

Carboni Viola



William Carboni (1915–1985) was a remarkable viola player and luthier whose talent and dedication left a lasting mark on the world of classical music. He attended the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied under renowned instructors, including Louis Bailley, Primrose, Toscha Seidel, and Demetrius Dounis. His exceptional skill earned him a place in the celebrated NBC Symphony Orchestra, personally admitted by Arturo Toscanini after an impressive performance of a Brahms sonata. Following his service in the U.S. Army during World War II, Carboni continued his musical journey as a longtime member of the New York Philharmonic. Beyond his performance career, he also had an extraordinary talent for violin making. Entirely self-taught, he constructed his first instrument by carefully studying existing violins and went on to craft over 90 instruments, mostly violas—throughout his lifetime.

Under the guidance of Italian master Simone Saccone in New York City, Carboni refined his craft, focusing on ease of playability and superior tonal quality. In collaboration with the esteemed French violin expert René Morel, he co-designed a remarkable 17½-inch viola model that was both lightweight and highly responsive.

One of Carboni's later creations, an 81st viola of this unique 17½-inch design, was made while he was battling cancer. Even in declining health, he continued to experiment with different archings, f-hole placements, and wood types, including poplar backs. His unwavering dedication to perfection defined his career.

Carboni's intellectual curiosity led him to self-study calculus, Japanese, and violin making, among other disciplines. He was an avid reader and one of the rare advocates of Dounis' violin teachings. His expertise was highly regarded, and the New York Philharmonic designated him as their official instrument repairer while on tour.

Though his instruments are rare, Carboni's violas remain admired for their exceptional craftsmanship and sound quality, standing the test of time as a testament to his talent and perseverance.

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