

A peek into lutherie workshops around the world



LUTHIER

ULRIKE DEDERER

LOCATION

Zürich, Switzerland

I've been working in Zürich for the past twelve years. My workshop is in the northern part of the city, and I have a number of customers from the many ensembles that are based here: the Zürich Opera House orchestra and Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, for example, and the students at the Zürich University of the Arts. There's a lively amateur music scene here too; I play the cello myself, in the Alumni Symphony Orchestra Zürich.

Three years ago I had an outbuilding constructed in the courtyard next to our house. This is where I now have my workshop; the large window provides plenty of natural light and I have a marvellous view of the garden while I'm working. I store the wood under the roof of my house, because it is cool and has natural ventilation. Larger machines, such as my bandsaw, are in a small alcove in the basement. We also use the parlour in our house as a music room, for customers to try out their instruments or a new set-up. Occasionally it happens that they have spontaneous sonata sessions with my husband at the piano.

The workbench in the window has been with me since 1989, the very beginning of my violin making life – I acquired it even before I owned a knife or a plane! I was just starting at the Cremona Violin Making School, where I studied under Vincenzo Bissolotti, and I was lucky enough to buy it from another violin maker there. This is where I carry out all my new making projects; at the moment I've just finished a viola in the white. I recently bought the right-hand workbench from a violin maker who has just retired. I don't use it much at the moment but it's nice to have an extra working place for the future.

Most of my violas are based on the same Brothers Amati pattern. I've just finished the body of the one in the window and I'm just starting to cut the scroll. ●

INTERVIEW BY CHRISTIAN LLOYD

Customers still remember my third prize at the 2011 Wieniawski Violin Making Competition, as opposed to the Cremona Triennale, maybe because it's associated with a playing competition.



I do a lot of set-up, cleaning and retouching work at this bench but at the moment I'm working on a Francesco Rugeri violin. I have to find the source of a buzz on the G string.

I find it useful to have the back of one of *The Strad*'s posters hanging up in my workshop. When I need to explain a technical point to customers I can refer to the CT scans of the back and arching.

Right In front of the workshop is the start of a pergola. I've planted vines to grow around it, and we hope it will give a little Mediterranean flair in the summertime.



Hanging up in the window are two finished violins: one full-size and the other a quarter-size that I made just because I had a small piece of maple that was ideal for the purpose. I usually loan these instruments out to young players in need of a good instrument.

Beneath this workbench is a self-made bending iron, which I use to bend the ebony veneers for Baroque instruments. Like many of my tools, I made it during my time in Cremona and I've kept hold of it since then.