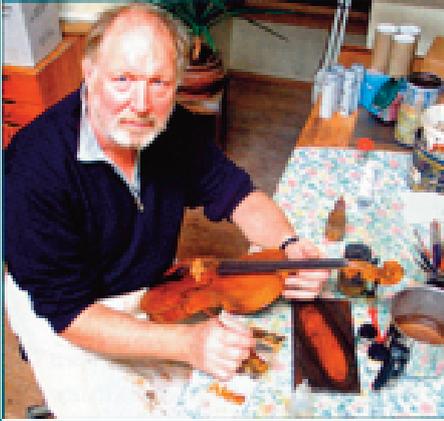


my FAVOURITE THINGS



The German-based British luthier **ROGER HARGRAVE** reveals how his most cherished instrument, tools, books and music have been sources of inspiration and comfort to him

HALF-INCH FLAT GROUND SORBY GOUGE



Violin makers are always crazy about tools. I almost always buy tools second-hand, or make them myself, but at least 90 per cent of them I never use - I buy them because they're beautiful. One of my absolute favourites, that I use all the time, is a simple half-inch flat ground gouge. It's a second-hand Sorby that I bought in an open-air auction in Newark about 35 years ago. I turned my own handle for it out of pear wood. It's getting shorter and shorter slowly but surely as I keep sharpening it.

BISHOP HAND RIP SAW



My old teacher, Wilf Saunders, had one of these. He used it to cut 2mm strips off really highly flamed onepiece maple backs to make matching ribs for instruments. It was amazing. I searched for five years until I found a saw like it, but in the end I got one. It is superbly balanced and has a beautifully shaped pearwood handle that just fits your hand exactly. Things that are really well made and work well will always be aesthetically beautiful. I do worry about what's going to happen to my tools when I go. They've done me such good service over the years. I want them to do good service for someone else.

THE 'ALARD' AMATI VIOLIN, 1649

The instruments that have really influenced me are those in absolutely pristine condition. These days most people are used to seeing worn varnishes that are highly polished, so untouched instruments are often a real surprise. It all started for me when I saw the collection of Amati instruments in Oxford's Ashmolean Museum as a student, in particular the 'Alard'. It's staggering to me that instruments that were made more than 400 years ago have never been surpassed aesthetically. No one has ever cut scrolls or f-holes more elegantly than the Amati family. You might argue about tone, but I suspect that in the intervening years very few makers have managed to emulate them in that respect either.



DELUXE EDITION OF THE HILLS' VIOLIN MAKERS OF THE GUARNERI FAMILY

I'm really into collecting books I've got one of the biggest collections of violin books in Europe. The Hill's Guarneri book is a leather-bound deluxe first edition from 1931 and is one of my most treasured possessions. The copper plates are just stunning. Sometimes I'll sit and thumb through it of an evening, and I'm like a miser running gold through my fingers. I've got about five or six first editions of this book, but the deluxe edition is something else. I'm sure that lots of people buy violin books and never actually read them, but I've read most of mine. When a new book arrives, I'll sit down and read it through from cover to cover.

HAMLET

Violin making's a lonely job, so I like to listen to Shakespeare's plays and sonnets on audio cassette while I work. I can listen to Hamlet over and over again. There are so many words and phrases we use all the time in the English language that are from this play, and people don't realise it phrases such as 'neither a borrower nor a lender be: If I'm a bit down, I listen to the 'to be or not to be' speech, when Hamlet's trying to decide whether or not to commit suicide. This usually lifts my mood.

BIZET'S CARMEN

As far as music goes I listen to everything from Purcell to Tom Waits, but I love opera. I'm a romantic as far as the repertoire goes, and Carmen's my favourite. I've heard lots of versions and love them all, but I've just listened to Maria Callas singing some of the arias, and she is fantastic. In the past, I used to be invited over to the Eastern bloc before the Berlin Wall came down, and one time I went over to Romania, and I was whistling a tune from Carmen as I was walking along a corridor. A couple of people who were passing started whistling the tune with me. They couldn't speak any English, and I can't speak Romanian, but we could share the music of Carmen.