

EUROPEAN-MADE INSTRUMENTS: A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

A top-quality violin buyer's guide for intermediate and advanced players

When it comes to a rich history and lineage of making stringed instruments, Europe stands unequaled. The birthplace of the legendary Stradivarius and Guarneri schools of violin making, Europe has a reputation for quality that goes back hundreds of years.

The United Kingdom, Italy, France, Germany and other western European countries are perhaps the best-known. Changing politics and economics, however, have seen a recent influx of top-quality, affordable instruments from such eastern European countries as Poland, Romania and Hungary.

Though quality instruments are being made all across the globe, European luthiers are known for being steeped in the traditions of the original masters. They also enjoy close proximity to some of the world's richest tonewood forests.



For hundreds of years, European-made instruments have been considered among the best money can buy.

A Legacy of Quality

In contrast to some Asian countries that make instruments in large factories, many eastern European violin makers run small with just a few employees. Some operations are family-run, while others may employ dozens of workers. Pictured here are father and son Jan and Grzegorz Bobak of Poland, whose world-renowned instruments are available by special order from Rich Strings.

Our European instruments are among the best money can buy for two simple reasons: how they're made, and the woods they're made from.

Using techniques refined over the centuries, luthiers hand-carve, assemble and finish every instrument with meticulous attention to detail. Many of our higher-end instruments bear the name of the master luthier that built them. Others are built by craftsmen under the watchful eye of the master luthier, using his techniques and training. The master luthier plays and approves every instrument before it leaves his shop.



Jan and Grzegorz Bobak are among the many European luthiers who build instruments in family-run workshops.



Magical, Musical Woods

European tonewoods are among the most highly-regarded woods in the world. These "magical, musical" woods include maple and spruce from the Carpathian Mountains of Romania, the forests of the Bosnian/Montenegrin region and Germany/the Alps.

The best tonewoods have tight, even grain and the optimum density. They are beautiful to look at, and—most importantly—create beautiful sound.

Loggers fell the tonewood trees then season, mill and dry the wood in a very specific way. Even the timing in the season when they fell the tree can affect the density and moisture content—and tonal qualities—of the wood. Every step in the process contributes to the ultimate goal: giving luthiers the best-possible wood for their instruments.

Master luthiers know which woods look and sound best for their instruments, and they carefully choose the perfect pieces of wood for their work. Master luthiers understand that no amount of care invested in