

Antonio e Girolamo Amati – viola da gamba 1611



Viola da gamba. 1611, Cremona, Italy

Label: «Antonius, & Hieronymus Fr. Amati Cremonen[us]. Andrea[us] fil. F. 1611»

Measurements (in millimeters)

Lower bouts: length – 537; width – 251/168/311

ANTONIO and GERONIMO AMATI

The Amati family is one of the main founders of the Cremonese violinmaking tradition. Andrea Amati (before 1511-1577) is the founder of the dynasty and is also one of the main reformer of the violin. All the violin makers of the next eras

are, in some measure, his followers. His sons Antonio (around 1540-1607) and Geronimo (around 1561-1630) further developed the kind of violin created by their father. Each brother had his own typical features; nonetheless, they became famous as makers of instruments they made together. The Amati brothers experimented on the shape of the body and of the belly, but they managed to continue the quality of the sound and the elegance of the shape that was the characteristic of the instruments by their father.

It is not possible to overestimate the influence of the Amati brothers on the other violinmaking tradition. Their instruments were all around Italy and Europe. The incomparable look and the perfect construction features made the violin of Cremona models we use have used for ages to determine the quality of an instrument.

The instrument exhibited among the instruments of the collection is one of the rare violas made by the Amati brother and preserved until now. The violas were frequently used for religious music, for folk music and for the court music. The tenor viola was popular between the XVI and XVIII centuries both as solo instrument and as instrument in an orchestra.

Because among the other instruments of the orchestra the viola had the role of the basso, the viola was often called «viola da basso». Among the composer who wrote music for this instrument, there are Johann Sebastian Bach, Georg Philipp Telemann, Francois Couperin.

For the back, the Amati brothers used maple wood with tangential cut. The instrument is almost entirely covered with original varnish.

Before it joined the State Collection at the end of the forties, the viola had been transformed into a cello for kid by an unidentified maker. In 1988, after the work of restoration by the violin maker A.S. Kocherghin, the

instrument return to its original nature.