

# BOOKS

## JOANNES BAPTISTA GUADAGNINI

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It seems as if it was a lifetime ago that the last word on the subject of Guadagnini was that of

Ernest Doring. Before that, all that was available was the memoirs of Count Cozio di Salabue. Since then, of course, there has been Duane Rosengard's monumental work, redefining what we know about any historical makers and their not necessarily straightforward lives. But that has not stopped the flow of publications inspired by this uniquely

fascinating maker, whose status, rightfully, rises ever higher in the school of classical Italian luthiers.

This most recent and magnificently impressive contribution certainly adds to our store of knowledge. Primarily a reference source of beautiful, accurately life-sized photographs (encompassing violins, violas and cellos) by Jan Röhrmann, Tucker Densley and Giorgio Movilli, the book also contains extended essays by the foremost experts in their fields: Carlo Chiesa, Philip Kass and Brigitte Brandmair, and others less familiar to me. As well as Chiesa's historical insight, the technical aspects explored by Kass and Brandmair in the structure and varnishing processes are eye-opening. There are photomicrographs of varnish, CT scans of archings (although unfortunately not at full size), full-dimensional charts and acoustical investigations, making this possibly the most complete book of analysis ever produced on any maker.

Guadagnini certainly deserves this sort of attention. His work is very personal and individualistic, yet at the same time affected by the shifting demands of his clients and patrons, and by his many changes in circumstance.

The notion that a maker of this level of artistry might even be self-taught would, until now, have been seen as heretical. But from all this diligent forensic work emerges the modern idea of a man of great intelligence and self-preserving wit, and of great originality.

His legacy stretches through the 20th century via his descendents and their pupils and assistants, making the Guadagnini tradition in its entirety a very vital and interconnected one. This book even manages to include some of his less well-known followers.

Doring by no means had the last word. Nor will this book, I'm sure, but it is more than enough to be getting on with.

JOHN DILWORTH