

Antonio Stradivari “Joachim – Ma”, Cremona, 1714



Violino Antonio Stradivari “Joachim – Ma”, Cremona, 1714

Although Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) owned no less than 10 Stradivari violins during his lifetime, he is most closely associated with the 1714 “Joachim, Ma” violin which was probably the violin he played when he premiered the Brahms violin concerto opus 77 in 1879.

Here’s what W.E. Hill & Sons wrote in 1914 about Joachim’s acquisition of the prize as a young man of 18:

“This instrument formerly belonged to Herr Heinrich Muller of Hamburg in whose possession, Joachim, in 1849, first made its acquaintance, and became so enamored with it that he desired to possess it. It was, however, only after a prolonged struggle with his uncles, as he himself informed us, that he was at length able to realize his project, and secure the

violin, the price paid for it being £200.

Joachim retained possession of the instrument, playing on it on all occasions, until about 1890. At that period he happened to play in a quartet with Mr. Diedrich Meier who owned a very fine Stradivari that he offered to exchange with Joachim, whereupon the above mentioned fiddle changed hands. Mr. Diedrich Meier eventually sold the instrument to Baron Knoop, who, after retaining it in his possession for some years, finally presented it to his wife, Baroness May Knoop, from whom we have recently acquired it."

Hills sold the violin in 1913 to Sir Alexander Kennedy (1847-1928), a British engineer and amateur violinist. It passed in 1923 to American Albert E. Stephens, and then to John H. Bennett, and then to American collector Hugh Long around 1964. The Rembert Wurlitzer firm of New York sold it to the Chinese-American violinist, Si-Hon Ma, in 1967. Ma treasured the violin until he passed in 2009, which makes him the only recorded owner who possessed it longer than Joachim himself.

The "Joachim, Ma" was made during Stradivari's "golden period" and resembles other great instruments of the time such as the "Dolphin" of 1714 and the "Titian" of 1715. It is now on display in Cremona in fitting proximity to another Stradivari held by Joachim, the "Cremonese" of 1715, which was given to him in 1889. Although the "Cremonese" is slightly larger, the "Joachim, Ma" is also built on a large form. It is regarded as one of Stradivari's finest-sounding violins.

Christopher Reuning