

# The Scroll

The Membership Magazine of The Violin Society of America

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Interviews with  
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and Roman Barnas

Violoncello by  
Giuseppe Guarneri  
'filius Andreae'



# VSA Members, We Have a Problem!

By Lynn Armour Hannings

As a professional bassist, I thought at times of the French bass on which I performed for over forty years, not as private property but as a precious instrument that was entrusted to me to use and care for during my playing career and which would eventually end up in the hands of another musician. This would continue on and on from one generation to the next. Powerful traditions! This universal language of music. I believed that classical music should and would continue forever. However, over the years, I became increasingly alarmed to learn more about issues that were threatening our forests: vast destruction of tropical rainforests: down to only 7% of its original size in the case of Brazil's Atlantic Rainforest, the home of pernambuco. Climate change is causing floods and droughts. Unsustainable forest practices are threatening thousands of species of trees and animals worldwide, including woods from which orchestral instruments and bows are made. Forests are being cut down as population centers expand. Land is being cleared for farming and for industrial use. Indiscriminate, often illegal, cutting negatively impacts forests and local communities that are impoverished by unhealthy living conditions and economic hardship.

Below is a letter received from the US Embassy in Brazil concerning ongoing worldwide investigations of the illegal cutting, exporting and use of pernambuco. Pernambuco is an endangered species. This is extremely serious. The Brazilian and US governments have documented fraud and the illegal sourcing of pernambuco imported from Brazil, and imports from Brazil are undergoing increased scrutiny for their legality. We must make every effort to inform ourselves and to avoid purchases of raw wood and bows made from illegally harvested wood. If we are seeing raw pernambuco from Brazil, we should be aware that the wood may not be legal and should ask to see a valid Brazilian export permit. Due diligence is essential. Ignoring international and US laws such as the Lacey Act has potentially very serious consequences.

## *Call for Submissions* **The Violin Society of America Papers**

*The Violin Society of America Papers* is a scholarly peer-reviewed journal for VSA members. It is the authoritative forum for the publication of original peer-reviewed research furthering the advancement of the art and science of bowed stringed instruments. Contents include articles on auctions and appraisals, the history of the violin and performers, playing technique and performance practice, making and restoration, tools, varnish, wood, graduation and acoustics. Once approved, papers are published on The VSA Website, and are collected for an annual publication.

Submissions are handled through [vsapapers.org](https://vsapapers.org), which specifies submission requirements and explains the peer review process.

Please contact [paperseditor@vsaweb.org](mailto:paperseditor@vsaweb.org) with any questions.

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Polícia Federal coordinate joint enforcement actions to combat trafficking of rare and endangered timber from Brazil**

**December 1, 2021:** A press release issued on November 30 by Polícia Federal provides details of a joint U.S./Brazilian timber trafficking investigation and the execution of 20 search warrants in the State of Espírito Santo. The investigation involves the manufacture and export of musical instruments and parts, specifically, stringed instrument bows, derived from illegally sourced, rare and endangered timber from Brazil to the U.S., Europe and Asia.



The wood species from which the bows are derived, Pau-brasilia Echinata known commonly as 'Pau-Brasil' or 'Pernambucu' is a rare species of wood listed as 'Endangered' under Brazil's official list of endangered species of flora, Lista de Espécies da Flora Ameaçadas de Extinção, and the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), to which the U.S. and Brazil are both Signatories (Party). Pau-Brasil is also recognized as the National Tree of Brazil with deep cultural significance to the country. Despite the foregoing protections, pau-brasil remains heavily traded internationally, widely regarded in the manufacture of quality musical instruments.

Today, the species is largely exasperated in Brazil but international demand for the wood has only increased. As quantities of any remaining legal stock in Brazil diminish, the price for Pau-Brasil has increased dramatically over the years, and a series of frauds have surfaced in Brazil designed to mask illegal sourcing of rare and slow-growing pau-brasil, in order to fulfill international market demand, including in the United States. By way of comparison, a custom viola bow made of rare pau-brasil wood weighing approximately sixty (60) grams, can sell for more than \$6,200 USD in the United States, roughly the same price per gram as cocaine.

The U.S. is committed to working with Brazil to combat deforestation, timber trafficking, and related environmental crimes. This investigation highlights cooperation between the United States and Brazil to prevent extinction of endangered species and preserve our natural heritage for future generations.

**Link to the press release of the Federal Police:** <https://www.gov.br/pf/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2021/11/pf-combate-crimes-ambientais-no-norte-capixaba>

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### **Hard questions I've come to reflect on in recent years:**

- What would happen to classical music if access to instruments and bows was impaired or denied?
- What if WE, members of the musical instrument trade, were the endangered species as we rely on forests that are being destroyed?
- What if musicians could no longer travel with their personal equipment?
- Who is educating or guiding the musical community to look realistically at these threats and to find ways to take meaningful action?

The history of instrument and bow making is full of materials, once common, that have become more endangered. The materials with the highest level of regulation include Brazilian rosewood, whalebone, tortoiseshell and ivory. Modern makers are experiencing increasing restrictions on the use of certain species of ebony, pearl, lizard and pernambuco. There is growing concern about maple and spruce. This is a challenging time that requires increased commitment to education and conservation.

It is a challenge for makers and dealers of today to remain informed, abide by the changing regulations, identify new materials that will work as substitutes and importantly, to educate and guide musicians about changing regulations, required documents or potential travel restrictions. Communications with and guidance from governmental authorities must be made available to assist shops, those in the trade, and musicians in these changing times.

The International Pernambuco Conservation Initiative (IPCI) was created in 1999. In the early days of the IPCI, it rightly prided itself on being an organization created by bowmakers. The program was established out of concern for the depletion of the Brazilian Atlantic Rainforest and the urgent need to protect pernambuco. It was a historical moment when this international group of bowmakers came together to create and help fund a comprehensive program that included research projects, community outreach, support of a youth orchestra, and resulted in planting an estimated 250,000 seedlings in farms, town centers and national forests.

Bow makers took the first steps, but it was always understood that this would be a long and arduous process that would need support from the entire musical community and beyond.

In 2007, in response to Brazil's request to list pernambuco (pau-brasil) as an endangered species, the IPCI asked to speak at the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), Conference of the Parties, in The Hague. The IPCI wished to attend to describe the strengths of the program and to describe the challenges to the musicians and orchestras of the world if musicians were disallowed from travel with their pernambuco bows. I was the presenter for our IPCI groups.

### **My memories of the meeting:**

- Registering and receiving notebooks of every endangered species worldwide and what specific actions would be voted on that day... hundreds and hundreds of endangered species of plants and animals. Many species were to be voted on that day. I was suddenly aware of the magnitude of their work.
- In attendance were all the conservation non-profit groups.
- IPCI – four bowmakers representing the international groups – armed only with a brief written description of our program and a strong belief that, against great odds, we had a working program in Brazil that was helping pernambuco and providing a model management plan for other professional groups, for other species, in other parts of the world.

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- After a successful presentation, the vote was taken and the chair announced an Appendix II listing, which would allow for international travel with finished bows. One representative describing our program said, “This is the first time in history when the users of a resource are driving the engine of conservation of a species.” We were touched by the words of another representative who said, “I look forward to the day when pau-brasil is abundant in the forests of Brazil and in concert halls around the world.” This moment was unforgettable.

The IPCI of today continues to make a lasting contribution to the conservation of pernambuco. The IPCI-planted trees continue to grow and the IPCI, despite the devastating impact of the pandemic in Brazil, has continued its financial support of research of different varieties of pernambuco and other woods used in bow making. Research projects are examining growth rates across pernambuco varieties and the most suitable climate and soil conditions for successful planting, taking into account global warming. This knowledge will inform reforestation efforts and conservation policy. For the past several years, the International Association of Violin and Bow Makers (EILA) has been participating deeply in CITES, EU and US negotiations involving the regulation of trade in elephant ivory, rosewood and other species of concern. EILA has been at the forefront of a music sector working group whose active participation has been welcomed by the CITES Secretary General and whose inputs have made it possible to secure trade rules that take account of the needs of instrument makers, retailers and musicians.

Given the urgent global state of natural resources and their crucial importance to music, members of EILA decided to launch a new, conservation-focused international organization called the International Alliance of Violin and Bow Makers for Endangered Species. The Alliance builds on the important work of IPCI, Eben!Holz and other partners that have been working for the good of species used in instrument making, such as ebony and pernambuco. It is also supporting the representation of violin and bow makers before CITES, the European Union and other decision-making bodies that affect the trade.

Its mission is:

1. Advocacy on behalf of violin and bow makers before decision makers
2. Support of conservation programs
3. Education programs that expand conservation awareness and good practices.

The Alliance creates a platform for strategic consideration of all natural resource issues of concern to the trade and takes direct action through investments in conservation, advocacy and education. Each year, programs are presented and reviewed. The Alliance is currently partnering on conservation projects with IPCI and Eben!Holz (ebony).

Musicians around the world continue to use pernambuco and travel with finished bows in part because of the forethought of these conservation organizations and their timely and responsible actions. For this to continue, we need to demonstrate our commitment to conservation with greater membership and expanded programs. We need to become educated, to avoid wasting precious resources and to make informed purchases to carefully avoid illegally harvested wood or instruments and bows made of illegal wood. It's up to us.

Environmental problems in our forests did not happen overnight and cannot be fixed quickly or easily. The music industry is not responsible for all of the problems but our continuing reliance on these materials makes our participation in responsible actions critically important. As part of the problem, we must also be part of the solution. It will take time and effort. I believe that the International Pernambuco Conservation Initiative and the International Alliance of Violin and Bow Makers for Endangered Species deserve our appreciation and continued support.

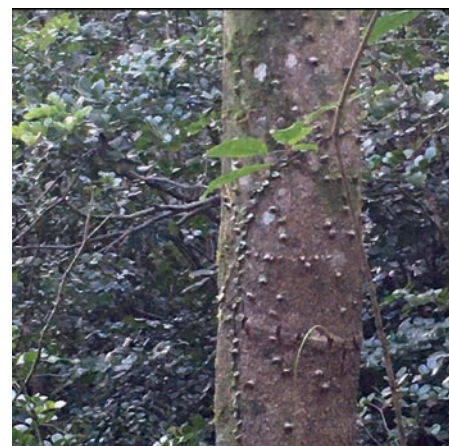
In 2005, Jacy Sousa planted for me 200 pernambuco trees in memory of my father who had just died. This seemed a fitting tribute to my father, who so loved nature and music, and a permanent gift to the Atlantic Rainforest. My thanks to Jacy for making this possible.



*Seedling in the nursery  
(photos by Jacy Sousa,  
Horst John Bows)*



*After 3 years they moved to the forest*



*20-year-old tree*

### **VSA Members, what can you do to take action?**

- Support conservation by making a donation
- Get informed by joining IPCI-USA ([www.ipci-usa.org](http://www.ipci-usa.org)), Alliance-USA ([www.Alliance-usa.org](http://www.Alliance-usa.org)) or on Facebook and Instagram and helping to spread the word
- Do not purchase or sell disposable bows that are not worth the cost of rehair. This is a horrible waste of resources!
- Care for your bows by keeping them well maintained to preserve this valuable resource.
- When purchasing a bow, ask the shop owner to demonstrate that the wood used was legally obtained. They may not know, but the questions can help to prompt action.
- Support shops that donate a percentage of repairs or sales to conservation.
- Begin discussions with your colleagues. We need fresh thinking and solutions.

**PLEASE HELP PREVENT THE  
POACHING OF PERNAMBUCO!**



Please read this QR code to find a document from the US Embassy in Brazil concerning an ongoing international investigation of the illegal cutting, exporting and use of pernambuco.

Representatives of the American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers (AFVBM), Entente Internationale des Luthiers et Archetiers (EILA), and the International Alliance of Violin and Bow Makers for Endangered Species are working in full cooperation with investigators and government officials to circulate this information in an effort to educate the greater musical community. It is critically important that we become informed and avoid participation in activities that break the law and threaten the species.



International Pernambuco Conservation Initiative (IPCI) Website

**What YOU can do:**

- Care for and maintain your bow and instrument
- Support conservation efforts of the IPCI
- Do not purchase or sell disposable bows (bows that are not worth the cost of rehairing)






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The American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers is a professional organization formed in 1980. It followed the blueprint of the VdG (Germany) and International Entente of Violin and Bow Makers to provide the North American musical community with a dependable standard of work and expertise and support all aspects of violin and bow making. The AFVBM's members meet regularly to share information, maintain traditions, promote makers and help those in the trade. Over the years, the AFBVM has taken a leadership role on environmental issues affecting those traditions and the materials used.

1999- the International Pernambuco Conservation Initiative (IPCI-USA) was established by an international group of bow makers including many members of the AFVBM for the conservation of pernambuco. Members continue to be actively involved in this conservation effort.

2014- AFVBM initiated a US music sector working group leading to the African elephant ivory *de minimis* exemption

2016- AFVBM created a Document of Species used in violin and bow making with legal status to inform members and the trade of changing environmental restriction. Go to [afvbm.org](http://afvbm.org) to view this document.

2018-AFVBM is a Voting Member of the International Alliance of Violin & Bow Makers for Endangered Species, [Alliance-usa.org](http://Alliance-usa.org).

*Lynn is a bassist, recently retired after 50 years in the Portland Symphony Orchestra. She attended New England Conservatory where she studied with Gary Karr and William Rhein.*

*Lynn is a bow maker who studied with William Salchow in NYC, and with Bernard Millant in France as a Fulbright Scholar and Annette Kade Fellow.*

*She is a member of the American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers, the Entente Internationale des Luthiers et Archetiers, International Pernambuco Conservation Initiative and the International Alliance of Violin and Bow Makers for Endangered Species.*

