

Dear Paul,

Peter and I prepared this narrative report. We did not include much of Stefano's work as he will undoubtedly give you a detailed report himself.

Peter and I arrived in Havana late in the day on April the 14th. We took advantage of a package trip that included the flight and accommodation including breakfast. Early the next morning we tried to find the work shop. Unbeknownst to us, it had moved to the new location. The uniformed guards at the basilica didn't know or didn't want to tell us where the new location of the shop was. Luckily the janitor overheard our question and sent us in the right direction. When we did find it, the door was locked and we could not communicate with whomever was inside. We sat down at a table across the square and after about a half hour Andreas stepped on the balcony and we could attract his attention.



Inside we met Stefano, Winnie, Felix and Merlin. Stefano was already well in the beginning stages of his instructions. Peter and I had brought wood, frogs, bridges, strings, tools etcetera. After an initial orientation, Peter and I started on repairs to client's instruments. For example, one of the instruments was a cello with a cracked top. It probably would have been possible to make repairs without removing the top, but for instruction purposes, Peter was able to show Winnie and Merlin how to remove the top, make repairs.



A young violist arrived from the far away east end of Cuba to have her unplayable viola fixed. Peter, while she waited, planed the fingerboard and made a bridge. It is very unusual in Canada for a client to wait for these repairs, but it seemed to us that in Cuba everything takes time.

Before we arrived, Winnie had opened a client's violin to make repairs to the top. After Stefano arrived, she had to divert her attention to learning building new instruments. I took over and touched up the varnish and installed a new bridge. The rest of the week I repaired some other instruments, assisted Stefano in setting up tools that were still in boxes in the storage room and sharpen whatever needed to be sharpened. Peter made repairs to other cellos, bass viola and violins. Peter was also able to repair several bows. The rib of one of the cellos was cracked in an accident and had warped due to moisture. Peter improvised making a plaster-cast of the ribs with the intend of using this cast and straighten the ribs. It worked out ok, but we would have had a better success if we had several strong deep clamps to clamp the ribs to the remodelled plaster-cast. The workshop is well renovated and beautiful. The air conditioning works well. To make strong glue joints the wood must be warmed up. I suggest somebody brings a hair dryer.

Peter and I left Havana late in the day on April the 21st. We felt it was a useful and gratifying experience and we would be interested in doing this again. Stefano was a great teacher and a master builder and it was an honour to see him in action and be able to work with him.

As I mentioned before, I would have gone back to assist Stefano during his last week in Havana, but I could not arrange a flight in time to be of much use. I still have a box with material, wood, brushes, Staedtler compass, figure saw, small clamps, varnish coloring in powder (brown and yellow, everything they have is red) , etcetera, I somehow must try to get this to Havana. I will ask around if someone here is going to Havana in the near future.

Best wishes also from Peter.
Paul

