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'Violin playing is important in Cypriot culture' - My Space: Michalis Pantelides

19 APRIL 2023



Visit Cyprus's only professional violin workshop



Middle left: On the left, I have a selection of older instruments, while on the right I have newer ones. This caters for the two types of customer; professional musicians will be more interested in the finer examples, while student players go for the cheaper option.

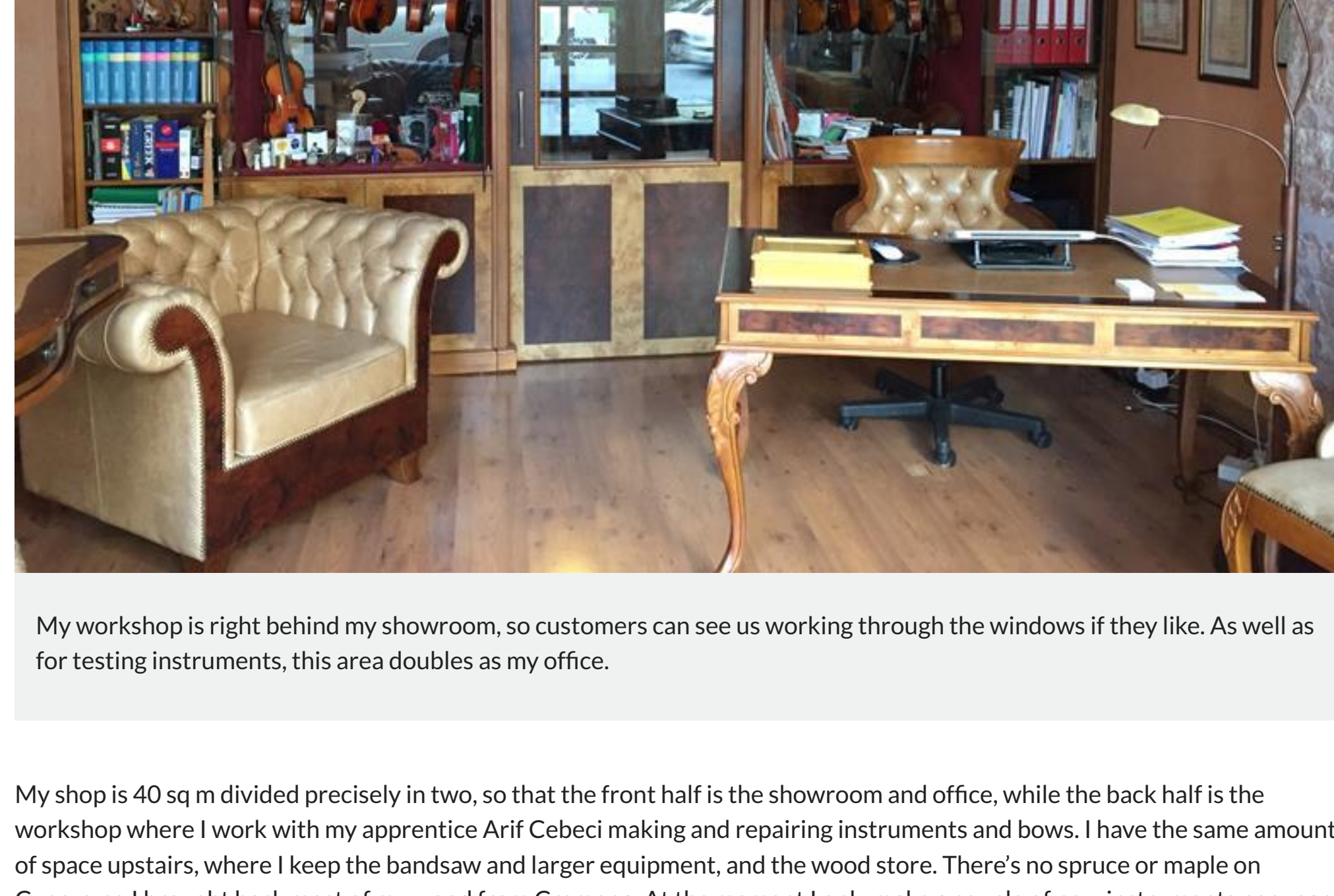
Bottom right: I'm currently working on a new violin based on a 1705 Stradivari; I only have the fingerplate left to carve. When I was in Cremona I had the chance to copy the outlines of Antonio's original moulds, and this one is based on the 'P' form.

Bottom middle: I have a fixed workbench, maybe slightly higher than normal, but a chair that I can move up and down to compensate. It's a swivel chair but I usually have it fixed in one position while I'm working. I've worked this way since my days in Cremona.

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I was born in Nicosia, so it was natural for me to set up a workshop here. I opened MP Violins in 2006, after returning from Cremona where I spent five years at the Violin Making School, two years learning bow making with Giovanni Lucchi, and then an apprenticeship with Toshiyuki Matsushita. I believe I'm the only Cypriot ever to have learnt violin making in Cremona, and mine is still the only professional violin workshop in Nicosia, although there are one or two amateur makers and repairers around the island. Violin playing is quite important in Cypriot culture; it features in a lot of our traditional folk music, and it's customary to have a violin and lute playing at wedding ceremonies. There's also a professional orchestra based in Nicosia, as well as a youth symphony orchestra and the University of Cyprus has recently set up a programme to foster young violin talent, so there's always plenty of work!



My workshop is right behind my showroom, so customers can see us working through the windows if they like. As well as for testing instruments, this area doubles as my office.

My shop is 40 sq m divided precisely in two, so that the front half is the showroom and office, while the back half is the workshop where I work with my apprentice Arif Cebeci making and repairing instruments and bows. I have the same amount of space upstairs, where I keep the bandsaw and larger equipment, and the wood store. There's no spruce or maple on Cyprus, so I brought back most of my wood from Cremona. At the moment I only make a couple of new instruments per year, as I'm so busy with repair work. Musicians here like to have new instruments, though, and I can always find a buyer.

I noticed a lot of changes during and after the pandemic. Most of the younger students gave up learning the violin completely because of the lack of tuition, but on the other hand, some of the adults decided to start learning from scratch - they said it had always been a dream of theirs to learn. For me there was less work for a few months but at least it gave me more time for making new instruments!

INTERVIEW BY CHRISTIAN LLOYD

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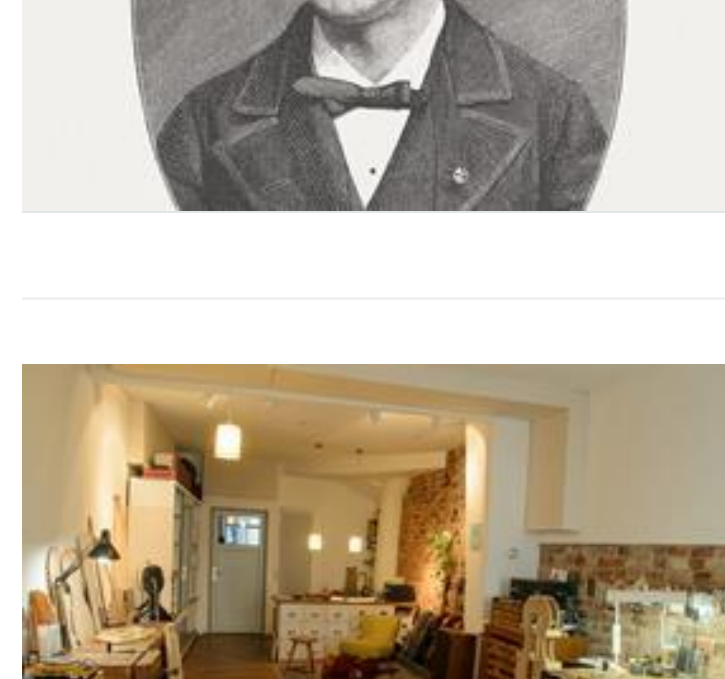
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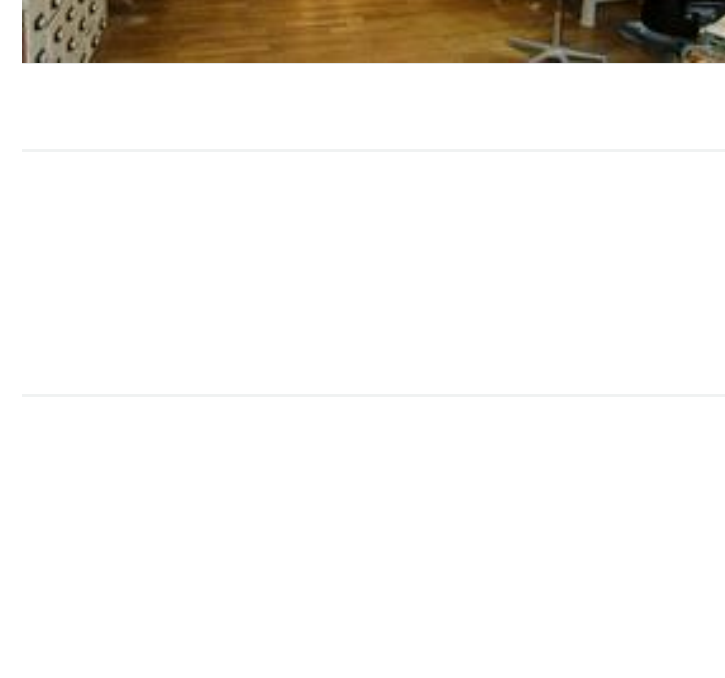
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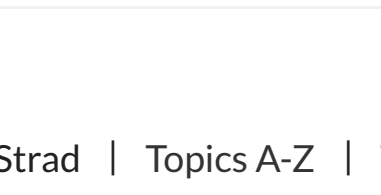
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