

American Made Fiddles & Violins

One common question many people ask when looking at a violin or playing on one is, “where was this made?” This often leads to other curious wonderment about the maker. The intrigue of someone who sat at a workbench with their hand tools ages ago, laboriously carving the wood, makes us want to get closer to that person, or at least know something about the mystery behind the individual who made something as unique and special as a violin.

Often, it seems that many of the modern violins you find today are more or less the same due to the standardization of size and measurements, the type of woods used, a certain way it is made. This all leads back to Stradivarius who perfected the form (after all he did make a very good fiddle), and because of that perfection, many have copied its form. With American instruments, it is really interesting to see something made with domestic woods, with an expressive character that is more personal. The history of the American violin is not quite as long as that of Europe. Master violin making in Europe goes back at least four centuries, where in America the appearance of quality violins came forward only in the early 1800’s.

Considering there are thousands of known American violinmakers, it is nearly impossible to know the history of each one. Looking into the history of these makers, it seems they kept more to themselves in their workshops working wood rather than writing down their biographies. However, with a little research, some makers stand out from the crowd.

The owner and head luthier at Nashville Violins says, “Among the many American violins we have at Nashville Violins, we have a Robert Benedetto that will blow almost anything away. Benedetto is still living and was one heck of a violinmaker.”

Robert Benedetto was born October 22, 1946 in the Bronx, New York, into a family of artists, cabinet makers and musicians. Although more well known as a guitar maker, his violins are extremely fantastic and played by professionals such as Stephane Grapelli & Michele Ramo.

In 1983, with customary Italian flair and intensity, Benedetto threw himself into the study of violin lutherie. He even studied the Italian language so as to understand his source material more thoroughly. During the next four years, Benedetto devoted himself almost exclusively to violinmaking, the only archtop guitarmaker ever to do so. Following this period, his archtop guitars took on a new lease on life. They were equal, and some might say superior, to the very best examples of archtop thus far produced. The period of intense scrutiny and searching which resulted from Benedetto’s foray into violinmaking had, as intuitively suspected, elevated his archtops to a peak of achievement which has yet to be surpassed by any other maker.” Robert Benedetto resides in Georgia where he continues to make Jazz Guitars.



Bob & Cindy Benedetto



Stephane Grappelli with his
Benedetto violin
Photo by Joseph Oldenhove de Guertechin



Violin Virtuoso Michele Ramo with his
Robert Benedetto Violin
Photo by Jeffrey Hertzlich

It is unfortunate that more American makers are not better known. Their history is quite interesting as are their instruments. An American made fiddle or violin is one to cherish as they typically are as special and unique as the individual who plays on it.

We find it fascinating to have these wonderful instruments be American made. Everybody American should be proud to own an American made violin. Nashville Violins loves American made instruments and we do have several American made fiddles and violins available for you. Even though there are not a lot of American made violins and violin makers (at least one that are in the budget of the average player) almost all of the instruments at Nashville Violins have been through a full set up in our workshop.

Other American made products that we are proud to sell at Nashville Violins include: [Glasser bows](#), (fiberglass, carbon fiber, composite & colored bows), [CodaBows](#) (all carbon fiber models), [D'Addario](#) strings ([Prelude](#), [Helicore](#), [ProArte](#), [Zyex](#), and most fretted instrument strings), [Clarity](#) & [Magic rosins](#), Manhasset music stands are still made in Yakama, WA., Long Hollow straps are made right here in Middle Tennessee, Ludiker Music books; [Suzuki music books](#) (many others are also printed in the USA).

We have for you to audition, a rare find,
one of the very few Robert Benedetto violins:



[#225 Robert Benedetto](#)



[#C224 Zoltan Toth viola](#)



[#C226 Zoltan Toth violin](#)



[#C279 Lawrence K Brown](#)



[John Rook violin c1921, Nashville, TN](#)



[#C211 Gary Mohler 5-String Violin](#)

Sources:

Dave Wascher, owner Nashville Violins

http://www.19thcenturyguitar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=78:joseph-bohmann&catid=42:the-gilded-age&Itemid=62

<http://www.harpguitars.net/history/bohmann/bohmann1.htm>

<http://benedettoguitars.com/about/about-benedetto-violins/>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/tips/violins.html>

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5344096>