

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF MAKERS OF EXTANT VIOLS
IN OTHER COUNTRIES OF EUROPE,
WITH BRIEF SURVEYS OF THEIR SURVIVING WORK

The following notes are for the most part simply compilations of information available in several standard reference books (omitting or amending anything known to be incorrect), notably the following:

- Willibald Leo, Freiherr von Lütgendorff, *Die Geigen- und Lautenmacher vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main, 6/1922) and Thomas Drescher, *Nachtragsband* (Tutzing, 1990)
- René Vannes, *Dictionnaire universel des luthiers* (Spa, Belgium, 3/1999; first published in 1951–59)

From time to time, reference is made to “the museum” of certain European cities, without giving its full name. These names can be found in the database entries for the instruments in question, but are also given here for the reader’s convenience:

- Berlin: Musikinstrumenten-Museum des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung, Preußischer Kulturbesitz
- Brussels: Musée des instruments de musique / Musical Instruments Museum (formerly at the Conservatoire royal de musique and now part of the Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire)
- Copenhagen: Musikhistorisk Museum (now also identifying itself in English as The Danish Music Museum)
- Leipzig: Museum für musikalische Instrumente der Universität Leipzig (also known as the Grassi Museum)
- Stockholm: Scenkonstmuseet (formerly the Musikmuseet; in English, Swedish Museum of Performing Arts)

It may also be helpful to provide some background for the repeated references to a viol maker being granted citizenship of a certain city. According to the German-language version of Wikipedia, “The status of citizen, and related civil rights, were not always available to all the inhabitants of a country or city. [...] Only those people could be citizens who had reached a certain age; proved they owned a home or property in the city, either by inheritance or purchase; were transferring their citizenship from another city; paid taxes; and participated in military service to defend the city. Only citizens could vote for the city government.... Until the imperial period, in many German cities the proportion of citizens to the total population was less than ten percent.” [my translation]

—Thomas G. MacCracken
(revised 10/2018)

Belgium

BORBON, Peeter and Gaspar

Peeter Borbon was born in 1606 and died some time after 1668. Like his teacher, Laurenz van der Linden, he was both a musician and an instrument maker to the royal court at Brussels. In 1631 he married Marie Leiffrix, and it is assumed (though not documented) that Gaspar Borbon was their son. He was born about 1635 and also worked as a luthier for the court; he was married twice, in 1661 to Margareta de Langa and in 1674 to Joanna Verbruggen, and died in 1710.

The Brussels museum has two bass viols by Peeter, both undated, while the Vleeshuis museum in Antwerp has one by Gaspar, whose date of 1665 makes it his earliest known work. The Brussels museum also owns an assortment of eleven violin-family instruments by Gaspar.

DARCHE, Hilaire

Hilaire Darce was born in Brussels in 1862, the son and grandson of luthiers and nephew of two others. After initial training in Mirecourt, he returned to Brussels and worked for Nicolas Vuillaume before opening his own shop in 1886. Eight years later he entered into a decade-long partnership with his brother Joseph, a piano maker and dealer, thereby recreating the firm of Darce Frères established four decades earlier by their father Jacques-Joseph and uncle Claude-François Darce. Hilaire retired in 1915, succeeded by his son-in-law Louis Auguste Lagarenne, and died in 1929.

Toward the end of his career he evidently developed an interest in reviving historical string instruments, because there are three pardessus, five bass viols, and a violone bearing his name, in addition to several violas

d'amore. Most of these were made after the turn of the 20th century, including several after the supposed date of Darche's retirement, when Lagarenne presumably continued to use his father-in-law's labels. As such, technically they are not eligible for inclusion in the accompanying database, but because his first bass viol is dated 1890 and does qualify, we have included his complete known output of viols in all sizes.

DE COMBLE, Ambroise

Ambroise De Comble (1723–1796) has been called the most important Flemish luthier of his time, active in Tournai from 1741 until at least 1785. It is unknown where or from whom he learned the craft of violin making, but his instruments are said to show a strong Italian influence, not only in style but also in building methods.

The Brussels museum has a dozen examples of his work in their collection, including a pardessus and a bass viol (now converted into a cello) made in the late 1750s as well as violin-family instruments of all sizes. Another bass viol did not sell at a Bonhams auction in 2007 but was subsequently acquired by a private performer/collector; although undated, dendrochronological testing establishes that it was made no earlier than the late 1760s. A third bass viol, dated 1764 and with a cello-shaped body (unlike the other two), was offered for sale on eBay in 2021–22 by a seller in England, but an inquiry seeking additional information went unanswered.

HAUTSTONT, Charles

Charles Hautstont (or Hautstone) was born in Brussels in 1863 and studied with Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume in Paris before opening his own shop in Brussels in 1883. He had a special interest in making copies of old instruments, among which may be counted four bass viols, two of them dated 1897 and 1903 and all four furnished with sympathetic strings. A younger cousin, Jean-Baptiste Hautstont, was first his pupil and then his colleague from 1899 to 1914; Vannes describes the younger man as one of the best repairers and restorers in Belgium, and says that more than a few instruments bearing Charles's label were actually made by Jean-Baptiste. In addition to his musical pursuits, Charles was apparently also active in anarchist circles during the 1890s, later serving as a police informant. He died in 1929.

LAURENT, Emile

Born in 1854 in Mirecourt, Laurent received his initial training there before working for Pierre-Joseph Hel in Lille and Hilaire Darche in Brussels. He opened his own shop in the latter city about 1905 and soon began to win medals at various exhibitions for his work based on classical Italian models. He also made bows and at least two viols, a pardessus and a bass, both now at the Ringve Museum in Norway. (These are dated 1910 and thus technically do not belong in the accompanying database of instruments made before the 20th century, but they have been included as additional products of the Brussels school whose other members, such as Darche and Houtstont, produced viols both before and after the turn of the century.) Laurent's older son, Emile Jr. (1875–1941), also became a luthier, working in Bordeaux and Paris, while his younger son Albert (1884–1924) took over the Brussels shop after their father's death in 1914.

LORRET, Hyacinte

Lorret's dates of birth and death are not known, but he appears to have been active in Ghent at least during the third quarter of the 18th century. The Brussels museum has a pair of violas both made in 1766 as well as a pardessus whose date is given on their website (and in Mahillon's century-old catalogue) as 1738, but by Vannes as 1758. An undated violin was auctioned in Rennes in 2014, and an undated viola in Albi in 2017.

LUCX, D.

The identity of this maker remains mysterious. A tenor viol in the Brussels museum is stamped "D. LUCX" on the back, below the neck heel. Curt Sachs's 1922 catalogue of the Berlin museum collection includes a description of a guitar (no. 2335) bearing this same brand stamp, with the suggestion that it was made in Belgium about 1700. A recent comprehensive dictionary of Belgian instrument makers includes an entry for "Lucx, D." consisting only of a cross reference to someone named "Van Luck" who worked in Liège in the 17th century, about whom no further details are provided. This may be either the same person or a relative of the "Jean Van Luck,

faiseur de violon” who is mentioned in a 1633 document from that city quoted in a mid-19th-century article in a local scholarly periodical, but it is unclear what his connection is to the maker of the tenor viol and the guitar.

MOUGENOT, Georges

Mougenot was born in 1843 in Mirecourt, where at the age of 12 he was apprenticed to Georges Deroux. In 1858 he went to work for his uncle Victor Jeandel in Liège, becoming his successor after Jeandel’s death two years later and remaining in that city until 1875, when he took over the shop of Nicolas Vuillaume in Brussels. Known for his fine work modeled on the great Cremonese makers, he also held an appointment as violin maker to the royal conservatory. In 1910 he retired and turned the business over to his pupil Maurice Bourignon; he died in 1937 at the age of 94. A bass viol with sympathetic strings made by Mougenot in 1897 is in the Museu de Música in Lisbon, and the Musée de l’Hospice Comtesse in Lille recently acquired a viola d’amore dated 1895.

PIERRARD, Louis

Pierrard’s ancestor Nicolas was a luthier in Mirecourt in the mid-18th century; Louis was a pupil of Georges Mougenot in late 19th-century Brussels, where he opened his own shop in 1882, subsequently winning medals at exhibitions in Antwerp (1894) and Brussels (1897). In 1900 he relocated to Ghent, where he was appointed luthier to the conservatory and remained active at least until 1908. A bass viol dated 1896 with sympathetic strings is in the Leipzig museum; for unknown reasons both their century-old published catalogue and their website state that Pierrard’s label only documents repair work by him on this instrument.

WILLEMS, Hendrick and Jooris

The Willems family was active in Ghent from the mid-17th to the mid-18th century. Jooris was a cornetto player at the cathedral from 1630 to 1662 as well as a luthier; instruments bearing his name include a tenor viol dated 1642, two Amati-style violins dated 1659, and a viola of 1616, all now in the Brussels museum. The same collection also contains half a dozen violin-family instruments signed Hendrick Willems with dates ranging from 1660 to 1743, strongly implying there must have been two makers of that name. Some writers suggest that the elder Hendrick may have been a brother of Jooris, but if the date of 1616 for Jooris’s viola has been correctly read it seems more likely that Jooris was the father of Hendrick I (active as his successor during the latter part of that century), while Hendrick II (working during the first half of the 18th century) was probably the latter’s son. Two additional unsigned instruments were attributed to one of the Hendricks by their former owner, the collector César Snoeck, a cello and an oddity described on the museum’s website as a fantasy violin. Although the latter now has only four strings, Snoeck believed the neck was not original and that it would originally have had six; because its size is approximately that of a tenor viol he (and, following his example, the museum’s century-old printed catalogue by Victor Mahillon) therefore called it a “viole de fantasie.” However, it has been omitted from the accompanying database.

Bohemia

(Note that Bohemian origin is indicated in the database by the abbreviation CZ, used today for the Czech Republic, which covers much of the same territory.)

EBERLE, Johannes Udalricus

Eberle was born in 1699 in Vils, a small town on the border between Austria and Bavaria, as the son of Sebastian Eberle and his wife Ursula Schonger. He came to Prague to work as a journeyman for Thomas Edlinger II, a second-generation luthier who had himself relocated from Augsburg to Prague after his father’s death about 1690. In 1726 Eberle was granted citizenship, and the next year he married Klara Theresia Jordin, with whom he had five sons and four daughters and from whose parents they subsequently inherited a house in which the family lived and he had his workshop. Eberle was both prolific and prosperous, with his work being highly regarded both in his own time and today.

Eberle primarily made violin-family instruments, plus a significant number of violas d’amore, but his label also appears in two bass viols (made in 1730 and 1740) and in two smaller instruments (made in 1729 and 1749) that

on balance seem likely to have been made originally as violas d'amore rather than da gamba; a third bass, currently owned by a professional gambist in Europe, has also been attributed to him. Eberle remained active until his death in 1768 and was succeeded by one of his sons, Wenzel Michael Joseph Vincenz Eberle.

HELLMER, Karl Joseph

Karl Joseph Hellmer was born in Prague in 1739, the son of luthier Johann Georg Hellmer, whose successor he eventually became. Initially trained by his father, he then studied with Johannes Udalricus Eberle, and after finishing his training he worked for some time in Germany. Returning to Prague in 1763, he was granted citizenship and that same year married Katharina Piestl (1742-1814), with whom he had seven sons and seven daughters, only eight of whom survived.

In addition to making both bowed and plucked string instruments, Hellmer was an expert performer on lute and mandolin, as well as a music publisher. In 1808–10 he was co-chairman of the local violin maker's guild, but in 1811 he drowned in the Vlatava (Moldau) River, an apparent suicide. His only known viol, a bass with an undated label, was sold at auction in 2009.

HULINZKY, Thomas Andreas

Born in Prague in 1731 to Mathias Hulinzky and his wife Eva Pofer, Thomas Hulinzky was a pupil of Johannes Udalricus Eberle, who was a witness at his wedding in 1760 to Katharina Matus. Sixteen years later he was granted citizenship and continued to work in Prague until his death in 1788, making harps, lutes, and guitars as well as violin-family instruments and violas d'amore. His only known viol is a small five-string bass dated 1754 that is now in the National Museum in Prague.

LASKE, Josef Anton

Laske was born in 1738 in Rumburk, a town very near the modern border between the Czech Republic and Germany. After studying there with Jacob Kolditz and then in Prague with Thomas Hulinzky he worked in several other cities (Dresden, Berlin, Vienna, and Brünn/Brno) before returning to Prague in 1764. The next year he was granted citizenship, and in 1766 he married Elisabeth Vogl, with whom he had one son before her death in 1768. He subsequently married Ludmilla Libovicky and had eight more children, of whom four survived infancy; he himself died in 1805. Karel Jalovec has written of Laske that "His workmanship is exemplary, his violas outstanding and his violas d'amore beautiful"; in addition to bowed instruments he also made harps and mandolins. One undated bass viol is known, still in Prague at the National Museum.

OSTLER, Andreas

Ostler was born in 1692 in Horn (near Füssen) and worked in Breslau, which at that time was part of the Kingdom of Bohemia, though it is now in Poland and known as Wrocław. The Musée d'art et d'histoire in Geneva owns an instrument by him that was probably built as a viola d'amore rather than a treble viol; at a minimum, its body closely resembles that of a viola d'amore (of the type with sympathetic strings) made by Ostler in 1730 that is now in the Brussels museum, and another privately-owned viola d'amore (without sympathetic strings) dated 1714.

STIRTZER, Johann Michael

There were two luthiers by this name (sometimes spelled Stürtzer), father and son. The father worked in Breslau at least during the 1720s and is mentioned as a lute maker by Ernst Gottlieb Baron, the prominent player and writer about the lute who was himself a native of Breslau. It was probably the older man, rather than his son, who made a treble-sized instrument with five strings, dated 1721, that was formerly in a museum in Hamburg but has since disappeared; however, this may actually have been a viola d'amore without sympathetic strings rather than a treble viol. Thomas Drescher notes that a "Lautenmacher" named Hans Michael Stüzer was married in Vienna in 1702, but it is unclear if he is the same person as the maker subsequently active in Breslau.

TRUSKA, Simon Joseph

Truska was born in 1734 in Roudnice (Raudnitz), a town in eastern Bohemia, as the son of a cabinet maker named Wenzel Truska. After training in that craft from his father and in Prague, in 1758 he joined the Strahov Monastery (also in Prague) as a lay brother, remaining there until his death in 1809. In addition to performing and composing music, he is reported to have made many different kinds of instruments, including keyboards, woodwinds, and both plucked and bowed strings. A biographical dictionary of Bohemian artists and artisans published in the early 19th century noted that he was “highly regarded as a violinist and cellist” and that his many compositions for the viola da gamba “have brought him great renown,” which strongly suggests he must have played the instrument himself. A bass viol made by him as late as 1799 (but subsequently turned into a cello) belongs to the National Museum in Prague, which also owns a contrabassoon by Truska that has been called “a unique masterpiece of decorative art.”

WALDTER, Daniel Adalbert

Very little is known about this maker, except that his name appears inside a bass viol made in 1695 in Postoloprty (Postelberg), a town in northwestern Bohemia. This formerly belonged to Ossegg Monastery, located about 30 miles north of Postoloprty, and is now in the Czech National Museum in Prague. Lütgendorff noted the existence of a viola labeled “Daniel Adalbert Wolz Inn Postelberg 168-” and wondered if its maker was the same man, but more recently Karel Jalovec has stated that “Both workmanship and varnish of the two instruments are very different so that it is not possible to attribute them to the same maker.”

ZACHER, Maximilian

Maximilian Zacher was born in 1694 in Ingolstadt (Germany), where his father Franz was a luthier. His older brother Anton also became a luthier and took over the family workshop after their father’s death in 1734. At least by 1740 Maximilian had relocated to Breslau (then in the Kingdom of Bohemia, now Wrocław in Poland), where he worked until his death some time after 1770. A number of violas d’amore by him survive in different museums, and another was auctioned at Sotheby’s in 1981.

A small six-stringed instrument in the Copenhagen museum, with a body outline very similar to the latter, is currently classified as a treble viol but is more likely to have started out as a viola d’amore, either with or without sympathetic strings. The same is true for a five-stringed instrument in the Munich Stadtmuseum, whose curator affirms that it is a rebuilt viola d’amore. There is also a lute in the Leipzig museum and a cittern in the Prague museum.

Denmark

BAAS, Peter Nielsen

Nothing is known about this maker except that a bass viol in the Copenhagen museum has a label stating that it was made by “Peter Nielsen Baas in Copenhagen Anno 1708.”

GOTFREDSEN, Jesper

Gotfredsen was born about 1708 and came to Copenhagen from Aarhus, where he is documented as a town musician in 1746. In 1751 he obtained a privilege for making string instruments that specifically mentions viols in addition to violins and cellos. According to Tarisio.com, he “was one of the earliest makers [in Denmark] to produce violins of standard size and model ... they show a strong Germanic influence and in many cases locally grown Danish maple is used for the back, ribs and scroll.” Only three instruments by him are known today: a small tenor viol dated 1752 in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; a violin made in 1754; and a pochette from 1766 or 1768, the latter two both in the Copenhagen museum. After his death in 1774 his son, Gottfried Jespersen, inherited the privilege and presumably continued the family business, though no instruments by him are extant.

KARP, Johann

This maker is known only from a treble viol labeled “Johann Karp in Copenhagen Anno 1730,” now in the Stockholm museum, and a Spitzharfe (table-top harp) dated 1709, now in the National Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota. Drescher gives his name as Karper, mentions a violin of 1706 with no further details, and supposes he may have come to Denmark from Germany; Tarisio.com states that he was German by birth and suggests he may have been a relative of the Gregor Karpp who worked in Königsberg during the final decades of the 17th century.

Ireland

MOLINEUX, Thomas

The only viol presently known to have been made in Ireland is a bass with a label reading “Made by Thomas Molineux in Christ Church Yard Dublin 1739” that was auctioned by Sotheby’s in 1973. Their description included the statement that “This maker came originally from France in the time of the Huguenots and worked in Dublin. His name is sometimes spelt Molyneux.” He does not appear in the usual reference books, but a website devoted to documenting the Dublin music trade (www.dublinmusictrade.ie) gives 1739–57 as the dates of his known activity and quotes a published death notice from January of the latter year: “In Christ Church Yard, Mr Thomas Molineux, Fiddle Maker.” Although a luthier named Martyn Molyneux was active in Dublin c. 1800, he is unlikely to have been a son of Thomas, because Vannes reports that Martyn “came from abroad to live in Dublin at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th,” whereas Thomas was already working there by 1739.

Netherlands

BOCHS, Pieter

Bochs (or Bosch) was born about 1578 in Dordrecht and is documented in the Amsterdam archives, starting in 1604, as a maker of citterns. In 1622 he bought a house, but by 1640 seems to have fallen into financial difficulties, because in that year he went to work, and to sea, for the Dutch West India Company. It is not known when or where he died. A bass viol with striped back and ribs, made in 1625, is privately owned in the Netherlands, and reportedly the luthier Max Möller knew of others whose current status is unknown.

BOUMEESTER, Jan

Jan Boumeester was born about 1629 in Quakenbrück, in northwestern Germany, and died in 1681 in Amsterdam. In 1653 he married Anneke van Munster, who continued to run the business as a widow until her own death in 1685, after which their daughter Margareta took charge until she died in 1701, perhaps with the help of her brother-in-law Jan Vos, who in 1704 purchased the entire contents of the shop from the estate. Jan and Anneke’s son Hermanus was also a luthier but died in 1678, three years before his father. Another maker named Jan Boumeester worked in Leiden between 1658 and 1671 and was presumably a relative, though not necessarily a son.

Only one viol still exists, a bass made in 1666 that is now in the Stockholm museum. Another bass, a year younger and having only five strings, was lost from the Berlin museum during World War II, and a treble dated 1675 was reported in 1974 to be at Cornell University, but was subsequently destroyed in a fire and flood.

JACOBS, Hendrik

Hendrik Jacobs (or Jacobsz) was born in 1629 or 1630 and died in Amsterdam in 1704 (not 1699, as some reference works report). In 1654 he married a widow named Femmetje Jans, and after her death in 1676 he married Sibilla Barents, also a widow and the mother of Pieter Rombouts, then only seven years old. Considered one of the best Dutch makers of the 17th century, Jacobs’s early work is in the style of Nicolo Amati, but after 1670 increasingly his own, while from 1685 onward experts detect the hand of Rombouts in instruments still signed with Jacobs’s name.

In addition to fairly numerous violins, four bass viols have been attributed to him. One, in the collection of the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, contains a label dated 1680 and features flame-shaped soundholes with lower eyes only. Two others, though unlabeled, are also thought to be by him, in part because they have similar soundholes (which can also be seen in Dutch paintings of the period). The fourth viol has C-holes and a label from 1663; one expert has suggested it may have been made by Rombouts, but if so the label clearly does not belong to it, being dated several years before his birth. Alternatively, the five-piece construction of its table, use of double purfling and decorative diamond patterns, and overall body proportions suggest that it may have been made in England, and it currently appears in the database as an anonymous English instrument.

ROMBOUTS, Pieter

Pieter Rombouts was born in 1667, the son of Jan Rombouts and Sibilla Barents; less than a decade later his widowed mother married the luthier Hendrik Jacobs, whose pupil, assistant, and finally successor he became. In 1706 he married Magdalena Kruijskerck, with whom he was to have eight children, and the following year was granted citizenship status in Amsterdam. Her family was evidently well to do, and in 1711 Rombouts and his father-in-law jointly bought a house. *Tarisio.com* writes that “With regard to his collaboration with Jacobs, Rombouts’ hand is most visible in the cellos, which were clearly his strong point: his independent examples are among the finest produced in the Netherlands.”

Apart from violin-family instruments, his legacy includes at least seven bass viols and two trebles, with dates for both sizes ranging from 1708 to the mid-1720s, shortly before his death in 1728. One of the basses, reportedly in very original condition, was sold at auction by Christie’s in 2009 for the record-breaking price (for any viol) of \$212,500.

Norway

LIND, Gulbrand

In 1904 the Copenhagen museum acquired a bass viol signed by this maker, though without a place or date. Descriptions of the instrument published then and a few years later called it early 19th-century Norwegian work and suggested a date of ca. 1815. Lind does not appear in any of the standard reference books, but is probably the same man whose epitaph was published in a historical journal at close to the same time the viol came to the museum: “Below rests Gulbrand Lind, born in Drammen in 1776, died in Vestfossen 1859. Poor in gold, but rich in spirit and heart, he was greatly revered and loved by all those who knew him.” (Drammen is located about 25 miles southwest of Oslo, and Vestfossen is some 15 miles west of Drammen.)

Poland

ALBRECHT, Paul

Nothing is known about this maker apart from the label inside a small, six-string instrument now in the Copenhagen museum, which says it was made by “Paul Albrecht zu Dantzig 16..” (with the final two digits never added by hand). Although classified by the museum as a treble viol, its tailpiece is equipped with six white buttons around which to fasten the strings, instead of the usual holes into which the strings would be inserted. This is a strong indication that it was built as a viola d’amore of the early type without sympathetic strings, whose bowed strings of metal required harpsichord-style hitchpins, since they could not be knotted as gut strings normally were.

ENDER, Alexander

A five-string treble-size instrument with a printed label reading “Alexander Ender. Im Mezeriz 1722” is in the Copenhagen museum, which identifies it as an alto viola da braccio. This maker’s name is not found in any of the standard reference books (or online), and the location could refer to any of three different places in Poland.

GOLDBERG, Johann

A website devoted to the local history of Gdansk/Danzig (www.gedanopedia.pl) provides the most up-to-date information on this maker, who was born in 1701 in Orunia/Ohra (just south of the city), became a citizen of Gdansk in 1726, and died there in 1765. He and his wife Concordia Renata (née Witting) had five children, of whom the eldest, Johann Gottlieb Goldberg (1727–1756) became a harpsichordist and composer whose name would be immortalized in the (informal) title of J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

In addition to violin-family instruments and lutes, the father built at least one viol, a bass dated 1726 now in a museum in Hamburg, somewhat crudely converted to a cello. The Musikinstrumenten-Museum in Markneukirchen has a small, five-stringed instrument made in 1742 that they refer to as a treble viol (and that Lütgendorff called a "Tenorgeige"), but more recent scholarship classifies it as a viola d'amore without sympathetic strings. There are also other instruments, notably lutes, in other European museum collections, some of which are signed "Gollberg" or "Goltberg".

GROBLICZ, Marcin

There are currently two competing narratives about the maker(s) of string instruments associated with the name Marcin Groblicz. One, represented by entries in the Polish version of Wikipedia and drawing on research by several scholars, affirms that there were as many as six successive generations of makers, all with the same name, who worked in Krakow from the mid-16th to the mid-18th century. The other, most recently presented in a book on *The Polish School of Violin Making* published in 2016, concludes that there was only one person, who was born in Lithuania some time before 1688 (when he is recorded as a vocalist and violinist at a church in Poznan) and died in 1745. This man later lived in Wrocław, Krakow, and Lviv, among other places, and was not only a luthier but also a violinist, turner, decorative artist, and alchemist, with additional interests ranging widely from gardening to gunpowder production.

The date of 1601 on the label of a bass viol now in the Muzeum Narodowe in Krakow cannot be taken seriously, since not only is it in a different handwriting but dendrochronological testing reveals that the wood of the instrument's table was still growing as late as 1715. The table of another, privately-owned bass dates to the following year, so the date of 1720 on its label is believable. Two more basses, although unlabeled, have also been attributed to Groblicz, along with two tenors (of rather different designs) likewise now in Polish museums. In addition, at least seven violins made during the second, third, and fourth decades of the 18th century are considered to have been made by the same man, in contrast to a dozen others of questionable authenticity.

MEYER, Christoph

Lütgendorff described in some detail an instrument labeled "Christof Mener in Danzig 1685," calling it "a splendid treble viol" while admitting he had been unable to find any documentation of its maker in that city. A century later, a website devoted to local history (www.gedanopedia.pl) provides much fuller information under an alternate spelling of his surname (Meyer), revealing that he is listed as a citizen during the period 1680–94 and that in 1675 he married a woman named Catharina, with whom he had a daughter Abigail and a son Solomon. Both reference works call him one of the best German violin makers of the 17th century, while other evidence shows he was active at least from 1677 to 1692. However, his supposed treble viol, currently in the Stockholm museum and converted into a viola, is more likely to have been made originally as a viola d'amore without sympathetic strings. Another small viol in the Leipzig museum, whose damaged label reads "Christof Me... in Danzig 1685," may be by the same maker. There is also a pochette in the Copenhagen museum.

WANCKE, Michael

Wancke was born about 1663, the son of Andreas Wancke, a carpenter, and his wife Catharine Minnich. Between 1689 and 1706 he is recorded as a citizen of Danzig/Gdansk and repeatedly punished for practicing his craft without permission. His wife, Euphrosine Rossmann, died before 1725. His only known instrument is a bass viol with a handwritten label reading "Michael Wancke in Dantzig Ao 1699" whose distinguishing feature is the presence of two longitudinal stripes in the middle of the ribs, one slightly darker than the surrounding wood and the other much darker, which alternate in segments creating V-shaped joints.

Russia

WACHTER, Joseph Anthony

A bass viol (converted to a cello) in the State Museum in St. Petersburg has an inscription stating it was built (or perhaps only repaired, or transformed) by “Joseph Anthony Wachter, Lauten und Violinmacher, in St. Petersburg, anno 1793.” Apart from a newspaper advertisement in 1798 for his work as a violin maker, nothing else is known about this maker, who may be a member of the same south-German family of luthiers that produced Anton and Lorenz Wachter.

Spain

CONTRERAS, José

Contreras was born in 1710 and began his career as a guitar maker in Granada. About 1737 he moved to Madrid, where he married Maria de la Fuente and where seven of their children were baptised during the decade of the 1740s. When seeking to become a member of the royal chapel he stated that he was self taught; although this application was unsuccessful, in 1741 he received an appointment as violin maker to the queen. Contreras remained active at court as a restorer and supplier until his death in 1782, after which his son and grandson continued the family business into the 19th century. According to Tarisio.com, “His work follows Stradivari closely in style, workmanship, and sound quality.” In 1982, the auction firm of Phillips offered a “small tenor viol,” dated 1744 and having only five strings, but this is more likely to have been made as a viola d’amore without sympathetic strings. (Another viola d’amore, dated 1758 and presumably equipped with sympathetic strings, also exists.)

MATABOSCH, Juan (or Joan)

Matabosch was a guitar maker active in Barcelona during the last quarter of the 18th century and first quarter of the 19th. A bass viol with an unusually narrow body, labeled “Juan Matabosch Fecit Barcelona 1778,” is privately owned in the city where it was made, having recently returned there from prior ownership in Switzerland. Other instruments include a guitar dated 1815 in the Museu de la Musica in Barcelona, and another made in 1799 owned and played by the Portuguese guitarist and researcher Mário Carreira. A violin dated 1797 and a cello dated 1799 have recently appeared in auction listings, the former on eBay in 2018, the latter at Skinner in Boston in 2016.

Sweden

For this country, the essential reference work is Bengt Nilsson, *Svensk Fiobygggar Konst / Swedish Violin Making*, self-published by the author (himself a respected luthier) in 1988. Also important is an article by Kenneth Sparr, “Jonas Elg: An Eighteenth-Century Lute and Violin Maker in Stockholm, Sweden, and his 15-course Baroque Lute,” *Galpin Society Journal* 65 (2012): 23–59, which discusses Beckman and Hellstedt as well as Elg.

BECKMAN, Svend

Beckman was probably born in Askersund, about 150 miles west of Stockholm, in 1717. In 1736 he is recorded as an apprentice of the dancing master and instrument dealer Johan Fredrik Weidemann in Stockholm, who also held a license for making violins, lutes, and viols. After further training abroad, perhaps in Königsberg, he returned to Stockholm in 1740, received his own license in 1741, and ultimately took over Weidemann’s business. Beckmann was appointed court instrument maker in 1756, but died in poverty in 1762. The majority of his output seems to have been cellos, several of which have been sold at auction in recent years, but he also made plucked instruments. A violin dated 1749 and a quinton dated 1758 are in the Stockholm museum; a guitar from 1757 at the Royal College of Music in London is thought to be the only such instrument made in Sweden before the 19th century.

ELG, Jonas

In a 1730 census Elg is described as an ex-guardsmen “who supports himself by making and repairing violins,” and his age is listed as 62, meaning he was probably born about 1668. In 1706, Stockholm parish records show him as having three young sons, but by 1711 he had no children; perhaps all of them had died in the plague epidemic of 1710–11. We have no information about their mother, but in 1720 Elg was married again, to Anna Johansdotter Upman, who died only seven years later. In 1728 he married Brita Olofsdotter Ström, with whom he had a daughter and a son, who were both still small children when their father died in 1732. At that point, following a fairly common practice of tradesmen throughout Europe during this period, Elg’s 19-year-old apprentice, Olof Arling, married his widow and took over running the shop until he himself died in 1735. Thereafter Brita Elg Arling continued in business with the help of another apprentice, Petter Hellstedt, who by 1738 had achieved the status of journeyman and in 1742 finally received his own license to make instruments.

Elg is the first Swedish luthier from whose workshop more than a single instrument (of any kind) survives; a recent article by Kenneth Sparr lists more than a dozen, with dates ranging from 1713 to 1731, including two lutes, five violins, a viola, and a double bass as well as three bass viols, two of which are still privately owned in Sweden. His repair label also appears in a handful of instruments, including a bass viol originally made in 1666 by Jan Boumeester.

HELLSTEDT, Petter

Hellstedt was probably born in 1713, since his age is given as 57 in a 1770 census, and as 59 when he died in 1772. A label dated 1736 places him in Frötuna, a coastal city about 250 miles north of Stockholm, but by 1738 he was in Stockholm and working as a journeyman for the widow of Olof Arling, a pupil of Jonas Elg who had succeeded his master on the latter’s death in 1732 but then himself died in 1735. In 1742 Hellstedt obtained his own license for making instruments, having meanwhile married Brita Christina Ferngren in 1739. The next year saw the birth of their son Petter Alexander, who would eventually take over the business, followed by a second son in 1744, then two or three more children who died very young, and finally a daughter who lived to the age of 75.

One modern writer reports that Hellstedt’s instruments are of uneven quality, and another notes that he seems to have catered to the lower end of the market, citing contemporary economic statistics suggesting the monetary value of his instruments was less than those made by his competitor Sven Beckman. Hellstedt’s numbering system suggests that he produced 673 (of all kinds, including plucked as well as bowed) between the years 1749 and 1765, for a career total perhaps approaching 1,000, only a few of which survive today. A recent article by Kenneth Sparr lists ten, including four bass viols as well as two violas and four cellos, nearly all of which remain in Scandinavian ownership

MOTHE, Johannes Georg

In 1723, when applying for permission to settle in Ängelholm, Mothe stated that he had been born in Dresden, was then 28 years old (thus probably born in 1695), and had learned the craft of violin making while a Russian prisoner of war for fourteen years (following the defeat of the Swedish army at the Battle of Poltava in 1709). Also in 1723 he married Inger Pahlsson, and the next year they had a son, Jöran, who was his father’s pupil by about 1740, an apprentice in 1745, and working independently by 1748. One of Mothe’s daughters married a subsequent apprentice, Jacob Hellman, in 1750, and after Mothe’s wife died in 1752 he seems to have turned both the shop and the family farm over to the young couple, though he lived until 1765.

Surviving instruments include four bass viols with labels dated from 1726 to 1735 (two of which spell his surname “Mohte” and another “Mohtte”) plus two more that have been attributed to him, as well as a cello with a festooned body outline made in 1751 and a violin dated 1745.

RÖNNEGREN, Arwit

Both of this maker’s names seem to have caused spelling difficulties to his contemporaries, and perhaps even to himself. His death notice in 1737 referred to him as “Arvid Rönngren, former cavalryman and violin maker of Kattarp” and said he was 57 years old, so he was probably born in 1680. When Johannes Georg Mothe applied in 1723 for permission to settle in Ängelholm, one of his two witnesses was “Arvid Runnegren,” likewise just released from many years in a Russian prison, where he too had probably learned how to make string instruments. By the

next year Rönnegren had already established himself in nearby Kattarp and produced no fewer than three bass viols that are still extant, with labels that render his name variously as “Arwitt Rönnegren,” “Arfvid Runnegren,” and “Arfeved Runnegren.” The label in a fourth viol, dated 1733, reads “Arwit Rönnegren,” as does that in a treble-size instrument with seven strings in the Stockholm museum, which they classify as a treble viol but which is more likely to have been made as a viola d’amore without sympathetic strings. Like the 1733 viol and one of those made in 1724, it has black-and-white edging to its table, as does a violin dated 1737 belonging to a museum in Lund.