

TarisiO  
Fine Instruments & Bows



*The 'Lady Blunt'*  
Stradivarius of 1721

All proceeds to benefit The Nippon Foundation's  
Northeastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Relief Fund

20 JUNE 2011 LONDON AUCTION

Fine Instruments & Bows

[www.tarisio.com](http://www.tarisio.com)





2 May 2011

Confronted by the tragic events of the 11 March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and resulting nuclear crisis, The Nippon Music Foundation has made an extraordinary offer to assist in the recovery efforts of their native Japan. In a gesture of profound generosity they have decided to sell what is considered to be the finest violin of their collection, the 'Lady Blunt' Stradivarius of 1721, and have pledged the entire proceeds of the sale to the Northeastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Relief Fund.

We are honoured to present the 'Lady Blunt' for sale on behalf of The Nippon Music Foundation.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JP'.

Jason Price  
Director







## Provenance

Nippon Music Foundation, Japan <i>W.E. Hill</i>	2008–Present
Private Owner <i>W.E. Hill</i>	2000–2008
Robin Loh, Singapore <i>Sotheby's</i>	1971–2000
Sam Bloomfield, United States <i>W.E. Hill &amp; Sons</i>	1959–1971
Henry Werro, Switzerland <i>Robert A. Bower</i>	1941–1959
W.E. Hill & Sons <i>Richard Bennett</i>	192?–1941
Richard Bennett, England <i>W.E. Hill &amp; Sons</i>	1915–192?
J. E. Street, England <i>W.E. Hill &amp; Sons</i>	1901–1913
Baron Johann Knoop, England <i>W.E. Hill &amp; Sons</i>	1896–1900
Charles Edler, Germany <i>Edward Withers &amp; Emil Hamma</i>	1895–1896
Lady Anne Blunt, England <i>Jean Baptiste Vuillaume</i>	1864–1895
Jean Baptiste Vuillaume, France <i>from Spain</i>	?–1864



## *The 'Lady Blunt'* Stradivarius of 1721

*Sale date: 20 June 2011*

A FINE AND IMPORTANT ITALIAN VIOLIN  
BY ANTONIO STRADIVARI, CREMONA, 1721

Labelled, 'Antonius Stradivarius faciebat  
Cremonensis Anno 1721.'

Bearing its original neck, re-angled at the heel.  
Accompanied by its original bass-bar and fingerboard  
and a presentation case from W.E. Hill & Sons. The  
ornamented pegs and tailpiece by Jean Baptiste  
Vuillaume. Inscribed 'PG' to the inside of the pegbox.

LOB 35.5 cm







The bass-side lower back corner.



The bridge, bearing the stamp of W.E. Hill & Sons, London.

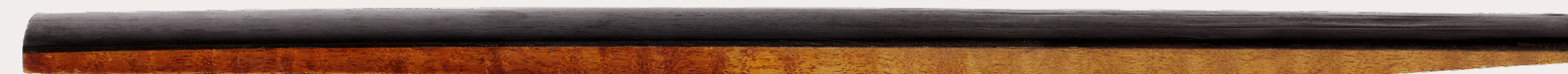


The eye of the scroll, with blackened chamfers.



The 'Lady Blunt' bears no neck mortise and the top edge remains uncut. The neck is original and has been re-angled at the heel by J.B. Vuillaume during the "modernization" of the violin sometime around 1864. These features are evidence of careful conservation.

The side view of the original fingerboard. (actual size)



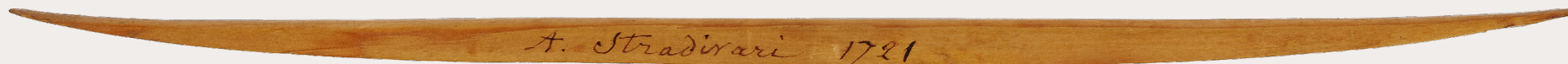
The underside of the original Stradivari fingerboard. The red varnish puddled in the under-edges confirms that the violin was varnished with the fingerboard attached. The writing on the left is that of Alfred E. Hill, the writing on the right, J.B. Vuillaume. (actual size)



The original bass-bar. Removed by Vuillaume. Inscription in the hand of Alfred E. Hill. (actual size)

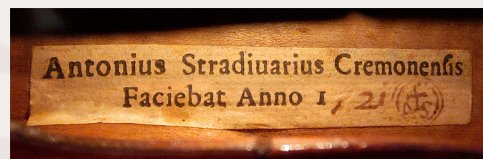


The original bass-bar. Inscription in the hand of J.B. Vuillaume. (actual size)



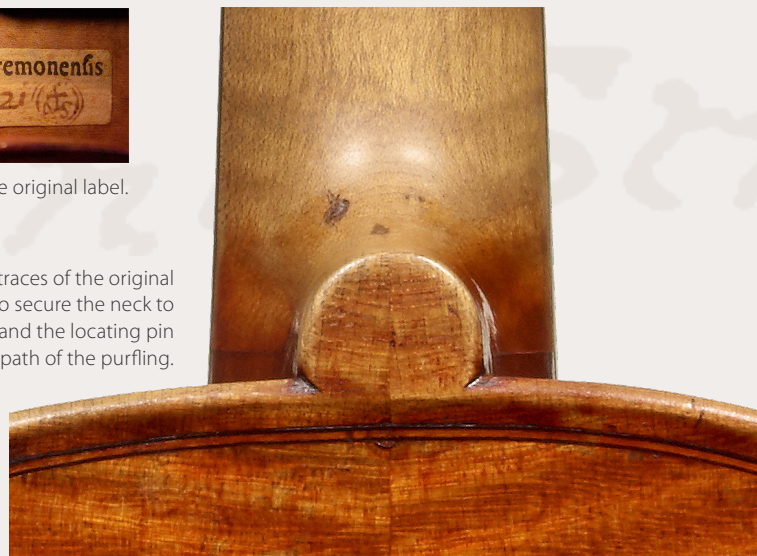
Originally thought to have been 'PS', for 'Paolo Stradivari' and used to indicate the violins he inherited upon his brother Francesco's death, this inscription to the inside of the pegbox is now understood as 'PG', to indicate the form on which the violin was made, the 'PG' form. Most other Stradivari violins have lost this section of the pegbox floor upon the replacement of the original neck, a procedure from which the 'Lady Blunt' has been spared.

The tuning pegs by J.B. Vuillaume.



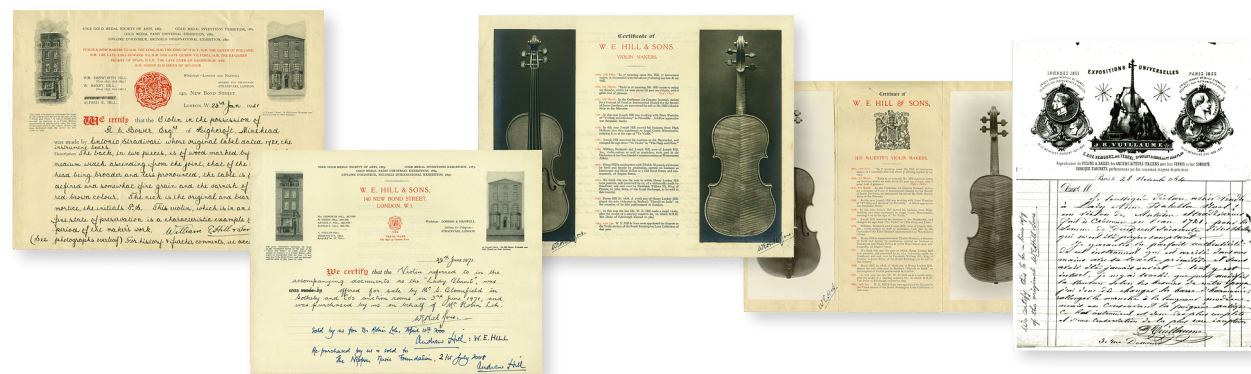
The original label.

The original button, traces of the original iron nails used to secure the neck to the upper block and the locating pin beneath the path of the purfling.



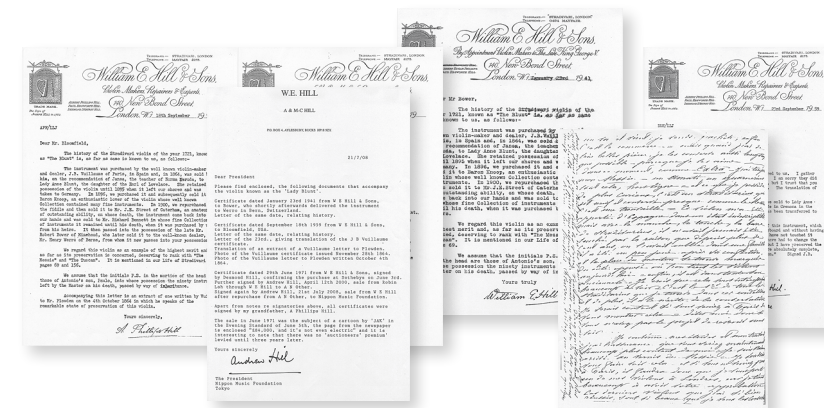
# Certificates

- W.E. Hill & Sons, London (29 June 1971)
- W.E. Hill & Sons, London (18 September 1959)
- W.E. Hill & Sons, London (23 January 1941)
- Jean Baptiste Vuillaume, Paris (28 November 1864), photocopy only

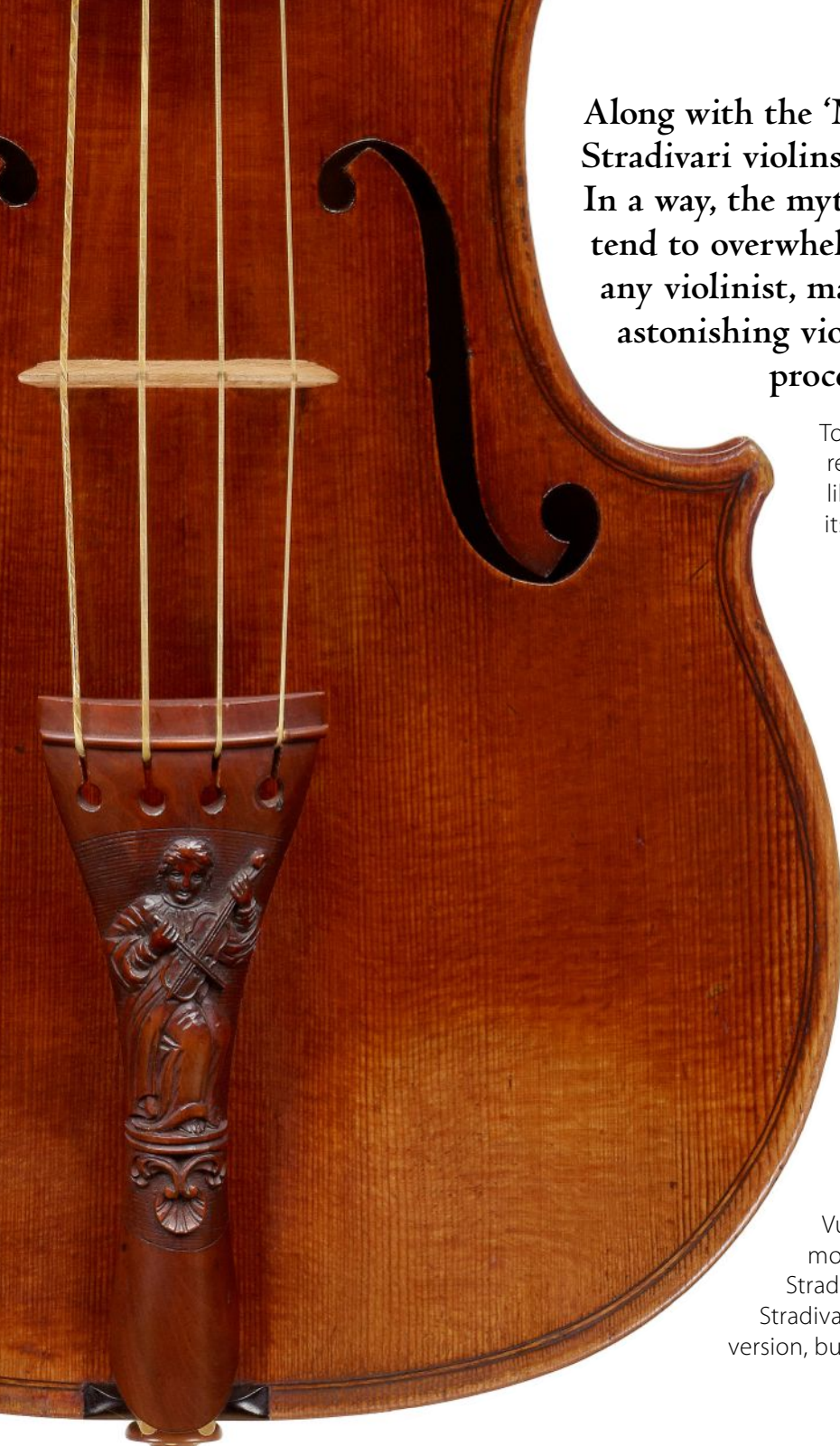


# Correspondence

- W.E. Hill (21 July 2008) to the Nippon Music Foundation from Andrew Hill
- W.E. Hill & Sons, London (23 September 1959) to Samuel Bloomfield from Desmond Hill
- W.E. Hill & Sons, London (18 September 1959) to Samuel Bloomfield from Alfred Hill, with translation extract of a letter from Vuillaume to Charles H.C. Plowden
- W.E. Hill & Sons, London (23 September 1959) to Samuel Bloomfield from Desmond Hill
- W.E. Hill & Sons, London (23 January 1941) to Robert Bower from W.E. Hill & Sons
- Jean Baptiste Vuillaume, Paris (4 October 1864) to Charles H.C. Plowden, photocopy only







**Along with the ‘Messie’ of 1716, the 1721 ‘Lady Blunt’ stands above all other Stradivari violins in terms of its survival in near-perfect, original condition. In a way, the mythology and romantic lore that surrounds these two violins tend to overwhelm the objects themselves. It is, indeed, a rare privilege for any violinist, maker, expert or enthusiast to view and examine such an astonishing violin. At that moment, the words vanish and the violin proceeds to tell its own incredible story.**

To our immense gratitude, the ‘Lady Blunt’ has been cared for by several of the most responsible collectors and experts in history. It is our hope that the next owner will likewise view him or herself as just a caretaker of this precious object for the next stage of its already 290-year-long-journey.

## A LADY IN

The ‘Lady Blunt’ today appears much as it did when it left the famous collection of the Parisian dealer and maker, Jean Baptiste Vuillaume in 1864, and still bears the ornamented pegs and tailpiece made in his workshop. Vuillaume wrote to the collector C.H.C. Plowden in that year,

*... as for myself, I am always on the lookout for fine instruments, they come and they go, that is business but when I possess fine examples I like to keep them as long as possible because I love them. At the present time, as extras, I have the Messie, an Amati, and a Guarnerius. All these are, however, beside the point; the most remarkable that I possess is a Stradivarius that is in new condition almost like the Messie. It is a rare discovery. This violin was brought to me from Spain in an unheard of condition with the neck, fingerboard and bass bar of Stradivari. It had never been opened, the reason being it had reposed, forgotten, in an attic for over 100 years ... (translation)*

Like the ‘Messie’, the ‘Lady Blunt’ has had its original neck extended at the heel by Vuillaume, who was careful to leave the top untouched without mortising the edge as is more common but also more destructive to the original. Vuillaume carefully retained the Stradivari fingerboard, which has remained with the violin and shows unworn deposits of Stradivari varnish collected on its edges. He also replaced the bass-bar with a longer, modern version, but retained the original, which also remains with the violin. Like the ‘Messie’, the edges,

corners and channelling of the ‘Lady Blunt’ allow us to observe the maker’s tool artifacts unaltered by any wear. Both violins have an almost unworn, full and magnificent varnish that looks as if it could have been brushed on 50 years ago.

Inside the pegbox, at the base of the mortise, is the maker’s inscription ‘PG’ which indicates the violin was built on the ‘PG’ form. In the past, this inscription has been thought to be the initials of Paolo Stradivari but more recent scholars have demonstrated otherwise. The handwriting and letter form of the ‘PG’ in the pegbox of the ‘Lady Blunt’ exactly match the inscription on the ‘PG’ Stradivari form exhibited

## WAITING

By Christopher Reuning

in the Museo Stradivariano in Cremona. The ‘PG’ (MS21) along with the ‘G’ (MS49) were the largest two violin forms Stradivari used during his mature years. The violins built on these forms are universally considered the most desirable.

Of course, Stradivari’s violins have gained their fame not just for their appearance, but especially for their unparalleled tonal merits. Very little has been written about the sound of the ‘Lady Blunt’, but this is not surprising as it is one of the few Stradivaris which, thankfully, has not been put to regular use. The violin retains its 19th-century set-up and even the bridge remains from W.E. Hill & Sons, who have been most closely associated with the violin since they first purchased it in 1896.

We are fortunate that the ‘Lady Blunt’ has experienced few of the deleterious effects of constant playing that most 18th-century violins have suffered. Perspiration, wear, accidents, and

unscrupulous repairs – even the most careful of musicians will leave his or her mark on a violin over the years. It is common knowledge that violins sound at their best when they are played regularly, but the notion that they will spoil when they are unplayed is fortunately a myth. We are indeed lucky that the ‘Lady Blunt’ has been so well preserved and retains its full acoustic potential for future generations.

The known history of the ‘Lady Blunt’ continued with its sale by Vuillaume on the recommendation of Leopold Jansa to his student, the Lady Anne Blunt, daughter of the Earl of Lovelace and granddaughter of Lord Byron. Lady Blunt treasured her violin for over 30 years and sold it finally through Emil Hamma to the German dealer Edler in 1895 just prior to his death. It was purchased by W.E. Hill & Sons the following year and sold immediately to their most important client, the collector Baron Johann Knoop. Arthur Hill wrote in his diary at that time,

*Baron Knoop has purchased from us the Strad violin that reminds us so much of the ‘Messie’, as the varnish is of similar colour. It is in a very fine state, and for years we have cast longing eyes upon it. It is dated 1721, and Lady Anne Blunt bought it off Vuillaume of Paris. We have made drawings of the original fingerboard and bar of the violin, which are fortunately preserved for our Strad book.*

Knoop parted with the violin in 1900 and shortly thereafter

it was sold by Hills to Mr. J.E. Street of Caterham, a celebrated amateur violinist and underwriter of Lloyds. Street purchased the violin for his son Edmund, who was a promising young violinist. The younger Street tragically died in the First World War and thereafter the violin was sold again by Hills in 1915 to the most important collector of his time, Richard Bennett. On Bennett’s death in 1930 the violin was purchased by Hills and remained in their collection until 1941 when they sold it through the dealer Robert Bower to the Swiss dealer and collector Henry Werro, in whose possession it remained for nearly 20 years. Werro produced a small monograph on the violin of which only 200 copies were published. It was next sold in 1959, again by Hills, to the noted American collector Sam Bloomfield of California, who later offered it in 1971 at Sotheby’s auction. It sold then for the record price of £84,500.00 (\$200,000 at the time) to Hills on behalf of Robin Loh, the collector of Singapore. Loh lent the violin to the 1987 Stradivari exhibition in Cremona organized by Charles Beare and kept the violin until 2000, when it was sold by Andrew Hill to a private collector. It was more recently sold to the current owners again by their advisor, Andrew Hill.



The accompanying presentation case by W.E. Hill & Sons, London.



# About The Nippon Foundation

## The Nippon Foundation

[www.nippon-foundation.or.jp](http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp)

The Nippon Foundation was established in 1962 as a non-profit philanthropic organization, active both in Japan and abroad. Since the beginning, its efforts to bolster the domestic development of the island nation of Japan have focused largely on the maritime and shipping fields. As the years have gone by, it has expanded its activities to include such fields as education, social welfare and public health, both within Japan and in more than a hundred countries to date.

The Foundation's fundamental aim is the realization of a peaceful and prosperous global society, in which none need struggle to secure their basic human rights. Towards this goal, it is essential on the one hand to respect the different value systems embraced by the world's many cultures, but on the

other to transcend the political, religious, racial and national boundaries that divide the world.

The Foundation works to not be blindly influenced by precedent, but rather proactively seek out alternative solutions to the world's problems,

enacting them expediently. It feels a strong sense of responsibility and mission in working together with the people of the world. For the sake of humankind and the world in general, the Foundation brings together the world's wisdom, using it to transform society.

“The World is one family; all mankind are brothers and sisters.”  
- Ryoichi Sasakawa,  
Founder of The Nippon Foundation



The Nippon Foundation

## The Nippon Music Foundation

[www.nmf.or.jp](http://www.nmf.or.jp)

The Nippon Music Foundation strives to make global contributions through music, the universal language for all people. Established in March 1974 to enhance music culture both domestically and internationally, it acts as a custodian of some of the world's top-quality stringed instruments such as those made by Antonio Stradivari and Giuseppe Guarneri 'del Gesù'. It currently owns 21 instruments (19 Stradivari and two Guarneri 'del Gesù') and one of its main objectives today is to make both short and long-term loans of these exquisite instruments at no charge to world-renowned musicians as well as promising young players, regardless of nationality.

The Foundation is committed to preserving these stringed instrument masterpieces, regarded as cultural assets of the world, so that they can be enjoyed by future generations. It organizes benefit concerts worldwide, with musicians playing more than ten Stradivari instruments on loan from the Foundation. These concerts provide opportunities for classical music lovers to fully enjoy the timbre of these superb instruments. Full proceeds are donated to the local organizations to be used for projects to promote classical music.

The Foundation also provides grants to support a variety of classical music projects including concerts, workshops and seminars organized by other organizations. The Foundation's activities are made possible by the generous support of The Nippon Foundation.

“Each of the instruments in our collection is very dear to us. However, the extent of the devastation facing Japan is very serious and we feel that everyone and every organization should make some sacrifice for those affected by this tragedy.”

- Kazuko Shiomi,  
President of The Nippon  
Music Foundation

日本音楽財団  
NIPPON MUSIC FOUNDATION

# Make Your Contribution

## A Message from The Nippon Foundation

[www.nippon-foundation.or.jp](http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp)

The Nippon Foundation is urgently requesting donations to help the victims of the earthquake and tsunami that struck Northeastern Japan on 11 March 2011. The damage has been devastating. Estimates already place the dead and missing above 25,000 and those rendered homeless number in the hundreds of thousands.

The Nippon Foundation's Northeastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Relief Fund aims to provide both immediate and medium-to-long-term support to ensure a full recovery to the affected areas.

Historically, The Nippon Foundation has financed its outreach operations using only proprietary funds, but given the extensiveness of the current disaster, the Foundation is seeking outside donations.

Three compelling reasons to support The Nippon Foundation's Northeastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Relief Fund:

### (1) Full Accountability and Transparency

The Nippon Foundation has pledged to make regular public reports on their website with full accountability of how the fund is being spent.

### (2) 100% of Donations to be Spent on Aid

All administrative costs and staffing are provided by The Nippon Foundation to allow 100% of donations to be spent directly on aid to those affected by this tragedy.

### (3) Experience and a Network of Expert Partners

The Nippon Foundation has had extensive experience working with local partners to provide support in previous disaster areas such as the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995, and more recently the Mid Niigata Earthquake and the Noto Peninsula Earthquake. By working with qualified NPO partners, many of whom have received grants from The Nippon Foundation over the past 20 years, The Nippon Foundation can quickly mobilize volunteers and provide assistance to those most in need.

The headquarters for the Northeastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Relief Fund is located within The Nippon Foundation building itself and currently there are five satellite support centres in the Tohoku area to coordinate volunteers, supplies and operations.

The immediate goals are to deliver food, water and other aid supplies to those affected by the disaster. Medical supplies are being sourced and a wide range of specialists including doctors, nurses, psychotherapists and language interpreters are being assembled to support the people of the disaster-stricken areas. The medium-to-long-term plans will focus particularly on children, the disabled, the elderly, immigrants and others whose particular needs are often neglected in difficult circumstances.

The total donated to this fund as of 21 April 2011 is approximately \$16 million. Your support and generous donations are gratefully appreciated.

Please visit The Nippon Foundation's website and follow the link to donate.

## Literature

- Beare, Charles, *Antonio Stradivari: The Cremona Exhibition of 1987*, 1993
- Beare, Charles, *Capolavori di Antonio Stradivari*, 1987
- Ingles, Tim, *Sotheby's, Four Centuries of Violin Making*, 2006
- Doring, Ernest, *How Many Strads? Our Heritage from the Master*, 1945
- Doring, Ernest, *Violins and Violinists*, Sept/Oct 1950
- Gallay, Jules; *Les Instruments des Ecoles Italiennes*, 1872
- Gand, Charles Eugene, *Stradivarius - Guarnerius del Gesù*, 1870
- Goodkind, Herbert K., *The Violin Iconography of Antonio Stradivari*, 1972
- Henley, William, *Antonio Stradivari and His Instruments*, 1961
- Hill, W.E. & Sons, *Antonio Stradivari: His Life and Work (1644-1737)*, 1902
- Jalovec, Karel, *Italian Violin Makers*, 1952
- Lewin, Robert, *The Strad*, May 1971
- Millant, Roger, *Vuillaume: His Life and Work*, 1972
- Werro, Henry, 'Lady Blunt' Stradivarius-Violine, 1721, 1943



## Recent & Historical Quotes

“We regard this violin as an example of the highest merit and, as far as its preservation is concerned, deserving to rank with the ‘Messie’ and the ‘Tuscan.’”  
- W.E. Hill & Sons, 1941

“A Strad made in 1721 of incomparable beauty and the most remarkable condition. . .”  
- Robert Lewin, *The Strad*, 1971

“If you want to buy the world’s best-preserved Stradivari violin, this is your opportunity.”  
- Peter Biddulph, 2011

“Rarely does a Stradivarius of this quality in such pristine condition and with such significant historical provenance come up for sale. It still shows the tool-marks and brushstrokes of Stradivari. The ‘Lady Blunt’ is perhaps the best-preserved Stradivarius to be offered for sale in the past century.”  
- Christopher Reuning, *Reuning & Son Violins*, 2011

“Considered the finest Strad in existence, next to ‘The Messie’.”  
- William Henley, 1961



“This extraordinary violin is in much the same condition as when it left its maker’s hands, and it can be placed alongside the ‘Messie’ of 1716, that is in the Ashmolean museum in Oxford, England.”  
- Andrew Hill, W.E. Hill, 2010

“The freshness of preservation of this violin is outstanding, and it was no great surprise when it fetched a world record price at a Sotheby’s auction sale in 1971. All the details of Stradivari’s immaculate workmanship have remained almost unbelievably sharp, indeed sharper than most makers choose to make their new instruments in our own time. There is very little wear to the varnish, and even the original bass-bar and fingerboard are preserved with the violin.”  
- Charles Beare, J. & A. Beare Ltd, 1987

“The ‘Lady Blunt’ of 1721 is indisputably the finest violin ever to appear at auction, and is considered the second best preserved Stradivari, after the ‘Messiab’ of 1716.”  
- Tim Ingles, *Sotheby’s*, 2006

“I, the undersigned, declare that I have sold to Lady Anne Isobella Noël a violin by Antonio Stradivari, made in Cremona in the year 1721, for the sum of £260 sterling. I guarantee the perfect authenticity of this instrument which came into my possession with its original fingerboard and without having been opened, everything about it is intact and I have not touched it except as is required by present day needs. I have had to change the bar and lengthen the neck to modern dimensions, but I have preserved the original neck. This fine instrument is therefore absolutely complete, and in an exceptionally rare state of preservation.”  
- Jean Baptiste Vuillaume, 1864

## Lady Anne Blunt

Grand-daughter of Lord Byron, Lady Anne Blunt (1837–1917) was a colourful member of the British aristocracy, distinguished not only for her stewardship of the pristine Stradivari violin that bears her name, but also for her important work in breeding Arabian horses.



An accomplished violinist, Lady Anne was a pupil of the Czech violinist Leopold Jansa, who encouraged his student’s acquisition of the violin from J.B. Vuillaume in 1864. (Incidentally, Jansa also owned a Stradivarius of the same year, acquired separately.) Lady Anne also had a lifelong passion for horses, which was shared by her husband, the poet Sir Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. In 1882 they bought Sheykh Obeyd, a private estate outside Cairo devoted to horse breeding, and they also established the Crabbet Arabian stud farm in England, which founded a lasting legacy for the breed worldwide.

Lady Anne’s marriage was strained by Blunt’s frequent and open infidelity, and produced only one surviving child, Judith Blunt-Lytton. The couple finally separated in 1906 and Lady Anne spent increasing amounts of time at Sheykh Obeyd. In 1915 she left the Crabbet stud farm to the care of her daughter and lived the remaining years of her life in Egypt. Shortly before her death in 1917 she inherited the title of Baroness Wentworth.

Blunt, Strad



# Viewing, Bidding & Contact

## Public Viewing

19 & 20 June  
Westbury Hotel  
2nd Floor Gallery  
Bond Street  
Mayfair, London

Sunday 11am–7pm  
Monday 10am–5pm

## Private Viewings

Tarisio is pleased to accept inquiries for private viewings in the following cities:

<b>Boston</b>	<b>Chicago</b>
<b>Hong Kong</b>	<b>London</b>
<b>New York</b>	<b>San Francisco</b>
<b>Seoul</b>	<b>Tokyo</b>
<b>Taipei</b>	<b>Zurich</b>
<b>Los Angeles</b>	

## Bidding

Bidding is conducted online at [www.tarisio.com](http://www.tarisio.com). Bidding ends on **20 June 2011**. Phone bidding is encouraged. Special registration to bid on this lot is required 24 hours in advance.

## Contact

Please contact Ethan Ladd at **+1.800.814.4188** or [eladd@tarisio.com](mailto:eladd@tarisio.com) to schedule a private viewing, or for assistance with bidder registration. Prospective bidders only, please.

Tarisio is an internet-based auction house dedicated to fine stringed instruments and bows. Founded in 1999 on the promise of high-quality expertise combined with the efficiency of internet bidding, the firm created an accessible way for players, collectors and members of the trade to buy fine instruments, and it quickly expanded. With offices in New York and London, it now holds up to eight auctions per year and also offers private sales.

*Additional content available at [www.tarisio.com/theladyblunt](http://www.tarisio.com/theladyblunt), including high resolution photographs, full colour certificates, the official press release, and articles by Andrew Hill and Robert Lewin.*



US air travel for the 'Lady Blunt'  
provided by Virgin America





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