

Antonious Stradivarius

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Antonio Stradivari, or *Antonious Stradivarius* in Latin, is the most famous violin maker of all time. He was probably born around 1644 in the town of Cremona, in the Lombardy region of Italy. Stradivari was famed for his violins, though he built extraordinary cellos, a handful of violas, and there are guitars, mandolins, and even a harp from his workshop. The earliest violin bearing his name comes from 1666 and he built instruments alongside of his sons until his death in 1737.



Left: Reduced maximum card, Italy, 1938 cancellation, featuring Hamman representation of Stradivari with 20 centesimo 1937 red stamp issue. Right: Italy, 1937, green-gray issue, 2.55 lira. Far Right: Pictorial cancel of the Hamman representation of Stradivari from Cremona, 1987.

Though approximately 600 of his violins survive, there is no known image of the builder. In the 19th century, several artists created imaginary historical paintings that envisioned Stradivari in his workshop. The most famous of those is by the Belgian painter Edouard Hamman. This painting is commonly used to represent the maker.



Stradivari is known for the beautiful workmanship of his instruments and his innovative ideas. He experimented with various violin proportions and with flatter archings than were made by his predecessors. This resulted in his instruments have a rich tone and the ability to play very loudly.

Players have always loved the sound of Stradivarius violins. However, as concert halls grew in the 19th century, violin virtuosos began to favor his violins for their loud projection. Their popularity continues today.



North Korea, 1987 issue featuring front and back views of a Stradivari violin.



Celebrating violin making. France 1979 issue, and Canada 1999 stamp.



Violinists known for playing Stradivari violins. Left: Ole Bull, Norway, 1985. Center: Eugene Ysaye, Belgium, 1958. Right: Joseph Joachim, Berlin, 1969.