



LUTHIER
Tobias Widemann
LOCATION
**Christchurch,
New Zealand**

MY WORKSHOP IS part of my home, a 1920s weatherboard bungalow I share with my wife and two daughters aged three and one. We recently had an earthquake which measured 7.1 on the Richter scale. It was one of the most horrifying experiences of my life but luckily the bungalow stood up to it fairly well. The chimneys came crumbling down and in my workshop, below the centre bench, you can see a gap where the skirting board came off the

wall. We've had a lot of aftershocks, but unfortunately I haven't managed to put the shaking to use for free-plate tuning!

Having my workshop in the bungalow was meant to be an interim solution, but several years on and two children later... It's quite small, 5m by 4m, so I have to be creative with space and I've made tools to help out. For example, on the centre bench you can see two 'modules', one orange and one blue. Each module does a different job and slides into the bench to save space when I'm not using it. The orange one is used for holding the sides while planing and scraping, and the blue one is used for cutting bridges.

The instrument on the centre bench in the wooden cradle is the top and back of a 'del Gesù' violin model. I'm working on the outside arching – one of my favourite steps when making an instrument. I made the wooden cradle myself, inspired by a picture on the front of a catalogue from an exhibition in Cremona. Two of the instruments hanging up on the

left are a violin and a viola I've made recently. The violin is another 'del Gesù' model and the viola is based on an Andrea Guarneri instrument. Next to them are two more violins – although only one is visible in the picture. One is in for repair and the other is my first full-sized violin. I like it so much I've never bought another.

The case under the centre desk is a violin and viola double case that meets airline hand-luggage dimensions. I designed it with a colleague and put it together with another friend who makes model airplanes. It's made of polystyrene covered in fibre-glass so it's light and very strong. The long plane to the right of the case was given to me by a neighbour when I was studying

My dog tests how well my instruments project. The more they do, the more he howls

at Mittenwald. He found it when he was cleaning out the workshop of his violin making great-grandfather who had recently

died. He gave the plane to me as there was no one in the family to carry on the lutherie tradition. It has 1925 written on it and I assume that's the year it was made. Then to the right of the plane, on the bench, you can see the UV cabinet I designed and made – it has a built-in fan and rotating base.

In the garden you can see my dog Felix. He's my barometer and he tests how well my instruments project. The more they do, the more he howls.

INTERVIEW BY VICKY HANCOCK

NEXT MONTH ANDREA FRANSEN IN ANGERS, FRANCE

PHOTOS: TOBIAS WIDEMANN

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