



# PANORMO

*The life and work of Vincenzo and his sons*

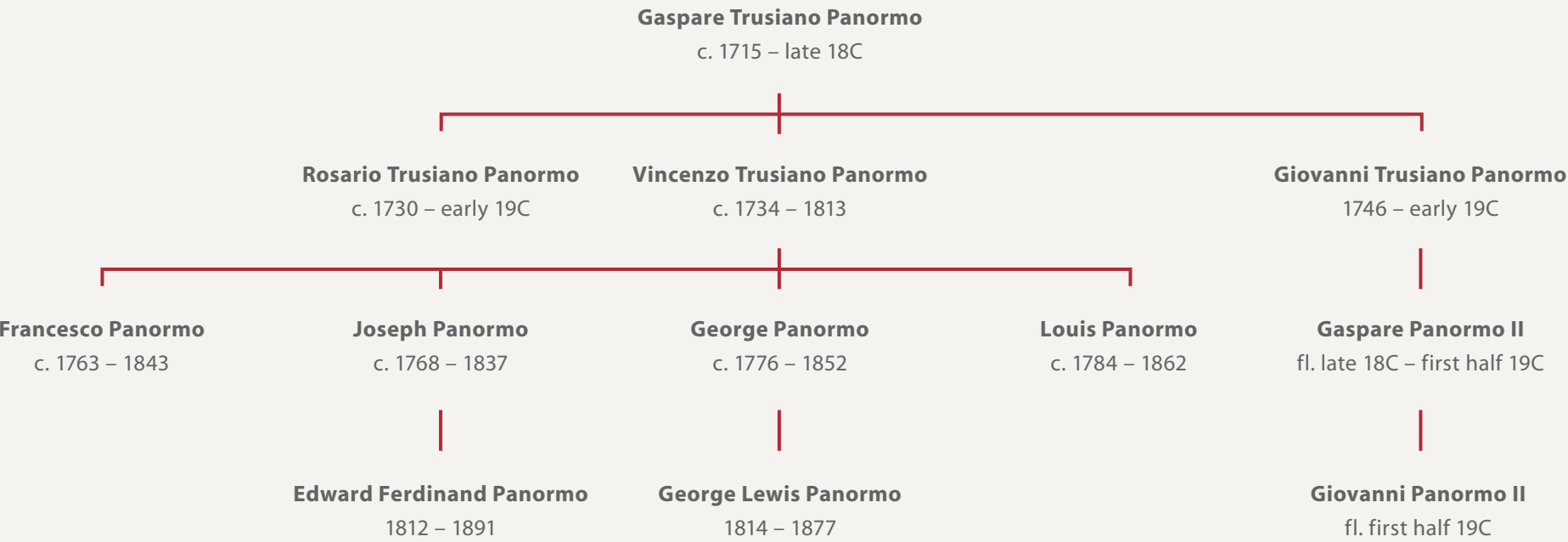
An Exhibition • 23–24 October 2016

Curated by Andrew Fairfax

Tarasio  
FINE INSTRUMENTS & BOWS

# PANORMO

Our new exhibition featuring Vincenzo Panormo sheds some much-needed light on his life, as Jason Price explains



## Introducing Panormo

Few characters in the history of violin making have attracted as much misinformation and mystery as Vincenzo Trusiano Panormo. The major reference books of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries correctly note some of his movements, but they also optimistically imagined him as apprenticed to the Gaglianos, sojourning in Turin and training with the Bergonzis – all things that we know now to be extremely unlikely if not patently untrue. The challenge of unravelling this biographical tangle is complicated by the fact that Panormo has also been widely misattributed. In 2012 when Tarisio acquired the Cozio archive, it contained 219 ‘Panormo’ instruments, a full three-quarters of which had nothing more to do with Panormo than a label and an optimistic certificate. Now the archive contains just 61 authentic examples by this most famous and least understood of English violin makers.

The significance of Panormo and his influence on English violin making is difficult to overstate. In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century

English makers typically followed Stainer and Amati models, with a few notable exceptions including Daniel Parker and John Hare, who made some instruments on a model of a long pattern Stradivari. Panormo’s arrival in England in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century coincided with a growing fascination with Italian musical culture that accompanied the arrival of violin superstars such as Giovanni Battista Viotti, and which began an enduring fascination with the Stradivaris and Guarneris they played. With his Italian origins and his highly successful employment of a Stradivari form, Panormo had the perfect qualifications to become the inspiration for the generations of English makers who followed.

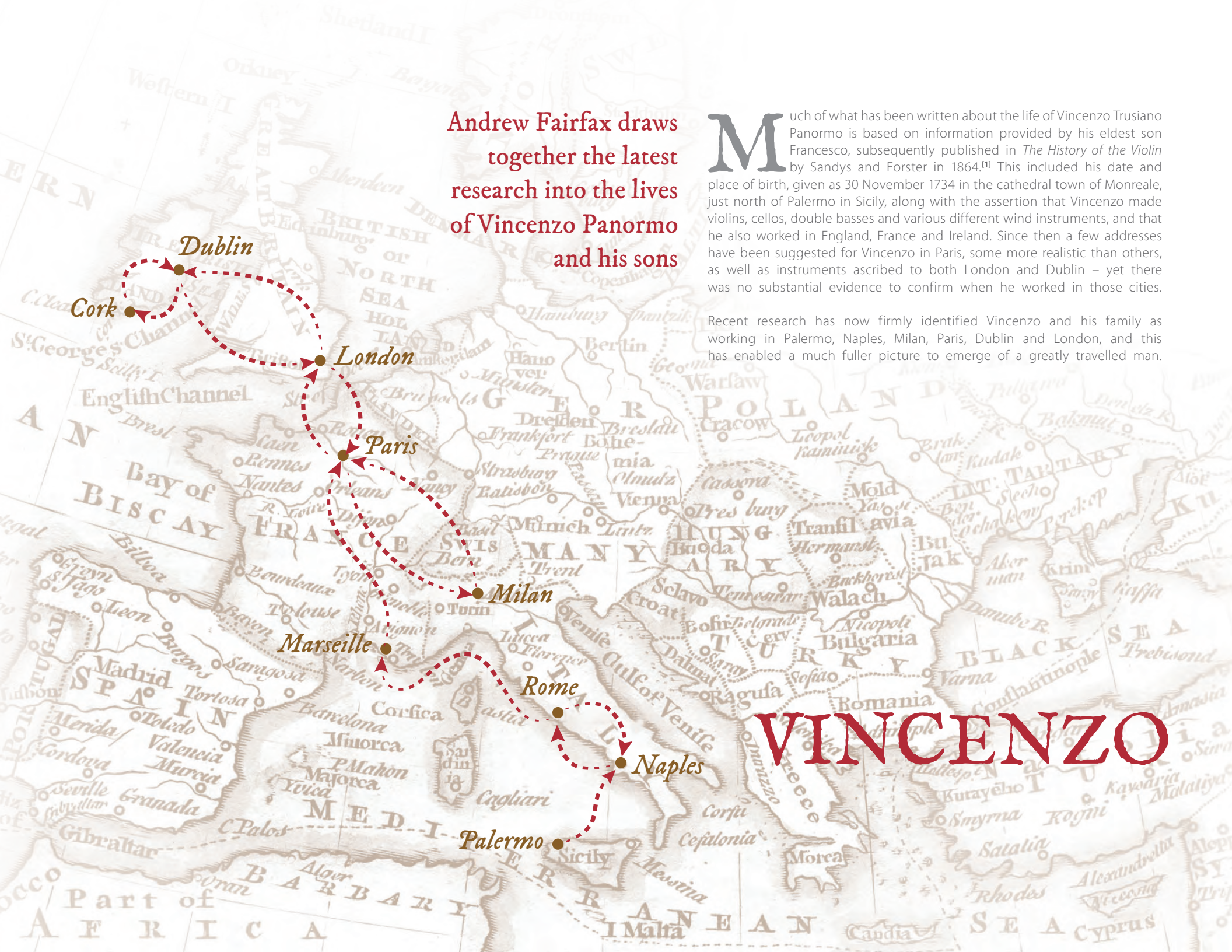
And somewhere along the way violin maker biographers embellished his life with a healthy dose of Romantic myth-making. The truth about Panormo, as Andrew Fairfax makes clear in this excellent new biography, is much more humble. Economic conditions in late-18<sup>th</sup>-century Italy made life

difficult for violin makers. In fact only Venice and Naples seem to have provided sustainable work at this time, which led many – Guadagnini, Valenzano and Panormo being the most notable examples – to migrate in search of fresh economic opportunities. The eternally restless Panormo made more stops on his journey than most, and in doing so he contributed greatly to the cross-pollination of violin making ideas across Europe.

The driving force behind this exhibition and the brainwork that made it happen are due to the tireless efforts of Andrew Fairfax. Thanks to extensive new research by him and by Giovanni Paolo di Stefano our understanding of Vincenzo Panormo’s life and works has taken an enormous leap forward. We are also very grateful to the owners of these 22 instruments and bows, who have generously made them available to be studied and appreciated. ■

*The typeface used for the Panormo exhibition logo is not derived from a Panormo label. Taking their name from John Fell, a Bishop of Oxford in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Fell Types are digitally reproduced by Igino Marini. [www.iginomarini.com](http://www.iginomarini.com)*





Andrew Fairfax draws  
together the latest  
research into the lives  
of Vincenzo Panormo  
and his sons

Much of what has been written about the life of Vincenzo Trusiano Panormo is based on information provided by his eldest son Francesco, subsequently published in *The History of the Violin* by Sandys and Forster in 1864.<sup>[1]</sup> This included his date and place of birth, given as 30 November 1734 in the cathedral town of Monreale, just north of Palermo in Sicily, along with the assertion that Vincenzo made violins, cellos, double basses and various different wind instruments, and that he also worked in England, France and Ireland. Since then a few addresses have been suggested for Vincenzo in Paris, some more realistic than others, as well as instruments ascribed to both London and Dublin – yet there was no substantial evidence to confirm when he worked in those cities.

Recent research has now firmly identified Vincenzo and his family as working in Palermo, Naples, Milan, Paris, Dublin and London, and this has enabled a much fuller picture to emerge of a greatly travelled man.

# VINCENZO

## Palermo 1734–c. 1759

Extensive research by Giovanni Paolo di Stefano in Sicily has confirmed the origins of the Trusiano family in Palermo as well as their move to Naples, where the family name of Trusiano was supplanted by the now-familiar Panormo, the Latin form of Palermo. According to di Stefano, a thriving community of stringed instrument makers had existed in Palermo since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, located near the church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami (St Joseph of the Carpenters) in the old Jewish area, appropriately named Ponticello.<sup>[2]</sup> Although Palermo had close political ties to Naples, after four centuries of Spanish rule that ended only in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Sicily remained essentially Spanish. It was only in the 1760s that the Italian language was adopted for official documents.

The earliest evidence of the Trusiano family's involvement in musical instrument making is a composite double bass labelled 'Gaspar Trusiano/Fecit/Panormi 1743' now in private hands. In 1752 Gaspare Trusiano was described in a legal document as a 'citarraro' (musical instrument maker) and in 1754 the 'maestri' Gaspare, Rosario and Vincenzo Trusiano received a payment of 45 onze from the priest Celestino Maria Grassi on behalf of the monastery of Santissima Trinità in Giuliana. The church registers of San Nicola all'Albergeria show that during this time the Trusiano family lived in the carpenter's neighbourhood known as the Isola di San Gaetano. The family comprised Gaspare, his wife Anna and five children named Vincenzo, Giovanni, Grazia, Margherita and Giuseppe; the eldest son, Rosario, was no longer living with the family. They appear to have moved before 1753 from the nearby Parish of St Cajetan, where both Giovanni and Grazia were baptised in 1746 and 1750.

# TRUSIANO PANORMO

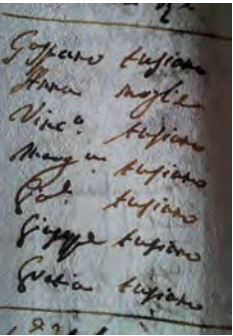
<sup>[1]</sup> 'Europe from the best Authorities, by Tho. Kitchin Geogr' published in *The Modern Gazetteer*... about 1770

## Naples c. 1759–c. 1770

In 1734 Charles of Bourbon was crowned king of Naples and he became king of Sicily the following year, although his coronation proved to be the last time he set foot on the island. Despite his lack of interest in Sicily, Charles transformed Naples into one of the most magnificent capitals in Europe before inheriting the Spanish crown in 1759 and passing control of Naples and Sicily to his son, Ferdinand. Di Stefano believes that it was around this time Gaspare Trusiano, accompanied by Vincenzo and Giovanni, moved to Naples.

The city was by now the fourth largest in Europe with a population of around 325,000 and another 3.5 million in the surrounding countryside – far larger than any other in Italy. Architecture and the arts flourished and after 1700 Naples even began to rival Venice in its enthusiasm for opera.<sup>[3]</sup> This environment would have offered far greater opportunities than Palermo for Gaspare. Rosario, meanwhile, remained in Palermo, where in 1770 he attended the marriage of his daughter to Francesco Arienzo (one of the witnesses being Angelo Bonanno, a musical instrument maker).

According to the research of Francesco Nocerino, the instrument curator at San Sebastiano in Naples, a contract shows that in 1770 Gaspare made two flutes and two oboes for the Royal Conservatoire in Naples.<sup>[4]</sup> The agreement concludes that these instruments would be remade if they proved to be not in tune, perhaps suggesting the maker was a fairly recent arrival in the city and still something of an unknown quantity. Once established, the business seems to have thrived, with Gaspare, Giovanni and Vincenzo Trusiano Panormo all listed among 14 woodwind makers



A church register from San Nicola all'Albergeria in Palermo shows the Trusiano family were living in the carpenter's district, Isola di San Gaetano. Photo courtesy of Giovanni Paolo di Stefano



<sup>[4]</sup> Head of Vincenzo's 1752 double bass, State Conservatory of Music, Palermo. Photo courtesy of Giovanni Paolo di Stefano



“Vincenzo ‘unassisted, from sixteen years of age, took delight in making various descriptions of musical instruments’

in a total of 120 musical instrument makers working in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Naples.<sup>[5]</sup> Surviving instruments bearing brands of ‘Panormo & Figli, Joannes, Giovanni and Vincenzo Panormo’ include flutes, oboes, clarinets and a recorder.<sup>[6]</sup>

The family went on to become the most important woodwind makers in Naples, but Vincenzo would not remain there for long. Giovanni did stay and in 1783, working under his own name (perhaps suggesting that Gaspare had died by this time), he supplied two flutes for the use of the orchestra of the Real Teatro del Fondo Seperazione.<sup>[7]</sup> Giovanni was followed in the family business by his son, Gaspare II, and grandson, Giovanni II, who worked until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A catalogue of the Panormo firm from around 1835, most likely relating to Giovanni II, includes clarinets, flutes, piccolos, oboes and bassoons; also supplied but not necessarily made by Giovanni were horns, trombones and trumpets.<sup>[8]</sup>

It certainly appears Vincenzo also made woodwinds, although little credence has been given to Francesco’s assertion that his father Vincenzo ‘unassisted, from sixteen years of age, took delight in making various descriptions of musical instruments’ and that he ‘excelled in violins, violoncellos, double-basses and hautboys.’ Nevertheless this appears to be supported not only by an early double bass bearing a manuscript label ‘Vincenz\*\*Trusiano/fecitPanormi/1752’ recorded by diStefano (now housed in the Conservatorio Vincenzo Bellini di Palermo) but also by a boxwood flute and oboe, both branded from Naples.

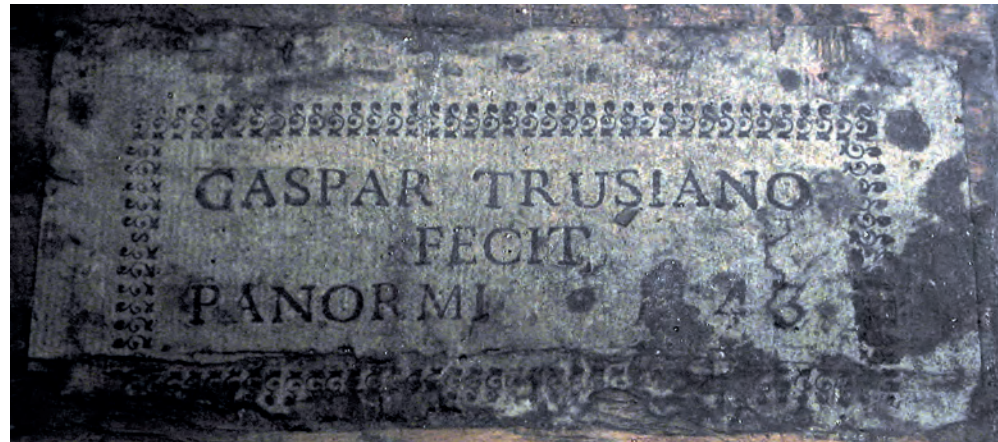
Although as yet we have no knowledge of where Vincenzo learnt violin making, given that we know Gaspare made double basses and probably other instruments too, it is to be expected that Vincenzo’s initial apprenticeship would have been with his father, or perhaps one of the 60 or more instrument makers who worked in Palermo in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During his time in Naples, exposure to instruments of the Gagliano family may also have influenced his later work.<sup>[9]</sup>



Wind instruments showing some of the many different Panormo brands. The family became important woodwind makers in Naples although Vincenzo himself did not remain there for long. Photo by Arnold Ritter, courtesy of Alfredo Bernardini



Labels from double basses by Gaspare and Vincenzo. Although there is no clear evidence of where Vincenzo learnt violin making, it seems likely that his initial apprenticeship would have been with his father. Photos courtesy of Giovanni Paolo di Stefano and Duane Rosengard



## Possible Rome interlude c. 1763

Vincenzo was living in Naples for the birth of his second son Joseph in 1768 according to information provided by Joseph’s son Edward Ferdinand in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>[10]</sup> However, Vincenzo’s eldest son Francesco claimed to have been born in Rome rather than Naples and was listed as such during his lifetime in the *Sainsbury Dictionary of Musicians* in 1824. He gave his age as 55 in the London census of 1821, implying he was born around 1765 or 66, but the age of 80 recorded on his death certificate in 1843 indicates a birth date of 1763. If so, it is plausible that Vincenzo briefly fled Naples as a consequence of the tragic famines that affected several parts of Italy in the early 1760s.

Despite its affluent minority, Naples was largely poor. The city had suffered many famines in the past but in 1763 and 1764 the famine was particularly disastrous, resulting in the deaths of over 200,000 people. Thousands of people began pouring into the city in January 1764 and on 11 February the royal architect Luigi Vanvitelli wrote: ‘Famine worsens. In the provinces they are dying of hunger and come to Naples to find grain that doesn’t exist. May God preserve us from some great trouble.’<sup>[11]</sup> The city soon witnessed looting and rioting before troops were brought in to restore order. It would be no surprise to discover that Vincenzo and his wife, perhaps pregnant with their first child, sought refuge from this disaster in Rome.

## Paris, via Marseille c. 1770–1772

If indeed Vincenzo was in Rome around 1763, he appears to have returned to Naples by the birth of Joseph around 1768. Soon thereafter Vincenzo was on the move again, and we next find evidence of him in France. A boxwood oboe branded ‘Vinc. Panorm: a Marseille’<sup>[12]</sup> makes an interesting pairing with a violin recorded in the Hill Archives of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, labelled ‘Vincenzo Panormo/ fece Marsiglia anno 17\*\*’ and bearing the same brand as the oboe on the upper back (the violin itself has since disappeared). Perhaps this suggests the direction travelled to Paris, Vincenzo’s next destination, was the well-established sea route from Naples, via Livorno and Genoa, to Marseille. Before the advent of railways this journey would have been much easier by sea than over land using the few passable roads.

Vincenzo probably arrived in Paris around 1770 (the date is surmised from Edward Ferdinand’s statement that the family moved from Paris to London in 1772).<sup>[13]</sup> Although some work may have been available, it might not have been easy to find. Foreigners, and sometimes even those born outside the city, were ineligible to join any of the Parisian guilds, which sought to monopolise the production of all goods. Vincenzo would have been forced to work in one of the *lieux privilégiés* (places of privilege) to be found in the suburbs of most

major cities and nominally outside the jurisdiction of the guilds. The best known of these *lieux privilégiés* in Paris was the Faubourg St Antoine, home to hundreds of carpenters and cabinet makers and where Nicolas Pierre Tourte began his career as a carpenter before declaring himself a luthier in 1742. The power of the guilds may also go some way to explain the distinctive type of spruce used in Paris during this period, including on some of Vincenzo’s instruments.<sup>[14]</sup>

Nevertheless, working in these areas was not without its difficulties as the *chambrellans*, or false workers, were considered by many guilds to undermine their monopoly and were often subject to searches by the authorities. One guild repeatedly confiscated the materials of the piano maker Sébastien Erard because he was perceived as a threat to its members who were harpsichord makers.

## London c. 1772–c. 1779

Perhaps under such circumstances Vincenzo experienced hardship as, according to his grandson Edward Ferdinand, he moved his young family to London in 1772. He arrived just as the city was developing into a major musical centre fuelled by growing patronage and the rise of public concerts resulting in abundant opportunities for musicians.





A fine viola bearing a manuscript label dated 1774 confirms Vincenzo's presence in London after 1772 and shows that he was by then a highly proficient maker

“In France the centuries-old structure of labour that may have contributed to Vincenzo's departure was dramatically overturned

Vincenzo was by now a highly proficient maker judging by a fine viola bearing a manuscript label dated London 1774. Further evidence of his move to London is the burial of a child, presumably an unbaptised baby, simply noted as Trusiano Panormo, on 7 November 1774 at St Martin in the Fields. Vincenzo's third son George, who did survive, must have been born two years later in 1776 judging by his age on later census returns and an early label he signed at the age of 14.

Also in 1776, 'Panormo's Music Shop' in Little Newport Street, Soho, is mentioned in the Memoirs of Dr Charles Burney,<sup>[15]</sup> while in the same year the shop was advertised as a source of music in 'The New Morning Post & General Advertiser'.<sup>[16]</sup> Now at the heart of London's Chinatown, Little Newport Street was originally in the parish of St Martin in the Fields before being transferred to St Anne's, Soho. The area was developed towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, after the demolition of Newport House, and attracted a large number of French Huguenots, to the extent that one commentator described how in many areas 'it is an easy matter for a stranger to fancy himself in France'.<sup>[17]</sup> It rapidly became a community of small businesses, described in 1720 as a 'Place of good Trade', with numerous French restaurants and cafes, as well as being the only part of London to produce its own French language newspaper.<sup>[18]</sup>

For Vincenzo, arriving from Paris, this must have seemed a natural district in which to settle, especially as many of his new neighbours would have been craftsmen, in particular goldsmiths and jewellers, as well as a number of painters. An added incentive would have been the growing population now living outside of the old City of London, allowing trade to continue unhindered by the counterparts of the French guilds, the City of London livery companies.

## Paris c. 1779–c. 1790

Although as late as 1782 John Betts was required to seek permission from the City of London authorities to employ two non-freemen, the livery companies were gradually

losing influence, while in France the centuries-old structure of labour that may have contributed to Vincenzo's departure was dramatically overturned. In February 1776 the Controller of General Finances in France, Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, issued his Six Edicts, intended as part of an ambitious programme of social reform and deregulation of working practices that included the abolition of the outdated guild system. This brought about a wave of disorder, Turgot was dismissed by Louis XVI and the guilds were re-established in August the same year.<sup>[19]</sup> However, this was not just a simple reversion of policy: although in Paris this reorganisation proceeded slowly, the power of the guilds was significantly reduced, resulting in far greater accessibility to trades, and with many becoming open to women and outsiders for the first time. Several, including the Company of Musical Instrument Makers, were forced to amalgamate with other guilds.<sup>[20]</sup>

Meanwhile in London the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 brought about a wave of anti-Catholic sentiment that resulted in harassment and attacks on their properties, culminating in the Gordon Riots of 1780. Perhaps this, combined with the relaxation of the guild system in France, was the stimulus for Vincenzo to return to Paris, for on 5 October 1779, along with François Pique, he was received as a *Maître tabletier et luthier* in the *Classe des nouveaux Maîtres* of the *Communauté des Maître et Marchands Tabletiers, Luthiers, Éventaillists de la ville, Vinz & banlieue de Paris*, his address given as rue de l'Arbre-Sec.

Vincenzo's son Francesco may have continued his involvement with the workshop in Paris, but he also began a career as a musician, the first indication of this being his appointment in 1780 as a flautist at the Grand-Danseurs du Roi, the hugely successful theatre run by Jean-Baptiste Nicolet on the boulevard du Temple. This is also the year that Vincenzo's violins bearing the coat of arms of Palermo on the label start to appear, perhaps by now made with the assistance of the 12-year-old Joseph. When Vincenzo had first visited Paris around 1770 the 'vieux Paris' style of making influenced by Amati and Stainer and epitomised by makers such as Louis

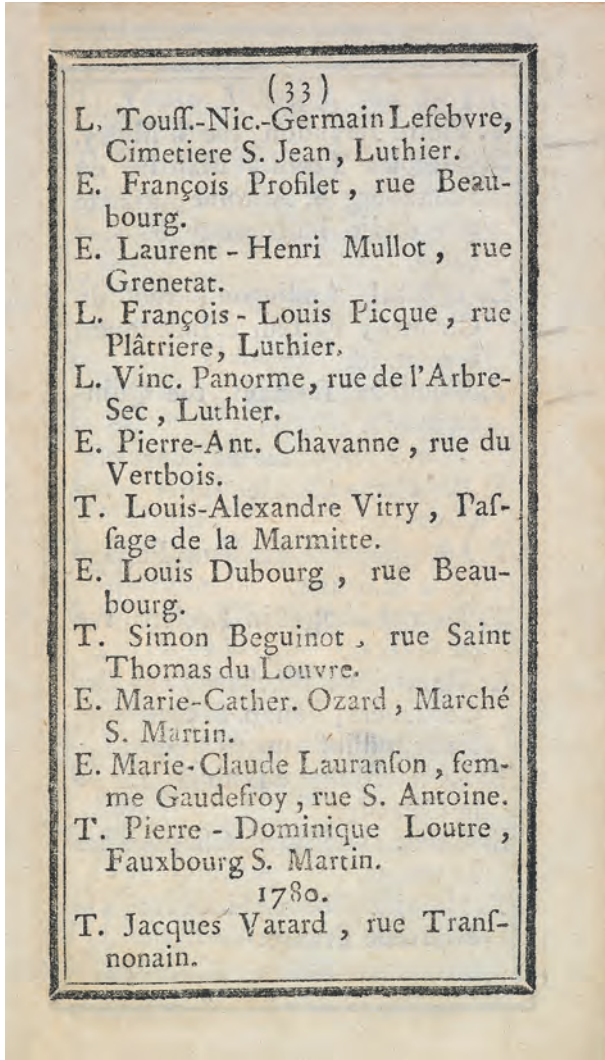


## Makers in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Paris

- 1 Vincenzo Panormo, rue de l'Arbre-Sec, 1779
- 2 Vincenzo Panormo, rue de Chartres, 1789
- 3 Vincenzo Panormo, rue de Rohan, 1790
- 4 Jean-Baptiste Salomon, place de l'Ecole, 1748–1767
- 5 Georges Cousineau, rue des Poulies, 1773–1794
- 6 Andrea Castagneri, rue des Deux Ecus
- 7 Joseph Bassot, rue des Chabonais, c. 1780
- 8 Leopold Renaudin, rue Saint-Honoré – Saint-Denis, 1772–1795

Map of Paris in 1787 by Brian de la Tour  
Data for other Parisian makers courtesy  
Sylvette Milliot, La lutherie parisienne, vol. 2





The Classe des nouveaux Maîtres listing from 1779 shows that Vincenzo had registered as a luthier in Paris. He appears to have continued his involvement with woodwind as well as stringed instruments at this time

Guersan and Jean-Baptiste Salomon still prevailed, but by 1779 the Stradivari model was in the ascendancy and becoming apparent in the work of several makers, including those arriving

in Paris from further afield, such as François Fent, Léopold Renaudin, François Pique – and Vincenzo Panormo himself.

Once in Paris Vincenzo appears to have continued his involvement with woodwind instruments, although whether producing them himself or acting as an agent for the family in Naples is unclear. In March 1781 Longman & Broderip in London announced in an advert that they had imported from Paris ‘a fine toned Serpent and Hautboy by Mons Prudent and Mons Panormo’.<sup>[21]</sup> Prudent Thieriot was apprenticed to the leading French woodwind producer Charles Bizet and became a renowned flute and clarinet maker. The tone of the advertisement implies that customers would be familiar with both brands.

Seven months later 18-year-old Francesco was promoting the Panormo name 400 miles away in Milan. According to di Stefano, in October 1781 Francesco advertised in the *Giornale Enciclopedico di Milano* that ‘he makes oboes, flutes, clarinets and other similar instruments in a definitely new, skilful, way for a reasonable price...’ Francesco may have travelled alone to Milan but the Parisian researcher Catherine Marlat has discovered that in 1782 Vincenzo was registered by his guild as absent, suggesting that he may have accompanied Francesco. Whether this was a failed attempt to establish themselves in Milan or simply a business trip to promote their instruments, the visit appears to have been a brief one as Vincenzo is once again listed, without an address, in the Parisian Almanach Musical of 1783.

On his return Vincenzo may have settled in the rue de Chartres, a short distance west of his former address in the rue de l’Arbre-Sec and close to several established workshops (see map). He is recorded there in the Almanach of 1789 and the following year is registered in the adjacent rue de Rohan. Both these streets had been created in 1780 (making the many labels quoting these streets before this date quite spurious), meeting at their southern end in the Place du Carousel, where the guillotine was placed in August 1792.<sup>[22]</sup> Perhaps significantly in terms of Vincenzo’s choice of address, they were located on the site of the former Quinze Vingts *lieu privilégié* to which Nicolas Léonard Tourte had moved his workshop after the death of his father, Nicolas Pierre, in 1764.

Vincenzo’s youngest son, Louis, was born in Paris in 1784 or 85 and was baptised with the name of the French king, Louis XVI. Curiously, two of his elder brothers also seem to have been named after the ruling monarch: Francesco appears to have been born in Rome, when Frances I was Holy Roman Emperor, while George was almost certainly born in the reign of George

III in the parish of St Martin in the Fields in 1776 (he claimed to have been born in ‘foreign parts’ in the 1841 London census but amended this to ‘native of St Martin’s’ ten years later). Perhaps this was a conscious attempt at integration by Vincenzo?

Francesco, now known as François (he apparently altered his name to fit in with his location), continued his musical career outside the family workshop, publishing six duets for flutes by 1786, but within a few years the family were once again uprooted. Francesco maintained in a later interview <sup>[23]</sup> that his father was doing well in Paris but was forced to flee the city after the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789.

## London c. 1790 – c. 1797

The Panormo family had certainly returned to London by 1791, just as legislation was passed in Paris enabling the authorities to confiscate the possessions of immigrants. Indeed, Vincenzo’s second period in London coincided with the turmoil created by the conflict between Napoleonic France and the other European powers. They were joined by a flood of refugees from France, including the greatest violinist of the age, G.B. Viotti, condemned because of his royalist associations.

A rare manuscript label inside a cello dated 1791, the handwriting of which has been authenticated to be by the same hand as the 1774 viola label, confirms Vincenzo’s return to London. Meanwhile a vox umana branded ‘Vinc/ Panorm’ and ‘Patent’, considered by the Musée de la Musique in Paris to have been made at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, suggests he also continued to make woodwinds.<sup>[24]</sup> In England the vox umana was made as early as the 1730s by Stanesby Jr and became popular in the opera orchestras of Rome and Naples. George Burney must therefore have been familiar with the Panormo name in Naples as well as London after he recorded hearing the vox umana on his visit to Naples 1770, where the foremost woodwind maker was recognised as Vincenzo’s brother Giovanni.<sup>[25]</sup>

Apart from the cello label of 1791 the earliest documentary evidence of the Panormo family’s return to London is the marriage of a woman who may have been a daughter of Vincenzo. Cassandra Palermo (this surname was still occasionally used by the family) was married in St Mary le Bone, the parish bordering both St Giles in the Fields and St Anne’s, Soho, in August 1793. The following year Francesco is recorded as translating Italian comic opera into English and advertising himself as a ‘Teacher of the Italian language’

## “According to Francesco, Vincenzo made instruments from the wood of an old billiard table

at 116 Wardour Street. His first son, Henry, was baptised in the new Catholic chapel in Soho, later known as St Patrick’s – in fact Francesco was actually the only member of Vincenzo’s family to baptise his children in a Catholic church.

## Ireland c. 1797–1800

Vincenzo’s Dublin period is difficult to pin down, but writers have frequently asserted that he met Richard Tobin, a native of Cork who was employed by Thomas Perry in 1789, while working in Dublin and correspondence from Dr W. Graham dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, now housed in the National Archives, Dublin, states that Vincenzo made instruments for the Duke of Leinster while in the city. Vincenzo’s move to Ireland may have resulted from a connection with the Parisian maker Claude Pierray, who is believed to be related to the Perry family through a descendant who moved to Kilkenny. In 1741 Thomas Perrie, or Pierray, opened a violin shop in Dublin which his son, Thomas Perry Jr, continued.

Vincenzo is also listed as working in Cork in John Teahan’s *A List of Irish Makers* published in the Galpin Society Journal in 1963, but no evidence is given as to the source. However, further support is provided by a letter from the granddaughter of the Cork instrument maker Bartholomew Murphy.<sup>[26]</sup> She states that Vincenzo worked in Cork for Murphy for three years from 1797, and that he made many violins, violas and cellos there. This was a time of growing anti-French sentiment in London as fears of a Napoleonic invasion spread, leading to many arrests. Perhaps Vincenzo felt intimidated in the same way as Viotti, who had fled in 1798 to Hamburg.

If Vincenzo was in Ireland at this time he would have experienced further turmoil influenced by the revolution he had so recently escaped from in Paris. In 1791 the Society of United Irishmen dedicated to an independent Ireland was established; war broke out between England and France in February 1793; and as tensions rose France launched a *Expédition d’Irlande* in December 1796, landing 14,000

troops in the south-west in their support. It failed and martial law was established the following year but by mid-1798 rebellion was raging in the south-east of the country. Perhaps a cello recorded in the National Archives, Dublin, bearing a manuscript label stating ‘Vincenzo Panormo/fecit Kilkenny/Irlande, 1799’ charts Vincenzo’s return from Cork to Dublin. Whatever the exact timing, it is in Dublin that, according to Francesco, Vincenzo made instruments from the wood of an old billiard table, resulting in those made from this distinctive wood being ascribed to this period.

It is unclear if Vincenzo’s sons accompanied him to Ireland but the family undoubtedly forged strong ties with Dublin. Francesco was to put down roots there a couple of decades later; Joseph’s son Edward Ferdinand appears to have worked there in 1834; and five years later George’s sister in Dublin complained that some money she had posted to him in Liverpool had not arrived.

## London c. 1800

After the Act of Union between Britain and Ireland at the beginning of 1801, much of the focus of Irish society transferred to London. Many craftsmen also moved to London, by then the largest city in Europe, and it would be no surprise to discover Vincenzo doing the same. Certainly at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Francesco, Joseph and George were all recorded as residents of the parish of St James’s, Piccadilly, and it seems most likely Vincenzo would have been in London with them. On 13 January 1801 George’s marriage to Elizabeth Kemp is recorded at St James’s. By this time Francesco would have been in his mid to late 30s while Vincenzo would have been 66, Joseph about 33, George 24 and Louis 16.

With the exception of Francesco, all the sons had presumably remained active in the family business during the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century but there is evidence that Joseph had gone his own way by 1800, leaving George and Louis as Vincenzo’s main assistants. He may have already been working independently in

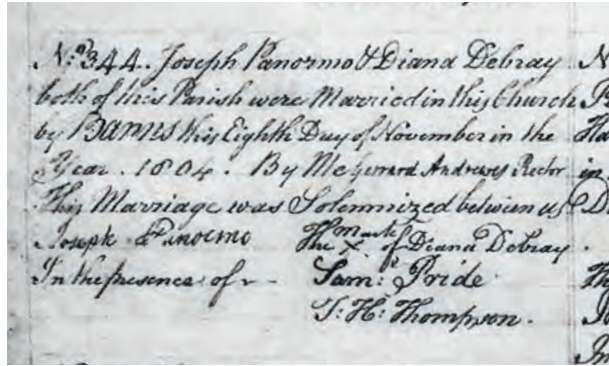
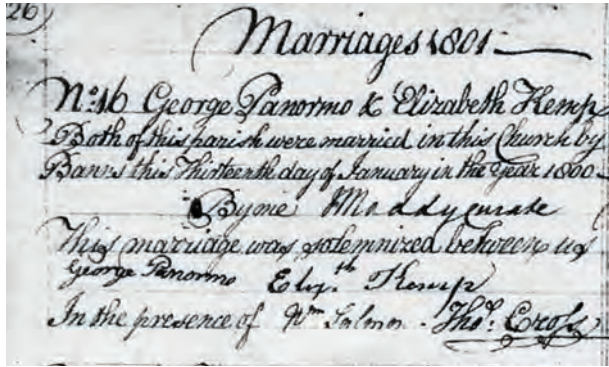


The distinctive wood of this viola by Vincenzo is said to have been taken from an old billiard table in Dublin

New Compton Street, the address given by Sandys and Forster and recorded in a violin dated 1799. On 14 August 1801 Joseph signed a receipt for repairs undertaken for the double bass virtuoso Domenico Dragonetti, then in 1802 he is listed with no reference to other family members in a trade directory at 3 Portland Street, just around the corner from Francesco. On 8 November 1804 Joseph also married in St James’s, his signature matching that sometimes seen inside his violins.

By then George had moved several miles east when on 16 December 1801 his son of the same name was baptised at St Sepulchre, near Newgate. Sadly, the baby George was buried there the following year but intriguingly the parents’ address was given as Leonard Street, Shoreditch, a





The marriage registrations of George (in 1801) and Joseph (in 1804) both at St James's, Piccadilly in London. Joseph's signature matches that found in some of his violins, while his wife, Diana Debray, signed with an X

village only a mile north of John Betts's shop at the Royal Exchange. St Sepulchre is close to Newgate prison where the violin maker Lockey Hill was executed in 1796 for stealing horses.<sup>[27]</sup> His son, Henry Lockey, worked for John Betts in the early 1800s and Henry Lockey's first two children were both baptised at St Leonard's, Shoreditch, just along the road from where George Panormo was living. It has often been stated

that Vincenzo also worked for Betts and if this was indeed the case it might well explain George's move to an area that was a fair distance from the family's traditional stamping ground of Soho. It also seems to confirm that the Panormo family would have known and worked with Hill. A further connection is with the Betts workman William Taylor, often mentioned as an assistant to Vincenzo and whose signature was discovered inside the front of a Panormo double bass.

George remained in Shoreditch for only a few years and in August 1807 his daughter was baptised in St Anne's, Soho, as was Louis, the son of Louis and Anne, in 1809. The area was already something of a European melting pot but was now being settled by thousands of French émigrés fleeing the revolution as well as many Germans escaping the invading Napoleonic armies.<sup>[28]</sup> Indeed in 1805 two young painters, David Wilkie and Benjamin Haydon, while dining in their favourite restaurant in Poland Street, observed that they could hear 'all languages of Europe talked with the greatest fluency' and 'it is a very rare thing to see an Englishman.'<sup>[29]</sup>

Meanwhile Vincenzo and his two youngest sons settled in the parish of St Giles in the Fields, on the eastern side of Soho, an area that had developed a reputation for poverty as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was characterised in illustrations such as William Hogarth's 1751 *Gin Lane* and Thomas Rowlandson's 1794 comparison between the differing social classes titled *St James's St Giles's*. The most notorious part of St Giles was just north of St Giles Church and High Street, Bloomsbury, where Louis was later to open his shop, and at the eastern end of Oxford Street. Nicknamed the Rookeries, it contained some of the worst living conditions in London and was depicted in Johann Heinrich Ramberg's 1788 *Humours of St Giles*.

Vincenzo was still living in Soho at the time of his death aged 79. He was buried in St Anne's Churchyard on 19 March 1813 but was described as a resident of St Giles. Francesco (now known as Francis) had moved close to the Middlesex Hospital, north of Oxford Street. He moved to Dublin between 1818 and 1821 and for a further five years from 1823. It was there that one of his sons, Constantine, became a noted sculptor before Francesco returned to London for the last time in 1827 to live

at 42 Prince's Street, Soho, where he continued to advertise his compositions, as well as offering piano and singing lessons.

Joseph was the least settled of the brothers, frequently moving to different addresses around Soho. He was living in King Street when Vincenzo died and advertised from no. 39, joined by his 11-year-old son Edward Ferdinand as 'Jos



The notorious neighbourhood of St Giles, where Vincenzo settled in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, is referenced in Thomas Rowlandson's 1794 comparison of the different social classes, *St James's St Giles's*. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum

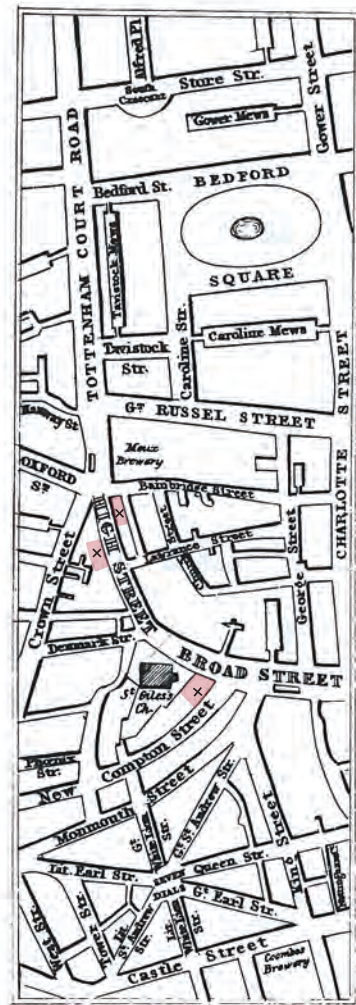
## The Panormo Family in London

- 1 Vincenzo, Panormo's Music Shop, Little Newport Street, 1776
- 2 Francesco, 'Teacher of the Italian Language', 116 Wardour Street, 1794
- 3 Joseph, 3 Portland Street, 1802
- 4 St Anne's Churchyard where Vincenzo was buried in 1813
- 5 Louis, 43 Monmouth Street, 1813
- 6 George, 13 Monmouth Street, 1814
- 7 Louis's shops:  
26 High Street, Bloomsbury, 1817–1829  
46 High Street, Bloomsbury, 1830–1850  
31 High Street, Bloomsbury, 1850–1854
- 8 Francesco, 'Piano and Singing Lessons', Princes Street, 1827
- 9 Joseph, 'Panormo & Son', 39 King Street, 1823
- 10 Joseph, 'in partnership with Antonio Bruno', 52 King Street, in 1820s
- 11 Joseph, 'Panormo & Son', 4 Compton Street, 1830–36
- 12 George, 56 New Compton Street, 1841

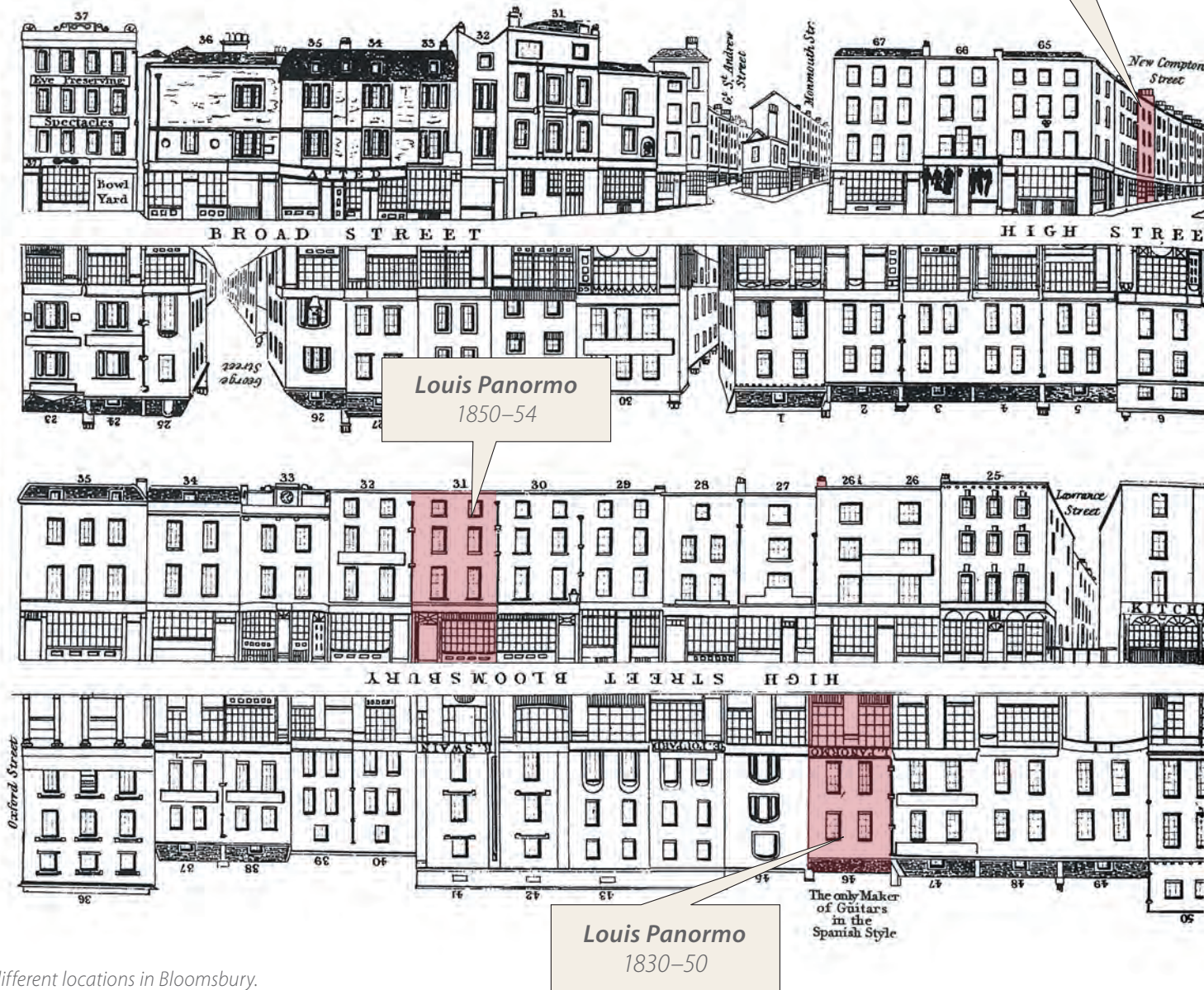
Richard Horwood, Map of London, Westminster and Southwark Shewing Every House 1792–9  
Motco Enterprises Limited, motco.com

“The Rookeries, where Louis was to open his shop, contained some of the worst living conditions in London





Joseph and Louis Panormo's various different locations in Bloomsbury. The Panormo name appears on Louis Panormo's High Street Bloomsbury shop. Images: Tallis's London Street Views, 1838–1840



Panormo & Son' from 1823. He also went into partnership, probably during the 1820s, with Antonio Bruno, subsequently known as Anthony Brown, making guitars at 52 King Street; their joint label refers to them as 'makers to the celebrated Mr Sor', the famous virtuoso who quit London in 1823. The trade directory listing as 'Panormo & son' continued at 4 Compton Street from 1830 to 1836, although Edward Ferdinand is also listed independently at this address from 1832. Bruno had also established himself independently in Dean Street by 1836.

Joseph died in the St Anne's Workhouse in 1837, his occupation given as 'pauper'. In 1898 Richard Harrison, a close friend of the Panormos, described him as having made guitars for Louis and wrote that he 'would invariably make instruments for the trade'. He also described Joseph as eccentric and 'would work until he had acquired some thirty pounds, and then he would amuse himself with painting.'<sup>[30]</sup>

Vincenzo's younger sons George and Louis remained where they were living when Vincenzo died in 1813 and seem to have enjoyed a close relationship. Louis remarried in the church of St Giles in 1813, giving his address as 43 Monmouth Street and was witness to George's second marriage in the same church the following year, George's address being 13 Monmouth Street. Louis, who claimed to have taken British citizenship, turned to manufacturing the newly fashionable guitar. The earliest known label of 'Panormo Fecit/ London 1816' inserted in an early guitar by Louis is identical to that used by George around this time with the addition of the letter 'G' written in front of the printed 'Panormo'.

Louis ran a shop at 26 High Street, Bloomsbury from 1817. This street became known as High Street, St Giles in 1830 and in 1847 he moved to 31 High Street, St Giles, from where he advertised bows and violin family instruments, including those made by other members of his family. According to Harrison, Louis employed his brothers Joseph and George and their sons, Edward Ferdinand and George Lewis, as well as his own son Charles (although this is so far the only source to suggest that Charles Panormo worked for his father) and two apprentices, Thomas Ambry and George Middlewood.<sup>[31]</sup> Louis also sold bows traditionally believed to have been made by members of the Tubbs family, but recent research by James Westbrook has revealed that George Middlewood is noted in the 1841 census as a 'violin bow-maker'. Westbrook also suggests that Ambry is actually the guitar maker William Hanbury, whose instruments strongly resemble those by Louis.<sup>[32]</sup>

“ In a back room... lay the remains of old Panormo, the last link of the great Italian stringed instrument makers



Louis Panormo was successful enough to have his portrait painted, unlike his brothers – Joseph died a pauper in St Anne's Workhouse, while George spent his final years sharing a house in New Compton Street with two other families. Portrait c. 1854, courtesy of James Westbrook & Judy Nolan

After his father's death Edward Ferdinand led a nomadic life as a maker and player. He often remained at an address for only a year, a sure sign of financial difficulty. According to Harrison, he returned to Brighton in 1888, where he entered the workhouse. A public subscription was raised to support him and his wife but in 1891 he became suddenly ill and Harrison was called upon. He recalled how 'in a back room, or garret, on a straw mattress, beneath a coverlet (that a table cloth), lay the remains of old Panormo, the last link of the great Italian stringed instrument makers.'<sup>[34]</sup>

Mystery still surrounds the life of Vincenzo Panormo. He travelled frequently in search of work and used materials according to his location and circumstances; he would have rented accommodation and was regularly employed by dealers – all of which makes it hard to trace his movements. However, the quality of his work is clear. He became a hugely important figure and perhaps it is no coincidence that Vincenzo's first appearance in London corresponded with the demise of the Stainer model, while his second period in the city saw the acceptance of the Stradivari pattern that he had developed in Paris. His sons were also influential: Joseph became one of the first makers to copy Guarneri 'del Gesù' and the family was heavily involved with the development of the guitar in Britain. There is surely more to be discovered about the Panormos, but for now there remains much to admire. ■

With thanks to Tim Baker, Charles Beare, Pierre Caradot, Anne Houssay, Michael Jameson, Philip J. Kass, Catherine Marlat, Duane Rosengard, Giovanni Paolo di Stefano and Graham Wells.



Notes

[1] William Sandys and Simon Andrew Forster, *History of the Violin*, John Russell Smith, 1864.

[2] Giovanni Paolo di Stefano, *Documentary Evidence Concerning the Early History of Vincenzo Trusiano and the Panormo Family of Instrument Makers in Italy*, Violin Society of America, VSA Papers, Fall 2014.

[3] Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty, Transforming Myths in Eighteenth Century Italy*, University of Chicago Press, 2007.

[4] Francesco Nocerino, *Gli strumenti musicali a Napoli nel secolo XVIII, in Storia della musica e dello spettacolo a Napoli. Il Settecento*, F. Cotticelli & P.G. Maione (ed.), Turchini Edizioni, 2009.

[5] Francesco Nocerino, *Gli strumenti* op. cit.

[6] Several brands are listed in different references: 'Panorm & Figli', 'Panorm', 'Panormo', 'Vinci Panorm', 'IOAN PANORMO', 'PANORM/E FIGLI'.

[7] Francesco Nocerino, *Gli strumenti* op. cit.

[8] Renato Meucci (ed.) *Produzione e diffusione degli strumenti a fiato, tariffa per i prezzi degli stormenti che dal Sig. Panorm si costruiscono tanto di lagno, che di ottone...* (1835) Reggio Calabria, Archivio di Sato, inv. 29, fascio 156, n. 167.

[9] Various theories exist about Vincenzo's training. Henley wrote that he studied with one of the Bergonzis; John Dilworth suggested that he worked 'possibly for a member of the Gagliano family' (Tim Baker, John Dilworth and Andrew Fairfax, *The British Violin*, BVMA, 2001); Dennis Plowright speculated that he worked for a descendant of Carlo Bergonzi (Dennis G. Plowright, *Dictionary of British Violin & Bow Makers*, 1996).

[10] Richard Harrison, *The Panormo Family*, The Musical Opinion & Music Trade Review, December 1888.

[11] Martha Feldman op. cit.

[12] Lot 80, Sotheby's Important Musical Instruments Auction Catalogue, London, 21 June 1984.

[13] Richard Harrison, *The Panormo Family*, The Musical Opinion op. cit.

[14] Peter Ratcliff's dendrochronology testing of Panormo's Paris instruments found several very strong correlations with wood typically used in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This is probably because the Parisian guilds strictly controlled the supply of wood for instrument makers. One possible source for this wood was the region of the Massif des Vosges in France.

[15] Fanny Burney (ed.), *Memoirs of Dr Burney*, Edward Moxon, 1832.

[16] The New Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, 25 November 1776.

[17] Peter Ackroyd, *London, The Biography*, Chatto & Windus, 2000.

[18] Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century 'A Great and Monstrous Thing'*, The Bodley Head 2012.

[19] Michael P. Fitzsimmons, *From Artisan to Worker. Guilds, the French State, and the Organisation of Labor, 1776–1821*, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

[20] John Hunt, *Jurors of the Guild of Musical Instrument Makers of Paris*, Galpin Society Journal, 1998.

[21] The Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, 16 March 1781.

[22] Unknown author, *The History of Paris, from the earliest period to the present day*, vol. 3 (reprint), G.B. Whittaker, 1825.

[23] Sandys and Forster, *History of the Violin*, op. cit.

[24] Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, Yale University Press, 2004.

[25] Renato Meucci op. cit, who describes the Panormo family as 'the most important makers in Naples at the time.'

[26] Recorded in the Hill Archives at the Ashmolean Museum.

[27] Jenny Nex, *Luthier and Thief*, The Strad, August 2010.

[28] Stefan Manz, Margrit Schulte Beerbühl & John R. Davis (ed.), *Migration and Transfer from Germany to Britain, 1660–1914*, K.G. Saur Verlag, 2007.

[29] Jerry White, *London In The Nineteenth Century 'A Human Awful Wonder of God'*, Jonathan Cape, 2007.

[30] Richard Harrison, *The Panormo Family*, The Troubadour, Dec 1898.

[31] Richard Harrison, *The Panormo Family*, The Troubadour, Dec 1898.

[32] James Westbrook, *Guitar Making in Nineteenth-Century London: Louis Panormo and His Contemporaries*, PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 2012.

[33] Stuart Button, *The Guitar in England 1800–1924*, Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989.

[34] Richard Harrison, *The Panormo Family*, The Troubadour, Dec 1898.

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Jordan Lancaster, *In the Shadow of Vesuvius, A Cultural History of Naples*, Tauris Parke, 2005.

John Julius Norwich, Sicily, *A Short History from the Ancient Greeks to Cosa Nostra*, John Murray, 2015.

Warwick Lester, *Amico, The Life of Giovanni Battista Viotti*, Oxford University Press, 2009.

Christopher Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

David Gilmour, *The Pursuit of Italy, a History of a Land, its Regions and their Peoples*, Penguin, 2011.

Tim Baker, John Dilworth and Andrew Fairfax, *The British Violin*, BVMA, 2001.

The Arms of Palermo, bearing the Palermo eagle, appears in Vincenzo's labels. The emblem of the Swabian Kings and the Holy Roman Emperors, the arms can be seen over the main entry portal of Palermo Cathedral c. 1200

# PANORMO

*The life and work of Vincenzo and his sons*



Additional images of the instruments and bows in the exhibition can be found in the Cozio Archive. Please visit tarisio.com and type the Tarisio ID number in the search bar.

Dendrochronology reports provided by Peter Ratcliff





## I. VINCENZO PANORMO

Viola, Early London • Tarisio ID 66323

Almost identical to an early viola (see illustrated on p. 6) bearing a manuscript label dated 'Londini 1774', this must be one of the very earliest surviving examples of Vincenzo's work and would have been made during his first period in London before leaving for Paris in 1779. The model is typically Amati inspired and it is branded PANORMO under the button on the back, the top block and inside one of the G-bout ribs. The dendrochronology report states that the latest ring on the outside edge of the lower treble side of the one-piece front is dated 1767. It gives a fairly generic Alpine response, unlike the wood used in Paris at the time. As is typical of Vincenzo's early work, it has large, slightly oval pins, placed well inside the purfling, as does the 1774 viola.







## 2. VINCENZO PANORMO

Viola, Early London • Tarisio ID 76652

This viola closely resembles the previous instrument, with the same bout measurements but a slightly shorter back length. It also shares the same slightly short, delicate corners and typical flattish curve on the upper pegbox, culminating in a narrow throat where the remains of a saw cut can sometimes be seen. The blocks and linings are of spruce, which appears fairly typical for these early instruments. Vincenzo was obviously not concerned with positioning his location pins in the same place every time and although they are often placed centrally on one-piece backs, this is not the case here. Although proving impossible to date, the spruce used for the front is cut from the same tree as the violin no. 3.



## 3. VINCENZO PANORMO

Violin, Early London/Paris • Tarisio ID 68943

Although many of Vincenzo's early instruments are based on an Amati pattern, this violin, made either in London or perhaps after Vincenzo's move to Paris in around 1779, is clearly modelled after Stradivari and would have been very advanced for the late 1770s, before the ideas of Stradivari became widely accepted. The sound-holes have been re-cut but there remains a great similarity in style to the early violas, especially the shapes of the corners, the shallow sound-hole fluting and the carving of the scroll. Like the 1774 viola (see p. 6), the lower rib is in one piece. The blocks and linings are made of spruce and there is a large hole in the original top block that would have been the result of a single nail, or perhaps a dowel used to fix the neck. The spruce used for the front gave an inconclusive result in the dendrochronology report.





#### 4. VINCENZO PANORMO

Violin, Paris • Tarisio ID 76839

Made in Paris between 1779 and 1789, this violin is firmly based on the Stradivari pattern that was becoming increasingly popular in Paris at this time, even before Viotti's visit in 1782, and is of very similar proportions to the previous violin. Violins from this period often appear to have the sound-holes set quite high and close to the edge of the C bouts, but the deeper fluting in the wings seen on later Panormo instruments is already becoming apparent. The blocks and linings are once again of spruce. According to the dendrochronological examination, Vincenzo was not yet using wood typical for Paris makers of the period but instead using old stock, a feature common throughout his career. In this case the last ring on the bass side dates from 1706 and on the treble side from 1718.



#### 5. VINCENZO PANORMO

Viola, Dublin • Tarisio ID 74330

Although no firm evidence has fixed the exact dates of Vincenzo's stay in Ireland, this viola has resided in Dublin for as long as its history has been known, and it displays the distinctive maple that Vincenzo is said to have taken from an old billiard table in Ireland. Compared with the early Amati-model violas this is a little weightier in its overall appearance but is of similar proportions to viola no. 2. The blocks and linings are of spruce and, as would be expected in Vincenzo's earlier work, the linings are simply butted up to the corner blocks in typical English fashion rather than morticed in. The dendrochronological examination was unable to date the spruce used for the front but discovered a strong relationship between the treble side and the wood used for the front of violin no. 6.





## 6. VINCENZO PANORMO

Violin, Dublin • Tarisio ID 73270

Closely related in style to the previous Dublin viola and using seemingly related wood for the front, this violin appears to be inspired by Stradivari's very early work from around 1670. It displays the larger, slightly oval location pins set well inside the purfling frequently seen in Vincenzo's earlier work. The substantial edges and large overhang are also typical for this period, as is the slightly 'droopy' look of the lower back of the pegbox. Spruce has once again been used for the blocks and linings. This violin retains its original neck, which measures 132.5 mm, and a single nail hole is still evident in the upper block. Like many Panormo instruments, the broad grain of the spruce front provides too few rings to make the dendrochronology report conclusive, but the bass side of the front seems to date from 1717 and the treble side to 1756.



## 7. VINCENZO PANORMO

Cello, Dublin-like front • Tarisio ID 73274

This cello bears a copy of the label found inside cello no. 8 and appears to be from the same model, with an identical body length. However, the front, particularly in the sound-holes, bears a striking resemblance to the instruments of the Dublin maker Thomas Perry, for whom Vincenzo is supposed to have worked some time after leaving Paris, while the elegant scroll displays the small extra turn into the eye often paired with his more Amatis violin and viola models. Spruce for the blocks and linings seems to have been abandoned by now and willow is used, although the C-bout linings are still not morticed into the corner blocks. There are no conclusive dendrochronology results.

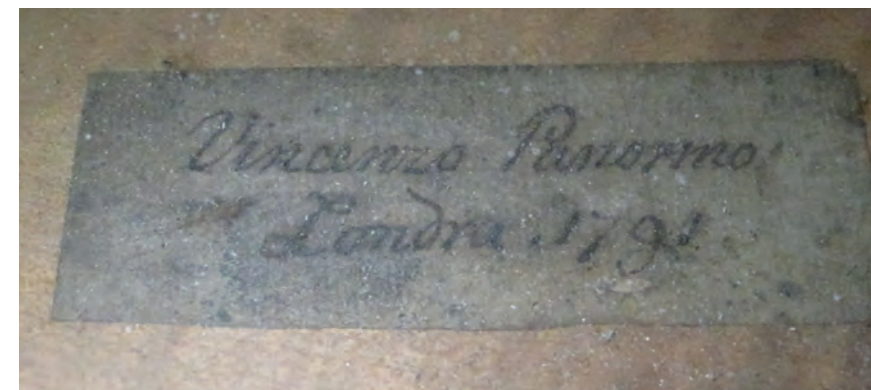




## 8. VINCENZO PANORMO

Cello, London 1791 • Tarisio ID 73273

The original manuscript label inside this Stradivari model cello states 'Londra 1791' and it was therefore made soon after Vincenzo's return from Paris. The cello displays a much thicker and more textured varnish than seen on earlier instruments, and once again willow is used for the blocks and linings, which are now morticed into the corner blocks. Also unlike the earlier instruments, the edges of the scroll and the rib mitres have been blackened, a feature begun by Stradivari in the 1680s and perhaps taken up by Vincenzo towards the end of his stay in Paris. The dendrochronology report suggests that the latest visible ring for the bass side dates from 1772 and the treble from 1774, but that there may be a couple of further rings unseen.







## 9. VINCENZO PANORMO

Violin, London • Tarisio ID 72869

During the 1790s Joseph in particular, but also his brothers George and Louis, were probably all at some time assisting in the workshop and this violin is typical of the Stradivari model made by Vincenzo around this time. The location pins are still quite large and the blocks and linings are also made from willow but it is unclear whether they are morticed in or not. The edges of the scroll and rib mitres continue to be blackened and the sound-hole wings show typically strong fluting. It proved impossible to date the wood used for the front but it was discovered that the treble side is totally unrelated to the bass side, although it does show a possible same-tree relationship with the bass side of a fine violin by Nicolas Lupot.



## 10. VINCENZO PANORMO

Violin, London • Tarisio ID 76596

This violin sees something of a departure from Vincenzo's instruments of the 1790s. Some of the work has become heavier, particularly in the corners and scroll, which intriguingly has similarities to the cello scroll by Joseph, no. 16. Like the previous violin, the back of the lower pegbox is also now rounder and less 'droopy'. Another feature typical of these later violins is that the purfling mitres in the lower corners often appear to be shorter than those in the upper corners. Willow has been used for the blocks and linings and the C-bout linings are let into the corner blocks. Once again the broad-grained spruce so often used by Vincenzo for his fronts proved impossible to date.

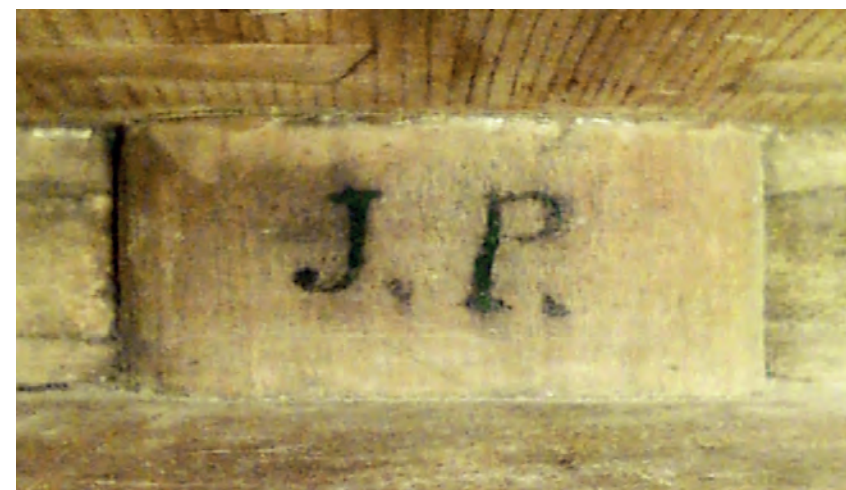




## II. VINCENZO PANORMO

Violin, London • [Tarisio ID 73267](#)

Although considered to be by Vincenzo, this violin is signed 'J.P.' in ink on the top block, denoting Joseph's input into the family workshop before he established his own business around 1800. Similar violins have sometimes been signed with his full name on the the top block rather than simple initials. As the hand of Joseph becomes more apparent, the location pins reduce in size to approximately 2 mm and, unlike Vincenzo's earlier work, they are often partially covered by the purfling. The blocks and linings are both made of willow with the C-bout linings let into the corner blocks. Once again, the two sides of the front are totally unrelated.







## 12. VINCENZO PANORMO

Violin, London • Tarisio ID 74469

This violin has the same body proportions as no. 10 and also features the larger corners, bolder head and sound-holes with distinctive pointed lower wings. As Joseph was by now established in his own workshop, it seems likely that George had become Vincenzo's chief assistant, presumably also aided by Louis. The C-bout linings are let into the corner blocks but on this occasion all the internal work is of spruce. The dendrochronology report suggests that once again there is no correlation between the two halves of the front but the latest ring on the the bass side dates from 1799 and the treble side from 1786, with a similarity to a French violin of c. 1800.



## 13. VINCENZO PANORMO

Violin, London • Tarisio ID 73271

This example is made to the same pattern as the previous violin, with a typically full overhang, larger, well-fluted sound-hole wings, a heavier scroll with blackened bevels and a narrow throat that still show signs of the saw. Once again the location pins are partially covered by the purfling and the blocks and linings are made of the more typical willow with the C-bout linings let into the corner blocks. The dendrochronology report does not give a firm dating but suggests that Vincenzo continued to use well-seasoned spruce as the latest ring on the bass side is dated to 1775, while the treble dates to 1776.





#### 14. VINCENZO PANORMO

Violin, London • Tarisio ID 73272

Another late example made to the same proportions as the previous example and featuring a large overhang with even heavier modelling, this violin displays very different characteristics to those signed by Joseph. The full pegbox with blackened bevels and the straight cut into the eye of the scroll are both typical of these later instruments, but the purfling is notably bold. The blocks and particularly high linings are made of willow with the C-bout linings let into the corner blocks. The dendrochronology report was unable to date the wood used for the front, but it appears to have been purchased in France as it is a same-tree match for a violin made by Vincenzo in Paris.



#### 15. JOSEPH PANORMO

Violin, London • Tarisio ID 73269

The signature 'J. Panormo' found inside the back of this violin matches that found on Joseph's marriage licence. He is reputed to have never used a label but frequently signed his name where the label would normally be placed. This violin is believed to have been bought by the present owner's great grandfather, William Henry Kearns, directly from the maker after his arrival in London from Dublin in 1817. It is a typical Stradivari model for Joseph but he is also known to have made violins in the style of Guarneri 'del Gesù'. The blocks and linings are of spruce, with the C-bout linings possibly let into the corner blocks. There were no conclusive results from the dendrochronology examination.





## 16. JOSEPH PANORMO

Cello, London • Tarisio ID 64921

The Amati influence was still proving popular, as can be seen in the viola made by George in 1812 (opposite) and instruments sold by A. and J. Betts into the 1850s. This Amatise cello has the same body length and similar proportions to the two earlier cellos made by Vincenzo. The scroll has the extra turn into the eye not seen on the Stradivari-pattern instruments made by the family and the back of the pegbox retains the detailing and rounded corners often seen on English cellos during the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It proved impossible to obtain a clear dendrochronological result.



## 17. GEORGE PANORMO

Viola, London • Tarisio ID 73266

George must have made this viola, dated 1812, just before Vincenzo died and it is perhaps one of the earliest instruments to bear his label. The viola, which has a body length of 387 mm, is once again influenced by the Amatis and has typical light fluting through the sound-hole wings while retaining the slight extra turn into the eye of the scroll. The printed label is the same as one found in an early guitar made by Louis but has a handwritten letter 'G' added before the printed 'Panormo'. The blocks are of spruce and the linings of willow, while the original top block has a single screw to fix the neck, which is 145 mm long. There is no relationship between the two halves of the front and only a tenuous date of around 1780 given for the bass side.





## 18. GEORGE PANORMO

Violin, London • Tarisio ID 73268

This Stradivari model violin by George bears a different printed label from the previous violin and is dated 1830. His hand is quite distinct from that of Joseph and can perhaps be detected in some of Vincenzo's later instruments. George is believed to have been making guitars for his younger brother Louis by the time this violin was made and it may well have been sold through Louis's shop on the High Street, St Giles. The blocks and linings are made from spruce with the C-bout linings probably either butted up to the corner blocks or morticed in very slightly. According to the dendrochronological examination, the bass side of the front dates from 1720 and the treble from 1722, and the wood shows an affinity with spruce used in England during the early 1700s, particularly by Daniel Parker.



## 19. GEORGE PANORMO

Violin, London • Tarisio ID 76642

Bearing a slightly different printed label, dated 1833, from the previous instrument no. 18, this is another Stradivari model violin made by George before he left for a brief period to work in Liverpool. There are several hasty scraper marks visible on the surface of the front, which is once again typical of wood used in mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Paris and similar to that used by Lupot. Although the neatly cut sound-holes are reminiscent of those seen on the later violins of Vincenzo, the edges of the wings are often flatter on instruments by George. The blocks and linings are willow with the C-bout linings appearing to be slightly morticed into the corner blocks.





## 20. LOUIS PANORMO

Viola bow, London • [Tarisio ID 76633](#)

This viola bow was probably commissioned by Louis Panormo and made to his specifications by a member of the Tubbs family. Its large proportions, heavy chamfers running down the front of the high head and the square throat in the frog are all features commonly associated with bows branded by Louis. There is no shoe on the upper face of the frog, suggesting the bow was made around 1840, before this feature was adopted in England.



## 21. LOUIS PANORMO

Violin bow, London • [Tarisio ID 76632](#)

This example bears the same 'L PANORMO' brand as the viola bow, but the frog has a shoe as well as a lower ferrule and rounder throat, suggesting it was made a little later. It was probably made by one of the Tubbs family and has several characteristics such as the broadening chamfer towards the face, wide silver bands on the adjuster and white mother-of-pearl that are typical of many Panormo bows.

## 22. LOUIS PANORMO

Cello bow, London • [Tarisio ID 77127](#)

The renowned cellist Jacqueline du Pré used this bow for a number of years, including on her famous 1967 recording of the Elgar Concerto filmed by Christopher Nupen. Weighing 90 grams, it is a fine example of this type of slightly oversized bow sold by Louis Panormo. Once again it has chamfers running down the front of the head, with a broad band of hair at both the frog and the head end of the stick. The later adjuster was made by William Watson.





## LOUIS PANORMO

Guitar, London • **Tarisio ID 76634** • *Not in exhibition*

This is a classic example of Louis Panormo's guitar making. As his labels stated, it is constructed 'in the Spanish style': based on the plantilla (a template of one-half of the guitar face) used for guitars by the makers Juan and Josef Pages of Cadiz, with the ribs let into the top block and seven symmetrically placed fan-braces to support the belly. This model was first introduced ten years earlier, soon after the arrival in London of the Spanish guitarist Antonio Trinitario Huerta. Dendrochronology typically shows that Louis used 30–50-year-old seasoned spruce for his soundboards – this one is of one-piece, with the widest grain towards the bass side. The central portion of the rosette, with its mother-of-pearl inlay, is tastefully understated: the obvious influence comes from the work of Stradivari – the 1683 'Cipriani Potter' violin and the c. 1688 'Hill' five-course guitar, for example – demonstrating Louis's connection with the violin making tradition. The head is unusually made from maple, almost certainly from the off-cuts of cello neck-blanks.

- James Westbrook



## Andrew Fairfax

After graduating from the Newark School of Violin Making, Andrew Fairfax was employed by Joost van der Grinten in the Netherlands before joining J. & A. Beare as a violin maker and restorer in 1982, where he worked for over 30 years. Fairfax co-authored *The British Violin* and *The Voller Brothers*, and continues to write and lecture on violin making, restoration and history across Europe, the USA, Australia and Asia. He now works independently in Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

## Tarisio

Tarisio is a leading international venue for fine instruments and bows, serving musicians, patrons, dealers and collectors. With offices in New York and London, Tarisio holds six fine instrument auctions per year, and Tarisio's Private Sales operates a year-round personalised service. Tarisio also owns and maintains the Cozio Archive, a reference resource for fine instruments and bows containing detailed iconography, provenance, pricing and maker information for over 60,000 instruments.





**C**urated by Andrew Fairfax, this exhibition celebrates the work of Vincenzo Panormo and his sons, featuring 12 violins, 4 violas, 3 cellos and 3 bows. Fairfax also draws together the latest archival research in a new biography of Panormo, unravelling some of the myths surrounding a maker who influenced a generation of English craftsmen.

## PANORMO

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