

OBERLIN



▲ The varnishing was completed by a process of 'chipping' and 'shading'

JUNE 20 Ryan Soltis wants to demonstrate how to make rosinate pigments so that we can all experience the process. In groups of two or three, we make enough pigment for everyone to be able to take some home. This becomes an exciting activity for the evening.

By the end of the day, the varnish team is applying a ground to the 'Betts' fiddle. Everyone is intent on getting a look, huddled around a workbench in the smaller varnish studio. We have cleaned this room (a former wood shop) and installed a UV 'light shack', put together from a plastic garden shed.

JUNE 21 By now we have outlines for the top and back cut out from the rib assembly, and wood chips are flying all over the place. The team leaders for the new 'Betts' violin have

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VIOLIN PHOTOS MICHAEL ZIRKLE

adjusted the arching templates made from CT scans with corrected distortion. We have agreed on arching heights and factored in some distortion. Sam Zygmuntowicz can only stay for a week, so he encourages his team to get more carving done, but there's a bit of a delay. It's Ben Ruth's turn to work on the scroll, and he has to rework the previous step of its cut-out, a problem of miscommunication. It's difficult when you need to have each step explained and passed on to the next person, especially when it's completed (or not) late in the evening, and the next morning's shift has begun (without clarification). This is one of the main challenges of being in a large, multilingual group.

JUNE 22 The new violin is progressing well, the scroll has been recovered and the arching has taken shape. We have some authentic-looking purfling that Sam's assistant Collin Gallahue has made previously. A varnish demonstration can often steal the show at workshops: that's become a daily occurrence this year, courtesy of Jeff and Antoine. Whenever there's an announcement for the next step, the entire workshop clears out and people pack into the varnishing studio with notebooks and cameras.

JUNE 23 **JUNE 24** The weekend is less structured, with some free time to catch up on personal work or explore the Oberlin area. Jeff and Antoine have to continue with their varnish steps if they're to meet their Wednesday deadline. They have encountered difficulties with their craquelure, which doesn't quite meet their high standards. However, Chris Germain and I encourage them to move forwards, because it's a demonstration to all participants in how to recover from these experiences.

JUNE 25 Both the top and back plates have had work completed over the weekend, so the new violin is clearly taking shape. Steve Sirr has his computer set up in one corner of the workshop, to show analysis of the 'Betts' CT scans. These are quite useful for comparing arching, thicknesses, densities and

▼ It took precisely ten days to complete the varnish process

