

# SOLUTIONS: MUSEO DEL VIOLIN, CREMONA

The Treasure Chest houses the most important instruments, such as Stradivarius' Cremonese violin  
Picture: Mino Boiocchi

Installation  
OF THE  
MONTH

## What a fiddle!

The home of violinmaking inaugurates an impressive interactive museum to bring the history of these instruments to life, writes **Mike Clark**

### ITALY

STRADIVARIUS, AMATI and Guarneri, probably the world's best-known violinmakers, were all from Cremona, the Italian city whose traditional violin craftsmanship is now part of UNESCO's list of the Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The recently inaugurated Museo del Violin (violin museum), combining a priceless collection of string instruments with a high-impact interactive multimedia history of the fascinating craft, therefore just had to be in Cremona.

Called in to design and install the ambitious 10-room project, Italian communications giant Euphon already had wide experience in this field.

Marco Carazzato, communication systems manager with Euphon Communication, was the consultant of the museum's scientific committee for the multimedia project and head of the multimedia installation project.

He explains: "Our company was responsible for the project development, realisation, supply and installation of the interactive multimedia system, software development, technological

hardware and scenographic aspects, as well as the realisation of the multimedia content for the museum.

#### TUNNEL VISION

The visit starts at the beginning of the violin's history as visitors pass through a multimedia tunnel documenting the story of the replicas of the early 16th century ancestors of the violin on show. A series of 10 Sanyo PLC XU106 projectors screen video and paintings on five screen areas.

Italian audio is supplied by Panphonics Sound Shower SS1000 directional speaker panels in front of each screen, while foreign visitors use the Audio Cultura audio guides (in English, French, Spanish, German, Japanese and Russian), triggered when they reach the appropriate position.

Visitors' sense of smell is brought into play in the next room, where there is a reproduction of a violinmaker's workshop (there are still no fewer than 141 in Cremona to this day!) with its typical smells of freshly planed wood, resin and paint.

A series of large interactive touchscreens enable visitors



Visitors can leaf through virtual antique books at the interactive tables

to discover the various parts of a violin and watch how they are made.

Apart from the wide use of proximity sensors, other devices used to ensure streamlined visitor

interaction in the various exhibit areas include apparently simple ideas such as having an identical 42in or 48in display mounted on the wall above the ones used by individual visitors. This

### [INSTALLED]

#### AUDIO

- Audio Cultura audio guides
- Bose151 loudspeaker enclosures
- JBL CBT 50LA line array column loudspeakers
- JBL Control 23 loudspeaker enclosures
- Panphonics Sound Shower SS1000 speakers
- TOA F-2000B enclosures
- Crown XLS1000 power amplifiers
- Yamaha MG 166CX audio console
- AKG K99 headphones
- RSF headphones
- InOut Panelplayers

#### VIDEO

- BrightSign Roku HD110, HD410, HD1010, HD210 and HD120 media players
  - Sanyo PLC-XU106 and PLC-ZM5000L multimedia projectors
  - BenQ MB813ST projectors
  - NEC X462UN 46in seamless monitors
  - NEC V422 60003168 42in LCD monitors
  - NEC LCD P402DST 40in touch monitors
  - Samsung SM400UX-3 40in seamless monitors
  - Samsung SM-ME46B and SM-ME46A 46in monitors
  - Samsung SM-MD32B 32in monitors
  - Samsung MD40B 40in monitors
  - Asus VE208D 19in LED monitors
  - Asus VE228H 21.5in LED monitors
  - Blacklit S65 TO holographic films
  - Sony DPF HD1000 10in digital frames
  - Peau Production video cameras
  - Ligra 68901 projection screen
  - Extron DVI 201 TX/RX DVI extender
  - Extron SW2 DVI A PLUS DVI switch
  - Dell 260 D02s623 Desktop PCs
  - Dell X51 Alienware
- #### LIGHTING
- Spotlight MI PR LW/CT mini profiles
  - Coemar Reflection LEDko fixtures
  - Coemar LEDko VariWhite profiles
  - ETC Smartfade console

enables guides to show their groups the same video content. Other tricks include the use of custom video cameras by Peau Production, a US firm specialised in IR camera tracking systems, →

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which activate the 'touch' features of Blacklit holographic film applied to eye-catching oval tables. Visitors can thus also leaf through virtual antique books telling the story of Cremona's famous violinmaking families.

## SEEN AND HEARD

Excerpts from important concerts by famous musicians can be heard and seen in an original wooden listening room, nicknamed the egg. This features seven TOA F-2000B enclosures recessed round the walls and a pair of BenQ MB813ST projectors screening performance footage on the ceiling (all supplied and installed by Risam).

The Treasure Chest (complete with armed guard) houses the most important instruments, such as Stradivarius' Cremonese violin, in display cases by specialist company Goppion, whose cases have also safeguarded the Mona Lisa and Crown Jewels. The only concession to technology here is diffused audio, but the lighting was designed for the museum by LD Paolo Rodighiero. It consists of a series of Coemar LEDko VariWhite profiles with adjustable colour temperature recessed in the ceiling above each case and reflected off mirrors inside the glass, allowing visitors to admire the beautiful instruments from all angles.

As far as difficulties involved on the work were concerned, Carazzato adds: "This was a very complex articulated project that involved various companies, each with its own competence. The main difficulty was adapting to a project that in fact was developed as work proceeded, with ongoing variations. This was overcome with constant control of the work in progress."

## [ABOUT THE INSTALLER]

- A member of the Mediacontech Group, Euphon Communication has branches in the provinces of Turin and Milan
- It is organised in four business units: events, audiovisuals, large screens and communication systems
- An Italian leader in providing technological solutions for corporate, entertainment and culture-orientated communication, Euphon specialises in integrated solutions for the entire value chain
- Recent projects have included theatres, theme parks, conference and expo venues, and major corporate events

Lighting in the auditorium consists of Coemar Reflection LEDko Full Spectrum fixtures  
Picture: Mino Boiorchi



Other Goppion fixtures include a series of huge drawer units, in which over 700 original Stradivarius drawings, moulds and tools are kept. Virtual versions can also be viewed on the large touchscreens on the top of each drawer unit.

## MORE TO DISCOVER

Room 8 holds information on the Gold Medal winners of the three-yearly violinmaking contest organised by the Stradivarius Foundation, complete with an incredibly detailed multimedia station providing information on the instruments and the craftsmen who made them.

Room 9 focuses on the Friends of Stradivarius, a worldwide network of people who play, collect, study or simply love the Cremonese instruments. It also hosts instruments made by Amati

and Guarneri which are on loan from private and public collections (including one of just six Strad guitars in existence). Here four more large displays show interviews of the collectors.

Euphon's project for the museum does not however cater exclusively for experts or musicians: along the entire exhibition route there are numerous Discovery Points. These bright orange child-height consoles, complete with display and two handsets, enable young visitors to keep in touch with Uncle Strad, a descendant of the man himself, who guides them through the five-century story.

Video quality is ensured throughout by BrightSign Full HD media players and, as well as the numerous Panphonics directive speakers, the notes of the precious instruments and comments are reproduced with Crown-powered JBL and Bose enclosures.

The last stop on the visitor's journey through musical history is a large cinema area, which can be blacked out if necessary, in which a Sanyo PLC-ZM5000L Full HD projector screens film and cartoon footage of how violins have appeared through the decades, on a motorised Ligra 4.5m x 3.5m screen. Here audio is courtesy of a pair of white JBL CBT 50LA column speakers with a Crown XLS1000 amplifier.

Behind the audience seating, below an enormous photograph of a violin, there is a long series of large 'books' with the names of Cremona's artisans on the spines. At the end of the room is a 46in monitor on a lectern, on which Italy's professional violinmakers are listed.

## OTHER FACILITIES

As well as the actual museum, the facility also has a 460-seat auditorium designed by world-famous Japanese acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota. The control room hosts a Yamaha MG 166CX audio console and an ETC Smartfade desk used to control 18 Coemar Reflection LEDko Full Spectrum fixtures above the stage and eight more installed at the sides. There is also an acoustic research lab, run with Milan Polytechnic (complete with anechoic chamber), and another lab for staff from the University of Pavia, for the analysis of the materials used in violinmaking, such as paint and wood.

Carazzato concludes: "Every one of our installations is unique, as each is the result of clients' specific needs or, in this case, those of the scientific committee. One original element on this project was without doubt the route conceived and realised specifically for children (with its interactive Discovery Points), whereas in general installations are the result of an attempt to

translate the communication requirements expressed by the museum project into installation elements. For example, we invented a sort of set of binoculars to animate and describe the so-called 'island' - the place where everything began (the area in which the workshops of the first historical violin making families were located) - with the odour diffusor and the virtual animations showing the basics of making Stradivarius instruments." ■

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