

The Violins of František Ondříček and Their Pictorial Documentation in the Collections of the Czech Museum of Music

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This article presents findings from study of and research concerning musical instruments and rich iconographic materials from the estate of the world-renowned Czech violinist František Ondříček. Violins held by the Czech Museum of Music's Musical Instruments Division were analysed and the results compared with secondary information from literature. Information was found concerning a total of fifteen bowed string instruments known to have been once owned by Ondříček. Five of them are presently held by the Czech Museum of Music, which also holds more than three hundred photographs of the artist (forty of them showing him with a violin) and fifteen works of visual art depicting him. The violin seen most frequently on preserved photographs of Ondříček is one by Didier Nicolas aîné, which is the most historically valuable instrument from his estate. In drawings and works of graphic art Ondříček is shown mainly with his last violin, by Carlo Giuseppe Testore, which he played to the end of his life.

František Ondříček – violin – violin making – musical iconography – historical photography – studio photography – visual art – performing artist – performing art

Many distinguished figures have contributed to the worldwide fame of Czech art in the sphere of musical performance. Materials pertaining to the lives and careers of some of them have been preserved in the Czech Museum of Music (České muzeum hudby – ČMH) as part of the National Museum (Národní muzeum – NM). Apart from the bequests of these artists themselves and their families, such materials have often been assembled by their pupils or admirers. Although these performers may seem to be well known, research can deepen our understanding of them and contribute new knowledge.

One of these important figures was the internationally-renowned Czech violinist, composer, and teacher František Ondříček (1857–1922), an heir to the tradition of Jan Slavík and Ferdinand Laub. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Ondříček ranked among the most famous violinists in the world, admired not only for his wonderful