

A peek into lutherie workshops around the world



LUTHIERS

MIRA GRUSZOW & GIDEON BAUMBLATT

LOCATION

Berlin, Germany

We moved to this workshop in west Berlin about a year ago, having been based in the centre of the city for a number of years. The workshop is 60 sq m, which is enough for us to have our own spaces. We work in the same room but we never share workbenches; the one in the main picture is Gideon's. We always make every instrument together: both of us have our strengths and we discuss things all the time as we come to them. Mira always carves the scrolls, Gideon does the f-holes; Mira finishes the cellos, while Gideon finishes the violins and violas – which corresponds to the instruments we play. We've been working together since 2012 and we've developed a common style; sometimes we have different opinions on how to do something, which is always a good thing – it motivates us to go a step further, or find another solution.

A lot of our discussions revolve around an instrument's tone: how to equip it with the broadest palette of colours possible. For example, we've made ten violins based on the same Michele Angelo Bergonzi, which is played by Andrew Wan, the concertmaster of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. With each one, we've gone a little further in discovering what gives it the tone quality it has, and how we can take it to another level tonally. The visual aspect is certainly important, but we keep in mind that we're making instruments for musicians, so the main concern has to be the sound of the finished product. Our most recent Bergonzi model won a double gold at the Violin Society of America's 2018 competition, and one judge commented on its versatility.

We've now been in this workshop for around a year, but in the future we're hoping to move it into our house so we can be closer to our children. ●

INTERVIEW BY CHRISTIAN LLOYD

We like late Guarneris and *The Strad's* recent poster of the 1743 'Brusilow' provides inspiration for us both. It's a near-contemporary of the Michele Angelo Bergonzi we've copied so many times.



On top of the cabinet containing our templates and plaster casts is a souvenir from our time working in Montreal: an LP of the Canadian comedian 'Le Père Gédéon'. It also refers to Gideon becoming a father himself.

One difference in our working methods is that Gideon has lots of natural light at his workbench, whereas Mira prefers using lamps. Maybe it's because Gideon studied in Mittenwald where there are huge windows in front of the students, whereas Mira studied in Cremona.

Right As well as posters of our previous instruments, Mira's workbench is surrounded by mementoes of her time in Belgium and Canada.



Gideon is just making some adjustments to a Rogeri model, which we've copied several times. The book at the side is open at the page of a Stradivari violin we're planning to copy as our next project.

We normally have more than one instrument on the go at a time, but never more than two. Often we have one on this cabinet for varnishing, while working on another at our benches.