

# OPEN STUDIO



Luthiers loosen up  
 at the Oberlin Violin  
 Making Workshop

BY PATRICK SULLIVAN

Some, like, and high-stakes competition: If popular mythology is even half right, the history of violin making has a lot in common with a James Bond movie. One thinks of luthiers (colloquially granting their souls various virtues), of legendary German maker Jacob Stainer collecting his own wood in the mountains because he trusted no one else to do it right, of Stradivari becoming the town of Italy while Giuseppe Guarneri lowered its obscurity just down the street, of the terrible illness suffered by the craft in Brescia when Giovanni Paolo Maggini died during the plague of 1632 before he found the time or inclination to train a successor.

In short, violin makers don't sound like the sort of people who would suddenly quit their lonely studios to assemble in the back of an art museum in Oberlin, Ohio, and spill the most intimate secrets of their craft to a room full of distinguished competitors.

But that's exactly what happens every summer at the Oberlin Violin Making Workshop. "We have leading makers from all over the world coming together and sharing insights," explains Christopher Grenada, 44, the workshop's founder and director. "Everyone shares, and everyone learns. It's the best of the best working together."