

Written by Benoît Rolland  
Photographs Benoît Rolland

# PECCATTE



MAKER	<b>DOMINIQUE PECCATTE</b>
NATIONALITY	<b>FRENCH</b>
BORN	<b>MIRECOURT, 1810</b>
DIED	<b>MIRECOURT, 1874</b>
BOW	<b>VIOLIN</b>
DATE	<b>C.1840</b>
BRAND	<b>VUILLAUME A PARIS</b>

The tool marks on this violin bow recount its extraordinary journey. Around 1840 Dominique Peccatte sculpted a conventional bow stick for Vuillaume. The powerful head was shaped in one flowing movement, the throat streaked with file strokes; Peccatte was working quickly as usual. He created a superbly effective stick, in a nice but weak wood that meant he had to retain some thickness to achieve the required strength. His brother, François, probably helped him fit the nickel silver frog. With the fashion for gold, it is rare that a valuable bow reaches us with its original, humble fittings.

The bow's self-rehairing device, patented (but not invented) by Vuillaume in 1835, was tremendously appealing to musicians – wherever you were, you could instantly clasp in new hair. The ribbon was clipped between two pins that were simply slotted into matching holes in the head and frog.

Did a musician, excited by this novelty, insist on the modification of this bow? Certainly, it should never have been converted. Drilling into the thin, conventional frog was risky, and the splinter torn away at the edge of the hole in the head confirms that the 19th-century machinery could not provide a clean cut into a finished surface.

The innovation severely constrained the shape of the bow and ultimately Peccatte preferred to retain his freedom to create. This bow was eventually converted back to a conventional fitting. Its unusually low weight is due to its very light, ancient wrapping. With a modern wrapping it would weigh about 62 grams. ■