arresti's Sonate op. 4 (Venice, 1665).

ITALIAN CELLO MAKING. ORIGINS  
TO 1750: CREMONA & BRESCIA, BY  
JASON PRICE

ITALIAN CELLO MAKING. ORIGINS  
TO 1750: VENICE, BOLOGNA AND  
ROME, BY JASON PRICE

RALPH KIRSHBAUM, MONTAGNANA  
1729  
Coming soon - 18 May 2016

RONALD LEONARD, PIETRO  
GUARNERIE DI MANTUA 1695  
Coming soon - 18 May 2016

DAVID CEBINGAS, GUADAGNINI  
1761  
Coming soon - 18 May 2016

ZUILL BAKER, GUARNERIE DI MANTUA 1693  
Coming soon - 18 May 2016

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