

THE STRING CIRCLE, A “MAGIC CIRCLE” WHERE FINE LUTHERIE MEETS THE MUSICAL ART OF YOUNG PERFORMERS

This new project, designed by Le Dimore del Quartetto and promoted in collaboration with Fondazione Museo del Violino Antonio Stradivari of Cremona, through the international mapping of the best craft workshops, selected in collaboration with Museo del Violino among those of violin and bow makers who have distinguished themselves through major awards and competitions, connects, on the basis of a circular economy, the excellence of current violin making art with the most promising musicians of the new generation

A new cultural and economic reality has appeared in the world of Italian musical art, a reality called The String Circle that aims to give life to a platform capable of connecting excellent Italian and international luthiers with the new generation of the best chamber musicians. This idea was born and came to life to respond, on the one hand, to the desire to enhance the art and professionalism of the figure embodied by the "master luthier," putting him or her in direct contact with young artists, and on the other to satisfy that need for quality instruments for young musicians at the beginning of their careers. The task of The String Circle is precisely this: to create a widespread network of master luthiers and musicians capable of facilitating international exchange between these two categories, fostering their professional and artistic growth.

The project originates from an idea of Le Dimore del Quartetto, the international network that today supports ninety young string quartets and chamber music ensembles in the early years of their careers, in collaboration with the Fondazione Museo del Violino of Cremona, which is responsible for the involvement of craftsmen of excellence from among those awarded prizes in the "Concorso Triennale Internazionale di Liuteria Antonio Stradivari" (which since 1976 has been an authentic "Olympiad" for string instrument makers from all over the world), as well as in similar international competitions. A project, this one, that has already obtained the patronage of the Fondazione Cologni dei Mestieri d'Arte.

"High contemporary violin making is an indispensable element for the classical music supply chain to continue to be healthy and sustainable," explained Francesca Moncada, founder and president of Le Dimore del Quartetto (read her interview here). "With The String Circle we complete the virtuous circle triggered by Le Dimore del Quartetto, where networking and the exchange of resources generate value for the community and for all partners involved."

To be involved in this project and to be part of the network, the selected luthiers offer one or more instruments on loan for use and a range of services (i.e., repair, maintenance, etc.) to musicians in the Le Dimore del Quartetto network, with the craft workshops being marked on an interactive map that facilitates their location, thus coming to create a widespread collection available to young artists.

"I immediately joined this interesting and worthy initiative of The String Circle, which involves us together with Le Dimore del Quartetto and the promising young musicians in their network," said Stefano Trabucchi, a master luthier from Cremona and president of the luthiers' group of Confartigianato imprese. "I think the word circle itself makes it very clear how important this circularity of our violin-making knowledge is that meets, through our instruments, the talented young instrumentalists of the quartets and their attentive and passionate audiences. It is undoubtedly a unique and exclusive way of relating and getting to know each other in the name of music, violin making and art."

So, The String Circle aims to celebrate the collective elements of artistic creation and musical performance, enhancing the inescapable union between the craftsman and the musician, within a dynamic where one creates the conditions for the achievement of the full expressiveness of the other and vice versa. In this sense, the master luthier establishes with the musician a relationship very similar to that which the master glassmaker establishes with the artist. The craftsmen's technical skill is, in fact, a necessary condition for artistic creation to reach its apex, moving from being in power to being in action, fulfilling itself, as confirmed by Simone Gramaglia, Artistic Director of Le Dimore del Quartetto and violist of the now legendary Cremona Quartet.

"The String Circle is an innovative, open and fundamental project for all talented young musicians who are projected into the excellence of contemporary violin making and who can find the instrument best suited to their artistic needs," Maestro Gramaglia pointed out. "Moreover, it should not be forgotten that The String Circle is a demonstration of how much contemporary violin making can give to the world of classical music, giving it a voice and creating its sound. The direct contact between luthiers and talented young musicians can only be a great source of inspiration for both categories, so close and, at the same time, so connected."

In this particular and stimulating light, the relationship between "master" and "maestro" leads to the establishment of an exhilarating dialectical development that leads both figures to overcome their technical and expressive limitations. With his demands, the great musician pushes the luthier to go beyond the established "rules" of his art while, with his skills, the great luthier opens wide to the musician a world of unprecedented expressive possibilities. Both realize their vocation: on the one hand, the unparalleled instrument created by the "master," on the other, the memorable performance made by the "master." This is why The String Circle exalts the marriage of craftsmanship and music, and consequently also espouses the principles of the circular economy that leads to the enhancement of mutual support between the two arts. Within this economy, a prominent role could be played by collectors of contemporary violin making, who can be demanding patrons as well as innovative patrons. The identification and involvement of collectors (real and potential) willing to collaborate in the project, represents, therefore, one of the essential objectives, in order to transform the disseminated collection into a permanent collection and develop a concrete support activity for workshops of excellence and quality musical activity.

In this way, in the realization of this path of knowledge and enhancement, all subjects will confront each other with continuity and gain greater awareness of the centrality of their role

in the contemporary music scene. Thanks to a "Widespread Collection of Contemporary Instruments" there will be a continuous growth of relationships that will allow the establishment of a system aimed at the circulation of resources and skills that are essential for professionals in today's musical world. A realization and growth that is already materializing, as already eleven master luthiers and bowmakers have wanted to join The String Circle, to be precise Luca Baratto (Cremona, Italy), Michele Buccellè (Acquanegra Cremonese, in the province of Cremona, Italy), Stefano Conia (Cremona, Italy), Ulrike Dederer (Zurich, Switzerland), Mira Gruszow and Gideon Baumblatt (Werder, Germany), Gawang Jung (Cremona, Italy), Marco Nolli (Cremona, Italy), Emilio and Luca Slaviero (Cremona, Italy), Stefano Trabucchi (Cremona, Italy), Noémie Viaud (Denmark) and Gregg Alf (United States).

Le Dimore del Quartetto is a creative cultural enterprise that has been supporting young international string quartets and chamber music ensembles in launching their careers and enhancing European cultural heritage in a circular economy since 2015. With a well-established network in the field of music and cultural heritage, it engages in project planning through the organization of festivals and travel itineraries, masterclasses, master classes and training courses for musicians, educational projects for schools and universities, training and team-building activities for companies, artistic residencies and concerts in historic mansions and other places of cultural interest.

For its part, Fondazione Museo del Violino Antonio Stradivari, has been protecting and promoting the value of Cremonese violin making, both classical and contemporary, since 1976. The constant commitment to research and rediscovery of the great masters of the past and their work, together with the recognition of the work of the best makers of today, translates, on a daily basis, into the management and organization of the Museo del Violino and the staging of exhibitions and the "Triennial Violinmaking Competition," research, conferences, workshops and publications capable of catalyzing, thanks to the prominence of scientific content and often unpublished proposals, international attention.

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