

**Stradivarius: Five Violins, One Cello and a Genius.** By Toby Faber. pp. xviii + 294. (Macmillan, London, 2004, £16.99. ISBN 0-333-98976-7.

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***Stradivarius: Five Violins, One Cello and a Genius.***  
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Robin Stowell

*Music and Letters*, Volume 86, Issue 3, 1 August 2005, Pages 476–478,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gci078>

**Published:** 01 August 2005

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Toby Faber's maiden book has much in common with Nicholas Delbanco's *The Countess of Stanlein Restored* (London, 2001; reviewed in *Music & Letters*, 83 (2002), 511), which recounts the chequered history of a celebrated cello by Antonio Stradivari and its role in the life of its current owner, Bernard Greenhouse (former cellist of the Beaux Arts Trio). Using the same luthier as his subject, Faber ventures further than Delbanco both in exploring Stradivari's techniques and methods of instrument making in the context of lutherie before and during the maker's career and in attempting to account for his continuing supremacy. In so doing, he traces the histories, ownerships, and 'playing careers' of six Stradivari instruments from their construction as far as possible to the present.

Faber's first chapter introduces the five violins—the 'Messiah' (1716), the 'Viotti–Marie Hall' (1709),...

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Online ISSN 1477-4631

Print ISSN 0027-4224

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