*Can I commission an instrument from you?*Yes, and I encourage musicians to think about it as a way of starting a conversation about what it is they are looking for in their sound so that I might better recommend one or another of my models to try. (Starting this conversation allows me also to prioritize the work on my bench, from the contemporary instruments to the period ones, instruments for individuals or for dealers, there being a limited amount of instruments I make in a given year!) I think having an instrument made for you should be an exciting project and one where the excitement is free from worry about deposits, about expectations not met, or anything else that might get in the way of what is a singularly unique and fascinating process. Having some experience in making instruments to order, I have come to trust that you and I will both find the ongoing conversation about the progress of your instrument to be as rewarding and interesting as the attention paid to your instrument post-completion. Should the instrument you have waited for not meet your approval after the trial period and adjustment or for whatever reason at all, you will meet no insistence on my part that you purchase the instrument made - I won't have a hard time finding another home for it and you will have learned even more about what you are looking for. That said, it hardly ever comes to that, and I'm pretty confident that what we make is something with which we will both be happy. *Do you make copies of existing instruments?* Yes. And no. I prefer to think of my work as being based on particular examples of the great masterworks of the 16th - 18th century in Brescia, Cremona, Milan, and Venice but not copies. Though they may look a bit like them from the outside, my own work is based on a type of deconstruction of the original - creating something true to the original form and to the original approach, but at the end something that is particularly mine. That said, one of the cello models I've made "after Testore" started as a strict bench-top copy when the instrument was before me. Another - a Peter of Venice cello owned by Rostropovich at the end of his career - started as another bench-top copy. The del Gesù models I make are also based on particular studies of particular instruments, but as in the other cases, my instruments are now all "after" them - an interpretation or a consideration, surely, but a copy, no. Think of my work as being something inspired by an appreciation of a form, not just a copy of a picture. *If you do not make "copies" of instruments, why do they look antiqued?*I don't "antique" all of my instruments but when I do I think about it in a slightly different way than most makers. Indeed, I do think it a bit contrived when there are particular marks made to match a photo or an instrument in front of you, but when it is done by a good maker, it can look quite beautiful. I am glad to have so many colleagues that do this with a type of artistry and subtlety that is nothing short of virtuosic. However, there is another way of approaching the look of the finished thing that is neither about copying a particularly famous instrument nor about trying to produce a facsimile of age where it doesn't exist. What I mean is this: I think instruments contain stories. I think these stories and the way that time has collected them in a particular instrument are what makes collecting anything with some history a meaningful thing to do; but not because the player is collecting the instrument, rather the opposite - because the instrument is collecting the player! When I remove a bit of varnish from one of my newly made instruments or soften the wood where some wear may have happened, it is not to fake a look but to make a gesture to the stories that I want this instrument to tell.* If a player is inspired to have a fully varnished

instrument and for all marks made from then on to tell the story of their own, I'm all for that. But if they appreciate the look of a good ground that lies beneath the varnish and that this view might offer a pictorial analogy for what has come before in the history of great music and great players - I can appreciate that too; and hope that the instruments I make inspire a type of connection with the past and with whatever comes next in the musician's hands. * But it is as well to acknowledge that part of my task as a modern maker is to appreciate the time that has affected the instruments of old which we adore - instruments which may be slightly different objects than the ones which left the maker's bench - but against which we nevertheless measure our own creations. All the more so, I say. For it is not time itself that has changed these instruments but what has happened *in* time - as a result of being played, adjusted, or restored - that should be approached with as vigorous an interrogation as any singular originating moment which has always more jealously presumed our attention. "Antiquing" on one of my instruments then is a way of suggesting that my own work is paying attention to these technical, material, and ultimately acoustical issues that lie beneath the look.
*What happens after I purchase one of your instruments?*This question gets to the heart of what it means to play something from a living maker, and since you are a living player, the answer should strike a chord. For just as you need to keep performing on an instrument that supports the sound you are looking for, I need to make sure that I can support you. If just starting your career, the instrument should be one that will grow with you; and if already a professional, well, you know what you are looking for in your sound and need that answered in your instrument without needing to ask. This is why when you choose one of my instruments, I request that we get together periodically to make any adjustments necessary. After the first two years, the instrument and your imprint on it are well known and we will only need to get together for seasonal or annual upkeep - something also important for the health of your instrument. And if sometimes there won't be much to do at our meeting at all except have a cup of coffee, that's one of the pleasures of keeping up. All to say, I see every instrument I've made as an example of my work just as every performance or recording is an example of yours; and our interest - quite alive, we should say - is in insuring the continuing excellence of both.