

# Itzel Ávila (M.A. Université de Montréal)

Itzel Ávila is a Mexican-Canadian violin maker and violinist who discovered the art of violin making as a teenager. She graduated with honours in violin performance from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and holds a Master's degree in the same discipline from the University of Montreal. As a Violin Maker, Itzel further perfected her skills in Cremona, Italy, and San Francisco, United States, under the supervision of Francis Kuttner, as well as in Montreal, under the supervision of Michèle Ashley. She has worked at the workshops Wilder & Davis in Montreal, and The Sound Post in Toronto. In 2010, she established her own workshop in Toronto, where she resides.

Very active in the international violin making scene, her instruments have participated in exhibitions in Italy, Netherlands, Germany, Canada and the United States. She is also a participant member of the annual Oberlin Violin Makers Workshop of the Violin Society of America.

Thanks to her integral formation as an interpreter and violin maker, her instruments are characterized by an ergonomic and comfortable playability, reliable responsiveness, and a clean and clear sound. She is also a photographer and mother of two kids.

[www.itzelavila.com](http://www.itzelavila.com)



# Gideon Baublatt and Mira Gruszow

The construction of a singing instrument has fascinated Gideon and Mira from the very beginning and brought them to Cremona at a young age. It's their common starting point on a path that took them to very different places and experiences and eventually reunited them on this quest after many years. While Mira finished her diploma at the Scuola di Liuteria, Gideon completed his education at the Mittenwald school. Mira spent several years with Isabelle Wilboux in Montreal discovering the world of new making. Gideon, on the other hand, focused on restoration of old Italian instruments in different workshops in Mainz and London. When they reunited in Montreal, they decided very naturally to put all their skills together and commit themselves entirely to making new instruments. Mira and Gideon now live with their two children on the borders of Berlin next to a beautiful lake. They participate in exhibitions and workshops in Europe and North America. The quality of their work has been recognized with several international awards.

“In the beginning, we worked independently, but soon we realized how complementary our skills were and how we could learn from each other's particular experiences. Since then, we have developed a way of working together on each instrument that leaves our workshop. Every instrument is planned by two minds and crafted by four hands. The infinite complexity of sound and the many possible ways of sculpting it in an instrument is a great source of inspiration and motivation for us. We always aim as high as we possibly can, as we have learned that the best musicians often are the best partners to work with. For us, the finished instrument represents the beginning of a rewarding journey where we continue to work with its player.”

# Arsenios Corbishley and Kristin Siegfried Ballenger

The CorbishFried DelGesu is a collaboration between Arsenios Corbishley and Kristin Siegfried Ballenger. After years of saying “We should build a violin together” we finally got to it. Kristin and Arsenios met while students at the Chicago School of Violin Making, drinking lots of coffee, eating too many Sparky’s(RIP) pancakes, and playing in the “Cat's Cradle String Quartet.”

After finishing school Arsenios returned to his native Oklahoma to open Corbishley Violins and spend a year as an artist in residence at the Skirvin Hotel. Since then he continues his new making, as well as offering the finest repairs and restoration as one of the finest luthiers in the state.

Kristin stayed in Chicago after graduating from CSVM and worked for Seman Violins doing restoration until 2018, after which she returned to the Chicago School of Violin Making as an instructor. She is currently teaching, doing new making, and on the Board of the Violin Society of America.

# Jesse Berndt

Jesse Berndt is a bowmaker in Minneapolis.

# Jedidjah de Vries

I see myself as a tool maker. My goal is to combine physics, history, and craft into the best possible tool I can for the musician and for the music. That's why I particularly enjoy collaborating closely with musicians to fine-tune their instruments.

I have been playing the violin since I was a young child. And while I enjoy playing, it was always the violin's sound that really attracted me to the instrument. I was captivated by the seemingly magical relationship between the music in my ears and the beautiful object in my hand. That magic is the result of the violin's ingenious design, its rich history, and the fine materials and craftsmanship that go into its creation.

I am a graduate of the North Bennet St. School's Violin Making and Repair program, where I studied under master luthier Roman Barnas. I have also had the opportunity to attend the renowned Hans Nebel's set-up and repair workshop, and have participated in the Oberlin Acoustics Workshop. I spent a number of years working at the Metzler Violin Shop in Los Angeles. I now live and work in Barcelona, where I primarily focus on making new instruments.

# Mike Dunham

Mike graduated in 2019 from the Violin Making School of America in Salt Lake City, studying with Charles Wolf, Sanghoon Lee, R Alex Wilson, and Aubrey Alexander. Mike's interest in making violins flowed naturally from many years of making simpler instruments, such as dulcimers and harps.

Prior to attending violin making school, Mike worked for more than 30 years in advanced materials research and new product development in many fields, most recently developing membranes and composites for cardiovascular medical devices. A PhD in Chemical Engineering provided an academic basis for this work, and now provides a starting point to learn about and use the complex natural materials in violin finishes.

Mike is excited to dive into the world of making violins, violas and cellos. The intense pleasure of hearing each instrument come to life as it is played for the first time is a special treat.

Mike makes and repairs violin-family instruments from his home in Brevard, NC, where he recently moved from Flagstaff, AZ.

Mike Dunham

Brevard, NC

928.853.0429

[midunham@mac.com](mailto:midunham@mac.com)

[www.highaspenstrings.com](http://www.highaspenstrings.com)

# Louis Gord

Louis Gord grew up in Angers in a family filled with artists and musicians. He studied viola at Angers's Musical Conservatory for twelve years and has played in orchestras and chamber music ensembles. His love for music and crafts pushed him to the service of performers and their instruments. In 2012, he graduated from the International Violin Making School of Mirecourt in France.

During his formation, he notably worked with Jérôme Doucet in Angers or Vatelot-Rampal in Paris, in the manufacturing, restoration and maintenance of ancient instruments. However he quickly started growing fond of instrumental contemporary making. After school, Louis did many work experiences with Angers's violin makers; Marcus Klimke and Antoine Cauche, then worked with Patrick Robin and his assistant Viateur Roy.

In January 2014, he became Isabelle Wilbaux's assistant in Montreal, Quebec. For their mutual work on a Viola, Isabelle and Louis won a fabrication credit certificate and a sonority credit certificate, during the 2014 Violin Society of America (VSA) competition in Indianapolis.

During the 2018 edition, in Cleveland, he gets a Certificat of merit for workmanship for a viola.

In June 2019, Isabelle and Louis separate activities, since the Louis works on his own creations.

Website : <https://louisgordluthier.com/>

Facebook : @louisgordluthier

Instagram : @louisgord

# Jeffrey Haas

Jeffrey is a former mechanical engineer for the US Army recently retiring after 37 years of service.

He holds a BS degree from Clarkson College and an MS Degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Jeffrey began his violinmaking studies with the late Geoffrey Ovington and later with Michael Darnton. He has continued to refine his skills as a participant in the Oberlin Violinmaking workshops.

The featured instrument is based on the Conte Vitali of 1676 and has a body length of 413mm.

In addition to building he enjoys playing contradance fiddle with the Albany, NY based Capital District Megaband.



# Marvin Hoekstra

Marvin Hoekstra is a Seattle area violin maker. His initial training was at the University of New Hampshire with Karl Roy. Since then he has worked with other violin-making professionals to add to his working skills and studied historic instruments to refine the character of his making. In addition to multiple violins, he has made a cello, a half-size violin, and is currently working on a viola.

# Adam Kology

Born in 1983, Adam Kology grew up in Rhode Island. After receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in sculpture, printmaking, and painting in 2007, he landed in Woodstock, New York. It was in Woodstock that he developed a love for folk music, woodworking, and the violin. A move to Boston in 2012 began his career as a luthier.

Today, Adam divides his time between working as Assistant Manager of the workshop at Carriage House Violins and constructing new instruments on classical models. He makes between two and four instruments a year and is a member of the VSA and the BVMA.

# Gary Leahy

After working in a variety of fields, award-winning bowmaker Gary Leahy trained in the repair and restoration of violins and bows in Christchurch, New Zealand, where he lived for six years. While there, he became increasingly fascinated by bows. He returned to Ireland in 2002 to train as a bowmaker. He set up his own workshop in 2005 in Newport, Co. Mayo, and apart from a year spent working in Paris, has been based there since.

His violin, viola and cello bows are very much inspired by French bowmaking of the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

He has won numerous prizes, including gold medals and certificates for violin, viola, and cello bows at Violin Society of America competitions in 2010, 2012, and 2018. And, Grand Prix de la Ville de Paris for a viola bow at the Etienne Vatelot competition in Paris in 2011.

# James Ropp, Violin Maker

James began playing violin at age 12 and was fascinated with how the violin worked. At the age of sixteen James met a local luthier, an emigrant from Norway who became a friend and then a mentor, teaching James his trade of making and repairing stringed instruments. Over the years, James repaired and sold violins with the skills he was taught, eventually making own violins. Making violins has remained a passion for him and he has dedicated a great amount of research and time to perfect his violins. James carefully crafts each violin using hand selected traditional European woods and computer sound analysis to achieve precise plate tuning. Customers often comment how much they love the incredible volume, the rich open sound and abundant overtones.



# Theodore Skreko

After being interested in art and music as a child Theodore Skreko started violin making at age fourteen. Throughout high school he worked for two different violin shops in Indianapolis before attending the Violin Making School of America in Salt Lake City, Utah for four years. Soon after Graduation Theodore and fellow classmate Chris Ulbricht started Indianapolis Violins in 2003. In 2019 Theodore left Indianapolis Violins to focus intensely on violin making.

Theodore is influenced by classic Italian instruments and inspired by modern made instruments as well. He firmly believes that violin making is in a new renaissance. The violins that Theodore makes are modeled after several Guarneri del Gesu, a G form Stradivari, and his own original and highly successful model. Violas are influenced by Gasparo da Salò and Andrea Guarneri. Skreko loves Venetian cellos.

Skreko instruments have won the following awards:

2004 Violin society of America certificate for tone Violin

2008 Violin Society of America silver medal for tone Viola

2010 Violin Society of America silver medal for tone Viola

2012 Violin Society of America certificate for tone Violin

2012 Art of Sound special prize “most creative” Violin

2018 Violin Society of America certificate for tone Viola

Theodore Skreko instruments are prized by many musicians for their strong and accessible sound, but also the lovely patinated look of a old friend.

## R. J. Storm

R. J. Storm is a working first class violin maker, dealer, and restorer now located in Beacon, NY USA. Rooted under the sound tutelage of David Meyer, John A. Roskosky-ex Wurlitzer, and further refined under John L. Rossi, and world class restorer, and ex-Wurlitzer, Carlos Arcieri. A Bluegrass 5-string banjo musician, a Doctor of Acupuncture, PRC, along with a passion for O gauge trains, biology, and vegetable farming, all serve to round out a busy and dynamic life spent under God, and beside his wife. Approaching 35 years of making, Dr. Storm has completed 148 instruments that are around the world, is a regular contributing columnist for national quarterly publication, Fiddler Magazine-(Mary Larsen, Los Altos, CA.), and is a current member of the Violin Society of America. Among many fine musicians, ---in the Bluegrass world, you can hear R.J. Storm violins from Jason Carter – of the Del McCoury Band, and Adam Haynes of the Grascals! Furthermore, he makes time to perpetuate the art by guiding apprentices, refining their skills, and preparing a new generation to carry on the art of violin making and restoration. Contact R.J. Storm by visiting him on “facebook”, under R.J. Storm – Violin Maker...and see many great pictures, email him at: [Propinquity9@hotmail.com](mailto:Propinquity9@hotmail.com), or call him with questions, comments, or inquiries, at: 845-313-8422.



# Chris Ulbricht

Chris Ulbricht is based in Indianapolis, IN where he owns and operates Indianapolis Violins (2003-present) with his wife Laura Barcelo. Chris began his training at the Violin Making School of America in Salt Lake City, and has continued his violin making education as a regular participant at the Oberlin Violin Maker's workshop. Chris is a maker of violins, violas, cellos and has been exploring guitar construction this year.

Chris divides his days between shop-work, and new-making. In his spare time Chris enjoys playing music with friends, and travelling with Laura (when that was a thing). Chris also serves on the VSA Board of Directors (2018-present) as the Chair of the New Instrument Exhibit, and on the programming committee where he works with his colleagues to make each convention as interesting and fun as the last.

# Katrina Vandermeersch – violinmaker

Katrina Vandermeersch was born in 1956 in Canada.

She received her training as a violinmaker at Cmb “Centrum voor Muziekinstrumenten Bouw”, Puurs / Belgium. Earned a master’s degree in music – specialization: Musical Instruments / violinmaking - School of the Arts in Ghent / Belgium

She is not only fascinated by the sound and the beauty of an instrument, but also by acoustical research and above all by baroque instruments. Her instruments are personal redesigned models based upon 17<sup>th</sup> Century models, Italian but also inspired by the Flemish School.

She works primarily with projects like the construction of the “basse de violon” (after G. Bourbon), the construction of a baroque 5 string cello or the making of a tenor viola (after Brothers Amati). Lately she also made a violoncello jazz 5 strings.

Most important festivals visited during the last two years: Boston Early Music Festival, US/ Utrecht Festival Oude Muziek, NI/ New Directions Cello Festival Köln, D/ Berkeley Early Music Festival, US/ Cello Festival Rüttesheim, D/ A.O.

2003 – 2006: professor “violinmaking” - School of the Arts - Ghent / Belgium

1990 – to date: studio for violinmaking - independent builder and repairer of string instruments.

**Katrina Vandermeersch**  
**Amalia Van Solmsstraat 19 – 2300 Turnhout / Belgium**  
[Info@luthier-vandermeersch.eu](mailto:Info@luthier-vandermeersch.eu)  
[www.luthier-vandermeersch.eu](http://www.luthier-vandermeersch.eu)  
**Mobile: 00/32/498.10.95.92**



# Isabelle Wilbaux

Born (1965) and raised in the ancient, culturally-rich city of Tournai, Belgium, Master Luthier Isabelle Wilbaux has been crafting her signature violins, violas, and cellos for more than three decades. Today, some of the world's most distinguished musicians play Wilbaux instruments: violinists Régis Pasquier and Laura Andriani, violist Sofia Gentile, cellist Gabriel Prynne and David Ellis among many others.

Musicians always comment on the power, warmth and beauty of tone in her instruments. This tone is the result of thousands of hours of research, experimentation, and hard work. Her instruments give players what they want most: an extraordinarily rich, balanced and sonorous palette of colours to work with.

Wilbaux received her diploma in 1988 from the International Violin Making School in Cremona, Italy. She went on to study for several years with Philippe Bodart in Besançon (France) and Jose-Maria Lozano in Madrid. She then opened her own workshop, first in Tournai, then in Brussels, and finally in Montreal, where she has thrived since 1998.

#### **Prizes and awards** include:

The Violin Society of America – Silver medal for tone (violin), 2004

The Violin Society of America – Various prizes for tone and workmanship: violins, violas, cellos and quartets, between 1998 and 2018

Concours international de lutherie et d'archèterie de la ville de Paris – Bronze medal, violin, 1999

Fondation belge de la vocation prize, 1995

Cremona Triennale International – Three prizes, including the Sacconi Prize, viola, 1994

Mittenwald International Violin Making Competition – Prize for best tone, violin, 1993

#### Member of:

[American Federation of Violin and Bow Maker](#) (board member)

[Violin Society of America](#)

[EILA](#)

[Makers' Forum](#)

Website: [www.wilbaux.com](http://www.wilbaux.com)

**WILBAUX**  
luthier

Isabelle Wilbaux - Luthier  
1134 rue de Bellechasse  
Montréal, (Québec) H2S 1Y6  
514.270.1661 wilbaux.com