

Celebrate New England sports with The Globies Presented by Mercedes-Benz. Help us pick the winners - click here to vote now.

TEXT SIZE | MANAGE ACCOUNT | LOG OUT

The Boston Globe

NEWS	▶	METRO	
LOTTERY	▶	OBITUARIES	▶
GLOBE NORTH	▶	GLOBE SOUTH	▶
GLOBE WEST	▶	DATA DESK	▶
MAGAZINE	▶	TODAY'S PAPER	▶

E-MAIL FACEBOOK TWITTER  LINKEDIN

0



SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS

The Ames Stradivarius violin was placed for viewing during a news conference in New York on Thursday.

By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 06, 2015

Many in the music world believe there are no finer-made, sweeter-sounding violins than the ones Italian craftsman Antonio Stradivari made before his death in 1737.

Case in point: A celebration was held Thursday to mark the resurfacing of a Stradivarius violin that went missing 35 years ago after renowned musician Roman Totenberg tucked it away in his office at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge. The instrument's estimated worth is \$5 million.

Enthusiasts marvel over the look and feel of Stradivarius violins as much as they do over their sound. And because so few exist — only several hundred instruments remain today — they have become highly valuable and coveted among the world's top musicians.

So, why are a bunch of 300-year-old instruments considered the best the world has ever seen?

It turns out, there's no single agreed-upon answer to that question. Over the years numerous explanations have been offered, including that Stradivari used unique types of wood and other materials or that he simply had a yet-unmatched ability to carve and assemble the instruments. Not to mention the belief that all violins get better the more they are played.

However, not everyone believes that Stradivarius violins are the best.

Some believe the ones made by his contemporary countrymate, Giuseppe Guarneri, who died in 1744, are equal to or better than Stradivari's, while others contend that modern violins are just as good if not a step above their predecessors.

In fact, several studies in recent years have challenged the long-held belief that old Italian violins are superior.

Just last year, researchers conducted an experiment that found that “first-rate soloists tend to prefer new instruments and are unable to distinguish old from new at better than chance levels.”

“On average, soloists rated their favorite new violins more highly than their favorite old for playability, articulation, and projection, and at least equal to old in terms of timbre,” the researchers wrote. “Soloists failed to distinguish new from old at better than chance levels. These results confirm and extend those of the earlier study and present a striking challenge to near-canonical beliefs about old Italian violins.”

Still, many Stradivarian disciples remain unswayed.



Frank Almond, concertmaster of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and a Stradivarius violin player, told [The New York Times](#) last year in response to the study's findings that the experiment did not account for the months it typically takes for a violinist to get used to playing a certain violin.

While longtime Juilliard String Quartet member Earl Carlyss told the Times: "I don't know any great soloist who has a Strad or Guarneri who is trading it in for a new instrument."

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](#).



Get **Today's Headlines** from the Globe in your inbox:

[Privacy Policy](#)

0 COMMENTS



Top 10 Trending Articles

Most Viewed

Most Commented

Most Shared

An Auburn child lost amidst chaos and addiction

When did parents get so scared?

Donald Trump was brash, even at Wharton business school

Sexism in science leads to willful blindness

Dan Shaughnessy: Tom Werner breaks his silence on Don O...

Coffee or wine: which is better for you?

Learn more

Four-year-old boy drowns at Dennis beach, half-hour after l...

[SUBSCRIBE](#) [BOSTON GLOBE INSIDERS](#) [EPAPER EDITION](#) [NEWS IN EDUCATION](#)

Stephen Colbert's highly visible transition to 'The Late Show'

[MY ACCOUNT](#)

[LOG IN](#)

Ben Volin | Sunday Football Notes: NFL discipline process ...

[MANAGE MY ACCOUNT](#)

[DOWNLOAD CUSTOMER SERVICE APP](#)

Nick Cafardo | Sunday Baseball Notes: As Red Sox GM sear...

[CONTACT](#)

[HELP](#)

[FAQS](#)

[GLOBE NEWSROOM](#)

[ADVERTISE](#)

SOCIAL

[FACEBOOK](#)

[TWITTER](#)

[GOOGLE+](#)

MORE

[ARCHIVES](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY](#)

[TERMS OF SERVICE](#)

[TERMS OF PURCHASE](#)

[YOUR AD CHOICES](#)

[WORK AT BOSTON GLOBE MEDIA](#)