

CELLO BY FRANCESCO RUGGERI CALLED "THE FATHER"
On loan to Luigi Piovano from Francesco Micheli in Rome

Born around 1630 in Cremona and died there in 1698, Francesco Ruggeri was one of the most important exponents of the luthier tradition of the time in the city.

It seems he was a pupil of Nicola Amati and, judging by the stylistic elements that characterize his works, this hypothesis is likely, despite the lack of substantial evidence to support this thesis. It is said that Ruggeri was accused of plagiarism, having falsified and sold one of his creations by passing it off as the work of Nicola Amati.

On a stylistic level, his works are of extraordinary beauty and follow the style of the Amati. His instruments usually appear to have pronounced curvatures and this fact unites them with the acoustic philosophy in force at the time. The varnish is the one commonly used in Cremona and this suggests that it was made by the same person and in any case not by the luthiers themselves. In fact, the mystery that hovers around the paints of the time seems to have been brought to the tomb by those who had the power to manufacture them. At the end of an era, the quality of the paints also changes, unfortunately for the worse ...

Despite his skill it seems that Francesco Ruggeri did not reach the deserved fame in life. His son Vincenzo, on the other hand, was more fortunate in this sense.

As for the cello portrayed in these beautiful photographs, it is a specimen in excellent condition and which, miraculously, retains much of the original varnish. It seems to be built on a form previous to those used in the late era, as its classic model is smaller than that of the specimen examined. The fact that he later opted for a smaller size model could be explained by changing market needs rather than acoustic speculations.

Conceptually, his instruments remain in some way linked to the time he lived, similar to those produced by other Cremonese luthiers of the time. The great metamorphosis of Cremonese violin making will manifest itself later, at the beginning of the 18th century, in the person of Antonio Stradivari.

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