

Mecca for violin lovers

VioViva violin making exhibition offers fascinating insights into masterful craft

Kronberg im Taunus, 9 September 2024

Nowhere else can so much perfection-driven, instrument-making artistry be found in one place: the VioViva international violin making exhibition taking place during the Kronberg Festival from 23 to 28 September will bring acclaimed luthiers, bow makers and strings producers from across the world to the Taunus hills in a celebration of their craft.

Violin making exhibition VioViva, which was inaugurated in 2022 in conjunction with the opening of Kronberg Academy's Casals Forum, is now entering its second season. From 23 to 28 September, Kronberg Academy will present the next edition of this successful fair, which was developed from the violin making exhibitions of earlier Kronberg Academy Festivals and launched as a major biennial event in 2022. The exhibition, which is sponsored by SINFONIMA – insurers for classical music – is aimed in equal measure at experts, amateur musicians and stringed instrument enthusiasts. Visitors are invited to view and try the exquisite instruments, bows and other strings-related products at the fair, where they can also seek expert advice from the exhibitors.

The idea behind the VioViva exhibition was formed when the international music fair that had taken place annually from 1980 to 2019 at Frankfurt's exhibition grounds ceased during the Covid-19 pandemic. Raimund Trenkler, Founder and Chairman of the Board of the Kronberg Academy Foundation, and SINFONIMA director Susanne Rahn subsequently devised a plan to provide a new home and an international meeting point in Kronberg for master luthiers, bow makers and all craftspeople and artists with a connection to the making of stringed instruments.

Raimund Trenkler, himself a cellist, sums things up in a nutshell: "What is a musician without an instrument?" He understands the importance of dialogue between luthiers and artists, since it is the former who are using their supreme skill to make instruments for the latter. "The making of top quality new stringed instruments and bows is not only of growing importance for young musical elites. Finding a suitable instrument that meets all the necessary requirements can often take years," explains the director of SINFONIMA, Susanne Rahn. "Insuring musical instruments is our profession – music is our passion. This is why we are doubly pleased to be able to support the craft of instrument making through our partnership with VioViva."

Among those exhibiting at the fair are the Cremona Violin Store & Workshop from Italy, the "MAESTRA" collective of female luthiers from Munich, Germany, and the strings producers

Larsen and PIRASTRO. Providers of innovative accessories for string players and stringed instruments are also represented by DOLFINOS Ltd from Switzerland. A highly regarded expert in his field, London-based master luthier Florian Leonhard will be a guest in Kronberg during the exhibition and, through informative talks, will offer insights into identifying provenance and the analysis of stringed instruments. As a further highlight, the talk entitled “Die Instrumente der Mozart-Familie” (Instruments of the Mozart Family) by Dr Anja Morgenstern on Monday, 23 September, provides the ideal complement to a concert visit at the Kronberg Festival: that evening, pianist Kristian Bezuidenhout and the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra directed by Gottfried von der Goltz will perform WA Mozart’s Symphony No 1 as well as his piano concertos No 9 (E flat major) and 17 (G major) in the Grand Hall of the Casals Forum.

Although the VioViva exhibition takes place in Kronberg’s Stadthalle (Municipal Hall), luthiers will likewise be present in the Casals Forum, the concert hall of Kronberg Academy: in addition to exhibiting at VioViva, a small group of craftspeople will provide an “open workshop” for the duration of the Festival. Master luthiers Ekkard and Ferdinand Seidl from Markneukirchen and Dominik Josef Wlk from London, along with master bowmaker C Jochen Schmidt from Dresden, will relocate their workshops to the Dagmar Westberg Foyer of the Casals Forum to offer an insight into the craftsmanship of violin making. This is the place to gather practical tips and advice from the professionals on all aspects of stringed instruments, or simply just to watch them as they work.

A newspaper report from Süddeutsche Zeitung on last year’s Kronberg Festival affords a glimpse into the unique flair of Kronberg’s luthier summit: “In Kronberg, it feels almost entirely natural not to see the musicians as gods worshipped from afar, but to meet them on the streets, or outside the hall on Beethovenplatz or in the corridors of the Academy, and to fall into lively conversation. [...] And, of course, the talented youngsters are trying out the violins and cellos there. All of a sudden there is the most wondrous, radiant, carrying sound: there stands Pinchas Zukerman in the shop trying out both a Stradivarius and Leonhard’s copy of this masterpiece, and he doesn’t want to stop! Get to Kronberg!”

Kronberg Academy has captioned its 2024 Festival with the headline “Passing On the Fire”. Taking its lead from the famous maxim “Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire”, the Academy wants this Festival to provide a platform for fire and flame to be passed on: between the musicians on stage, from old to young in the masterclass tuition sessions and from the performing artists to audience members. VioViva, too, is guaranteed to make sparks fly and ignite passions – for violin making and exquisite craftsmanship!

The VioViva exhibition takes place from 23 to 28 September in Kronberg’s Stadthalle Kronberg (Municipal Hall) and will be open from 10.00am to 6.00pm daily. Visitor tickets cost €5.00, with free entry upon presentation of a ticket for one of the Kronberg Festival concerts. The “Open Workshop” in the Dagmar Westberg Foyer of the Casals Forum is open daily from 21 September to 3 October, from 10.00am to 6.00pm. All talks in conjunction with the VioViva exhibition highlighted above are free to attend. The full exhibition programme can be found at www.kronbergacademy.de.

About Kronberg Academy

Kronberg Academy is today considered one of the most important meeting and training places for young violinists, violists, cellists and now for young pianists as well. Located in the heart of Europe, it gathers the world's most gifted young musicians and brings them together with the great artists of our time. Through the Kronberg Academy Study Programmes, young soloists work intensively with leading musicians all year round in the pursuit of bachelor's and master's degrees. Kronberg Academy's events offer young artists a chance to share the stage with their role models, and also give audiences the opportunity to immerse themselves in this special atmosphere. Furthermore, Kronberg Academy's students go on tour together several times each year where they perform as an ensemble on international stages. The philosophy of Pablo Casals, the great cellist and champion of peace who believed that art, humanity and respect for nature are inextricably linked, is the guiding principle for all training and musical activities that take place at the new Casals Forum, which is the first concert hall and study centre in Europe capable of carbon neutral operation.

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