

## Foreword by Roger Hargrave

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There is a long and proud history of instrument making in Europe and for hundreds of years makers have passed their skills from one generation to the next. In many countries these skills have been guarded and protected by guild type organizations. While there can be no doubt that such guild systems and their corresponding examinations have upheld standards, left unchecked such systems can also stifle individual development and especially the advancement of talented outsiders.

I have often been asked by serious professional violinmakers why I give lectures to groups like the Violin Society of America, which has so many amateur members. My answer has always been the same. Amateur violinmakers come from many different walks of life and bring many skills to such groups as the VSA. They may offer important organization and management expertise, but they can also provide specialized knowledge of immense value to instrument makers. Indeed some of the most important books on violin acoustics, varnish and instrument design were written not by violinmakers but by enthusiastic amateurs. And as far as commercial competition is concerned any violinmaker worth his salt should not be afraid of an amateur. Moreover when any amateur reaches a certain standard against all the odds they should be welcomed with open arms for their achievement. If professional violinmakers can still recognise the achievements of talented amateurs then so should professional violinmakers.

Peter Westerlund is undoubtedly a world-class professional violin maker. An achievement made all the more remarkable by the fact that he began his illustrious career as an amateur, albeit a well educated one. Indeed, I suspect it is this that led him not only in his tireless pursuit of excellence, but also to promote openness and a free exchange of ideas amongst makers in his native Sweden.

Such openness has gradually become a phenomenon amongst violinmakers worldwide. It has led to advances in instrument making that have allowed some modern makers to seriously challenge the position of classical Italian instruments on the concert platform. Nevertheless, in some countries this openness has been a long time coming. To my shame I must admit to having considered Sweden as something of a backwater in this respect. Consequently, some years ago on my first visit to address the Swedish violinmakers association; I was surprised to discover an atmosphere that was not only receptive, but also in return both open-handed and knowledgeable. I came away feeling both drained and invigorated, but also somewhat humble.

The atmosphere I observed amongst Swedish makers has had much to do with the efforts made by craftsmen like Peter Westerlund and it pleases me to see that his personal candidness and energy in promoting Swedish violin making has been rewarded. Peter achieved recognition in his homeland long ago and is now undoubtedly a major talent on the world stage.

11-11-2005 Roger Graham Hargrave