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Summer Festivals



The Baltimore Consort

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The Holzapfel Violin Shop— A Rich Tradition in Baltimore, a Legacy to Peabody

Pilar Bradshaw has the fondest memories of watching her grandfather, Carl M. Holzapfel, as he repaired instruments in his Violin Shop on Fayette Street in Baltimore.

"I used to spend my summers with my Grandpa," she recalls. "I would play the violin with him and sit for hours at his workbench. I felt it was like going back in time because the tools and benches hadn't changed in a hundred years. There was an old aluminum pot that he kept over the fire to heat the glue in..."

"...and there were planks of wood hanging in the shop," Bill Bradshaw chimes in, "planks of spruce and maple, and an ebony log for making the finger-boards and tail pieces."

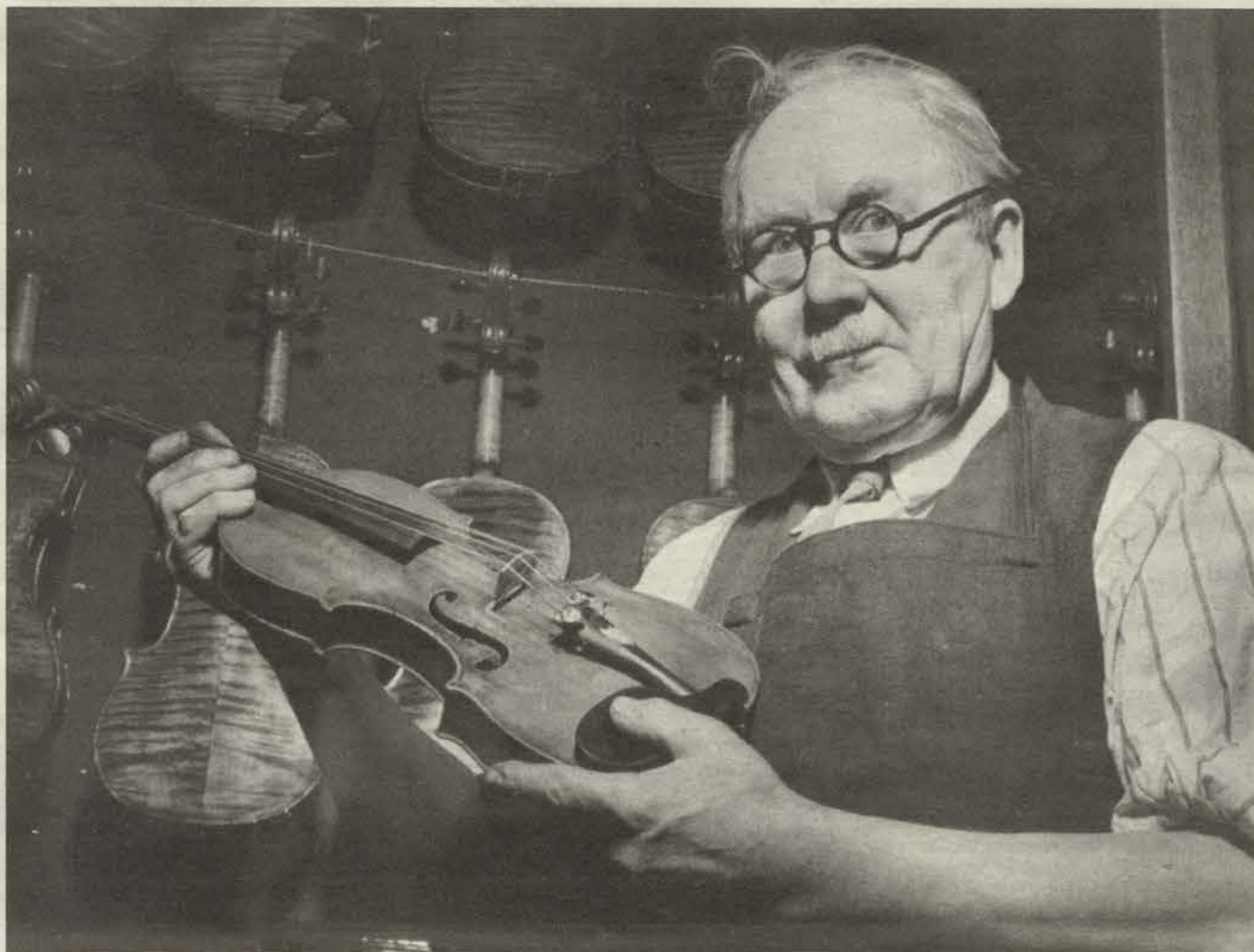
"Each morning, Grandpa would fire up the heaters at the front and back of the shop, take off his flannel shirt, and set to work in his undershirt," Pilar continues. "He had a big tummy and the dust and wood shavings would settle on his tummy."

Pilar's grandfather had learned the art of fiddle making from his father, Carl Christian Holzapfel, who was one of the founders of Baltimore's first violin shop. The next generations of the family are now working with Peabody to ensure that the rich history of the shop is preserved. Chris Holzapfel, Carl M.'s daughter, and Chris's husband Bill Bradshaw, and their daughter Pilar Bradshaw, are all doctors living in Oregon. They care deeply about the family legacy and are establishing an endowed scholarship fund at Peabody in the name of The Carl Holzapfel Violin Shop. At the same time, they are donating a collection of instruments and artifacts from the shop illustrating the Holzapfel tradition of craftsmanship that will be on permanent display outside of Griswold Hall.

"My great grandfather and Grandpa had incredible talent, but gave little thought to their own legacy," mourns Pilar.

Adds Chris, "Carl C. was the consummate artist. The instrument that he was building was the first thing that he thought of in the morning and the last thing that he thought of at night. He used to say, 'I am a fiddle maker, not a politician...' And so, it is up to the remaining family to attend to that legacy. The Holzapfel Violin Shop is gone, but an essential piece will remain where it belongs, at the Peabody."

Among the materials that the family is giving to the Peabody Archives are priceless photographs by Aubrey Bodine. That renowned photographer did a series of portraits of Carl C. Holzapfel at work, published in the then *Baltimore Sun Sunday Magazine* on May 9, 1948. They capture a well-rounded man with bushy eyebrows and small mustache, with eyes peering



Carl C. Holzapfel is shown at work in this print by renowned photographer Aubrey Bodine, taken in 1948.

intently through round black glasses. It is a strong yet sensitive face. The article, written by Elizabeth H. Moberly, opened with the words:

Once you've stepped from Fayette street into the crowded little workshop that smells of dust and old wood and resin and varnish, you might just as well be back in Cremona in the Seventeenth Century.....

Well, Cremona by way of Germany.

According to published record and family anecdotes, the Holzapfel craft of violin making was brought to America by Carl Christian Holzapfel. Carl C. was born in 1874 in Illingen, Germany. "He grew up in a wonderful old half-timbered house in Illingen," says Chris. "Bill and I have visited Illingen with Pilar and walked through its cobbled streets. It was quite stunning to think that these were the very same streets that my grandfather had known."

Apprenticed at the age of fourteen to his Uncle Scheytt, who was a master violinmaker in that town, the young boy learned to make mandolins, lutes, and cellos as well. At the age of seventeen, however, Carl left for America as a stowaway on a ship to avoid being conscripted into the Kaiser's army. "My grandfather felt strongly that war was not the way to solve the problems of humanity," Chris reflects. "He was a very gentle man. Also, he knew that he had a God-given gift for making fiddles,

and he felt very strongly about cherishing God-given gifts and using them, and sharing them with others."

Once in America, Carl C. found a job with an instrument maker named Zoener in Philadelphia at a salary of \$8 a week. Times were very hard in those early years. At one point he found a roll of money on the sidewalk. The young man advertised for the owner of the bills in the Philadelphia papers with no result. After several weeks, the authorities considered that the money, totaling \$75, was unclaimed and that he could keep it.

That \$75 enabled Carl C. to buy instrument-making tools of his own. Although he went on to work with other instrument shops in Philadelphia, including the long-lasting Weymann Violin Shop, it was a friendship with another instrument maker by the name of Griffith that prompted him to leave Philadelphia. In 1894, Griffith Sr., his nephew Guy Griffith, Carl C. Holzapfel, and another workman named Beitel all moved to Baltimore, a growing city that needed a good violin shop, especially as the town had a burgeoning conservatory of music (Peabody) and the beginnings of a symphony orchestra. The four partners established the Griffith Shop on West Pearl Street.

In 1896, Griffith Sr. went on the Klondike Gold Rush leaving his nephew as manager with Carl C. as senior craftsman. When he fell out

with his nephew over some questionable transactions, Griffith Sr. invited Holzapfel and Beitel to buy Griffith's interest in the shop. Soon after, Beitel developed tuberculosis and sold out to Carl C., so from 1898 the shop was established under the sole Holzapfel name. It moved in 1902 to 306 North Howard Street, which in those days was the town's prime shopping location. In 1904, Carl C. married Mary M. Rhoades and became a U.S. citizen. A year later, in 1905, their son Carl Martin Holzapfel was born.

Being surrounded by violins from earliest infancy, it is not surprising that at three years old, young Carl made his way to the varnish room where Holzapfel Sr. kept his secret varnishes and special supplies. Here Carl M. "varnished" a small violin that he had been "working on." But the child got dust and shavings into some of the varnishes, and his father punished him by destroying his little violin. Young Carl had learned the hard way that the instrument maker's varnish was sacred, and for his use alone.

"Great Grandfather Holzapfel," Bill Bradshaw explains, "made his own varnish with dragonsblood, an extract from the 3,000-year-old Dragon Tree, which is found only in the Canary Islands."

"He died without ever divulging the secret of the formula," adds Pilar,

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"not even to his own son."

In 1908, Carl C. purchased the property at 222 West Fayette Street. It consisted of four floors. The shop's activities were concentrated on the top floor and the back of the first floor, with the family living on the third. In 1920, the basement was dug out with pick and shovel and the entire yard was made into a large four-floor addition to the original building. The first floor, which had excellent natural light, became the primary showroom. Holzapfel Sr. had unique



Pilar Bradshaw with her great grandfather's Guarnerius Violin

Pilar Bradshaw is a pediatrician with special interests in cardiac disorders. She was valedictorian of both her undergraduate and medical school graduating classes. Pilar is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the honorary medical society, Alpha Omega Alpha, and is department head of pediatrics at Peace Health Hospitals in Eugene, Oregon.

Pilar has inherited the Holzapfel love of music. She thoughtfully mentions that the "violin is what keeps the balance" in her busy life. She began her violin studies with her grandfather Carl M. Holzapfel in the violin shop at the age of three, studied with Dorothy Delay at the Aspen Music Festival, and spent a year at the Royal College of Music working with Trevor Williams. She was the youngest musician invited to join the Grammy Award-winning Oregon Bach Festival and will mark her 18th season with that group this year. She also performs professionally as a soloist and in chamber groups.

Pilar's husband, Paul Benda, is a pediatrician as well. They have two young children, both of whom are learning to play the violin. Pilar is seen in the above photograph holding her primary instrument, the gold-medal Guarnerius model violin made by Carl C. Holzapfel in 1926. She also performs on an original Andreas Guarnerius violin (1681) purchased recently by Pilar and her parents.

floor-to-ceiling, hand-carved oak cases built to display his instruments and installed an ornate white tin ceiling throughout the shop to further enhance the lighting on the instruments and in his personal work space. When the family later purchased 54 acres on Liberty Road near Baltimore City as a home, they left the original living quarters of the shop virtually intact.

The Holzapfel shop in Baltimore was a veritable Aladdin's Cave of instruments. Holzapfel Sr. owned an original Nicolas Amati violin made in about 1640, an original Andreas Guarnerius violin dating about 1690, and at least one Antonio Stradivarius violin made in 1697. This Strad was purchased by Holzapfel in about 1908 and had been played in concert in Baltimore by the great violinist Sivori. Holzapfel Sr. carefully studied and used these instruments as patterns for his own violins, a practice that has been followed for centuries. Carl C. made more than 100 violins of magnificent quality, several violas and cellos, and unknown numbers of mandolins and guitars.

Chris tells us, "Carl Sr. placed his instruments carefully among talented musicians. For example, Fritz Kreisler owned a Holzapfel violin. The shop was frequented by all the great artists who came through Baltimore. There was a very congenial relationship. They would pop in because they were having a problem with a frog or a bow. I remember Grandfather lending Yehudi Menuhin a Torte bow once." (The 18th-century master François Torte is generally acknowledged to be the greatest bow-maker of all-times.)

"But, there was one violin that Carl Sr. would never sell," Chris continues, "his violin made in the pattern of Guarnerius that won the single Gold Medal in the 1926 Sesquicentennial Exhibition in Philadelphia."

For the honor that this award brought to Baltimore, the Mayor awarded Carl Sr. a rare Patek Philippe pocket watch, which remains a treasure of the family. "The watch had a wonderful gold chain and fob," Chris recounts, "and when I was a little kid I picked up the watch one day because it was all bright and shiny and started swinging it above my head by the chain. My grandfather was normally a very soft spoken man and it is the only time I can remember him ever raising his voice."

The watch is not the only heirloom in the family. The Gold Medal-winning Guarnerius copy is now owned by Pilar. A recording of her playing this instrument has been made in the new state-of-the-art Peabody recording studios, and is archived at the school.

Carl C.'s violins can be identified by their warm, reddish and golden varnishes, their beautifully flamed backs, sides and necks, their distinctive scrolls, and their spectacular tone. In an exhibit of fine instruments held at the Peabody in the 1960s, including Strads and other Italian instru-

ments from Cremona, one of Holzapfel's entries was selected by the famed violinist, Zoltan Zabo, as the instrument with the most glorious tone.

The 1948 article in the *Sunday Sun Magazine* tried to delve into the mysteries of tone. "The front of the violin is generally made of softer wood than the back. Mr. Holzapfel uses spruce for the front and maple for the back, sides and neck. The fingerboard and pegs are Madagascar ebony." It quotes Carl C. as saying: "None of the wood I use is less than 30 years old. It is very important that the wood be seasoned naturally."

Holzapfel Sr. also made some violin bows and had great success with his 12-string concert guitars. He had found a way of improving the tone of his guitars, which were in great demand. Many Holzapfel instruments carry no label. All, however, carry the brand of "Carl C. Holzapfel," which was burned into the wood and is visible when the tops are removed for repair or by use of light and a dental mirror. Neither Holzapfel Sr. nor Holzapfel Jr. believed much in the value of advertising or publicity. They tended to "place" their violins

rather than sell them for the highest price.

The two Holzapfels, both father and son, epitomized the strong work ethic and civic mindedness of Baltimore's German community. These German immigrants, who arrived in Baltimore from the mid-19th through the early 20th century, were to help forge Baltimore's prosperity. They were often people with skills and education, bringing with them the culture of the Old World and deep religious beliefs.

"My grandfather was a German Lutheran," says Chris, "but he wasn't the church-going type of Lutheran. He felt that he practiced his religion in his behavior. One of his guiding principles was that if you weren't working, you needn't be alive. He used to tell me, 'Find out what you want to do with your life to make life better for others when you are gone.' For him, it was making fine instruments and sharing them."

The Holzapfel family was a close knit one with strong connections to the local German community. "I can remember Grandfather sitting with other leaders in the German community," Chris remembers, "often with



Chris Holzapfel and Bill Bradshaw at work in the fields.

Chris Holzapfel and Bill Bradshaw met as doctoral students at the University of Michigan. Following their postdoctoral work at Harvard University, they moved to the University of Oregon where they are both geneticists in the Department of Biology. They have authored or coauthored more than 100 journal articles, symposia volumes, and books. Their research has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Fulbright Foundation, and the National Geographic Society.

"We have been very fortunate to be able to collaborate in our professional careers," says Bill. "Chris and I bring different backgrounds and expertise to our laboratory, which has resulted in a diverse and very successful research program." Recently, their laboratory has determined that natural populations may undergo a genetic change in their seasonal development in as few as five years in response to recent global warming. This startling find has implications not only to understanding and predicting how the very communities in which we live are structured, but also how many human diseases are spread. Their research on the quantitative and molecular basis of key genes that control daily, biological clocks whose effects we all experience in jet lag are providing insight into the therapeutic treatment of seasonal disorders such as sleep apnea, obesity, and childhood diabetes.

Outside of their busy professional lives, Chris and Bill share a deep commitment to music and philanthropy. Chris grew up surrounded by music and fine stringed instruments in the Holzapfel Violin Shop. Bill grew up on a farm where he learned how to work with wood and refinish furniture. He spent many hours with his father-in-law at his workbench in the violin shop. "We both know that music has the power to change lives," Chris affirms. "We have had so many opportunities, both professionally and personally. It is now our time to give back to those who made this possible."



Carl M. Holzapel at work.

lawyers or physicians, on Hepplewhite chairs around a table at the front of the shop, discussing ways of bettering the community. He was very philanthropic, but in a very quiet way."

Chris feels nostalgic for the kinder, gentler Baltimore of her childhood, where one could walk safely along Fayette Street day or night. A town where the streetcars were still running, and fruit and vegetables were delivered from horse-drawn carts. "Grandfather had a work ethic I can barely describe," she recalls. "He worked six days a week. But on Sunday mornings, while the women went to church, Grandfather would make *spatzle* and kidneys in a great cauldron of boiling water."

Sadly, anti-German feeling was prevalent after the Second World War. "When I was growing up, I was forbidden to speak German in the family," Chris recalls. "World War II was fresh in everyone's minds and all Germans were lumped together. So I was 'protected' from some of the rich experiences I could have had. I wasn't allowed to participate in the German community."

Ironically, in 1943, Carl C.'s son, Carl M. Holzapel had briefly taken a job as a machinist at a Baltimore war plant to assist the war effort. He interrupted his career as a professional musician to do so. Carl M. studied for many years with Peabody's Gustav Strube, who was founder and conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. He played in the Baltimore Symphony for a time, then joined the National Symphony as Assistant Principal Viola, staying with that orchestra for fourteen years. Then in 1945, Carl M. joined his aging father in the violin shop full time and re-joined the Baltimore Symphony. He performed with the orchestra for the next twelve years under conductors Reginald Stewart and Massimo Frecci. After the death of his father in 1963, the name of the shop was modified to "Carl C. Holzapel and Son."

"Grandpa was incredibly tender with instruments," Pilar recalls. "He

had great, huge hands but his fingers were so nimble, so gentle. He would take a knife and remove the top of a violin in a matter of minutes and begin a very delicate repair. Grandpa made most of his money from repairing instruments. I remember a member of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra brought her violin to him once because it had been run over by a car."

Amazingly, Carl M. was able to put the instrument back together again. Pilar remembers him asserting: "In this job I get ten dollars an hour, a dollar for doing the work and nine dollars for knowing how to do it." In fact, people from as far away as Korea, Japan, Germany and England sent fine instruments to this master craftsman for restoration. Carl M. was particularly challenged by repairs that other craftsmen considered hopeless. He was particularly generous to talented students too poor to afford a good instrument or a well-balanced bow.

Both Chris and Pilar admit that, in spite of his many talents, Carl M. was more a musician than a businessman. Pilar recalls an instance when a particularly inept, brusque client came to the shop. "Grandpa listened to his story and listened to him play his instrument, whereupon Grandpa took the violin, placed it in its case, snapped shut both clasps, and said to the client, 'Save your money. You'll never play the fiddle.'"

By the time Carl M. Holzapel died in 1988 at the age of 82, the Holzapel Violin Shop had existed in Baltimore for nearly one hundred years. During that hundred years, countless Peabody musicians must have passed through its doors. The Peabody Archives is in process of compiling an Oral History of the Shop and would like to hear of any experiences and anecdotes that our readers may have to add to the rich legacy that lives on at Peabody. Those wishing to contribute stories should contact Peabody Archivist Elizabeth Schaaf at 410/659-8100 ext. 1160.

Peabody Opera Outreach



The Peabody Opera Département offers several opportunities for presenting performances for social and educational groups, in schools and in private homes. Prices are set to cover expenses and any profits go to opera scholarship funds. Possibilities include, but are not limited to:

Hansel and Gretel

We bring the magic of the stage to your school in a fully staged and costumed version of the fairy tale opera Hansel and Gretel

1 hour program for schools: \$600

Opera Chez Vous

Looking for a special event for a house concert, fund-raiser, or social gathering? Peabody would be pleased to arrange solo or group recitals featuring the most advanced students in its professional program, many of whom may be on the brink of stardom.

Prices from \$400 depending on the number of performers and duration.

Opera Cornucopia

We can also arrange programs of scenes, informational programs about how opera works, previews of major productions or a glimpse of how new operas are created.

Prices from \$300 depending on type of program and duration.

**For further information on outreach activities, contact Ilah Raleigh, Outreach Coordinator
410/659-8100 ext. 1343 or
OperaOutreach@jhu.edu**