

For Immediate Release

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RARE CELLO UNVEILED AT CHRISTIE'S BY WORLD-RENOWNED CELLIST JULIAN LLOYD WEBBER



An Italian cello by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini (estimate: £250,000-300,000)

Musical Instruments, 3 November 2004

South Kensington – A rare 18th century Italian cello made by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini, one of the world's finest cello makers, was unveiled at Christie's today during a recording by world-renowned cellist, Julian Lloyd Webber. This exceptional instrument is estimated to fetch between £250,000 to £300,000 when it is offered in Christie's *Musical Instruments* sale on 3 November 2004.

Julian Lloyd Webber unveiled the cello at Christie's on 13 September 2004 during a recording of *The Look of Love* by Burt Bacharach for his new album. He commented: *"As soon as I played this cello I thought that its sultry, warm tone would be perfect for a new album I'm recording with my new band ¡Bossa Nova! I am very grateful to Christie's for letting me play this magnificence instrument. I only hope that my cello which I have played for 21 years will forgive this brief flirtation."*

Made in Parma in 1760, the cello is in a stunning state of preservation and is one of only five Guadagnini cellos which have come to auction in the last twenty years. The instrument is offered from the collection of a musician whose family acquired the cello over 60 years ago.

Jamie Buchanan, Head of Musical Instruments, Christie's South Kensington said:

“A rare masterpiece from the eighteenth century, this is one of the finest cellos to be offered at auction in the last 20 years. It makes its first public appearance at Christie's having been hidden away for the last sixty years.”

Giovanni Battista Guadagnini (1711 – 1786) was the greatest maker of the Guadagnini family. For many years his name suffered as his works were confused with the lesser creations of his father Lorenzo. Gradually as a clearer picture of the son's workmanship emerged, Giovanni Battista Guadagnini has become acknowledged as one of the greatest makers of the eighteenth century.

A maker who travelled more than was typical (he worked in five different Italian towns before settling in Turin), Guadagnini, rather unusually, associated more with musicians than with fellow makers. Perhaps because of this and his close association with the Piacenzan cellist Carlo Ferrari, Guadagnini cellos break the conventional mould of cello size and shape.

By taking advantage of new string technology, Guadagnini realised that the cello could be reduced in size with no great reduction in the power of the sound. Widening the centre bouts and reducing the size of the top bouts made access to the fingerboard easier for the cellist. These changes, radical at the time and still unusual (if you place a Guadagnini cello against most other full-sized cellos the difference in size would be striking), have ensured an august following for his cellos.

In the spring of 1758, Guadagnini moved his family and tools from Milan to take up residence in the Duchy of Parma, seat of the Bourbon duke, don Filipe and a centre of Bourbon culture. Guadagnini had been invited to the court by Parma's chief minister, Du Tillot, and it appears was requested to make the instruments for the court orchestra. This cello was made at the start of Guadagnini's thirteen years in Parma, and is an incredibly finely worked example. The sort of cello you one would expect from a maker eager to make his mark in a new city.

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Images available on request
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Christie's holds the world auction record for any musical instrument for the sale of the "Kreutzer" violin by Antonio Stradivari, which sold for £947,500 in April 1998 in London. Christie's holds three Musical Instruments sales a year in London and one in New York. While stringed instruments of the violin family generally dominate Christie's sales, fretted and wind instruments, as well as keyboard instruments up to *circa* 1820 also appear in the auctions.