

The Pascoli Brothers: Violin Making and Immigration in 20th-Century Brazil

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Abstract

Maria da Gloria Leitao Venceslau and Rafael Sando's article retraces through the narration of the lives of the violinmakers brothers Benvenuto and Guido Pascoli, part of the history of Brazilian violinmaking in the 20th century. The two authors aim to bring new insights on the topic through the presentation of part of the results of their research conducted over the years, contributing to define the context in which the first Brazilian luthiers were formed. The methodology presented is based on the reporting of news derived from newspaper articles, public and private archival material, and transcription of interviews with makers and musicians made by one of the two authors. The article ends with the presentation of selected string instruments, which allows us to reflect on the rich tradition of craftsmanship of the country.

INTRODUCTION

The history of Brazilian violin making has received little scholarly attention up till today.¹ Several valuable sources for the study of violin making in 20th-century Brazil are now available online and have been recently summarized in an article published by *The Strad* magazine.² Among these digital materials (mostly in Portuguese), various videos, interviews, and articles report general information on the most famous artisans, many of whom were Italian immigrants that played a significant role in the marketplace of musical instruments in cities such as São Paulo.³

The article presented here constitutes one of the preliminary results of research carried out by the two authors with the purpose of bringing new insights on the topic.⁴ Such investigations elucidate a fascinating chapter on unknown artisans and have supplied new information on those already known. Here, we will mainly focus on the Pascoli brothers: Benvenuto (1896–1952) and Guido (1905–1987), two important

protagonists of the violin making scene of the time.⁵ Through the reconstruction of their biographies, we can shed light on a fascinating chapter of Brazilian history: the central role of Italian immigrants and their descendants in the introduction of a series of crafts in the country, particularly that of the violinmaker.⁶

ITALIANS IN SÃO PAULO

The Pascoli brothers were born and raised in Brazil. Their training as violinmakers, however, took place in a context—the city of São Paulo—in which the trade, as well as the production of bowed and plucked stringed instruments was mainly the work of Italian immigrants, whose role in the industrialization of the city was of prime importance. Between the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, immigrants represented almost 80% of the workforce in transport, industry, and services.⁷ Among the Italians, some excellent tailors soon became renowned among the best in São Paulo. There were also several

shoemakers, shopkeepers, bakers, and masons, many of whom, managed to open their own shops. Small and large Italian traders and industrialists, especially those dedicated to foodstuff, were numerous and contributed to the growing of the internal market of the city.⁸

It is then not surprising to find makers of bowed and plucked string instruments among the different Italian artisans. It should be remembered that violinmakers were not only present in São Paulo, which for a long time was the main pole for the production of musical instruments, mostly in the hands of the Italian community.⁹ Among them, Giannini, Di Giorgio, Del Vecchio, Incisi, and others established their factories and were the first to commercially produce bowed and plucked string instruments.¹⁰ These enterprises represented a job opportunity for several artisans in Brazil, including the Pascoli brothers.¹¹

Precisely between the end of the 19th and the first decades of 20th centuries, São Paulo hosted a very animated musical scene, with several theaters, cinemas, and music halls. Theaters such as the *São José*, opened in 1909, or the *Municipal* (1911) housed the artistic itinerant companies that visited the city. In fact, around the 1890s, São Paulo entered the stages of the South American tour circuit of major Italian companies.¹² Such a rich musical context was possible thanks to the urban transformations and the economic progress of the city. In this scenario, job opportunities arose for musicians of different levels, from *café-concerts* to opera houses.¹³ The audience of these shows was a new cosmopolitan class made up of immigrants, most of whom were Italians. Their predominant presence in São Paulo also favored the operetta, with an enormous number of performances in these years.

In addition to the lyric scenario, Italians played a significant role in the foundation of musical associations such as the *Centro Musical de São Paulo* (1913), later *Centro Musical Carlos Gomes*. Most of its 205 members were Italian or descendants.¹⁴ Among them, there were musicians from musical theater as well as professors of the newly opened *Conservatório Dramático e Musical* (1906), who were often hired to play in operetta companies, ballets, cinema orchestras, and symphonic concerts.¹⁵ To these various

musical contexts, we may add those of the wind bands and musical circles such as the *Club Mandolinístico Ugo Azzolino* or the *Sociedade Coral Benedetto Marcello* that animated the leisure time of the immigrants and of the general public as well.¹⁶ Consequently, the city was a rich market for entrepreneurs, many of them immigrants, who worked on the production of musical instruments—plucked stringed instruments in particular and, above all others, the popular *violão* (six-course guitar).

There was a growing clamor for bowed stringed instruments as well, and, naturally, these factories tried to meet this demand. In this regard, we can mention the activity carried out by Ivo Incisi, who probably arrived in Brazil at the end of the 19th century. From some evidence and a few surviving instruments that have come down to us, it seems that Incisi was among the most talented violinmakers active in the country.¹⁷ In 1922, he won the first prize in the category of musical instruments at the National Exhibition in Rio De Janeiro, in which other makers of Italian origin had also participated (Lorenzo Fritelli, Tranquillo Giannini, Ettore Marani, and Vincenzo Lo Turco, among others).¹⁸ Ivo Incisi's workshop was significantly active and produced commercial quality instruments that have come down to us, most of them out of domestic woods.¹⁹ His production included bowed and plucked stringed instruments, as well as wind and even percussion instruments, together with musical accessories such as instrument cases.

Little information survives concerning other artisans of Italian origin who opened their workshops in São Paulo because they did not reach the same level of production as those described previously. That is the case of Romeu Realti, who ran a guitar shop named “Ao Violão do Gasômetro” together with his brother José, which was still active in 1935.²⁰ Another violinmaker—or possibly just repairer and dealer, since we have not seen any instruments by him—whose work was mainly linked to the violin family was Salvatore Vitale. Vitale was undoubtedly active in São Paulo since the beginning of the 20th century.²¹ Others were self-taught violinmakers, like Fernando Guerra, who was probably among the first to experiment with the use of domestic woods for the

production of violins, and Iginio Oliani, who claimed on his labels to be the only one to master the authentic Italian oil varnish.²²

Among the early violinmakers active in São Paulo, the most successful was the Roman Lorenzo Fritelli (1863–1928) (Fig. 1). Before devoting himself exclusively to violin making, he worked as an architect and builder. He is first mentioned as early as 1901, when he appeared in *Almanak Leimmert* as a maker of string instruments with a workshop at São João Avenue in downtown, São Paulo.²³ Information on Fritelli is also found on various newspaper articles of the time, including one published in the “Diário popular” in 1903 that refers to his workshop and production.²⁴ Several prominent musicians endorsed him publicly at the time, among them, the noted Brazilian violinist and composer Francisco Chiaffitelli (1881–1954). From the beginning of his career as a violinmaker, Fritelli strived to distinguish his production, which was marked by the use of imported

wood of excellent quality and the exclusive use of his own personal models. As far we know, he ran a small workshop with the help of a couple apprentices, and also made bows. Unlike his Italian contemporaries such as Carlo Giudici who were active in Brazil, Fritelli was quite resourceful in marketing as well, soon becoming a point of reference in São Paulo for violin making and a role model for younger craftsmen like the Pascoli brothers.²⁵

THE PASCOLI BROTHERS, BRAZILIAN MAKERS

The *Hospedaria dos Imigrantes* in São Paulo was a structure created in 1887 to temporarily host the immigrants who arrived in Brazil. This place welcomed a multitude of people, the future parents of Benvenuto (Fig. 2) and Guido (Figs. 3 and 4) Pascoli among them.²⁶ Their



Figure 1. Lorenzo Fritelli (São Paulo, ca.1900?) (Private Archives, Lery Sica).



Figure 2. Benvenuto Pascoli circa 1930 (Private Archives, Benvenuto Pascoli).



Figure 3. Guido Pascoli in the late 1920s (Private Archives, Benvenuto Pascoli).

mother, Serafina Spini, came from the countryside of Cremona, whereas their father Pietro Pascoli was born in Udine. Although Serafina came from Cremona—as stated by Guido—she



Figure 4. Guido Pascoli in late 1970s (Ciléo Gropillo, “Os instrumentos de Guido Pascoli,” *Jornal do Brasil*, September 7, 1977, 9).

knew nothing about her hometown’s glorious violin making history. Their parents were children of farmers and belonged to the generation of the great Italian migrations that between 1890 and 1898 had Brazil as their main destination.²⁷ Their father, Pietro, was a bricklayer in the city of São Paulo before moving with his young wife to the small village of Itobi, where their sons were born. The first was Benvenuto (1896), followed by Americo, Guido (1905), Valdomiro, and Rosa. Part of the childhood of the Pascoli brothers took place in this area. Then, the family moved to Poços de Caldas in the hinterland of the Brazilian State of Minas Gerais, where the young brothers had their first contact with the world of violin making.

TRAINING

The love of the Pascoli brothers for violin making began early, under the influence of the Italian musician Guido Rocchi. Rocchi is important not only as a mentor of the Pascoli brothers but also as a crucial figure in the Brazilian musical scene at the turn of the 20th century. He was born in Fontanellato, close to Parma, in 1865 and was mainly a clarinetist and cellist. He was trained at the *Regia Scuola di Musica* in Parma and arrived in Brazil in 1891 with an opera company directed by Arnaldo Conti. From this moment on, he lived between São Paulo, where he taught woodwind instruments at *Conservatório Dramático e Musical*, and Poços de Caldas, where he died in 1940. There are prominent figures among his students, such as conductor Armando Belardi, who was the director of the *Orquestra do Teatro Municipal* de São Paulo since its creation in 1939.²⁸

In 1915, Benvenuto Pascoli, then a young cabinet maker, began to work for Rocchi, a self-taught luthier himself,²⁹ repairing instruments from the various ensembles active at Poços de Caldas. The brothers also received musical tuition from Rocchi and Benvenuto on the clarinet and Guido, then a boy, on the violin. Benvenuto worked for Rocchi for 3 years, later joined by his younger brother Guido. From the orchestras of the casinos and spas of Poços de Caldas, instruments of different origins eventually ended up in the hands of the Pascoli brothers for repair or study; probably not only bowed but also

plucked instruments. Because of the abundance of Italian musicians who moved to this area, it can be assumed that a number of these items were by Italian makers, along with French and German trade instruments.³⁰ This hands-on experience under Rocchi's guidance actually constitutes the brothers' background on the craft. We do not know precisely when they began to make instruments, although Guido claims in a published interview to have finished his first violin around 1922, whereas Benvenuto had indeed begun to build string instruments a couple of years earlier.³¹

SÃO PAULO

Benvenuto was in his early twenties when he moved to São Paulo, around 1920, followed shortly by his brother Guido, aged 17 years. During the day, they worked as cabinet makers and, in the evenings, as luthiers for Romeo Di Giorgio (himself a former student of Frittelli's), where they would build, repair, and varnish a variety of stringed instruments.³² In 1922, the brothers opened their first workshop in the city downtown, named *Casa di Musica e Liuteria Cremona*. An article from 1969 reports that Guido claimed to have worked for a while with Salvatore Vitale, who used to have a business partnership with Guido Rocchi.³³ Concerning this testimony, the commercial guide Laemmert in 1927 lists Benvenuto as the owner of a workshop located at 93 São Caetano Street, the same address reported by Salvatore Vitale.³⁴ This suggests that the brothers started working for Vitale and eventually took over the workshop, where they worked until the transfer of Guido Pascoli to Rio de Janeiro around 1928. We may assume that most instruments made in this period are the result of the collaboration between the two brothers. Most of the string instruments attributed to them dating back to the 1920s and 30s are label-less. We also know that, at the same time, the two brothers were present in the violin making market of Rio de Janeiro as well.

RIO DE JANEIRO

Certainly, the busy musical scene of Rio de Janeiro in the late 1920s was an attractive factor for the Pascoli brothers, who took root in

the city. The Italian Vincenzo Lo Turco had established himself successfully there around 1922 (in partnership with violinist Ettore Marani), but apparently the Pascoli brothers believed there was still room for them. We find records in the 1928 "Jornal do Commercio" of a musical instrument shop owned by Benvenuto Pascoli and Amos Bartolini, an Italian musician and a singing teacher at Rio's Opera House.³⁵ The shop, named *Casa Santa Cecilia*, was located at 78 Rua do Passeio. Their joint venture was destined to be very short lived—Benvenuto withdrew from the society on December 1928.³⁶ In spite of the fact that Benvenuto was once the formal owner of a business in Rio, it was actually Guido who moved to this city along with his young wife Norma around 1928, eager to start his solo career. During the 1930s, Guido built several instruments of excellent quality, mostly commissioned by professional players. During the Second World War, Guido disappeared for several years from the violin making scene, resuming no later than 1948, as evidenced by his production. He remained in Rio until 1954, as attested by a brief newspaper article, still carrying out activities unrelated to violin making.³⁷ In 1955, we find him settled again in São Paulo, ready for a fresh start as a full-time violinmaker. The years between the late 50s and the late 60s were by far his most prolific and creative period.

TWO PERSONAL STYLES

The two brothers had very different personalities, which mirrored in their production. Benvenuto never sought a break with his Italian identity. Surely, he tried to establish a link with the land of his parents through violin making. The Italian political situation and the fascist propaganda of the 1920s and 1930s in Brazil attracted the young Benvenuto, who was captivated by the Fascist movement to such an extent that, in 1937, he wrote a treatise and built a violin in honor of Benito Mussolini, which he sent to the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome.³⁸ The text, written in Italian, and entitled *Teoria degli strumenti ad arco, descrizione del violino a barra regolabile* (Theory of bowed stringed instruments, description of the violin with an adjustable bass bar) is fascinating, as well the

description of his “Duce” violin made it possible to alter the instrument’s timbre at will. Benvenuto was indeed obsessed by the fine setup of the string instruments. A tireless experimenter, he would not hesitate in reworking an instrument whenever he felt that he could improve its sound, even many years after finishing it. He was also a meticulous and reliable restorer, certainly the only professional available in São Paulo for a long period of time.³⁹ He was also a forger, and his fakes, even if not faithful, were convincing enough to be sold by him as authentic old Italian instruments.⁴⁰ As is often the case, Benvenuto’s instruments display a series of idiosyncratic traits that allow for relatively easy identification, although given the very nature of the faking practice, as a whole they do not represent a “style.”

With Guido, instead, we find ourselves in front of a luthier with a peculiar personality, a nationalist, a lover of Brazilian art and culture, a man who aimed to develop his own style and who founded the country’s first violin making school. Unlike his brother, he always described himself as a Brazilian luthier and was very proud of the authorship of his instruments. For this reason, we will mainly focus on Guido in the following pages. As will be shown, Guido’s production and career had a vital role in the formation of the first national school of violin making. Moreover, Benvenuto, unlike his brother, as far we know had no apprentices in his workshop (other than his brother Guido) and was not particularly concerned about the future of the craft in Brazil. Because of his premature death, most of the available information on Benvenuto regards the São Paulo violin market and his relationship with the city. Unfortunately, testimonies of his relations with other luthiers are scant, whereas we know that his relationship with Guido had deteriorated significantly, and that they eventually grew apart in the years before Benvenuto’s death.

GUIDO PASCOLI AND HIS NATIONAL STYLE

There are two essential chapters in Guido Pascoli’s career as a violinmaker: the creation of his new designs for stringed instruments and the birth of the first national violin making school. The second half of the fifties meant for Guido a

period of experimentation, a period that saw Brazil undergo strong sociocultural transformations and a wave of nationalistic enthusiasm. It is the decade in which Brasilia was built, and the *Bossa Nova* and the Brazilian *Cinema Novo* were born. In these years, Guido designed his new *Marajoara* model, shortly followed by the *Brasiliano*. The creation of the *Marajoara* can be arguably seen as the consequence of these thrilling historical and cultural movements that intensely influenced the artisan, leading him to express his strong nationalism by incorporating a visual language linked to an ancient native civilization.

THE MARAJOARA AND THE BRASILIANO

The archaeological findings of fragments of *Marajoara* pottery in 1871 had an important influence on many Brazilian artists of the early 20th century, including Carlos Hadler,⁴¹ who produced a series of eighty-eight drawings based on the ornamental motifs of such remains.⁴² In his work, Hadler interprets the indigenous ornamental motifs conceived through geometric figures, aiming to create a new iconographic language named by him *Neomaraçoara*. The interest in this style not only affects the generation of artists who animated the Brazilian cultural environments in the early decades of the 20th century—particularly in the fields of Decorative and Graphic Arts—but also later characters such as Guido Pascoli, who daringly reinterpreted the iconic baroque design of the violin, giving life to his *Marajoara* instruments in 1958.

In a 1963 article, Guido Pascoli claims to have been inspired by the architectural lines of Brasilia to design the *Brasiliano* model.⁴³ Like the previous model, the *Brasiliano* was not widely accepted, and Guido was well aware of this. Nevertheless, he created an entire quartet in *Brasiliano* style to celebrate the city of Rio de Janeiro. The quartet was very finely crafted and had their backs decorated with the city’s symbols inlaid in mother of pearl. Unfortunately, as the violinmaker Orlando Ramos recalls, this quartet was destroyed in a fire and only photographs remain of it.⁴⁴ In a 1984 article, Guido recalled his participation in the 1960 Liège International Violin Making Competition, where he presented a string quartet in *Brasiliano* style.⁴⁵

GUIDO PASCOLI AND HIS HERITAGE

In one of his published interviews, Guido states that his educational project started in 1955 with Luiz Bellini (Fig. 5) as his first student.⁴⁶ The latter was born in 1935 in Monte Azul Paulista, countryside of São Paulo State, to humble Italian immigrants; he had studied cabinet making at the Getulio Vargas Technical School between 1950 and 1955, before he approached violin making.⁴⁷ At the end of 1955, Bellini began an internship at Guido's workshop in São Paulo that lasted until 1960. In an interview for a British article, Bellini remembers building 20 violins of different sizes during this period, plus a viola and a cello. The peculiarity of this stage of his work was, according to his own words, the use of Brazilian woods. As he recalls, the Perobinha-do-campo (*Acosmium dasycarpum*), used for the backs, sides, and necks, was dense and hard to work with, despite its excellent acoustical properties. The years spent with Pascoli undoubtedly gave Bellini a very solid background, allowing him to pursue a very successful career. Their friendship and reciprocal admiration lasted until Guido's death.⁴⁸



Figure 5. Luiz Bellini visiting the Pascoli laboratory (Rio de Janeiro, 1979) (Doris Moully, "O som da velha madeira" *Domingo*, November 18, 1979, 22).

Later, Bellini would devote himself also to the repair and restoration of string instruments. A series of events linked to the figure of his mentor led Bellini to work in New York. After the 1960 Liège Competition and with Geraldo Modern's support, Guido managed to organize a traineeship at Rembert Wurlitzer's workshop in New York under Simone Fernando Sacconi's supervision.⁴⁹ Bellini's skills and personality impressed employees and customers so much that his stay in New York eventually extended for life. Luiz Bellini died in 2015 and his figure as a craftsman was strongly linked to the US and New York contexts.⁵⁰

The next turn in Guido's career was in 1962, when he entered the public service at Funarte, a foundation linked to the Ministry of Culture; this led him to move back to Rio. Now with some financial stability and with an official position ("*Liuterista*" meaning Luthier, probably the first employed violinmaker in Brazil), Guido could finally take his project of creating a violin making school to the next level.⁵¹

Later that decade, Guido lived for a couple years in Brasília, where he tried unsuccessfully to establish his violin making workshop/school at the newly created Universidade de Brasília (UNB). In the 1982 interview, he does not explain the reasons why his project did not go through in the capital, but perhaps it was due to the lack of support from the university, not to mention the troubled political situation following the military coup d'état in 1964. Following his failed attempts in Brasília, Guido returned to Rio de Janeiro in the early 1970s, where he finally managed to create his violin making school.⁵²

THE VIOLIN MAKING SCHOOL

For almost a decade, Guido trained several young violinmakers in Rio de Janeiro with the support of two public foundations (Fig. 6).⁵³ To achieve this goal, his project had to be articulated with other educational initiatives, such as the Projeto Espiral.⁵⁴ In its final version, the project included two distinct activities: the collective teaching of bowed string instruments and the building of the musical instruments. The project aimed to creating violin making schools located near the music teaching centers. These teaching



Figure 6. Guido Pascoli and his students at the violin making school in Rio de Janeiro (Private Archives, Orlando Ramos).

centers were present in some cities of the country, but the first and only violin making school was that of Rio de Janeiro, thanks to an agreement between Funarte and Funabem.⁵⁵

The project involved students from different regions in Brazil, and the main goal was to train professional luthiers, who were expected, on completion of the three-year course, to return home ready to start a professional career, transmitting their knowledge to their own apprentices. Starting in 1976, students such as Wellington Fernando Barbosa and Pedro de Lima Souza from Paraíba, Fernando Cardoso from Bahia, and interns from the Funabem foundation, among them Jonas Caldas, graduated from Guido's school. In 1984, eight violinmakers had already been trained at the school, who later returned to their hometowns. Prior to his death, Guido succeeded in training as many as 15 students.

After a very promising start, the school soon faced financial difficulties, forcing Guido to rely on the use of domestic woods. This was supported by a scientific study commissioned by Funarte in 1981, which identified a series of species that could possibly replace the more expensive imported wood. However, even this wood was not readily available. By that time, another violin making school was active in Tatuí (State of São Paulo), at the Dr. Carlos de Campos Music Conservatory, which kindly supplied the wood necessary to keep the school running.

The violin making school continued its activity until 1987, the year of Guido's death.

Since the beginning of the 80s, he had become seriously ill, eventually losing his sight. Despite his poor health condition, he continued to teach violin making with the help of his former student and teaching assistant, Orlando Ramos, and his close friend, the violinmaker and restorer Luciano Rolla.⁵⁶ By the time of Guido's death, the Projeto Espiral was already disarticulated. Because of the lack of further economic support, the violin making school ended soon after master Pascoli passed away in 1987.

CONCLUSION

The Pascoli brothers must be recognized as the first professional Brazilian violinmakers. Their forerunners were severely limited by the difficulty in getting proper training and the lack of a solid musical activity to support their work. Guided by Guido Rocchi, and driven by a strong passion, they soon became accomplished and versatile craftsmen, each one with a distinct personality, deeply rooted in the European tradition, yet with a local touch. The work of the Pascoli brothers is very little known outside Brazil. Because their production was relatively small, and because of the fact that their instruments have always been in high demand in their country, very few people abroad will ever have a chance to handle an example by these makers. However, documenting them proves both interesting and useful. As for Benvenuto, the lack of a proper label often makes identification tricky for those who are not familiar with the work of this master. Instruments by him have been mistaken as Italian works. We could say that his approach was conventional, in the sense that he focused mainly on the practical aspects of the job, devoting much effort to carefully adjust them for the best tone and finishing them with the most attractive "ancient" look.

Guido was no less meticulous than his brother, concerning setup and other player-related issues, but went a step further. He attempted to innovate the violin design on esthetical grounds, rather than on scientific or practical reasoning. The cold reception from the players (that somehow holds until today) once more demonstrates how conservative the classical music world can be. On the other hand, in our postindustrial world, beauty

is back as the defining feature of our everyday objects. Because we can expect only marginal improvements on the violin from modern technology (and even less from the faking techniques), one might speculate that the only creative route open for the modern violinmaker is the development of new designs. For those who intend to follow this path, the work of Guido Pascoli will certainly be highly inspirational.

SELECTED INSTRUMENTS

The following section illustrates the previous pages with photographs and descriptions of string instruments. We have chosen a few significant items made by the Pascoli brothers and by other Brazilian makers, such as Ivo Incisi and Luiz Bellini.

This rare and interesting specimen by Ivo Incisi (Fig. 7) is representative of the early efforts to approach the European violin making tradition by Brazilian local makers. The model is elegant, with well-cut open F-holes, in harmony with the long corners. The edge work is delicate, with neatly inserted purflings. The arching is low and flat, mainly because of the construction method used. The curvature of the belly and the back were obtained by bending the plates using heat, with very little carving. The wood of the belly is a quite dense pine with broad and resinous growth rings, probably from foreign origin. The back, the ribs, and the neck, are made with Grumixama (*Eugenia Brasiliensis*), a Brazilian wood. The neck and the scroll, despite the rather rough design, are cleanly executed. The varnish is straight-forward, of a light orange, applied directly on the



Figure 7. Ivo Incisi, violin (São Paulo, ca.1900) (Private Archives, Rafael Sando).

wood, without a ground color, yet it is of good quality, offering excellent wear resistance.

The violin in Fig. 8, an example of Benvenuto's personal model, presents the typical graciously curved F-holes and long C-bouts, with a round and well-designed arching. The slightly antiqued finish, with a uniform spirit varnish of a transparent brown color over a golden yellow ground, gives the instrument a friendly look. The woods are European spruce for the top and flamed radial cut maple for the one-piece back plate, ribs, and neck. The scroll presents very circular, deeply carved spirals, typically ending with a large eye, and with the characteristically long peg box. This violin bears an original typed label, which is quite unusual on Benvenuto's instruments (Benvenuto often signed the backs on the inside with pencil).

Figure 9 is a typical "copy" (or forgery) by Benvenuto Pascoli from the 1930–40 period. Benvenuto made many of such fakes throughout his career. The facsimile label reads:

"Januarius Gagliano Filius Alexandri Fecit Neap 1757." As usual, Benvenuto did not try to faithfully reproduce an original, but rather was more concerned with re-creating a convincing old Italian instrument. For this purpose, he developed a very clever antiquing technique and applied it on generic instruments (clearly based on his own model of preference) but made purposely asymmetrical and worn out. His fakes are a true mosaic of special effects such as scuffs, peeling, dirt and wear patinas, scratches, marks, and even fake cracks in strategic and well-visible places.

This instrument (Fig. 10) made in 1948 represents the return of Guido to violin making after several years dedicated to other activities. We can see in this instrument a set of important modifications in relation to the work of the previous decade. From the outline to the reddish varnish (clearly influenced by Lo Turco, who eventually became Guido's close friend), to the treatment of the arching, everything seems to



Figure 8. Benvenuto Pascoli, violin (São Paulo, 1930) (Private Archives, Rafael Sando).



Figure 9. Benvenuto Pascoli, violin (São Paulo, ca. 1935–40) (Private Archives, Rafael Sando).



Figure 10. Guido Pascoli, violin (Rio de Janeiro, 1948) (Private Archives, Rafael Sando).

indicate an evolution toward a new style. The model is personal and quite different from that of the 1930s. This instrument is slightly shorter (355 mm) and has more “Stradivarian” proportions. The edge work is also very distinctive, with a broader, well-defined channel merging into the arching in Cremonese style. The original printed label states that the top was made from old spruce salvaged from the demolition of the *Theatro Lyrico*.

Although keeping with the essential structure of the classical violin, Guido modified the outline of the resonance box, altering the curvature of the upper bouts, supposedly to facilitate the access of the violinist’s left hand to the high positions

of the instrument. To preserve the proportions of the middle part of the instrument, a “break” was introduced in the classical curve. The resulting reduction in volume is compensated by augmenting the width of the lower part, and thus another “break” is added, echoing the one in the upper bout. The *Marajoara* instruments (Fig. 11) preserve the characteristic timbre of violin family and the diapason. Guido also modified the F-holes and squared the scroll to match the instrument’s lines. From the inside (plate graduations and bass bar shape included), the *Marajoara* has a completely conventional construction, what suggests that Pascoli’s goal was to incorporate new visual elements to the design of the classical violin rather



Figure 11. Guido Pascoli, violin *Marajoara* (São Paulo, 1958) (Private Archives, Rafael Sando).

than revolutionize it acoustically. In the year of 1958, the master built at least four *Marajoara* violins, all with excellent European woods and very fine workmanship.

The *Brasiliano* model (Fig. 12) is basically a re-reading of the *Marajoara* model. The viola pictured here, made in Rio de Janeiro in 1966, is a large instrument, although the neck and the



Figure 12. Guido Pascoli, viola Brasiliano (Rio de Janeiro, 1966) (Private Archives, Rafael Sando).



Figure 13. Luiz Bellini, violin (São Paulo, 1958) (Private Archives, Rafael Sando).

stop are those of a conventional 42-cm viola. For this particular instrument, Guido used North American wood (Big Leaf Maple) for the back,

sides, and neck, with an impressive visual result. The top also appears to be made of North American wood (possibly Engelmann Spruce).



Figure 14. Guido Pascoli, violin (São Paulo, 1961) (Private Archives, Rafael Sando).



Figure 15. Guido Pascoli, Cello Bow (Rio de Janeiro, c. 1970) (Private Archives, Rafael Sando).

This violin (Fig. 13), one of about 20 instruments made by Bellini under Guido's guidance, is a half-size violin. Pascoli recognized the importance of the production of musical instruments for children and encouraged his students to build them. For this particular violin, spruce or pine was used for the top, and deeply flamed, radial cut Perobinha-do-campo (*Acosmium dasycarpum*) for the back, ribs, and neck. Also, Jacarandá-da-baía (*Dalbergia Nigra*) is used for the fingerboard, pegs, tailpiece, and chinrest (all these handmade by Bellini).

This violin (Fig. 14) is representative of the work of Guido Pascoli at the height of his skills. Based on a design developed a decade earlier, the instrument displays well the results of a slow and organic process of evolution, during which Guido sought not only a more elegant outline but also an acoustically efficient instrument to meet the needs of the most demanding musicians. The gorgeous golden yellow varnish and the perfectly clean workmanship certainly are among the features that so favorably impressed the jurors in Liège the previous year.

Guido Pascoli was (and still is) particularly known by the high quality of his bow making.

This cello bow (Fig. 15) is in its fully original condition, with a delicate round stick made of top-quality Pernambuco. The silver mounted frog is made of Brazilian Pau-ferro (*Machaerium Scleroxylon*). The bow is quite light, weighing only 74.4 g. The iron mark reads: G. PASCOLI-RIO.

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NOTES

1. The only academic work devoted to this topic is the MA thesis of Maria da Gloria Leitao Venceslau: *I Fratelli Pascoli, liuteria ed immigrazione in Brasile* (The Pascoli Brothers, violin making and Immigration in Brazil), Master's thesis, Università degli Studi di Pavia, 2011. Information on Brazilian violinmakers can also be found in dictionaries. See René Vannes: *Dictionnaire Universel des Luthiers* (Bruxelles: Les Amis de la Musique, 1951).

2. M. Schmitz and I. Guimarães, Footsteps of the past largely neglected until now, the violin making tradition of Brazil is closely tied to the history of Italian immigration to the country, *Strad*, Vol. 128, No. 1531, pp. 50–54 (2017).

3. There are striking testimonies such as the video produced by Glauca Brum and Sabrina Lima, which reports an interview with the Brazilian violinmaker Newton Rolla. See, <https://bit.ly/2Er5h02>.

4. This collaboration began in 2009 during the realization of the MA thesis of one of the two.

5. Benvenuto Pascoli is cited by Vannes, as well as by Jalovec in their dictionaries. See, René Vannes, *Dictionnaire Universel des Luthiers*, p. 269; Karel, Jalovec, *Encyclopedia of Violin Makers* (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1968), p. 140.

6. The news reported here derive from newspaper articles, public and private archival material, transcriptions of interviews made by one of the two authors to makers and musicians in New York, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro.

7. A. Trento, Italiani a Sao Paulo tra lavoro e tempo libero, 1880–1940, *Navegar*, Vol. 2, p. 11 (2016).

8. Leitao Venceslau, *I Fratelli Pascoli*, p. 51.

9. Makers of other nationalities were present in São Paulo as well, such as Mathis A. Starchenko, an excellent violin and bowmaker born in Latvia and active in Brazil between the late 1930s and early 1940s before settling in the United States, where he was known as Matthew Starr. Among the other centers, we can mention Rio Grande do Sul, where Roque Guaragna, Américo La Porta, Reinaldo Hahn and others worked.

10. The Giannini, Di Giorgio, and Del Vecchio companies are still in business. On Di Giorgio's instruments and life see: Humberto Werneck, *Violões Di Giorgio - Os Primeiros Cem Anos* (São Paulo: Di Giorgio, 2008).

11. Leitao Venceslau, *I Fratelli Pascoli*, pp. 52–56.

12. Trento, Italiani a Sao Paulo, p. 17.

13. Virgínia de Almeida Bessa, A cena musical paulistana: teatro musicado e canção popular na cidade de São Paulo (1914–1934), PhD dissertation, Universidade de São Paulo (2012), pp. 44–70.

14. Virgínia de Almeida Bessa, A cena musical paulistana, pp. 139–140.

15. Virgínia de Almeida Bessa, A cena musical paulistana, p. 147.

16. Angelo Trento, Italiani a Sao Paulo, p. 16.

17. He won a silver medal at the National Exhibition of 1908 in the category *Arte Musical*. Moreover, he is cited in Lutegendorf's Dictionary. See Willibald Leo Von Lutegendorf, *Die Geigen, und Lautenmacher* (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Verlags, 1922), p. 242.

18. In 1927, his shop was located in the northern part of São Paulo in Rua da Coroa, whereas in 1935, it was in Rua Voluntários da Pátria. In this period, Incisi's workshop appears under the name João Incisi, probably a son. See, *Almanak Leimmert* (1927), p. 386; *Almanak Leimmert* (1935), p. 1450.

19. Incisi used a procedure similar to that of Tranquillo Giannini for the shaping of the top and back plates of his stringed instruments—their bending by the use of heat. We suppose from the surviving items that Tranquillo Giannini and Ivo Incisi may have collaborated in the production of stringed instruments.

20. *Almanak Leimmert* (1935), p. 1450.

21. Leitao Venceslau, *I Fratelli Pascoli*, p. 71.

22. This violinmaker takes part in the National Exhibition of 1908. There are a few surviving instruments by him.

23. *Almanak Leimmert* (1901), p. 1828.

24. See for instance: *Diario Popular*, September 1, 1903, p. 46.

25. About Carlo Giudici see: René Vannes, *Dictionnaire Universel des Luthiers*, p. 129.

26. Lucia Spini and her three children Serafina, Settimo and Angela immigrated to Brazil from the countryside of Cremona and arrived in São Paulo on the November 11, 1890. Pietro Pascoli, together with his family, arrived in São Paulo on the September 24, 1892. See, Leitao Venceslau, *I Fratelli Pascoli*, pp. 65–66.

27. Matteo Sampilippo, *Gli Italiani in Brasile* (Viterbo: Sette città, 2003), p. 14.

28. Virgínia de Almeida Bessa, *A cena musical paulistana*, p. 145.

29. See, Ciléo Gropillo, Os instrumentos de Guido Pascoli, *Jornal do Brasil*, September 7, 1977, pp. 8–10.

30. It should be remembered that most of the instruments belonging to these early Italian immigrants were usually of lesser quality, given

that they were often humble amateur musicians. Top-quality stringed instruments began to arrive in Brazil in the late 1930s, following another category of immigrants, those who escaped the war and the Fascist and Nazi persecutions.

31. *Jornal do Brasil*, April 3, 1984, p. 33.

32. Guido recounts this first period of work in the unpublished interview commissioned by Funarte in 1982. See, Leitao Venceslau, *I Fratelli Pascoli*, p. 71.

33. This news is reported by Christina Autran in an article entitled: *Como fazer violino* published in *Correio Brasiliense*, March 20, 1969. See also René Vannes, *Dictionnaire Universel des Luthiers*, p. 304.

34. *Almanak Leimmert* 1927, p. 386.

35. *Jornal Do Commercio*, June 3, 1928, p. 16.

36. *Correio da Manhã*, December 18, 1928, p. 13

37. *O Jornal*, May 1, 1954, p. 10.

38. The treatise, never published, is kept in the private archive of the family in São Paulo. The text was analyzed by Leitao Venceslau in her thesis, with permission. See, Leitao Venceslau, *I Fratelli Pascoli*, pp. 76–106.

39. Benvenuto died prematurely in the early fifties, leaving the São Paulo scenario to another Italian violinmaker, Enzo Bertelli (who started as a luthier in Verona, Italy, and immigrated in 1950) and to his brother Guido, who returned to the city around 1955. Moreover, other Italian luthiers were present there at the time, such as Marcello Martinenghi, who arrived in Brazil in 1950 and Raffaele Leone, active in São Paulo since the early 1920s.

40. Several members of the Orchestra of the Teatro Municipal de São Paulo played on Benvenuto's instruments exclusively, among them Clemente Capella (1916–2008), concertmaster for about 40 years.

41. *Marajoara* pottery was the work of early indigenous peoples of the Island of Marajó, which is located in the northern region of Pará. The most studied phase refers to the period between 400 and 1400 d.c.

42. Patricia Bueno Godoy, *A arte decorativa brasileira inspirada na cerâmica Marajoara* (Campinas: II Encontro de História da Arte IFCH - Unicamp, 2006), 268–269.

43. Paulo Salgado, *De liuteria e liuteiros, Acontecem*, October 1963, pp. 26–27.

44. Interview with Orlando Ramos, Rio de Janeiro July 9, 2009. See, Leitao Venceslau, *I Fratelli Pascoli*, 118.

45. Vivian Wyler, *O Milagre de Transformar a Madeira em Instrumento*, *Jornal do Brasil Caderno B*, April 3, 1984, p. 7.

46. Unpublished interview commissioned by Funarte in 1982. See, Leitao Venceslau, *I Fratelli Pascoli*, p. 119.

47. After seeing a violin made by his teacher Vincenzo Policene, he attempted to make one himself. Policene was an amateur luthier and was also the person who introduced Bellini to Guido Pascoli. See, *Ibid.*

48. On Bellini's visits to the maestro there is an article from 1979 entitled "O som da velha madeira." On these occasions, Bellini used to pass on advanced restoration techniques he had learned in New York. See, Doris Mouly, *O som da velha madeira*, *Domingo*, November 18, 1979, pp. 22–23.

49. See, <https://bit.ly/2RBaOYY>.

50. Pascoli had another gifted student, Francisco Torres, who followed Bellini to the United States and was known in the American environment as Frank Torres. Torres worked in New York and specialized in bow making at the workshop of William Salchow. There, he was able to train his fellow countryman José da Cunha, a well-known Miami-based bowmaker. Returning to Brazil in the early eighties he completely abandoned the craft.

51. Among his first initiatives was a Lutherie Exhibition that took place in Rio in October 1962.

52. Another important facet of Guido's work is bow making. As a matter of fact, he was, along with Vincenzo Lo Turco, the forerunner of fine bow making in Brazil. Guido's bows have always been in high demand in Brazil, and are of a consistently good quality, made with excellent Pernambuco sticks. One might speculate that the pursuing of bow making was also a means of improving income, because making a life with instrument making has always been tricky in Brazil, financially speaking.

53. On his return to Rio in 1962, Guido's workshop occupied several temporary and rather small spaces, first at the Rádio MEC building in Rio de Janeiro and later at the Palácio do Catete, until it was finally installed on the

more spacious premises of *Ginásio Industrial 15 de Novembro* in *Quintino Bocayuva*, suburban Rio.

54. The seventies were a decade of crisis for the orchestras, affected by the lack of available players, especially concerning strings. One of the proposals to change this situation was the mass training of specialized instrumentalists. This reality motivated the collective learning project developed by violinist and teacher Alberto Jaffé and promoted by the Funarte Foundation in collaboration with the *Instituto Nacional de Musica Villa-Lobos* of the city of Rio de Janeiro, which became known as Projeto

Espiral. See, Leitao Venceslau, *I Fratelli Pascoli*, 125–130.

55. Funarte is an organ of the Brazilian Ministry of Culture. It was created in 1975 and up till now it is responsible for promoting cultural and artistic activities in the country. Funabem, created in 1964, was a national foundation for the protection of endangered children.

56. Luciano Rolla was the only apprentice and successor of Vincenzo Lo Turco. One of the authors was able to interview Luciano Rolla's son, Newton Rolla. See interview with Newton Rolla, Rio de Janeiro July 9, 2009, in Leitao Venceslau, *I Fratelli Pascoli*, 137.