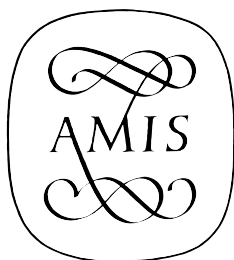


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Guido Chigi Saracini, Leandro Bisiach, and Five Bowed String Instruments at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena

GIORGIO FARABEGOLI AND CESARE MANCINI

The Accademia Musicale Chigiana (Chigiana Musical Academy) in Siena, today a prestigious musical institute, was founded in 1932 by the will of Count Guido Chigi Saracini, a Sienese patron, who succeeded, thanks to his personal prestige and determination, in bringing his city to the level of the most important ones for musical enhancement and promotion.

The count, animated by his passion for musical art, dedicated all his resources to spread the musical culture to as many people as possible, but also, in his own words, to create “a school for young people, out of the Conservatories . . . a school that gives the guarantees of a test, the strength of an incitement, the enthusiasm for the realization of a dream.”¹ To improve the beauty of a musical performance, it is necessary that the performer, in addition to his personal mastery and ability, might use the best musical instruments available. Therefore, the count, for his purpose of spreading art and musical culture in the best way, dedicated himself at the beginning of the twentieth century also to acquiring many excellent musical instruments, to entrust them to deserving teachers and students of his Accademia Chigiana, so that they could offer performances of the highest level, especially in sound. In addition to this strong determination to acquire musical instruments contributing to the continual improvement of musical performances of teachers and students, a plain collector’s intent was also evident.

The original nucleus of the collection of musical instruments was a group of five bowed string instruments, all of the “d’amore” type. Made by the Italian luthier Leandro Bisiach between 1903 and 1915, they included two violins, a viola, a cello, and a viola pomposa. Although these five instruments were not originally made in the same year, they were nevertheless updated and revised in April 1915, on the occasion of the

1. Danilo Verzili, *Le grandi creature musicali del Conte Guido Chigi Saracini* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1966), xiii–xiv.



FIGURE 1. Photo of Count Guido Chigi Saracini playing the piano. Courtesy of Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, Italy.

sale to Count Guido Chigi Saracini, so that they constitute a unicum, having the same organological characteristics. These modern instruments were inspired, in style and sonority, by the Baroque era and constituted, then and now, the backbone of the museum housed in the Palazzo Chigi Saracini, seat of the Accademia Musicale Chigiana.

Guido Chigi Saracini and the Accademia Musicale Chigiana

Guido Chigi Saracini (fig. 1) was born in Siena in 1880 to an ancient family of the greatest Italian nobility, which could boast a pope, Alexander VII (1599–1667), among its major exponents, but also ancestors with strong musical attitudes and passions.²

Count Guido Chigi Saracini followed the passion of his family and ancestors, studying harmony and composition at the “Luigi Cherubini” conservatory in Florence. His musical studies continued until 1906, when his uncle Fabio Chigi Saracini died, leaving him the only heir of his huge family heritage.³ He decided to drop out of the conservatory in order to

2. “Chigi Saracini, Guido,” *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 24 (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 1980).

3. “Chigi Saracini, Guido,” *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*; Danilo Verzili, *Le grandi*

devote himself to the management of the inheritance, but he kept a great love for music, and continued to devote himself to it, especially from an entrepreneurial point of view, organizing concerts in his city, Siena. His first major musical patronage intervention was aimed at the creation of the Quintetto Senese (Sienese Quintet), performers on bowed strings and piano.⁴

The concerts of the Quintetto Senese were financed by Guido Chigi Saracini, while the related receipts from the sale of tickets were donated to charity. We note the spirit of patronage of the count, who, from these events, lost economically, but gained in love for the musical art, which was put at the service and benefit of Siena and all its people, in order to elevate their culture. Regarding his business, he used to call himself “a lyric impresario always at a loss,” but had the honor of being defined by others, thanks to his love for art *tout court*, as “the last patron” and “the last romantic gentleman.”⁵

The count participated as a volunteer in the First World War for the sake of his country, carrying out the service of motorist for the Red Cross between May 1915 and July 1917. During his military service, he became severely ill with broncho-pneumonia, so he was initially hospitalized in Udine and then spent his convalescence period in Quercianella (in Tuscany, near Livorno) as a guest of the marquises Clara and Ottaviano Lenzi.⁶

Among the assets the count inherited was an old and unstable palace in via di Città, which he decided to restore, in order to give his city of Siena something beautiful, which would elevate it, not only from the artistic and architectural side, but also from the musical one.⁷ In 1923, Guido Chigi Saracini created a concert season, which took its name from the motto of the Chigi family “Micat in Vertice” (it shines on the top); it begins every

creature musicali del Conte Guido Chigi Saracini, ix.

4. Pelia Piangerelli, *Omaggio di Siena a Verdi con la Messa da Requiem* (Siena: Tipografia e Litografia Sordomuti Ditta L. Lazzeri, 1913), 39.

5. *Le grandi creature musicali del Conte Guido Chigi Saracini*, ix and xvii.

6. Giuliano Catoni and Guido Burchi, *Alla corte d'Armonia. Immagini e testimonianze su Guido Chigi Saracini* (Siena: Accademia Musicale Chigiana, 2005), 45; Guido Chigi Saracini, *Ricordanze di Guido Chigi Saracini*, ed. Olga Rudge (Siena: Arti Grafiche Ticci, 1958), 19.

7. Arturo Viligiardi, “Lettera,” in *Nel giorno della consacrazione della sala Chigi Saracini alla musica*, (Siena: Società arti grafiche San Bernardino, 1923), 13.



FIGURE 2. Photo of the Quintetto Chigiano with its rare but conventional string instruments during a tour in Paris, 22 October 1954. Copy owned by one of the two authors.

year on 22 November, the feast of Santa Cecilia, patron saint of music.⁸

In 1932, the count founded his major institution, the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, a school of high musical specialization, for the education and enhancement of energetic young artists who honed their talents, following the guidance of important masters in an open and stimulating environment. The Accademia Musicale Chigiana was not to be a center of basic studies like many others; rather, in the words that the Count pronounced in 1941 in the main hall of the University of Siena, it was created to be “a school for young people who, after leaving the conservatories, yearn for their first flights, because they feel the strength of their wings; a school that gives the warranty of a test, the strength of an incitement, the enthusiasm of the realization of a dream.”⁹

Guido Chigi Saracini did not stop at creating the Micat in Vertice concert season in 1923 and the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in 1932,

8. *Le grandi creature musicali del Conte Guido Chigi Saracini*, xii.

9. *Le grandi creature musicali del Conte Guido Chigi Saracini*, xiii–xiv. Original quote in Italian: “una scuola per i giovani che, usciti dai Conservatori, anelano ai primi voli, perché sentono la forza delle loro ali; una scuola che dia le garanzie di un collaudo, la forza di un incitamento, l’entusiasmo della realizzazione di un sogno.”

but continued to follow his love for music as a supreme form of art to be spread in the best ways and to the broadest layers of the population. Seven years later, in 1939, the count established the festival of the Settimane Musicali Senesi (Siena Musical Weeks), which had been held every year in September, at the end of the summer courses of the Accademia Chigiana. In the same year, the count created the Quintetto Chigiano, composed of Riccardo Brengola and Mario Benvenuti on violins, Giovanni Leone on viola, Lino Filippini on cello, and Sergio Lorenzi on piano (fig. 2).¹⁰

Even these two new creations by Guido Chigi Saracini furthered his specific purpose of bringing “the knowledge and penetration of musical masterpieces to the widest possible audience, awakening the interest in music.”¹¹ In his Chigi Saracini palace in Siena, the count adapted three rooms to store and exhibit his personal collection of musical instruments, which he also lent to the musicians of the Quintetto Chigiano, equipping them with instruments of excellent quality for optimal results in their performances in Italy and abroad. These were, in a reviewer’s words: “a Camillo Camilli violin for the throbs of Riccardo Brengola, a Giambattista Guadagnini violin for the caresses of Mario Benvenuti, a Nicola Amati viola for Giovanni Leone’s angel thrills, and an Antonio Stradivari cello . . . for Lino Filippini’s withheld lusts.”¹²

Within the collection, the Camilli violin (no. 71) dates from 1737, the Guadagnini violin (formerly no. 15, no longer part of the collection) dates from 1744, and the Nicolò Amati violin (no. 56) dates from the seventeenth century.¹³ Regarding the “Chigiano” cello by Stradivari (no. 72), there is a dating discrepancy between the catalog of the museum and *The Strad Calendar* 2018; the first reports that the internal label reads “Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis fecit anno 1682,” while the second reports that

10. *Alla corte d'Armonia. Immagini e testimonianze su Guido Chigi Saracini*, 67.

11. *Le grandi creature musicali del Conte Guido Chigi Saracini*, XIII. Original quote in Italian: “la conoscenza e la penetrazione dei capolavori musicali nel più vasto pubblico possibile, risvegliando l’interesse per la musica.”

12. F.A., “Concerto del Quintetto Chigiano,” *Corriere della Sera*, 24 April 1951, 2. Original quote in Italian: “un violino Camillo Camilli per i palpiti di Riccardo Brengola, un violino Giambattista Guadagnini per le carezze di Mario Benvenuti, una viola Nicola Amati per i fremiti d’angelo di Giovanni Leone ed un violoncello Antonio Stradivari . . . per le trattenute concupiscenze di Lino Filippini.”

13. *Accademia Musicale Chigiana. Il Museo degli Strumenti Musicali. Catalogo* (Siena: Accademia Musicale Chigiana, 1995), 13–32.

“the date is given as circa 1680, although there is no original label within the instrument.”¹⁴

Leandro Bisiach and his Bowed String Instruments “d’amore”

During the restoration of his palace, Guido Chigi Saracini invited the famous luthier Leandro Bisiach to stay, from 1916, in his city “to restore his collection of instruments and establish a museum featuring them.”¹⁵ The previous year, 1915, Guido Chigi Saracini had bought a group of bowed string instruments from the same luthier, which formed the backbone of the museum to come.¹⁶

Giuseppe Bisiach (fig. 3), called Leandro, was born in Casale Monferrato in 1864, studied violin making with Riccardo Antoniazzi, and opened his workshop in Milan in 1886. In 1900, he “was regarded as one of the most important violin makers of his generation [and] his instruments had won many awards at the great international competitions,” namely London and Atlanta in 1895, Turin in 1898, Paris in 1900, Milan in 1906, and Brussels in 1910.¹⁷ Major virtuosos of bowed instruments from all over the world entrusted him with their most precious Stradivari, Guarneri, or other instruments for repairs and adjustments, and also commissioned copies of them for daily study, reserving the originals for their own concerts in public.¹⁸

Leandro Bisiach had four sons: Andrea, Carlo, Giacomo, and Leandro. They were the last luthiers of the Bisiach family, as their own children did not continue the profession. To distinguish the father from the son of the

14. *Accademia Musicale Chigiana. Il Museo degli Strumenti Musicali. Catalogo*; John Dilworth, “Stradivarius ‘Chigiano’ cello, 1680,” *The Strad Calendar* 2018, accessed 7 February 2022, <https://www.thestrاد.com/lutherie/from-the-strad-calendar-2018-stradivarius-chigiano-cello-1680/7361.article>.

15. Dmitry Gindin, “Leandro Bisiach Sr., part 2,” 9 December 2014, <https://tarisio.com/cozio-archive/cozio-carteggio/leandro-bisiach-sr-part-ii/>.

16. “Nota degli istrumenti classici di proprietà del Conte Guido Chigi Saracini,” handwritten register kept at the Accademia Chigiana; end of 1910s, updated between 1922 and 1924.

17. Philip J. Kass, “The Bisiach Family Heritage,” *World of Strings* (Philadelphia: William Moennig & Sons Ltd., 1983), 1.

18. Benvenuto Disertori, “Leandro Bisiach ideatore ed artefice d’un nuovo quartetto d’amore,” *Rivista musicale italiana*, 48/1 (1946), 184–85.



FIGURE 3. The luthier Leandro Bisiach senior playing one of his violins. Courtesy of Massimo Bisiach, his grandson.

same name, the father is commonly indicated as Leandro Bisiach senior and the son as Leandro Bisiach junior. In the rest of the article, reference will always be made to the father luthier, naming him Leandro Bisiach for simplicity, without inserting “senior”.

A rather original activity of Leandro Bisiach was the creation of “instruments similar in sound and structure to the viola d’amore, but which could certainly be played by the normal violinist, violist and cellist . . . and eminently suitable for performing the specific pre-classic repertoire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.”¹⁹ The viola d’amore, “popular during the late seventeenth century and the eighteenth . . . is about the size of a viola but has physical characteristics of a viol: a flat back, wide ribs flush with the top and back, sloping shoulders, and a carved head (typically a blindfolded cupid) surmounting the pegbox.”²⁰

This instrument may have earned the denomination “d’amore” for the two following reasons: visual, because its scroll has the form of

19. Ibid., 184–85. Original quote in Italian: “strumenti analoghi per sonorità e struttura alla viola d’amore, ma che potessero essere senz’altro padroneggiati dal violinista, violista e cellista normali . . . ed eminentemente adatti all’esecuzione dello specifico repertorio preclassico del sei e settecento.”

20. Myron Rosenblum, “Viola d’amore,” *The Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments* 5, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 214.



FIGURE 4. Scroll, in the form of a blindfolded Cupid, of the cello d'amore made by Leandro Bisiach in 1904 and updated in 1915. Courtesy of Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, Italy.

a blindfolded cupid, which represents the blindness of love (fig. 4); and sonic, “from the soft and tender quality of the tone produced from it.”²¹ These “soft and tender tones” are produced by “the sympathetic vibrations of the open metal strings stretched over the belly in unison with those on the finger-board.”²² Historical violas d’amore “have 5–7, but mostly 6 or 7 playing strings. They may have the same number of sympathetic strings but they may also have more, less or no sympathetic strings.”²³ This follows a law of physics, according to which, “a body set in vibration will cause another body having the same frequency of vibration to sound when within reach of its influence.”²⁴ The instruments d’amore by Bisiach, although having F-holes (or sound holes) in the shape of a flame, have very little to do with the viola d’amore as it was known in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and even on into the nineteenth and twentieth. In Bisiach’s instruments, we can see features closer to a violin than to a viola d’amore both from the overhanging edges, built like violins (violas d’amore normally do not have the edges of the top and back plates projecting beyond the ribs), and the number of main and resonance strings, which were four, instead of five-to-seven of the classic d’amore instruments. This closeness to the violin idea is also noticeable in the tuning: the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century viola d’amore had no single fixed tuning, but the Bisiach’s instruments d’amore were tuned in fifths, like the violin. This choice was made by Bisiach specifically to provide modern instrumentalists the possibility of playing instruments equipped with resonance strings, without the need for particular study, as they were equipped with the usual four bowed strings.²⁵

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a renewed interest in the viola d’amore had arisen, following a renewed interest for music of the Baroque era.²⁶ Louis van Waefelghem (1840–1908), a Belgian

21. A. J. Hipkins, *Musical Instruments. Historic, Rare and Unique* (London: A. and C. Black, Ltd., 1921), 63.

22. Morris Steinert, *The M. Steinert Collection of Keyed and Stringed Instruments* (New York: Charles F. Tretbar, 1893), 143.

23. Marianne Rônez-Kubitschek and Ernst Kubitschek, “About the Viola D’amore,” International Viola d’amore Society. <https://www.violadamosociety.org/en/viola-damore/about-the-violadamore>.

24. Hipkins, *Musical Instruments*, 63.

25. Natale e Franco Gallini, *Museo degli strumenti musicali. Catalogo. Castello Sforzesco* (Milan: Stabilimenti Alfieri & Lacroix, 1963), 28.

26. For earlier use of the viola d’amore, see Rachael Durkin, *The Viola*

violinist and violist, devoted himself entirely to the revival and study of the viola d'amore, composing several works and making transcriptions for this instrument. The composer and violist Henri-Gustave Casadesus (1879–1947) founded the Société des Instruments Anciens with Camille Saint-Saëns in 1901; the Society was a quintet of performers who played ancient instruments such as the viola da gamba, or Henri's own instrument, the viola d'amore. The composer, violist, violinist, and conductor Paul Hindemith (1895–1963) not only played viola d'amore as a soloist, but also composed precisely for this instrument his *Kammermusik* No. 6, op. 46 no. 1 (1927), a concerto for viola d'amore and chamber orchestra.

Between 1900 and 1903, following on this rediscovery and renewed interest in the Baroque period and the viola d'amore, the luthier Bisiach conceived and created a quartet of d'amore instruments, made up of two violins, a viola and a cello, “equipped however with the usual four strings tuned for fifths, and additionally equipped with resonance strings.”²⁷

The first news of a concert held using Bisiach's instruments d'amore dates from Sunday, 31 May 1903, as we read in an article published in the *Corriere della Sera*, which reported the news of a private execution “in the house of Commendatore Jacopo Baisini, in front of an audience of musicians and amateurs,” even if it did not yet refer to a quartet d'amore. “The attempt can be said to be completely successful. . . . [T]he instruments d'amore built by Bisiach revealed all their merits—still fresh and alive—and they proved to be especially suitable for performances in environments of modest size, where the acoustic effect can be complete even when using the bow with much delicacy.”²⁸

In another two articles published in the *Corriere della Sera*, a further concert of instruments d'amore was announced, in which pieces by Porpora and Tartini will be performed for the first time “with string

d'Amore: Its History and Development (Abington and New York: Routledge, 2020); Marianne Róñez-Kubitschek and Ernst Kubitschek, “About the Viola D'amore,” <https://www.violadamoresociety.org/en/viola-damore/about-the-viola-damore>.

27. “Bisiach, Giuseppe, detto Leandro,” *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Volume 10, (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 1968). Original quote in Italian: “due violini, viola e violoncello . . . armati però delle solite quattro corde accordati per quinte, e in più forniti di corde di risonanza, variabili da quattro a sei.”

28. “Un concerto di ‘strumenti d'amore,’” *Corriere della Sera*, 3 June 1903. Original quote in Italian: “Il tentativo può dirsi completamente riuscito. . . . gli *strumenti d'amore* costruiti dal Bisiach rivelarono—ancora freschi e vivi—tutti i loro pregi e si dimostrarono specialmente adatti alle esecuzioni in ambienti non molto grandi, dove l'effetto acustico possa aversi completo pure usando l'arco con molta delicatezza.”



FIGURE 5. The five male musicians who played Bisiach's five instruments d'amore in 1914. From left, Alfredo Codevilla, Mario Adaglio, Italo Prati, Icilio Pinfari, and Luigi Gasperini. In the center is Maria Olper, who played an ancient harpsichord. Photo courtesy of Massimo Bisiach, grandson of Leandro Bisiach senior.

instruments of ancient style (quartetto d'amore), recently built by the luthier Bisiach."²⁹ This concert was held on the evening of 25 April 1904 at the Milan conservatory, including:

two beautiful pieces of music of the eighteenth century, a sonata a quattro by Tartini and the aforementioned sonata for violin and piano by Porpora, in which the instruments d'amore were played. . . . The public seemed greatly to enjoy such a renewal, because they wanted to applaud their builder onstage, the luthier Bisiach.³⁰

Another significant concert took place on 4 February 1914 in Milan, described in an article from the *Corriere della Sera*, which was performed

29. "Notizie Artistiche. Un Concerto patriottico," *Corriere della Sera*, 24 April 1904.

30. "Notizie Artistiche. Concerto Trentino," *Corriere della Sera*, 26 April 1904. Original quote in Italian: "e due bellissimi pezzi di musica del XVIII secolo, una *Sonata a quattro* di Tartini e la succitata *Sonata* per violino e piano di Porpora, nella cui esecuzione fu ricorso agli *strumenti d'amore*. . . . Il pubblico parve gustar molto tale *rinnovazione*, poiché volle salutare con applausi al proscenio il loro costruttore, il liutista Bisiach."

using a quartet d'amore by Bisiach with the addition of a viola pomposa, forming a sort of quintetto d'amore. In this event, held in the hall of the Cova restaurant in Milan, overlooking the Piazza della Scala, music "by composers who lived between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" was performed by a quartet d'amore plus a viola pomposa, which "has the shape and proportions of a cello" and ten strings—five main strings and five resonance strings.³¹ The writer of the article reports these impressions about the instruments d'amore:

The four instruments produce a sound worthy of eight. Each of them, in addition to the four bowed strings, has another four underneath, which are asked only to vibrate, to produce an echo of what they have heard. . . . They are called sympathetic strings.³²

In fig. 5, we see a photo of the five musicians who played the five instruments d'amore made by Leandro Bisiach. A version was printed in the *Corriere della Sera* article regarding the concert on 4 February 1914.

At the Museo degli Strumenti Musicali in Milan, housed in the rooms of the Castello Sforzesco, there are several instruments d'amore made by Leandro Bisiach in 1900 (a cello) and in 1903 (a viola and two violins), which could be those played in the private concert on 31 May 1903 at Jacopo Baisini's house in Milan.³³ The date of the performance is perfectly compatible with the date of creation of these instruments d'amore; in fact, in the article cited above, it is written that they had been "recently manufactured by Bisiach."³⁴ Moreover, at the same museum, there are other instruments d'amore by Bisiach, having the following dates of manufacture and inventory numbers: viola (1890, no. 22), violin (1905, no. 23), viola (1904, no. 24).³⁵ Other instruments d'amore made by Leandro

31. "Un concerto settecentesco con velade, parrucche e istrumenti antichi," *Corriere della Sera*, 5 February 1914, 3.

32. Ibid. Original quote in Italian: "I quattro istrumenti producono una sonorità degna di otto. Ciascuno di essi, oltre le quattro corde su cui scorre l'arco, ne possiede altre quattro sotto, le quali sono pregate unicamente di vibrare, di produrre come un'eco di quanto hanno udi. . . . Si chiamano *corde simpatiche*."

33. These musical instruments have the following inventory numbers: 27 (violin d'amore), 28 (violin d'amore), 29 (viola d'amore), 30 (cello d'amore). Andrea Gatti, *Museo degli Strumenti Musicali* (Milan: Electa, 1997), 33–56.

34. "Un concerto di 'strumenti d'amore,'" *Corriere della Sera*, 3 June 1903.

35. Andrea Gatti, *Museo degli Strumenti Musicali*, 33–56.

Bisiach can be found at the Museo della Musica in Venice (a 1909 viola with five main strings plus five resonance strings, Artemio Versari collection) and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (a 1913 viola pomposa d'amore with five main strings plus five resonance strings).

The Five Instruments d'amore at the Accademia Chigiana

The museum of musical instruments of the Accademia Chigiana in Siena has a quartet of d'amore instruments made by Leandro Bisiach in conventional sizes (violin, violin, viola, cello), with the addition of a viola pomposa, the five purchased in full by the count in April 1915, a month before his departure as a volunteer for military service in the First World War. This purchase date appears in a handwritten register entitled "Nota degli strumenti classici di proprietà del Conte Guido Chigi Saracini" (note of classical instruments owned by Count Guido Chigi Saracini), kept at the Accademia Chigiana. The register also provides us with other information about these five instruments by Bisiach, which constitute the initial nucleus of the museum established by Guido Chigi Saracini

In the register of the count, we read that the five bowed instruments d'amore were made by Bisiach in 1904 (viola d'amore) and in 1915 (the other four). However, these dates conflict with the "illustrative notes" in the last column, where it is written that the first four instruments listed are those of the "first quartet d'amore manufactured by the luthier Bisiach." Leandro Bisiach had made the instruments, which he then sold to the count as a quartet, as used in a public performance at the Royal Conservatory of Milan on 25 April 1904, as written in the register: "The first performance with this quartet was made at the Royal Conservatory of Milan, then in Bergamo, Turin, and other cities."³⁶

The register also reports that some instruments of the quartet were made by Bisiach "in 1915," so they could not have played in 1904 at the Milan Conservatory. However, reading the labels inside the instruments of the quartet d'amore of the Accademia Chigiana, it appears that three out of four are dated 1903 and 1904, while one, the violin d'amore no. 76,

36. *Nota degli strumenti classici di proprietà del Conte Guido Chigi Saracini*. Original quote in Italian: "La prima esecuzione con questo quartetto fu fatta al R.° Conservatorio di Milano, quindi a Bergamo, Torino ed altre città."

bears the words “made in Milan 1915,” but with the word “made” written in pen over the word “repaired,” which is largely erased. Therefore, it can also be assumed that no. 76 was produced in 1903 or 1904. Supporting this assumption, the violin d’amore no. 75 bears the original year of production 1903, with the subsequent inscription “made [instead of “repaired,” which is deleted] in Milan 1915.”

We can suppose that the luthier Bisiach, on the occasion of the sale of his instruments d’amore to Guido Chigi Saracini, updated some of them, to give the same organological characteristics to all five, adding to the quartet a viola pomposa, to form a sort of quintet d’amore. This update was probably made by Bisiach because Guido Chigi Saracini wished to hear five instruments d’amore, similar to those played in the concert in Milan on 4 February 1914, in the performances of the Quintetto Senese. It can be assumed that the luthier updated them in order to render the desired sound, but the five instruments present no evidence that they were altered before being sold to the count, except that one has two labels, dated 1903 and 1915 respectively. As soon as they were purchased, the count had the Quintetto Senese play the five instruments d’amore in a concert at the Continental hotel in Siena in 1915.³⁷

In the same register, it is written that “the viola of this quartet was used by Maestro Puccini for the first time at the Brescia theater for the opera *Madama Butterfly*.”³⁸ This work also includes a score related to the viola d’amore, the instrument which, with its sweet sonority, accompanies one of the most famous moments of the entire opera, when the choir “a bocca chiusa” (humming chorus) expresses all the pain of the protagonist, symbolically deprived of even the relief of speech.

The viola d’amore exhibited at the Museo degli Strumenti Musicali in Milan was “made expressly for the opera *Madama Butterfly* by Puccini,” whose first public performance, at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan on 17 February 1904, was a failure. From the register of Count Chigi Saracini, we know that a different viola d’amore, now exhibited at the Accademia Chigiana, was used for the representation of *Madama Butterfly* at the Teatro Grande in Brescia on 28 May 1904. It is not known the reason why

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid. Original quote in Italian: “La viola di questo quartetto fu adoperata dal M.^o Puccini la prima volta al Teatro di Brescia per l’opera *Madama Butterfly*.” See also Natale Gallini and Franco Gallini, *Musco degli Strumenti Musicali: Catalogo* (Milan: Castello Sforzesco, 1963), 26 (no. 24).

the viola d'amore made for the premiere of *Madama Butterfly* in Milan was not played in the performance three months later in Brescia. Perhaps the instrument was not available, or perhaps Puccini, having revised his work for the Brescia performance, was not satisfied with the sound in the premiere in Milan.

The description of the viola d'amore in the 1997 catalog of the Museo degli Strumenti Musicali in Milan is compatible with both these hypotheses: "this therefore leads us to assume that the instrument was born with five main strings, then adapted to four, to make it accessible to any violinist, and finally restored to its original five-string arrangement."³⁹ That is, the viola d'amore built for Puccini initially had five main strings plus five resonance strings, but was unfamiliar and perhaps not easy to use for the violinist or violist during the humming chorus, or perhaps its sound was not the one desired by the composer. After the fiasco of the first performance at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Puccini possibly preferred a viola d'amore equipped as a violin, having four main strings plus four resonance strings. Under this hypothesis, Bisiach, having no time to make such an instrument in time for the first performance in Brescia, lent him another viola d'amore having only four main strings plus four resonant strings, that is, the instrument currently exhibited at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena.

The sonority of this viola d'amore at the Brescia theater was enthusiastically received by critics, as we read in the magazine *Musica e Musicisti*: "recently at the Teatro Grande in Brescia his [Leandro Bisiach's] *viola d'amore* was enchanting for its acoustic virtuality" or, perhaps, unworldliness.⁴⁰ Puccini himself complimented the luthier Bisiach in a letter that he sent him on 16 January 1905 (fig. 6): "I am grateful to attest that the *viola d'amore* you built is a delicious and perfect instrument both in terms of *sound* and *shape*. I tried it in the *Butterfly* and was delighted with it."⁴¹ After

39. Andrea Gatti, *Museo degli Strumenti Musicali*, 50. Original quote in Italian: "Tutto questo fa dunque presumere che lo strumento sia nato a cinque corde tastabili, adattato poi a quattro per renderlo accessibile a qualsiasi violinista, infine ripristinato nel suo assetto originale a cinque corde."

40. "Istantanee Milanese. Il futuro programma Scaligero," *Musica e Musicisti. Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, Year 59, Volume II, No. 8, 15 August 1904, 512. Original quote in Italian: "Recentemente al teatro Grande di Brescia la sua viola d'amore apparve incantevole per le sue virtualità acustiche."

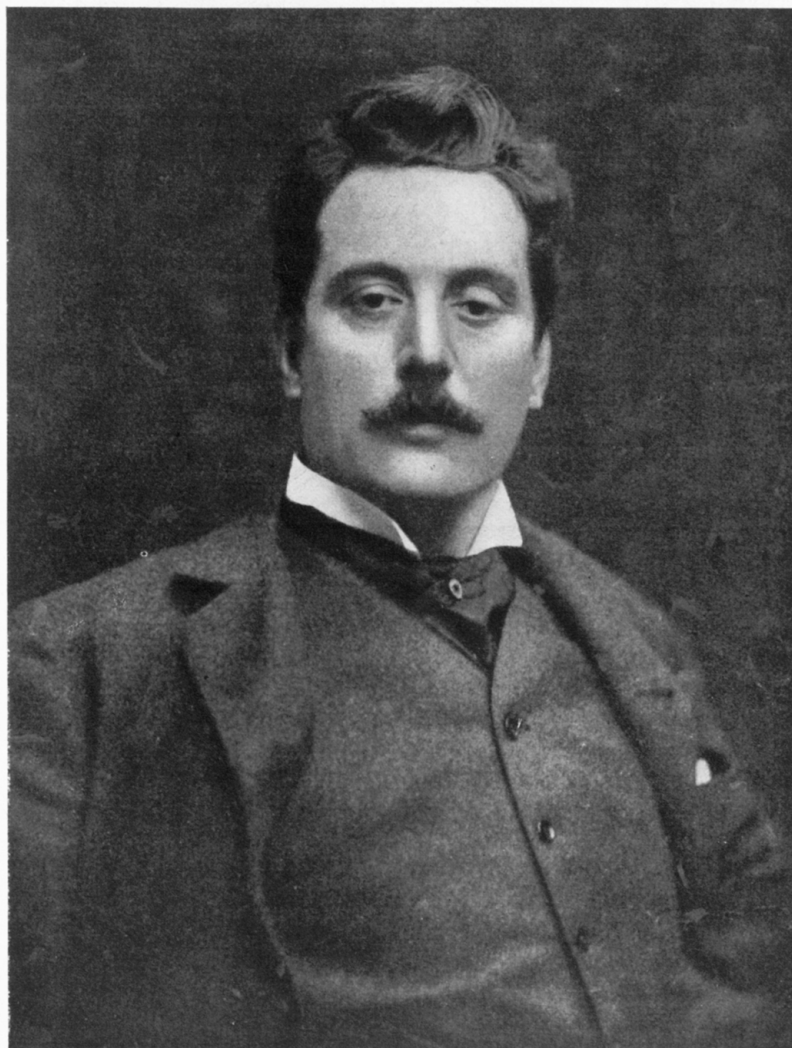
41. Natale e Franco Gallini, *Museo degli strumenti musicali. Catalogo. Castello Sforzesco, 26; Giacomo & Leandro Bisiach liutai. Strumenti musicali ad arco classici e moderni*, (Milan, 1940-41), 40. (Courtesy of Istituto di Bibliografia Musicale – IBIMUS, Biblioteca Nazionale

Via Verdi, 4,
Milano.
16. 1. 05

Caro Bisiach

Mi è grato accettare
che la viola d'amore
da lei costruita è
un istrumento delizioso
e perfetto sia come
civolta e come forma
So che presto alla
Butterfly e ne sono
rimasto contentissimo
un caro saluto
Giacomo Puccini

FIGURE 6a. Letter from Giacomo Puccini to Leandro Bisiach, 16 January 1905, taken from the manuscript catalog "Giacomo and Leandro Bisiach Violin Makers," 40. Copy owned by one of the two authors.



GIACOMO PUCCINI

FIGURE 6b. Giacomo Puccini. Wikimedia Commons photo.

the success obtained at the Teatro Grande in Brescia, *Madama Butterfly* began its fortunate existence. So we can say that the viola d'amore of the Accademia Chigiana was a participant in this Puccini success. (This instrument is discussed in technical detail below.)

The relation between Guido Chigi Saracini and Leandro Bisiach became particularly close from 1915, the year when the Count bought the quartet d'amore and the viola pomposa from the luthier, as well as other musical instruments marked in his personal register.⁴² Bisiach even moved to Siena "from 1916 . . . to work for Count Chigi Saracini" and remained there until 1922, when he returned to Milan.⁴³ His son Leandro Bisiach junior, nicknamed Leandrino, also moved to Siena in 1916 to work with his father, and remained there until 1924.⁴⁴ The second son, Carlo, after working with his father in Siena, even "came to love the Tuscan countryside and moved there in the early 1920s."⁴⁵

The count invited Leandro Bisiach to settle in his Chigi Saracini palace "to restore his collection of instruments and establish a museum featuring them."⁴⁶ Leandro had therefore become the Count's privileged consultant for musical instruments: the museum was born in these years under his advice and impulse. Guido Chigi Saracini himself later recalled that, in the summer of 1918, Bisiach followed him to a villa by the sea, in the above-mentioned hamlet of Quercianella, where the Sienese nobleman was a guest of the marquises Clara and Ottaviano Lenzoni during the period of the count's convalescence, following the serious illness that afflicted him during war in the summer of 1916:

[T]he beautiful villa Lenzoni had become a true reserve of lutherie and beautiful girls, and here musicians, violinists, lutenists, gathered to offer me purchases for my collection of musical instruments recently started in my palace in Via di

Centrale di Roma). Original quote in Italian: "Mi è grato attestare che la *viola d'amore* da lei costruita è un strumento delizioso e perfetto sia come *cavata* e come *forma*. Io l'ho provato nella *Butterfly* e ne sono rimasto contentissimo."

42. *Nota degli istrumenti classici di proprietà del Conte Guido Chigi Saracini*.

43. Andrea Gatti, *Museo degli Strumenti Musicali*, 568.

44. *Ibid.*, 568.

45. "The Bisiach Family Heritage," 2.

46. "Leandro Bisiach Sr.," part 2.

Città in Siena, under the guidance of the famous luthier Leandro Bisiach.⁴⁷

The few letters of the Chigi–Bisiach correspondence, preserved in the library of the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, almost always have as their subject the trade of musical instruments. From this point of view, a particularly intense year appears to be 1918, at the height of Leandro Bisiach's stay in Siena: "I keep a small collection of antique bowed instruments, both violins and violas d'amore and cellos, including two by Stradivari."⁴⁸

Decades later, the now-elderly Leandro Bisiach returned to talk about his instruments d'amore with Count Chigi Saracini, even hinting at presumed improvements in their construction, which he proposed for the five instruments already in the Sienese collection:

Dear Mr. Conte Guido,

. . . In any case, in my heart, nothing is erased, and I hope to be able to collaborate again when the instruments d'amore will speak again in Siena, in your grandiose hall, the sweet language of the great composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. . . .

P.S. The instruments d'amore have had recent improvements, which may also be made to yours.⁴⁹

Comments on the Five Instruments

Now we pass to individual examination of the five instruments d'amore that were purchased by the count in April 1915, starting from the oldest of these, which shows the date 1903. This violin d'amore is now located

47. *Ricordanze di Guido Chigi Saracini*, 19. Original quote in Italian: "la bella villina Lenzoni era divenuta un vero arsenale di 'liuteria' e di bellissime ragazze, quivi convenendovi musicisti, violinisti, liutisti, a propormi acquisti per la mia raccolta di istrumenti musicali da poco iniziata nel mio Palazzo di Via di Città in Siena, sotto la guida del celebre liutaio Leandro Bisiach."

48. Leandro Bisiach to Guido Chigi Saracini, letter, Milan, 17 January 1918. Siena, Library of the Accademia Chigiana, Epistolario Guido Chigi Saracini, signature C CXIX 23.

49. Leandro Bisiach to Guido Chigi Saracini, letter, Venice, 1 March 1939. Siena, Library of the Accademia Chigiana, Epistolario Guido Chigi Saracini, signature C CXIII 193. Original quote in Italian: "Caro Sig. Conte Guido, [...] In ogni modo nel mio cuore, non è nulla cancellato, e spero di poter collaborare ancora quando gli istrumenti d'amore parleranno nuovamente a Siena, nella Sua grandiosa Sala, il dolce linguaggio dei grandi autori del Sei e del Settecento, [...] P.S. Gli istrumenti d'amore, hanno avuto recenti miglioramenti, che potranno in caso, essere fatti anche ai Suoi."



FIGURE 7. Violin d'amore No. 75, the first of this type made by Leandro Bisiach in 1903; updated in 1915. (Left) Front view. (Right) Side view. Courtesy of Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, Italy.



FIGURE 8. The two labels inside the bottom of the soundboard of the violin d'amore no. 75, the first of this type made by Leandro Bisiach. Photos by Roberto Testi. Courtesy of Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, Italy.



FIGURE 9. The two labels inside the bottom of the soundboard of the viola d'amore no. 77, which was used by Puccini for the first performance of *Madama Butterfly* at the Teatro Grande in Brescia, 1904. Photos by Roberto Testi. Courtesy of Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, Italy.

TABLE. Measurements in mm of the five stringed instruments d'amore by Bisiach, taken by one of the two authors.

Instrument	Violin d'amore No. 75	Violin d'amore No. 76	Viola d'amore No. 77	Cello d'amore No. 78	Viola pomposa d'amore No. 79
A	360	360	393	755	765
B	175	173	193	344	343
C	118	117	130	256	245
D	216	210	233	438	429
E	130	130	138	283	278
F	195	195	209	391	418
G	65	67	79	174	145
H	31	30	37	121	114
I	50	50	59	145	138
J	32	32	40	125	125
K	3	3	3	4	4
L	21	22	24	29	22
M	133	136	147	284	284

Legend

- A Length of body (taken from the side of the button)
- B Width of body at widest point on top bouts
- C Width of thinnest point (waist) in the c-bouts
- D Width of body at widest point of lower bouts
- E Neck length (nut to where the neck meets the body)
- F Distance from the neck-body joint to the bridge (body stop)
- G Minimum distance between F-holes
- H Depth of body at the heel
- I Maximum depth of body from the top plate to the back plate
- J Depth of body at the end
- K Thickness of the top and back plates
- L Distance between the bowed and the sympathetic strings at the bridge
- M Vibrating string length

in the museum with the inventory number 75 (fig. 7). A side view of the blindfolded cupid's head carved in wood symbolizes blind love (fig. 4).

The label, glued inside the bottom of the soundboard, may be translated: (fig. 8, top): "1st Violin d'Amore / Leandro Bisiach / of the Cremonese school / made in Milan for the Lady Borgna Baronessa Annina in the year 1903"; this was perhaps the the baroness Annetta Borgna Radovska, a nineteenth-century painter, resident in Milan.⁵⁰ So we learn that this is the first specimen of a violin d'amore that Leandro Bisiach made. In addition, on the occasion of the sale to the Count, the luthier added a second internal label (fig. 8, bottom): "To the patron Count Guido Chigi Saracini / Leandro Bisiach Cremonese School / Duomo Square – made in Milan 1915 / Leandro Bisiach dedicates."⁵¹

The main measurements of the violin are shown in Table 1, alongside those of the other four instruments of the quintet d'amore.

The other violin d'amore in the museum, no. 76, was made by Leandro Bisiach probably in 1903 or 1904. On the label, inside the bottom of the soundboard, appear the words (translated here): "To the patron Count Guido Chigi Saracini / Leandro Bisiach Cremonese School / Duomo Square – made in Milan 1915 / Leandro Bisiach dedicates."⁵² Both violins are equipped with four main strings tuned at fifth intervals, like normal violins, but with the addition of four resonance strings. Since the violin no. 76 has construction features identical to the previous no. 75, it can be assumed that they were built in the same or consecutive years; therefore no. 76 dates from 1903–1904, despite the altered label.

The instruments d'amore exhibited at the Accademia Chigiana museum continue with the viola d'amore, no. 77, made by Leandro Bisiach in 1904, as written on the label, inside the bottom of the soundboard (fig. 9, top). In translation here: "Award-winning Viola d'Amore Bisiach / Leandro Bisiach Cremonese School / Duomo Square – made in Milan 1904 [In the lower part of the cartouche, red ink stamp] International Exhibition

50. Original quote in Italian: "1° Violino d'Amore / Leandro Bisiach / della scuola Cremonese / fece in Milano per la Signora / Sig Borgna Baronessa Annina l'anno 1903".

51. Original quote in Italian: "Al mecenate Conte Guido Chigi Saracini / Leandro Bisiach Scuola Cremonese / Piazza del Duomo – fece in Milano 1915 / Leandro Bisiach dedica".

52. Original quote in Italian: "Al mecenate Conte Guido Chigi Saracini / Leandro Bisiach Scuola Cremonese / Piazza del Duomo – fece in Milano 1915 / Leandro Bisiach dedica."



FIGURE 10. Viola d'amore No. 77, used for the first performance of *Madama Butterfly* at the Teatro Grande in Brescia, 1904. Photos by Roberto Testi. Courtesy of Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, Italy.



FIGURE 11. Viola pomposa d'amore no. 79 made by Leandro Bisiach, 1915. Photos by Roberto Testi. Courtesy of Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, Italy.

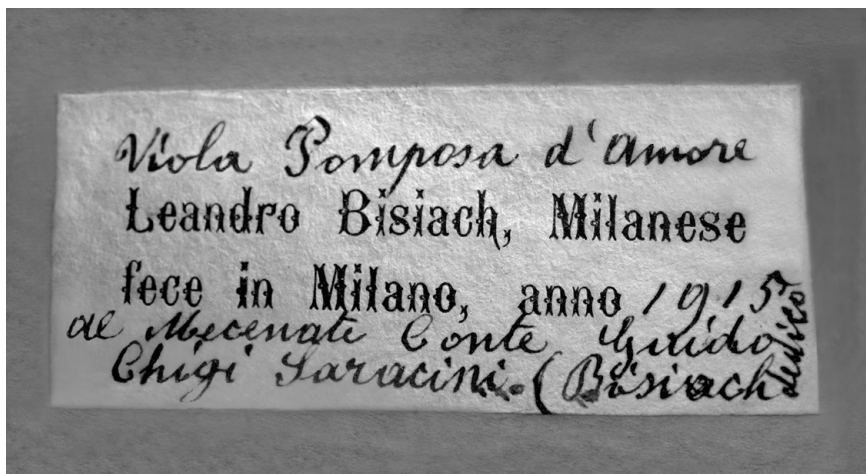


FIGURE 12. The label inside the bottom of the soundboard of the viola pomposa d'amore no. 79, 1915. Photo by Roberto Testi. Courtesy of Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, Italy.

Milan 1906 Gran Prix.”⁵³ Inside the bottom soundboard, there is another label, bearing the inscription “Leandro Bisiach / of the Cremonese school / made in Milan,” which adds nothing more to the historical knowledge of this instrument (fig. 9, bottom).⁵⁴

This viola d'amore too was made by Leandro Bisiach with four main strings and four resonance strings (fig. 10). In both fig. 13 and in Table 1, we can note how the dimensions of the viola d'amore are only slightly larger than those of the two violins d'amore.

The cello d'amore, no. 78, was made by Leandro Bisiach in 1904, as can be read on the label glued inside the bottom of the soundboard. In translation here: “Award-winning Bisiach Cello d'Amore / Leandro Bisiach Cremonese School / Duomo Square – made in Milan [In the lower part of the cartouche, red ink stamp] International Exhibition Milan 1906 Gran Prix.”⁵⁵ It too has four main strings tuned at perfect fifth intervals, like a normal cello, and four resonance strings. This instrument

53. Original quote in Italian: “Viola d'Amore Bisiach premiata / Leandro Bisiach Scuola Cremonese / Piazza del Duomo – fece in Milano 1904 Esposizione internazionale Milano 1906 Gran Prix.”

54. Original quote in Italian: “Leandro Bisiach / della scuola Cremonese / fece in Milano.”

55. Original quote in Italian: “Violoncello d'Amore Bisiach premiata / Leandro Bisiach Scuola Cremonese / Piazza del Duomo – fece in Milano [In the lower part of the cartouche, red ink stamp] Esposizione internazionale Milano 1906 Gran Prix”.



FIGURE 13. The five bowed instruments d'amore made by Leandro Bisiach between 1903 and 1915, as they are currently exhibited in the museum of musical instruments at the Accademia Chigiana. Photo by Roberto Testi. Courtesy of Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, Italy.

has construction features similar to those of the previous three, adapted and compared to its larger dimensions.

The only instrument of the group not equipped with four normal strings and four resonance strings is the viola pomposa d'amore no. 79, made by Leandro Bisiach in 1915 (fig. 11).

The viola pomposa “is a five-stringed viola da gamba [but with] characteristics very similar to the current cello,” to which Leandro Bisiach added five other resonance strings, in order to make it a “viola pomposa d'amore.”⁵⁶ Usually the viola pomposa is a five-stringed instrument slightly wider than a standard viola (hence the Italian adjective “pomposa”). The name “viola pomposa” is more usually associated with a smaller instrument played on the shoulder, or perhaps across the chest. It would be more logical to call no. 79, like no. 78, a “cello d'amore.”⁵⁷ However, for the purposes of this article, we prefer to keep the name given originally by the violin maker Leandro Bisiach. The label, placed inside the bottom of the soundboard, shows the inscription (fig. 12). In translation here: “Viola Pomposa d'Amore / Leandro Bisiach, Milanese / made in Milan, 1915 / To the patron Count Guido Chigi Saracini (Bisiach dedicated).”⁵⁸

This instrument has construction features similar to those of the previous four, but adapted to its cello-like size. The main measurements of the viola pomposa, shown in Table 1, reveal that it has dimensions similar to those of a cello.

The following features are common to all these five instruments. The back plate of the body is made of maple wood, the ribs are made of maple, and the top plate is made in spruce of regular grain, carved into an arched shape and purfled, with f-holes in the shape of a flame. The neck is made of maple wood and ends with a scroll in the shape of a blindfolded cupid and ivory decorated pegs. The varnish is brown-red for the four instruments of the quartet (inventory nos. 75–78) and brown-orange for the viola pomposa d'amore (inventory no. 79). Fig. 13 shows the five instruments of the quintet d'amore together.

A decade after Puccini revived the viola d'amore timbre using a latter-

56. Luigi Lanaro, *La liuteria classica e il liutaio moderno* (Padua: Edizioni G. Zanibon, 1974), 82.

57. Natale Gallini and Franco Gallini, *Museo degli strumenti musicali. Catalogo. Castello Sforzesco*, 56.

58. Original quote in Italian: “Viola Pomposa d'Amore / Leandro Bisiach, Milanese / fece in Milano, anno 1915 / Al mecenate Conte Guido Chigi Saracini (Bisiach dedicò)”.

day instrument by Bisiach, Riccardo Zandonai scored for viola pomposa d'amore using two instruments by Bisiach. Although these two specimens were not owned by the count, the revival was noted in his register: "this instrument, forgotten for about two centuries, was exhumed by Maestro Zandonai for his opera *Francesca da Rimini*, represented the first time at the Regio of Turin [19 February 1914], then at La Scala of Milan." Tito Ricordi II, the librettist, expressly requested two specimens of viola pomposa by Leandro Bisiach for the opera in a letter written on 3 December 1913.⁵⁹ Massimo Bisiach personally communicated with one of the two authors that he is the current owner of the viola pomposa d'amore played at the first performance of *Francesca da Rimini*. The second is held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York City, made by Leandro Bisiach "for the illustrious Commendatore Tito Ricordi" in 1913.⁶⁰

Another viola pomposa, held in the Museo degli Strumenti Musicali in Milan, inventory no. 25, is variously attributed to Leandro Bisiach or his student Giuseppe Ornati (1887–1995).⁶¹ The viola pomposa d'amore (no. 79) in the museum of the Accademia Chigiana, showing on the label only the year 1915 and the dedication to Count Guido Chigi Saracini, can be considered as part of the same series as the other three.

Epilogue

During the winter Micat in Vertice season 1930–31, on 18 January 1931, some members of the Société des Instruments Anciens from Paris, mentioned earlier, performed a concert. Marius Casadedus played the *quinton* (a French hybrid of the viol and violin), Henri Casadesus the viola d'amore, Lucette Casadesus the viola da gamba, Maurice Devilliers the "basse de viole" (in fact, a small contrabass), and Regina Patorni-Casadesus the harpsichord.

59. Casa editrice G. Ricordi & C. to Leandro Bisiach, letter, Milan, 3 December 1913. Courtesy of Massimo Bisiach, grandson of Leandro Bisiach senior. Original quote in Italian: "desideriamo sapere quando sarà pronta la prima e quando la seconda di tali viole, e rammentiamo che abbiamo la maggiore urgenza."

60. "Viola Pomposa d'Amore," 1913, by Leandro Bisiach, Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York City, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/503441>.

61. Original quote in Italian: "Viola Pomposa d'amore Brev.ta / Leandro Bisiach, Milanese / fece in Milano, anno 1914 / per l'illustre Com. Tito Ricordi". <https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/opere-arte/schede/2L010-00025/>, including the pdf file SIRBeC scheda OARL - 2L010-00025.

Probably, no instrument d'amore from the Chigi Saracini collection was used during this concert, otherwise it would have been declared in the evening's program.

Weeks later, on 5 February 1931, the Münchner Violon-Quintett, which specialized in early music, performed a concert in Siena. In the margins of this program, it was announced that, at an unspecified date, two performances would be held "with the quartet of instruments d'amore owned by the Chigi Saracini Museum." The concert, to include music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, would occur outside the Micat in Vertice season, within a special initiative called "Concerti di Cultura Musicale." This is the only documentation of further public use of the Chigi Saracini's instruments d'amore.

In the *Bullettino dell'Accademia Chigiana* (a periodical published by the Senese institution), a series of essays offered updated news on activities and on acquisitions and donations that contributed to its artistic heritage. But the space dedicated to musical instruments is singularly small; no reference was made to Leandro Bisiach and his group of instruments d'amore. This sparse information can be a useful clue in understanding the count's purpose in establishing his museum of approximately ninety musical instruments. Beyond a few practices that he favored—for example, the loan of precious instruments to the Quintetto Senese or the use of violas d'amore in other concerts—his assemblage of musical instruments was most likely the result of a purely private collector's impulse. Except in discussions about acquisitions of modern instruments intended for the use of the Accademia Chigiana, or of donations arising from exceptional circumstances, the entry of a precious musical instrument into Palazzo Chigi Saracini was a moment to live in complete privacy.

As Guido Chigi Saracini well knew, these instruments were not created to remain silent, but to be played and thus contribute to the success and the beauty of a musical performance. Therefore, as the count once supported the musicians of the Quintetto Chigiano, some of the most precious instruments of his personal collection might today be entrusted to the most deserving performers. A new Quintetto Chigiano, for example, which might play the five bowed string instruments d'amore made by Leandro Bisiach, could carry on the count's dream of keeping his city of Siena at the center of the Italian music scene, to spread the beauty of classic and modern music to as many people as possible, and to assist young people leaving the conservatories in fulfilling their artistic aspirations. Toward this dream and purpose, to which Guido Chigi Saracini worked throughout his life, the musical instruments that he

collected and bequeathed are essential. While preserving them, we must also let them be used by the most deserving musicians emerging from the forge of talents that is the Accademia Musicale Chigiana.