

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SPECIAL FEATURE on

GIOVANNI BATTISTA GUADAGNINI

Giovanni Battista Guadagnini (often shortened to G. B. Guadagnini) was born roughly 30 km away from the City of Cremona on 23rd June 1711 at Bilegno in Val Tidone of Piacenza, at a time when both Stradivari and Guarneri were at the height of their production years, J.B. Guadagnini was still a youth while his father Lorenzo, both in Bilegno and Piacenza, was a contributing maker of instruments for Stradivari's workshop, the leading violin shop in the first half of the 18th century (though other sources say he was not, but an innkeeper by trade!). Anyway, it was the normative use of trade in 18th-century Italy for a young person to start as an apprentice in a master's workshop as early as ages 12, to be allowed to practice a given trade afterward.

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He became regarded as one of the finest half-dozen craftsmen of string instruments in the history of string instrument making, a reputation he earned through 44 years of labour and experimentation and perseverance. His work is divided into four main periods corresponding to, and named after, Piacenza, Milan, Parma and Turin, the four cities in Italy where he lived and worked. Each period has its own style and characteristic. The Guadagnini's Milan style are more popular in Europe while the Turin style is more sought-after in the United States. Because of different arching built for each style, the Milan models make soft and colorful sound, whereas the Turin models sound are flatter and more powerful. Appreciation by both connoisseurs and musicians alike attest to the fact that J.B. Guadagnini may possibly be considered the last of the great master violin makers in the second half of the so-called "golden age", while Italy was under Bourbon rule. J.B. Guadagnini died in Turin in 1786.

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CELLISTS currently playing Guadagnini Cellos (in year 2020):

** Natalie Clein plays the "Simpson" Guadagnini cello (1777).

** David Geringas plays a G.B. Guadagnini cello made in 1761.

** Maxine Neuman plays a 1772 Guadagnini.

** Han-na Chang plays the G.B. Guadagnini cello made in Milan in 1757.

** Gilberto Munguia plays a G.B. Guadagnini cello (1748).

** Sol Gabetta plays a G.B. Guadagnini cello (1759).

** Carter Brey, principal cellist of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, plays a Guadagnini made in Milan in 1754.

** In addition, the Australian String Quartet (ASQ) plays four matched instruments: a violoncello (c.1743), and a violin (1748-49), both made in Piacenza, and a viola (1783) and another violin (1784) made in Turin.

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Have you got a lot of money? Well, the auction record paid for a cello by this maker was \$2,466,386 in November 2018!

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