

Further reading on strings

1. Primary sources, in chronological order

Praetorius, Michael: *Syntagma Musicum* (Wolfenbüttel, 1614-20), ii: *De Organographia*, Chap. 22, ‘Violin’; *Sciagraphia*, pls. V, VI, XX, XXI; iii: *Termini Musici*, p.155.

Diagrams clearly show very thick lower strings, implying equal tension. Mentions wire-strung violins – sweeter toned than gut!

Rognoni Taegio, Francesco: *Selva di varii passaggi* (Milan, 1620), parte seconda, preface. Modern edition by Arnaldo Forni Editore, 2002; English translation by Bruce Dickey.

Comments on harshness of violin tone, and care in bowing technique required.

Master, Thomas (1603-1643): ‘On lute-strings catt-eaten’, reprinted in D. Foster: *In Praise of Cats, an Anthology* (London, 1975)

Entertaining poem featuring expensive lute-strings and a cat.

Playford, John: *A brief introduction to the skill of music* (London, 4/1664).

First published mention of wound strings.

Burwell, Mary: *Instruction Book for the Lute* (MS, c1670, facs. Ed., 1974), Chapter 4: ‘Of the strings of the lute, and stringing thereof’

Recommends treble strings from Rome and thicker strings from Lyon. Strings should be smooth, well-twisted, clear, even, strong and of ‘even stiffness’.

Mace, Thomas: ‘Stringing’, in *Musick’s Monument* (London, 1676).

Three types of string: Minikins (treble), Venice-Catlins (mid-range and bass – Pistoy is the name for a bass Venice-Catlin), and Lyons (for bass – not as good as Pistoy). No mention of wound strings

Rousseau, Jean: ‘Dissertation sur l’origine’, *Traité de la Viole* (Paris, 1687), p.24; and ch. 5, ‘Des Chordes, & de l’Archet’.

Credits Sainte-Colombe with bringing wound strings to France in the 1670s for use on the new 7th string.

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Further reading on strings

1. Primary sources - continued

Colco, Serafino di: ‘Lettera Prima’ (Venice, 7 Jan 1690), *Le Vegghie di Minerva nella Academia di Filareti*. Cited in Barbieri (1985) and Webber (1999).

Describes method for finding true equal tension.

Talbot, James: (MS, c1694, Oxford, Christ Church Library 1187); partial transcription in Donington (1950).

Describes all-gut stringing for violins and relative gauges between instruments. Notes that bass viols and bass violins may occasionally have a wound lowest string.

Raguenet, François: *Parallele des Italiens et des Français* (Paris, 1702); Eng. Trans. Attributed to J.E. Galliard, 1709; repr. In Oliver Strunk: *Source Readings in Music History, iii: the Baroque Era* (New York, 1950), pp.113-28.

Italian violins use much thicker strings than the French, and sound twice as loud. Interesting when compared with Mersenne’s remarks on the violin!

Brossard, Sebastien de: [Fragments of a violin method] c 1712 (MS, Paris Bibliotheque Nationale, Mus Rés. Vm8 c 1), fol 12. Cited in Barbieri 1985.

Describes overspun G and demi-filée D as alternative to gut; overspun G “a little” thicker than D – implies thick gut core.

Carli, Gianrinaldo: Letter to Tartini, 21st August 1743, in *Delle Opere*, xiv (Milan, 1786), pp338-43. Cited in Barbieri 1985.

Tartini credited with increasing thickness of strings.

Mozart, Leopold: ‘Introduction: of stringed instruments, and in particular the violin’, *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (Augsburg, 1756), Eng. Trans. Editha Knocker (London, 2/1951).

Violin should be strung with ‘rather thick’ strings in equal tension.

Riccati, Count Giordano: *Delle Corde ovvero fibre elastiche* (Venice, 1767). Cited in Barbieri 1985.

First evidence of graded tension stringing.

For secondary sources: see next page

Further reading on strings

2. Secondary sources, in alphabetical order

Barbieri, Patrizio: ‘Giordano Riccati on the diameters of strings and pipes’, *Galpin Society Journal*, xxxviii (1985), 20-34.

Barbieri, Patrizio: Roman and Neapolitan Gut Strings 1550-1950, *Galpin Society Journal*, lix (2006), 147-182.

Bonta, Stephen: ‘From violone to violoncello: a question of strings?’, *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*, iii (1977), 64-99.

Larson, Daniel: ‘The inside story of gut strings’, *British Violin Makers’ Association Newsletter*, no.11 (Spring 1998), 9-17.

Peruffo, Mimmo: ‘Italian violin strings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: typographies, manufacturing techniques and principles of stringing’, *Recercare*, ix (1997), 155-201.

Peruffo, Mimmo: ‘The mystery of gut bass strings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the role of loaded-weighted gut’, *Recercare*, v (1993), 115-51.

Segerman, Ephraim: *The Strad*, ic (1989, no.1173, ‘Strings through the ages’ (pt.1); no.1175, ‘Highly strung’ (pt.2); no.1176, ‘Deep tensions’ (pt.3)).

Stoppani, George: ‘Gut’, *Early Music Today*, vii/3 (1999), 6-7.

Webber, Oliver: ‘Real Gut Strings: Some New Experiments in Historical Stringing’, *The Consort*, Vol. 55, (Summer 1999), 3-29.

Webber, Oliver: ‘Rethinking Gut Strings: a guide for Players of Baroque Instruments’, King’s Music 2006