



THE GREAT VIOLINS

volume 4: Girolamo Amati, 1629

Johann Joseph Vilsmaÿr

Artificiosus Concentus pro Camera

Six Partias for violin solo

Peter Sheppard Skærved



Johann Joseph Vilsmaÿr (1663-1722)

Artificiosus Conventus pro Camera, Distributus Sex Partes,
seu Partias à[sic] Violino Solo Con Basso Belle imitante

Partia No. 1 in A major 12:57

1	I	Prelude: Adagio – Harpeggio	1:59
2	II	Aria: Allegro	1:02
3	III	Saraband: Adagio	1:28
4	IV	Gavott: Allegro – Variatio	1:28
5	V	Menuett	1:12
6	VI	Aria: Adagio – Allegro	1:40
7	VII	Menuett	1:02
8	VIII	Aria: Allegro	1:06
9	IX	Menuett	0:50
10	X	Guique: Presto – Final	1:04

Partia No. 2 in B flat major 15:12

11	I	Prelude: Adagio	1:24
12	II	Aria: Allegro	1:10
13	III	Saraband: Adagio	1:15
14	IV	Fantasia: Allegro	2:15
15	V	Menuett	0:51
16	VI	Aria	1:04
17	VII	Menuett	0:48
18	VIII	Gavott: Allegro	1:09
19	IX	Passpied	2:03
20	X	Ciaccona – Variatio – Variatio 2	3:07

Partia No. 3 in C minor 11:17

21	I	Prelude: Adagio	1:35
22	II	Courrant: Allegro	1:23
23	III	Aria	0:51
24	IV	Menuett	0:47
25	V	Aria: Allegro	0:51
26	VI	Canario: Presto	0:32
27	VII	Aria Lamentevole: Adagio	2:23
28	VIII	Menuett: Allegro	1:03
29	IX	Guique: Presto	1:50

Partia No. 4 in D major 14:00

30	I	Prelude: Adagio	2:06
31	II	Aria	1:49
32	III	Menuett	1:14
33	IV	Brunada	0:53
34	V	Saraband: Adagio	2:03
35	VI	Aria: Allegro	0:34
36	VII	Menuett	1:30
37	VIII	Canario	0:56
38	IX	Passacaglia	2:53

Partia No. 5 in G minor 11:02

39	I	Prelude: Harpeggio	1:24
40	II	Gavott: Allegro	1:45
41	III	Saraband: Adagio	2:04
42	IV	Rigodon: Allegro	1:26
43	V	Guique: Allegro	0:45
44	VI	Menuett	1:22
45	VII	Boure	0:58
46	VIII	Retirada: Allegro	1:16

Partia No. 6 in A major 17:23

47	I	Prelude: Allegro – Aria	1:53
48	II	Saraband: Adagio	1:22
49	III	Aria: Allegro – Variatio	1:34
50	IV	Menuett	1:33
51	V	Aria: Allegro	2:04
52	VI	Menuett	1:04
53	VII	Aria: Allegro	1:23
54	VIII	Guique: Allegro	0:34
55	IX	Eccho	0:40
56	X	Aria Variata: Allegro	5:12

Total playing time: 81:51

Johann Joseph Vilsmaÿr (1663-1722)

‘Artificiosus Concentus pro Camera, Distributus Sex Partes, seu Partias à[sic] Violino Solo Con Basso Belle imitante, Celsissimo, AC REVERENDISSIMO S R I PRINCIPIO AC DOMINO DOMINO FRANCESCO ANTONIO Archiepiscopo Salisburgensis, S Sedis Apostolicae Legato Nato, Germiniae Primati S R I Principi ab Harrach etc etc Principi, ac Domino suo Clementissimo Dedicatus a Joanne Josepho Vilsmaÿr, Celsitudinis Suae Cubiculario, et Aulae Musico. Anno Dni. 1715.’

Violin (1629) by Girolamo Amati (1561-1630) labelled ‘Antonio & Girolamo ‘Brothers’ Amati’ played by

**Peter
Sheppard
Skærved**

The violin with a 1620
Brothers Amati viola



A Player explores

Johann Vilsmaÿr's six 'partias' or partitas/suites for solo violin offer this player an extraordinary bridge, from the great flowering of virtuosic 'German-speaking' solo writing of the end of the 17th century, best heard in the works of Biber, Baltzar, Matteis and Walther, to the philosophical masterpieces that would emerge in the 1720s and '30s – Bach and Telemann's cycles for the instrument alone. At the risk of generalising, I can say that Vilsmaÿr's pieces share elements of both approaches, but also mark a transition, from the use of rhetoric dash and virtuoso bravado to dazzle, entertain and amuse, to a more considered, if no less fantastic type of violin playing.

In his (to us) excruciatingly subservient dedication to Francesco Antonio, Archbishop of Salzburg, Vilsmaÿr's witty peroration (which I suspect that he hoped/expected his 'REVERENDISSIMO' employer would never trouble to read) offers a clue about his working practice. It finishes:

'...dedicated by Joanne Josepho Vilsmaÿr, from the heights of his chamber, and to the music hall.'

I would not read too much into the inexactitude of Vilsmaÿr's Latin: like so many of his contemporaries (Pietro Locatelli not least among them), he indulged in a somewhat queasy mish-mash of ecclesiastical Latin and flowery Italian. However, one thing is clear from the sting in the tail of this dedication – he was composing, writing, and playing in his 'cubicularius', his bedroom. This is music conceived in sequestered, intimate seclusion. The romanticised idealisation of Torquato Tasso, in splendid isolation in his cell in Ferrara, inspired writers and composers alike in the centuries following.

Five years after the publication of this cycle, Johann Sebastian Bach would inscribe 'sei solo' on the title page of his *Sonatas & Partitas*: in that deliberate non-agreement in Italian he carefully inserted the German meaning 'Be alone'. It had taken some time to appear, but gradually, as the violin liberated itself from the taverns and bawdy houses with which it had so often been associated in the early 17th century (as evidenced in so many Flemish genre-paintings of the day), a solitary, considered form of 'musicking' emerged, parallel to the act of reading. This was increasingly manifest in domestic,

sometimes even quasi-monastic settings (see the Klagenfurt Manuscript *The Great Violins Volume 3*). The first popular ‘visual’ of this was provided by the frontispiece of John Playford’s (1623–1686/7) *The Division Violin*, published in London in 1683:

A musician sits on a high-backed oak and leather chair, at a table, which may or may not be covered. He (‘for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it’) is playing the violin. The table itself has, it seems, been graffiti-ed with ‘Division Violin’ above the open volume laid on its top: it seems that we are to understand that the contented smile which plays across our violinist’s face, is due to his enjoyment of that music as he plays it (I am sure that it is!). Musical instruments (a bass viol or cello with bow and a crossed pair of crudely-represented wind instruments) hang on the wall. Light floods the room from the double-bay leaded windows. One thing is clear, above all: Our musician is at home. It’s not clear if there is an audience, though that question is moot, as our fiddler is smiling at the artist, or at us, at me, at you. Happiness is to be found thus, playing the violin.

I have no problem saying that everything that I intuit about Vilsmaÿr tells me he found happiness in just that way. For we know almost nothing about this extraordinary musician, except that he was a well-paid member of the *Hofkapell* in Salzburg from 1689 until his death in 1722. It’s likely that there he worked with the *Kapellmeister*, ‘Biber von Bibern’, Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber (1644-1704). Aspects of his writing betray the influence of the more celebrated musician.

The most commented-upon of these has been the use of ‘scordatura’. This word is often translated, and viewed as the de- or re-tuning of string instruments, an anachronistic result of its later use for caricatured effects. For example, in the second movement, of Gustav Mahler’s *Symphony No. 4*, a solo violin is heard tuned up a major third: according to Natalie Bauer-Lechner, Mahler wanted this to come across as “screeching and round, as if Death would strike up.” But there was no such association in the 1600s and early 1700s. We need to re-evaluate what ‘scordatura’ meant then, and to stop seeing it as an extraordinary, specialist effect.

I would suggest that a glance at the word, 'scordatura', will reveal what it means – 'Stringing'. Every historic 'cordophone' has in its history had many tunings, and for most of that history, will have been used in many different tunings within a short period of time. Anyone will be familiar with the rambling anecdotes told by great singer-guitarists or banjo players from the American Roots tradition, say Robin and Linda Williams, while they adjust the tuning of their instruments for the next song or performance of 'Rocky Mountain Breakdown'.

The retuning is done for two simple reasons; to reach certain harmonies and chords easier, and to bring a slightly different colour to the violin. It's worth noting, that, particularly on the violin, where different tunings effect subtle changes to the architecture and airspace of the box of the instrument, such different colourings are often the main driver for these different choices. Of course, the GDAE tuning with which we are all familiar was used extensively from the beginning of the violin's 'modern' history, which begins, for our purposes, with the standardisation of the form (if not the size) of the instrument in Brescia and Cremona in the 1560s.

However, if we look at the broader evolution of the violin, we will swiftly see that, away from the 'classical' limits of the instrument, extremely successful traditions/practices evolved, in the far north of Europe and across the Americas, which eschew such 'standard' tuning. I would argue that, applying what one might call a 'anthropological distance principle' (the idea that the best way to see the oldest version of any given thing or practice, one needs to go to the most distant place to where it might have travelled), we can see/hear truer echoes of the richness of tunings used by violinists of the 17th and 18th centuries. In Norway, the 'hardanger' tradition of violin playing is dominated by 'scordatura' (albeit using a higher 'A' on the smaller instruments that have dominated there since the 1600s). In this case, the most commonly used tuning is ADAE, though there are varied and complex variations used. In the USA, 'bluegrass' violinists are enamoured of AEAE, which is particularly handy for the rapid virtuosity of their tradition, as one can play the same passages an octave apart, using the same fingerings, on the top two, or bottom two strings. So, any notion of GDAE as being standard, is a myopically 'classical' one, although it's clear that by 1715, when this set was published, it was seen as 'home'.

The 'sex partes, seu partias' that make up this set require the following adjustments: 1. GDAE 2. GDAD (Top string down a tone) 3. GDAC (Top string down another tone) 4. AEAD (Bottom two and top string up a tone) 5. GDAD (Bottom two strings down a tone) 6. GDAE (Top string up a tone). So, four different tunings are used, requiring five adjustments when the cycle is played in sequence. A crucial factor in the 'colour' of the violin sound is the application of weight on the belly of the violin as a result of the tunings. The more weight/pressure applied, the brighter the violin will sound and the more restricted variety of timbre is possible. The point of maximum pressure is the 4th 'partia', when all strings but the 'A' have been raised a full tone: this is the violin at its brightest. The point of least pressure is the third 'partia', when the top string (called the 'cantina' or 'little singer'(fem.) until the 19th century) is lowered a major third from 'E' to 'C': here the violin is darkest, and most timbral variety is possible. This sequence of re-tunings offers us, players and listeners a 'doorway' into the structure of the set.

There's no question that such groups of pieces were designed to be played/heard as balanced and narrative sets, each illustrating certain qualities and affects. The equivalent, away from music, would be gatherings of paintings, such as Peter Paul Rubens' 1621-5 'L'Apothéose d'Henri IV et la proclamation de la régence de la reine, le 14 mai 1610/ The Apotheosis of Henri IV and the Proclamation of the Regency of Marie de Médici, 14th May 1610'. I have chosen this because, whilst it is a giant 24-painting cycle, it not only is designed to be appreciated all at once, but it also depicts the events (real and fanciful) of one day in 1610.

Looking at dramatic, narrative, or poetic cycles, one first of all notices the moments of drama, the pivotal changes. The observation of the cycle of tunings in this set of violin pieces offers just such a moment, when the violin is re-tuned from the dark, slack tuning of 'partia' number three, to the bright, tight, tuning of 'partia' number 4. It would be a hardened listener indeed, who did not notice the effect of 'the sun coming out' that results from this move, at the halfway point in the cycle. The tunings up till here, have moved darker, and darker and then there's a moment we can all recognise: "אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר" (*yehi 'or*) \dixitque Deus fiat lux et facta est lux" ("And God said let there be light, and there was light").ⁱ

As you might expect, this drama is matched in the key structure of the set. The third 'partia' is in C minor, and the fourth in D major. This is as striking a move from musical 'murk to sunlight' as can be imagined. At this point we should turn to the affects associated with given keys.

In his 1682 *Règles de Composition*, Mark-Antoine Charpentier (1643 – 1704) described C minor as 'obscure and sad', while D Major was 'joyous and very warlike', exactly the dramatic turn which can be heard in the re-tuning of the violin at this point. I don't think that it is going too far to suggest that the most generic religious typologies can be applied to such a tuning move (especially those a catholic musician writing for his Archbishop- employer might imagine). The most obvious of these, is the link from the aforementioned Genesis (1:3) to Isaiah: 'Populus qui ambulabat in tenebris, vidit lucem magnam; habitantibus in regione umbræ mortis, lux orta est eis.'/ 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.'ⁱⁱ

The full sequence of keys used in the set maps fascinatingly onto the 'scordatura shape' I outlined above (I will stick with Charpentier's attributes, although opinion, of course, varied on the precise nature of these). 1. A Major – 'joyful and pastoral' 2. B flat major – 'magnificent and joyful' 3. C minor 'obscure and sad' 4. D Major 'joyous and very warlike' 5. G minor 'serious and magnificent' 6. A major – 'joyful and pastoral' (again!). The overlay of instrumental qualities resulting from intersect between tunings and the shape of the key colours/emotions, offers us as clear an entrée into the architecture of this set as the music itself.

It should be clear that we can expect more links, use of *prolepsis*, and teleological felicities in Vilsmaÿr's beautiful group of pieces. Of course, he was an eminently practical musician, and each of the 'partias' works wonderfully as a free-standing piece. But, like Bach's *Six Brandenburg Concertos* or Beethoven's *Three Sonatas Op 30* something special emerges when we hear or play such music as a set.

The most important factor, the architectural constant, if you like, underlying groupings like this, is the 'rule of six'. In the 1st century BCE, Marcus Vitruvius Pollo ('Vitruvius' to you and me) wrote:

‘...mathematicians have said that the perfect number is six, because this number is composed of integral parts which are suited numerically to their method of reckoning: thus, one is one sixth, two is one third, three is one half [...]. And further, as the foot is one sixth of a man’s height, the height of the body as expressed in number of feet being limited to six, they held that this was the perfect number, and observed that the cubit consisted of six palms or of 24 fingers.’ ⁱⁱⁱ

Perhaps nothing more important for the western understanding of form and structure would ever be written. Every piece of music, every building, every painting, every instrument, would dialogue with this insight. Buried within Vitruvius’ rhetoric is the most important observation that $1+2+3=1(2\times3)$; the essential dialogue between the whole, the half and the third which this perfect number embodies.

In addition, as you might expect, this cycle, is divided into two. In some cases, such as Corelli’s such a division was clearly articulated between *da chiesa* and *da camera* sonatas. Bach interleaved the two sets of three in his *Sonatas & Partitas*. In Vilsmaÿr’s case, the division is more obscure, but clearer when we stand back from the set, and view all the movements as lively parts of a whole. Partias 2, 4 and 6 end in similar manners, with sets of variations, marked ‘Ciaccona’, ‘Passacaglia’, and ‘Aria Variata’ respectively. Each of these movements is successfully larger, and together they form the dominant element of the set, like the dome, the *Dom* of a cathedral.

Each of the partias begins the same way, with a ‘prelude’. The first four of these are marked ‘Prelude: Adagio’, the last two ‘Prelude: Harpeggio’ and ‘Prelude: Allegro’ respectively. In each case, as might be expected, the ‘prelude’ establishes the key, explores the fullest ‘tessitura’ and ‘gamut’ of the piece, and allows both player and listener to accustom themselves to the new tempering of tuning and colour resulting from the successive adjustments of the instrument.

Beginnings and endings were clearly important to Vilsmaÿr. To modern ears, this might not be noteworthy, as we became accustomed to dramatic endings, to ‘codas’ and ‘finales’ from the end of the 18th Century onwards. Instrumental works in the late 17th century were less concerned with such finials, particularly when using dance forms, so it is fascinating to observe some of the gambits this composer used to bring a ‘partia’ to

a noteworthy conclusion (as opposed to just finishing – as all of Bach's *Sonatas & Partitas* do, including the 'Chaconne' which ends the *D minor Partita*). Three of Vilsmaÿr's 'partias' are rounded out with a rhetorical gesture, breaking the form, signalling an end.

The first *partia* ends with a French 'Guigue', a mere eight bars long: the last note is joined, using a 'tie' to an 'alla breve' section, marked 'Final', whose nine-bar structure, and discursive argument has the nature of a written-out improvisation. This ends with a virtuosic descending up-bow staccato scale to a three-note chord (referencing material from the previous 'Aria: Allegro').

The fifth '*partia*' concludes with a 'Retirada' – a 'withdrawal', which recalls the title of Biber's 'Serenade' *der Nachtwächte*, which ended with a similar movement. This is the most dynamically contrasted of any in the *Artificiosus Concentus*. As well as the 'petites reprises' indicated near its end, it is rounded out with a four-part arpeggiated coda, which returns us to the sound world of the similar 'Prelude' that began this '*partia*'.

Dramatic gestures also distinguish the pair of movements preceding the virtuosic variations, which ends the 6th *partia*. The first of these, 'Guigue', includes two dramatic rests (silence is a rare commodity in this music, as in all solo violin music of the period). In the following movement, entitled 'Echo', the same rests are opened out, and more added, providing space for more material also marked 'Echo'.

Successive generations of Salzburg composers loved these kinds of spatial effects: in 1777, Mozart's most 'Biber-esque' work, his *Notturmo K.286* for four orchestras (written for the same spaces in which Vilsmaÿr had played) used effects marked the same way. However, the earlier composer's use of the technique recalls the devices of theatre. As an English violinist, I find it easiest to show the effectiveness of this using the famous 'echo-scene' from Act Five of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613). Note how the echo twists the words of Antonio and Delio:

DELIO: Now the echo hath caught you.

ANTONIO: It groan'd, methought, and gave/ A very deadly accent.

ECHO: Deadly accent.

DELIO: I told you 'twas a pretty one.

You may make it

A huntsman, or a falconer, a musician,

Or a thing of sorrow.

ECHO: A thing of sorrow.^{iv}

This is exactly the gambit used by Vilsmaÿr, albeit to less baleful effect. It's worth noticing that this movement ends with nearly a whole bar of notated silence, incorrectly notated as 12 8th notes long. The composer forgot, that he had begun the movement with an up-beat 8th note, which should have been subtracted from the last bar. But don't worry, Bach made exactly the same mistake – at the end of his 'Chaconne'!

As might be expected, the majority of the movements heard in this collection are dances. There are five sarabandes, three gavotts, twelve menuetts, four guigues, one passepied, one ciaconna, one courrant, two canarios, one brunada, one passacaglia, one rigodon, and one boure. The sheer dominance of the increasingly fashionable minuet is in itself worthy of note, but what's particularly interesting are two fast dances.

The first of these, the 'Brunada' is found in the fourth partia, between a stealthy minuet and a wistful sarabande. Almost nothing is known about this dance form, but it's clear that it was/is a complex, syncopated 'gone-wrong gavotte'. The listener and player, not to mention any dancer, would be hard pressed to find the down-beat, and that, clearly, is the joke. Vilsmaÿr's Dresden-based contemporary, Paul von Westhoff (1656 –1705), used a similar technique of misdirection in two gigues, in his *Allemanden, Couranten, Sarabanden und Gigueen Violino Solo sonder Basso Continuo* to great effect. Perhaps Vilsmaÿr had played these (only six of them have survived).

It is however, the 'Canario' I find most charming. Like the bird, the dance, a fast gigue, full of stamps and accents, originated in the Canary Islands (the 'Fortunate Isles').

Shakespeare summed up the character of the dance well, in *All's Well that Ends Well*: '...And make you dance canary, with sprightly fire and motion.'^v But the ever-inventive Vilsmaÿr, unlike his colleague composers (including Bach, who included the dance in his *Goldberg Variations*) could not resist the challenge of incorporating the eponymous bird's song in the dance. 'Avis Canaria/Passer Canarius' was unknown in the Europe until brought back by Spanish ships trading across the Atlantic in the 16th Century. It was celebrated for its song; this was in a culture obsessed with the capture and training of nearly every unfortunate wild song bird to warble on command. In 1622, Vincenzo Leonardi and Giovanni Pietro Olina published their *Uccelliera* ('The Aviary'). It gave precise instructions how to 'entice [canaries] and dispose them more to sing. Some CODDLE them and *pamper* them with crumbs of Sugar, or a mite of *Sugarcane* very finely pounded: others cover the cage with CHICKWEED for greenery, this being an herb dear to all the Little Birds that sing.'^{vi}

I like to think that Vilsmaÿr had a canary of his own, and that it loved to sing while he played. I imagine him, beaming with happiness, in his little bedroom, his 'Cubicularius Celsitudinus', sawing away, while his 'Canary Sparrow', the musical bird from the 'Fortunate Isles' sang away to its heart's content. It's certainly what his music feels like to play!

Peter Sheppard Skærvæd

ⁱ Genesis 1.3

ⁱⁱ Isaiah 9.2

ⁱⁱⁱ Pp.73-4, *The Ten Books of Architecture*, Vitruvius, translated M.H.Morgan, Harvard University Press, Harvard 1914

^{iv} Act 5, scene 3, *The Duchess of Malfi*, John Webster, 1613

^v *All's Well that ends Well*, Act two, Scene One, 230

^{vi} P.42, *Like Pasta for Nightingales*, Helen MacDonald, Royal Collection Trust, London 2018



The violin at rest, mid-concert, at London's 'Design Central'

The Great Violins | A player's appreciation.

This violin is labelled as being by the 'Brothers' Antonio and Girolamo Amati. These were the two sons of Andrea Amati (c. 1505 – 1577), who created what we now recognise as the modern form of the violin, the model that would be used by Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737) and every maker of note since (see *The Great Violins Volume 1*).

The label inside the violin lays claim to that lineage, presenting the brothers, curiously, as 'nepoti' (which could mean both descendants or nephews) of their father. From the mid-1570s until 1588 Girolamo (c. 1561 – 1630) and Antonio (c. 1540 – ca.1610) collaborated under a joint the 'Brothers Amati' moniker. They ended their partnership angrily in 1588, but Girolamo continued using the joint label. From about 1610, he was joined in the workshop by his son Nicolò (1596 – 1684) (See *The Great Violins Volume 2*). The general consensus is that Nicolò's hand can be seen in most of the instruments that emerged from the workshop from then until Girolamo's death in the catastrophic plague wave that swept through Italy in 1629–1630, the worst since the Black Death in the mid-1300s.

The pestilence arrived in October 1629, brought by Spanish and French troops involved in the 'War of the Mantuan Succession'. The disease spread quickly southwards, covering all of the northern Italian Peninsular (save for Liguria and parts of Friuli and Piedmont) by late spring, and then Tuscany, where it stopped in the summer. ^{vii} Death rates in Northern Italian cities were astonishing. Most authorities agree that in the major urban centres of Lombardy (including Cremona) the mortality was north of five hundred in a thousand. Writing this in the midst of the 2020 Pandemic, this is sobering, to put it mildly...

I think that it's fair to say that this violin was one of the last on which Girolamo worked. I find it very moving to imagine father and son collaborating on the instrument, only a few months before Girolamo died and Nicolò found himself, as a survivor of the plague (which had ripped through every level of Cremonese society), in charge of the family firm, and abruptly, the dominant *luthier* in the city.

The front of the violin is made of a medium grained spruce, the single-piece back a spectacular piece of slab-cut maple. The ribs are also of maple, like the head of the instrument. This is also slab-cut, resulting in a spectacular 'flame' across the front of

the scroll and the back of the pegbox. This was not the way that later makers, including Stradivari cut the heads of their violins but is found in earlier Cremonese and Brescian examples.

Having spent countless hours with this instrument in my hands, and having played some of the greatest violins made by Nicolò after his father's death, my hunch, and is, of course, only a hunch, is that Girolamo made the front, scroll and ribs, and that Nicolò made the back. The first time I held the 'Brooking' Nicolò Amati at the Library of Congress, I had the shock of recognition when I turned it over and looked at its back: this was a handiwork I recognised from the 'Brothers' Violin.

The most delicate features of the violin are the 'f-holes', miracles of geometry applied in a curved space, distinguished by the most elegant wings, particularly at the bottom. The purfling, the tripartite inlay that runs around the edge of back and belly, is unsurpassed; a masterclass in marquetry, in strips of poplar and stained pear wood.

I have been privileged to perform and record regularly on this instrument since 2013. Its extraordinary qualities have profoundly influenced my love of the violin and the understanding of what it can do. There seems to be no limit to its range, and whether I am playing earlier music, or reaching for the extreme colouristic demands of today's most adventurous composers, this violin offers me what I need, with room to spare, and, it seems, endless opportunities for exploration.

This violin forms part of the important collection at the Royal Academy of Music, London.

The bow is a 'Biber-model' of 2010 by Antonio Airenti of Genoa.

The Violinist

Peter Sheppard Skærved is known for his pioneering approach to the music of the past of our own time and the past. Over 400 works have been written for him, by composers Laurie Bamon, Judith Bingham, Nigel Clarke, Robert Saxton, Edward Cowie, Jeremy Dale Roberts, Peter Dickinson, Michael Finnissy, Elena Firsova, David Gorton, Naji Hakim, Sadie Harrison, Hans Werner Henze, Sıdıka Özdil, Rosalind Page, George Rochberg, Michael Alec Rose, Poul Ruders, Volodmyr Runchak, Evis Sammutis, Elliott Schwartz, Peter Sculthorpe, Howard Skempton, Dmitri Smirnov, Jeremy Thurlow, Mihailo Trandafilovski, Judith Weir, Jörg Widmann, Ian Wilson, John Woolrich and Douglas Young.

Peter's pioneering work on music for violin alone has resulted in research, performances and recordings of cycles by Bach, de Bériot, Tartini, Telemann, and, most recently, his project, 'Preludes and Vollerteries', which brings together 200 unknown works from the seventeenth century, from composers including Colombi, Lonati, Marini and Matteis, with the Wren and Hawksmoor churches in London's Square Mile.

His work with museums has resulted in long-term projects at institutions including the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, the Metropolitan Museum, New York City, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, Galeria Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City, and the exhibition 'Only Connect', which he curated at the National Portrait Gallery, London. Most recently his 'Tegner' commissioned by the Bergen International Festival, is a close collaboration with the major Norwegian abstract artist, Jan Groth, resulting in a set of solo Caprices, premiering at Kunsthallen, Bergen, and travelling to galleries in Denmark, the UK and even Svalbard/Spitzbergen. Peter is the only living violinist to have performed on the violins of Ole Bull, Joachim, Paganini and Viotti. As a writer, Peter has published a monograph on the Victorian artist/musician John Orlando Parry, many articles in journals worldwide, and most recently, *Practice: Walk*, for Routledge.

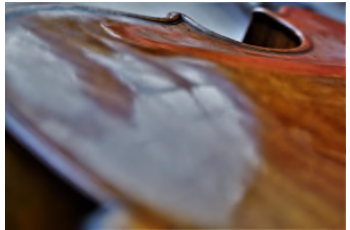
Peter is the founder and leader of the Kreutzer Quartet and the artistic director of the ensemble Longbow. Viotti Lecturer at the Royal Academy of Music, he was elected Fellow there in 2013. He is married to the Danish writer Malene Skærved and they live in Wapping.

www.peter-sheppard-skaerved.com

Aspects of the violin



Front and f-hole, treble side



Back and purfling

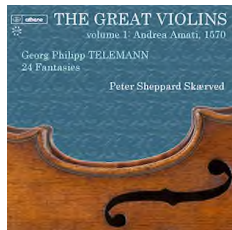


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Ribs, treble side

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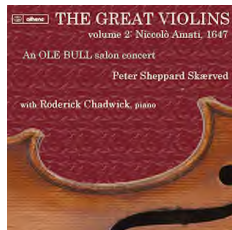
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Peter Sheppard Skærved

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