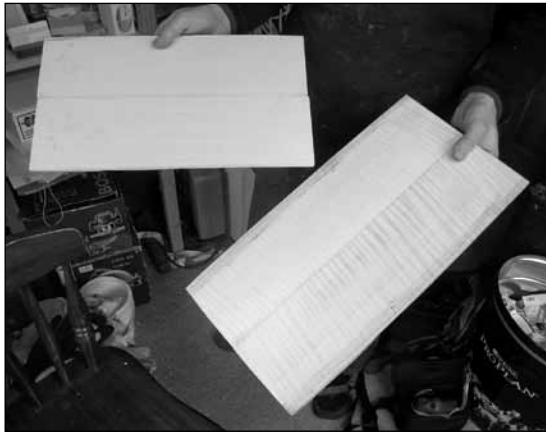


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Crafting a violin with Tobias Widemann:

part 2 Body-building



A back and front that have been glued up ready for shaping.



The template that determines the pattern sits on top, which has been used to create the mould that sits on a flat marble base. Some corner blocks have already been placed in position.

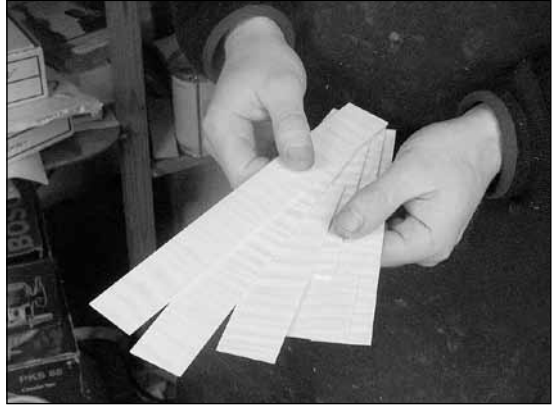
Now that the timber has been selected and felled, it is mostly quarter-sawn, or preferably split, for the best quality wood and to get the grain alignment right. Quarter-sawn means that it is milled with the cuts as close as possible to reflecting the radius of the trunk, like pizza slices. The timber is air-dried over at least five years.

When it is dry, the back and front pieces are glued like two halves of an open book.

Before any further work is undertaken, a decision must be made about the style of the violin. They tend to be patterned after existing ones that perform well. There are many choices in the style that influence the sound of the instrument, such as whether it is symmetrical or not, the thickness of the timber used and where it is thick and thin, and the placement of the bass bar and the sound post. Once a style is finalised, a template is cut out and used to make a wooden mould. The real violin will be built around this mould. The Cremonese system, as used by Italian masters Amati, Stradivari and Guarneri, uses an internal mould. The French traditionally used an external mould and built the violin inside it.



The next stage is to construct the sides, in the shape of a violin. That wood is very thin — around 1.3mm.

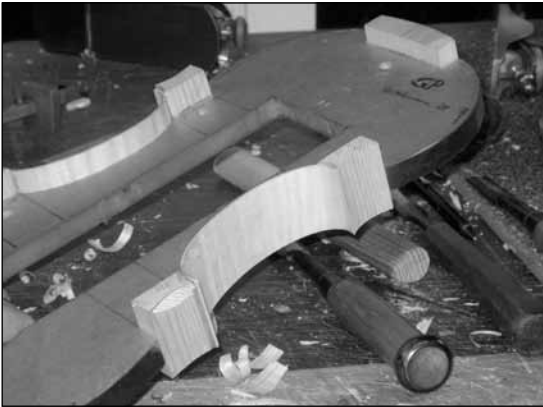


To form straight pieces into curved ones it must be heated, and this is done on a special oval-shaped post that behaves like a stationary iron.

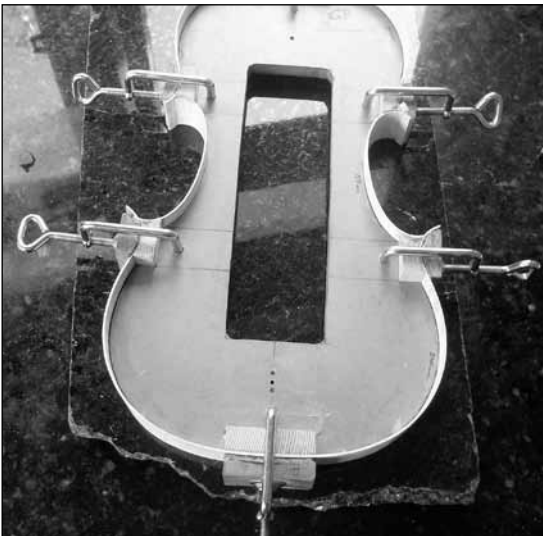




Small blocks of willow or spruce are cut and glued into the corners of the mould. They are shaped to the outside curves of the violin.



As each side piece is bent into shape, they are attached to the reinforcing blocks.



As you can see in the photo, the mould is still there, like a skeleton giving strength to the sides. It will be removed later, when there is a back to take its place.

Next step: putting on a brace front

Photos: Tobias Widemann and Bruce White

