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## INTRODUCTION

The violin making business is filled with self-perpetuating myths, superstitions, old wives' tales, rumors, and bad logic. This book is my attempt to sort out what works from what doesn't. Not what should work, not what sounds good, not what I heard—only what does actually work. Needless to say, there are valid procedures I haven't mentioned, and other things I have yet to learn about violin making, but I sincerely hope this book contains nothing which subsequent writers will discard as incorrect or misleading.

Many of the techniques come from other people from various schools of making and don't belong to me. I owe a lot to the people whom I worked with, especially Russell Wagner in the Bein and Fushi restoration shop, and violin maker Will Whedbee at William Harris Lee. From my time at Bein and Fushi I learned how to slow down and do things right, and the right way to do them. Russell was the one who guided me through that, and whose patience helped me figure out things that I had never thought much about in the past. Will was the one who showed me how to cut corners and helped me start thinking in terms of effective efficiency. I wouldn't have made it far without these two people, and I'm very grateful to them!

I'm just passing them on to you with as much explanation as I can give about how to use the techniques I've learned. From all the methods I've seen, I've tried to figure out which of the various alternative techniques are the most desirable because of their simplicity, ease of execution, and positive results. Some procedures—relatively few in number—are my own, and most of these have been worked out first in the shower in the morning. I'd like to claim exclusivity for my ideas, but suspect that many others in my situation have come to the same or similar conclusions independently, before me or after.

It is important for the reader to understand that there are two distinct areas of concern intertwined between these covers: the theoretical and the practical. Good results come not from merely following good procedures in the proper order, but from also understanding the theory underlying the design. Procedures are the means of unveiling the design, not an end in themselves.

My favorite violin making book, Edward Heron-Allen's obtuse and fault-filled "Violin Making as it was and is", has been in virtually continuous publication for over 120 years

because of the complexity of the task of violin making and the singular depth of his particular attempt to put it onto paper, which has never been equaled by any other book. His book is divided into historical, theoretical, and practical sections, and his approach is my model, though, as mentioned above, I've chosen to address the theoretical issues along with their related procedures rather than separately.

I haven't approached violin history because since Heron-Allen's time this facet that he treated in a few chapters has in recent years taken on a life of its own, and fills full bookshelves with works written by specialist researchers and connoisseurs who study minute geographic regions and periods of making. Unlike Heron-Allen, who lived in a time when illustrations were difficult and dear, I've tried to illustrate everything I can, for greater clarity and understanding.

Many of the activities of violins shops are perceived to be shrouded in secrecy, unwritten, and unshared except with initiates. When I started writing articles for the Guild of American Luthiers, my friends in shops were not pleased that I would reveal their methods to the unwashed masses. I think a lot of that is insecurity; so much of violin making is direct and non-esoteric that some in the business prefer to work like the Wizard of Oz, unseen and all-powerful. My model and inspiration for sharing in the Bein and Fushi shop was Bob Bein, who reminded me several times that information may be power, but only those who are able to utilize it become powerful. He liked to share, and didn't worry about people using his information to unseat him; his attitude as I knew it was that there was enough information for everyone to share, and that if someone could really make use of it, he deserved to have it.

My method is casual, and my workspace is casual, but my intent and results are not. It's good to understand when it's necessary to be stiff, and when to relax. This is relaxed book. Dig in; enjoy.