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*“The ‘Macdonald’ is without peer”*

## SOTHEBY'S TO OFFER THE FINEST STRADIVARI VIOLA IN EXISTENCE

Estimated to Sell in excess of  
US\$45 Million

NEW YORK, 26 March 2014 – Sotheby's and Ingles & Hayday announced today that they are to offer for sale the finest viola in existence – the 'Macdonald' Viola by Antonio Stradivari (1644 – 1737) – in a sealed bid process this Spring. Stradivari's name has become synonymous with perfection in the field of musical instruments. Of all the instruments made by him, violas are by far the rarest – only ten survive, while his output during his long career included 600 violins and 50 cellos. A Stradivari viola is the ultimate prize for collectors and the 'Macdonald' of 1719 is one of only two violas made during Stradivari's 'Golden Period' (1700 – 1720), which saw the production of his finest instruments. In terms of condition, beauty of

appearance and playing quality, the 'Macdonald' is without peer. The viola will be offered through a sealed bid process, with bids expected in excess of US\$45 million.\*

David Redden, Sotheby's Vice Chairman, commented: *"Every field is defined by one outstanding masterpiece which casts its shadow not only on its own domain but far beyond. The instruments of Stradivari are in a class of their own among the pinnacles of human craftsmanship and the 'Macdonald' Viola stands at the unquestioned summit."*

Tim Ingles, Director of Ingles & Hayday, commented: *"The finest of all Stradivari violas is generally agreed to be the 'Macdonald' of 1719. It is immaculately preserved. No Stradivari viola has been on the market for the last fifty years so this is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."*

The 'Macdonald' viola was purchased for Peter Schidlof of the Amadeus Quartet in 1964 and is being offered for sale by the family of the late musician, who died in 1987. The 'Macdonald' has a long documented history, passing through the hands of many titled owners. It was purchased by Godfrey Bosville, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Macdonald – from whom its name derives – in the 1820s. Only two Stradivari violas, of which the 'Macdonald' is one, remain in private hands.\*\*

The craftsmanship of the 'Macdonald' viola is of incomparable quality. The front is of alpine spruce while the back is of a single piece of maple, and its almost complete coating of Stradivari's famous varnish has remained in a remarkably pure and undamaged state. The consistent rippling flame of the maple slopes downward from left to right, providing a beautiful shifting pattern beneath the varnish. This unbroken figure emphasises the particular virtues of the instrument: a strength, weight and muscularity that proclaim the viola as a force of its own in the violin family.

From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when the popularity of Stradivari's work grew, collectors began to assemble quartets of Stradivari's instruments (two violins, one viola and one cello). It is practically impossible to assemble such a quartet today due to the extreme rarity of Stradivari's violas, thus making the appearance on the market of the 'Macdonald' an historic event. Stradivari's reputation for perfection was established during the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the work of legendary virtuoso performers, such as the violinist Niccolò Paganini (1782 – 1840).

\*US\$45 million would mark a world record for a musical instrument. The current auction record for a musical instrument is the 'Lady Blunt' Stradivarius violin of 1721, which was sold by the Nippon Music Foundation in June 2011 in an online auction for £9.8m (US\$15.9m) to raise money for the Nippon Foundation's Northeastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Relief Fund.

\*\*The other privately owned Strad viola is held in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. – The 'Tuscan' contralto viola of 1690 (not to be confused with the tenore viola of the same name - Stradivari made a quintet with two violas, one big, called tenore, and one of what we now consider standard size, or contralto).

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Ingles & Hayday is one of the world's leading specialists in the sale of fine stringed instruments and bows. With over thirty five years' combined experience, Tim Ingles & Paul Hayday are highly-respected experts in their field and act as consultants to Sotheby's. The two companies work closely together to ensure that vendors and buyers of musical instruments are offered the highest-quality service through their combined experience as leaders in the international market. Auctions are held twice a year in Sotheby's Bond Street Galleries and high-value instruments and bows are also offered for sale by private treaty. Ingles & Hayday have recently sold instruments by Stradivari and Guarneri del Gesù, amongst other highly sought-after makers. With a reputation for reliable and honest expertise, Tim and Paul regularly help to unite the world's top musicians with appropriate instruments. They also offer sound advice to investors interested in the stringed-instrument market. They recently sold the "Guyot" Stradivari violin of circa 1700 to a private investor for the use of leading soloist, Benjamin Schmid.