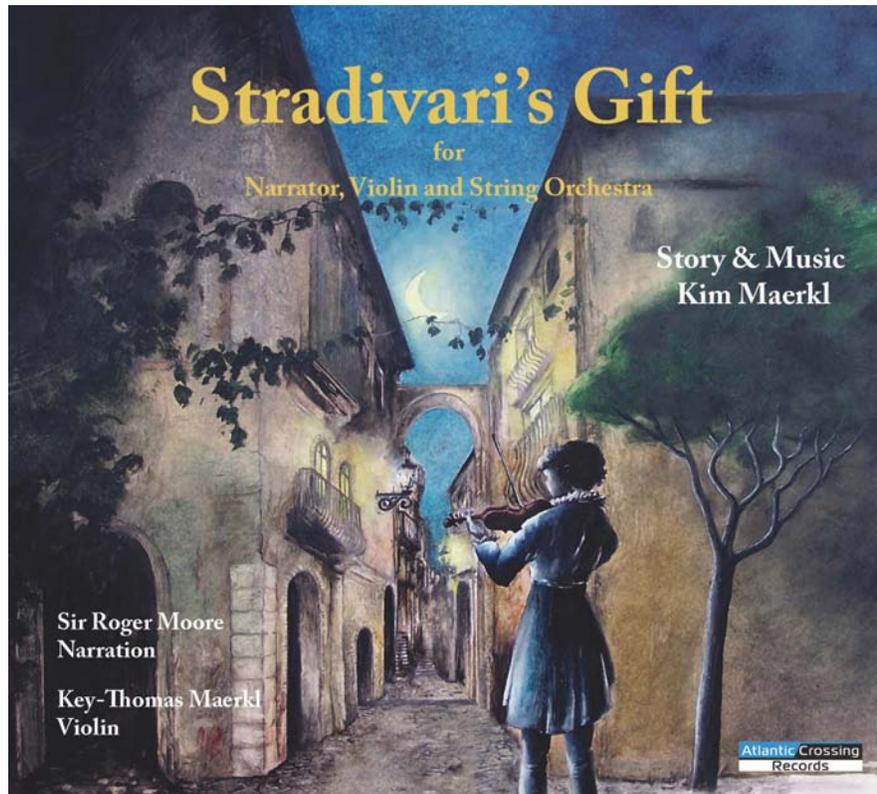


Teacher's Guide

Stradivari's Gift

for

Narrator, Violin & String Orchestra



Stradivari's Gift takes the listener on a historical journey to seventeenth century Italy and the violin shop of Antonio Stradivari. The story of the violinist Raphael and his gripping encounter with Stradivari brings to life the extraordinary achievements and unique magic of one of the world's most renowned violin makers.

Set against a historical backdrop the author introduces children to the fascinating and magical world of the violin through narration and music. A superb mix of information and fiction are melded together. The music is very melodic and easy to comprehend. *Stradivari's Gift* is the sequel to *Amati's Dream*, but the story can exist on its own.

**Atlantic Crossing
Records**

www.atlantic-crossing.com

Antonio Stradivari

Antonio Stradivari was born in 1644 and died in 1737. He was an Italian violin maker in Cremona, Italy. Violin makers are also known as luthiers. Stradivari served as an apprentice to Nicolò Amati from about the age of 12. His instruments are still regarded as among the finest stringed instruments in the world. He was very dedicated and hardworking.

Court Composer and Court Musicians

The protagonist Raphael is a court composer and musician. Court composers and musicians worked in the service of a prince, duke, king, or emperor. They existed from the Middle Ages until the early 19th century. Since there was no means to record music it could only be performed live. Having a court musician and composer was a status symbol for royalty. The musician was given room and board, as well as a salary and was required to compose and perform music for events in the palace.

Apprentice

Antonio Stradivari was an apprentice in Nicolò Amati's violin shop. An apprentice trains for a craft or profession while working for an employer, as opposed to someone who learns by attending school. Often, the apprentice worked for his employer in exchange for lodging, food and training. The apprenticeship system began in the Middle Ages. Most apprentices started between the age of 12 and 14. Antonio Stradivari was this age when he began learning the instrument making trade in the shop of Nicolò Amati. Benjamin Franklin was also 12 years old when he was apprenticed to his brother in 1718 to learn printing.

Can you think of any professions today that require apprenticeships instead of schooling ?
Plumber, electrician, carpenter, mechanic.

String instrument making is still learned through apprenticeship programs, although today the training takes place in the classroom as well as the violin shop. Some violins today are made by machines in factories.

Other Famous People of the Time

Enclosed is a list of famous people who also lived during the seventeenth century. Ask the students if they know something about each person. Have them research a famous seventeenth century person at home and write a few sentences about them.

Johann Sebastian Bach, composer (1685–1750)

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch painter (1606–1669)

William Shakespeare, English author and poet (1564–1616)

Galileo Galilei, Italian astronomer (1564–1642)

Sir Isaac Newton, English physicist and mathematician (1643–1727)

Discuss the Story

Raphael was a court composer and musician, who were his patrons?

Prince Ferdinand Maria and Princess Henrietta Adelaide

Where was Raphael's violin stolen?

In Munich, Germany

When Raphael was a boy he was apprenticed to a famous violin maker, what was his name?

Nicolo Amati

After Raphael's violin was stolen, where did he go to have a new violin made?

Cremona, Italy

Who was Antonio Stradivari's teacher?

Nicolo Amati

How old were some of the maple trees that Antonio Stradivari used to build his instruments? *Three hundred years old*

What instrument does Caroline play?

Cello

In what year does the story take place?

1676

Raphael received a letter from the thief regarding his stolen violin. What did the letter say?

The thief apologized and regretted stealing the instrument.

Who took ill and passed away at the end of the story?

Princess Adelaide

What consequences did this have for Raphael?

He was released from his contract and could return to Italy.

What is the gift Stradivari gives to all of us?

The instruments he built

Who was one of the greatest violin makers who ever lived?

Antonio Stradivari

What kinds of instruments did Stradivari make in the story?

Violins, violas, cellos

Antonio Stradivari (The Latin version of his name is Stradivarius) made instruments that are considered among the best in the world. His violins sell for millions of dollars. He built them 300 years ago by candlelight, and without electric tools.

Vocabulary Words

Encore

Dread

Indignant

Abhorred

Banquet

Emblazoned

Alps

Exquisite

Varnish

Predecessor

Ambition

Cremona

Munich

Enrich

Reverently

The Music

Listen to the CD several times, and take notes when listening for the second or third time.

Did you like the music? Did the violin portray the mood of the story? What is your favorite piece and why? Can you describe your favorite piece: happy, sad, exciting, contemplative...

What is a composer?

A person who creates music. The composer of this piece is Kim Maerkl; she was born in 1961. Many classical music composers lived centuries ago. Can you name another composer who wrote classical music?

Ask each student to compose a short melody then whistle or hum the tune.

How does a violin make a sound?

By drawing the bow across the strings; this causes the strings to vibrate. This vibration is transmitted to the body of the violin, which allows the sound to radiate into the surrounding air.

How many strings does a violin have?

Four

What kind of music do you listen to? Have the students discuss their favorite music and describe why they like it.

What instruments do you hear on the CD?

A violin alone, violins together, violas, cellos, double basses

Worksheets

Map of Italy-Find Cremona

Discover the Violin Shop

Draw a Scene from the Story

Pretend to be a Music Critic and Write a Review of the CD

Parts of the Violin

Use the Picture Above to Help You Draw the Violin

Write Your Own Story or Poem About the Violin

Review the CD

Facts about the Violin

Learn to be a Great Narrator! The Story Manuscript is Included.

Free Poster for the Classroom

Cremona is the city in Italy where the story takes place.

Can you find Cremona on the Map?



Italy is located on the continent of _____

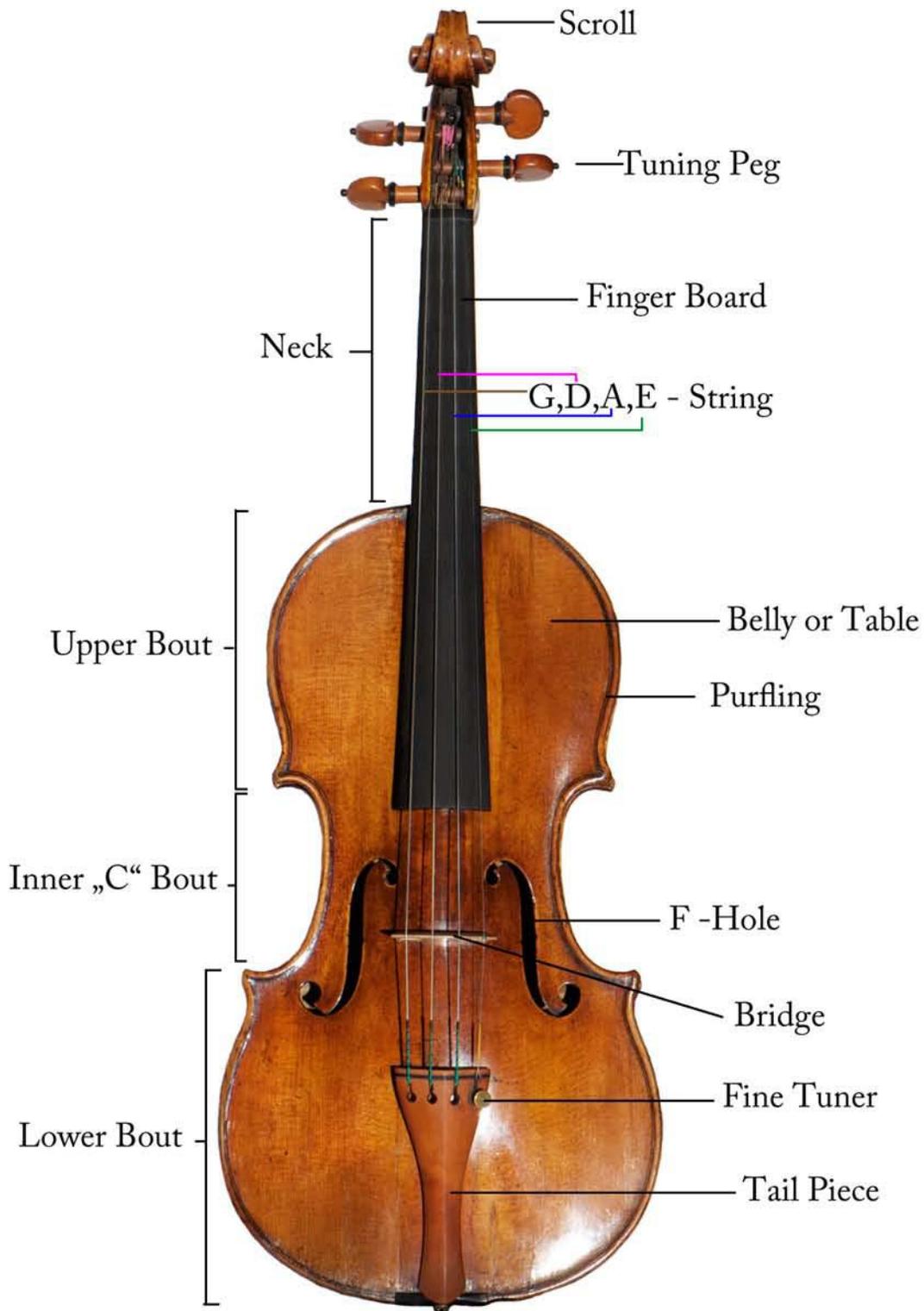
Make a list of what you see in the violin shop.



Draw a scene from the story that includes a violin.



Parts of the Violin



Draw a Violin and Name Five of its Parts

Facts About the Violin

The violin belongs to a family of stringed instruments. There are four important instruments in the violin family: Violin, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass.

The violin is the smallest and highest pitched instrument in the violin family.

The violin is most often used in classical music, but violinists can also play jazz, pop and folk music. There are even electric violins.

A violin is played with a bow or plucked.

The violin bow uses up to 150 hairs from a horse's tail.

The violinist can change the pitch by pressing down on the string with the left hand.

The violin has four strings.

The name violin comes from the Latin word Vitula, which means stringed instrument.

A person who plays a violin is called a violinist or a fiddler.

A person who makes or repairs violins is called a Luthier.

The strings used to be made from the gut of animals, today they are made of steel and nylon.

The oldest violins were made in the 1500s. They are over 500 years old.

Some of the best violins were made in the 1600s and 1700s by Antonio Stradivari and Nicolo Amati. They are two of the world's greatest violin makers.

Stradivari violins are very costly; they often sell for millions of dollars. There are about 600 violins made by Stradivari in the world today.

Violins come in a variety of sizes. Young children can rent or buy a very small violin.

The violin is made from many types of wood. The top is made of spruce, the back is made of maple and the neck is made of ebony and maple.

Fill in the blanks using the following words:

Smallest 500 bow Stradivari viola Vitula violinist gut left electric horse's four
Luthier 600 maple variety

The violin belongs to a family of stringed instruments. There are four important instruments in the violin family: Violin, _____, Cello, and Double Bass.

The violin is the _____ and highest pitched instrument in the violin family.

The violin is most often used in classical music, but violinists can also play jazz, pop and folk music. There are also _____ violins.

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Narration

Narrating a story is an art.

What makes a great narrator

A narrator should draw the listener into the story by speaking slowly and clearly.

A narrator must use correct pronunciation for all the words in the story.

A narrator should be able speak at many different volumes from soft to loud. The words must come to life and should be spoken expressively.

A narrator should hold the attention of the listener through his interpretation of the words. We must hear the words smiling or crying. The mood of the story must be expressed through inflections in the voice.

Use a colored pen to write instructions above the words in the story: soft, loud, fast, slow, happy, sad, angry. This will help you to remember to speak expressively when narrating in front of an audience.

What did you like or dislike about the narrator on the CD?

Print the story for each child and have the students take turns narrating a few paragraphs of the story.

Discuss ways to improve the narration of each student, as well as complimenting the positive aspects of each narration.

Stradivari's Gift

Kim Maerkl

The shadows cast by hundreds of candles danced on the walls as Prince Ferdinand Maria and Princess Henrietta Adelaide entered the concert hall. Tonight, the Italian court composer, and violinist Raphael was to perform in Munich for the first time. After the prince and his wife were seated, Raphael walked onto the stage, bowed to his patrons and lifted the violin to his shoulder. Then, he closed his eyes and the music burst like flames from his violin.

Raphael's playing enchanted the audience and when the music ended with a flourish of his bow, applause roared from the crowd. It was a magnificent occasion, and the concert was followed by a royal feast in the banquet hall of the palace. When Raphael entered the room they cried, "Play an encore, let us hear you again!"

"That is a splendid idea!" said Princess Adelaide.

"It would be my pleasure," replied Raphael, "but first, I must fetch my violin, I will return in a moment."

Raphael hurried to his dressing room, and flung open the door. Frantically, his eyes darted around the room, "I know I left my violin on the table," he thought desperately. Raphael searched inside the closet, under the table, and behind the curtains, but the violin was not nowhere to be found. Dread swept over him as he clutched the back of a chair to steady himself. The violin his teacher Nicolò Amati had made for him when he was an apprentice in Cremona, was gone. A terrible emptiness filled his heart.

Raphael returned to the banquet hall with his head hanging and the color drained from his face.

"Is something wrong Raphael, you do not look well?" Prince Ferdinand asked.

"Your Majesty, my violin has been stolen."

Anxious whispering filled the room, but Raphael glanced at the guests with a crushing sadness in his eyes and they fell silent. He began to speak in a voice full of sorrow.

"When I was a boy, I was apprenticed to the great violin maker of Cremona, Nicolò Amati. I learned to build instruments, but my secret wish was to play the violin. At night after everyone had left the shop, I remained behind to practice. Nicolò suspected that I was playing his violins, so one night he hid outside and watched me through the window. My music touched his heart, and he decided to make a special violin just for me. That is the violin which was stolen tonight."

Prince Ferdinand Maria was indignant, “Raphael, I am abhorred at the theft of your violin, and we will do everything in our power to find the culprit.”

Raphael thanked the Prince then turned to his friend Giovanni, “If you will lend me your violin, I can play the encore.”

Giovanni lifted his violin from its velvet bed and handed it to Raphael. He plunged into the music, for there were no words to express his despair.

After Raphael had finished playing, he left the banquet hall and wandered aimlessly through the palace gardens. “Where can I begin to search for my violin, what could have been the motive for the theft? Did another violinist steal it, or does the thief wish to sell it? Amati violins have grown extremely valuable,” he thought sadly. Raphael sank down beside a tree, leaned against its trunk, and closed his eyes. He dropped into a deep and dreamless sleep and did not awaken until the next morning. When he opened his eyes, he suddenly knew what he must do. He struggled to his feet and sped off to the palace. The prince was enjoying a morning stroll, and Raphael in his haste almost ran into him.

“Forgive me your majesty, ” Raphael stammered as he stopped to catch his breath, “Please may I speak with you.”

The prince looked kindly at Raphael, “You have certainly taken me by surprise, and nearly knocked me down, but I will gladly hear what you have to say.”

“I would like to request permission to return to Cremona to have a new violin made. I don’t know when, or if my violin will ever be found.”

“I see no reason why you cannot return to Cremona, I will arrange for a carriage to take you to Italy, you may leave tomorrow.”

“You are very generous and I am indebted to you.” Raphael said as he bowed to the prince, then dashed off to prepare for the journey.

The next morning Raphael boarded a carriage emblazoned with the royal arms. The seats were lush, and soft, and he felt as if he were stepping into a fairy tale. The clopping of the horse's hooves comforted him, and he drifted in and out of sleep for several days and nights. Dreams of Italy followed him through moonlit forests, and across the Alps.

When Raphael arrived in Cremona his heart beat excitedly as he knocked on the door of the violin shop. A young man with a friendly face opened the door.

“May I help you?” he asked.

“My name is Raphael, I was once an apprentice to Nicolò Amati. May I see him please, it is very important.”

“Welcome back to Cremona Raphael. I am Antonio Stradivari. Please come in, I have heard much about you.”

Raphael entered the shop and Nicolò looked up from his workbench, his eyes grew wide in astonishment. “Raphael, what a wonderful surprise, what brings you to Italy,” he said affectionately, as he rose to embrace his former pupil.

“I am afraid it is not good news Maestro Amati,” replied Raphael.

Pacing up and down the room Raphael explained the circumstances; Nicolò and Antonio listened in silence. After Raphael finished telling his story, he fell exhausted into a chair. Nicolò placed his hand on the shoulder of his former pupil and said, “Antonio will make you a new violin, he is a brilliant luthier.” Amati crossed the room, reached up and removed an exquisite violin from its hook. “You may borrow this until your new instrument is finished, but you could also use it to help us out of a difficult situation. A concert is being given in Cremona this evening in honor of the Archbishop, but the violin soloist has fallen ill. If you could perform for him, it would not have to be cancelled.”

“I would be honored Maestro Amati,” said Raphael.

When night had fallen, Antonio escorted Raphael to the concert hall. The word had spread about the new soloist, and the audience eagerly awaited him. The curtain rose, and Raphael thrilled the crowd with his music.

During the performance he had been captivated by a beautiful girl. Their eyes met and she smiled at him. The longer she held his gaze, the more he forgot the audience and found himself playing only for her. After the concert he ran to the lobby and searched for her, but she had disappeared. Raphael hurried out of the building and wandered the streets of Cremona. “Where are you hiding, where do you live?” he wondered. Then he stopped in the middle of a piazza, opened his case and picked up his violin. “If I cannot find you, perhaps you will find me.” Then he began to play and the music twirled and danced in the moonlight.

The next morning Raphael went to the violin shop. He took great pleasure in watching Antonio work. The violin maker held blocks of wood up to the morning light pouring through the window, and ran his finger lightly over the grain. The wood did not die after being cut from the tree, it received a second chance at life through the hands of the violin maker. Antonio Stradivari would transform the wood from something physical into something spiritual. He talked to the wood with his tools, and it responded, releasing its secrets under the hand of the master. Antonio thought about the energy that was locked inside; the summer sun, warm spring rains, harsh cold winters, and the splendor of fall. A violin was born long before the tree was felled. Some of the maples were three hundred years old, and the instrument was simply a continuation of that life. Raphael could feel the room vibrating with energy as Antonio worked.

The spell was broken by a timid knock on the door. Antonio opened it and greeted the customer with a smile. “Come in Carolina,” he said, taking the heavy cello case from her hand.

“Thank you Antonio, the low E on this instrument is howling like a wolf.”

“I’m sure we can remedy that,” answered Antonio.

Raphael stared at the girl, and his heart opened like the petals of a flower. Antonio introduced them.

“It is a pleasure to meet you Raphael, your playing last night was splendid,” Carolina said shyly. Raphael stammered a thank you.

“Unfortunately, I must be on my way,” said Carolina. “Maybe we will shall meet again.” Then she turned to violin maker. “ Thank you Antonio, you are the finest luthier in all of Italy.”

The door clicked shut, and Raphael stood motionless in the middle of the shop.

“Who is she, Antonio? I noticed her at my concert yesterday.”

“She is the daughter of the duke, and an excellent cellist,” replied Antonio amused.

“A beautiful cellist as well,” said Raphael with a smile. “Antonio would you mind if I stayed in the shop to practice?”

“If the smell of varnish will not distract you while you are playing. I will also be working late tonight,” answered Antonio.

Raphael removed a violin that was hanging on the beam above him. “Antonio, do you think I could play this violin tonight?”

“Yes, I would enjoy hearing it. The model is a bit longer, see how you like it.”

Raphael began to play, and Antonio brushed varnish in a gentle rhythm onto the wood.

Each day Raphael embraced the magic of the violin shop. Sometimes Carolina would stop in for a visit, and Raphael’s heart fluttered whenever she entered the room. She was transfixed by the instruments and yearned to learn more, but in the year 1676 it would have been unthinkable for a girl to become a violin apprentice.

Raphael and Carolina had never known anyone like Antonio Stradivari, his energy was tremendous when he was making a violin. He never seemed tired, and during the summer months he would take advantage of the light and work late into the night. He experimented with the arch and length of the violin, which gave the instruments a richer and more powerful sound. Tirelessly, he worked on improving the varnish, the scroll, and the sound holes. His violins were an expression of visual beauty as well as a vehicle of sound. Antonio Stradivari was imaginative and precise, and he knew that each instrument, whether it be a violin, viola, cello, or guitar, could be better than its predecessor. His ambition was never exhausted, and he was always searching for the ultimate truth

and beauty in everything he made. These qualities combined with enormous talent made him the greatest violin maker in Cremona.

One morning when Raphael entered the violin shop, Antonio Stradivari's eyes sparkled with excitement.

"Raphael, your violin is finished!"

Antonio handed Raphael the instrument, and he turned it slowly in his hands, admiring its beauty. The scroll was a perfect spiral, and the back shimmered golden in the morning sunlight. Every curve radiated the love Antonio had showered upon the instrument. The violin smiled at Raphael with power and magic. It was made by Stradivari just for him and as he placed it on his shoulder he felt as if it were alive.

Playing the Stradivari violin was the most beautiful and most painful moment in Raphael's life. It meant that his days in Cremona had come to an end and that he must return to his duties in Munich, although everything he loved was in Cremona.

The next morning, the air was heavy with sadness as Raphael embraced Nicolò, Antonio, and Carolina for the last time. He climbed into the carriage for the long trip back to Germany. As he gazed out the window, sorrow, and fatigue overcame him, and he drifted into a dreamless sleep.

Shortly after his arrival in Munich, Prince Ferdinand summoned Raphael to his quarters.

"Raphael, I have very good news for you, your violin has been found. The thief left it at the concert hall with this letter."

Raphael's hand was shaking as he took the paper from the Prince. "*Dear Raphael, I sincerely regret taking your violin. It is the most beautiful instrument I have ever seen, and I longed to have it and to play it. I did not plan to steal it, it was an impulsive act and I am very sorry for the pain I have caused you. Every time I took it out of the case I was consumed with guilt and shame. When I tried to play, it was as if the violin were rejecting me, in my hands it was just a piece of wood, in yours, it is alive. Please forgive me.*"

"It is unsigned, which is just as well. I am grateful that it has been returned, but I don't need to know the identity of the thief."

Raphael resumed his work at the court of Prince Ferdinand and Princess Adelaide, but thoughts of Cremona swirled and danced on every note he played. Every night, he clenched his eyes shut, and wished for a magic carpet to take him back to Italy.

Later that year Princess Henrietta Adelaide suddenly took ill, and passed away. Prince Ferdinand was consumed with grief, and could not bear to listen to music without his wife at his side. He summoned Raphael.

“Raphael, it was my beloved wife’s fervent wish that you come to Munich to enrich our lives with your music. You have accomplished this beyond our expectations, but now that she is gone I would like to release you from your duties. Of course, you can stay until you find another position.”

“Thank you Your Majesty, you are most generous. Serving you has been a great honor, but I long to return to Italy,” said Raphael and bowed reverently to the prince.

“Then go back to your home Raphael. We will always remember you.”

Raphael returned to Cremona and bought a house on the Piazza Roma near Antonio Stradivari. He played concerts throughout Europe, but whenever he was in Cremona he always found time to visit Antonio. Their friendship blossomed, and they never tired of exchanging ideas about music and the violin. Not long after returning to Cremona he married Carolina.

Raphael’s violin has been captivating people with its beauty for over three hundred years. Whenever you hear one of Stradivari’s instruments being played, you too become part of its history. Each of his violins is a gift to us all.

Antonio Stradivari

Cremona
Made in 1692



Antonio Stradivari

Cremona
Made in 1692

