

Marco Sellitto, from engineer to guitar maker



A passion for his work and an almost manic search for the most appropriate materials: that is how a perfect guitar comes to life.

At the age of three he was enraptured by the delightful notes of a classical guitar.

He listened to its sound and was spellbound by the charm of its melodies: we are talking about Marco Sellitto, the greatest living master luthier. At home and abroad his renown runs ahead of him, wherever he goes. A Neapolitan by birth, he combined his passion for the guitar with his formal studies. He obtained a degree in acoustic engineering from the University of Texas, without ever forgetting - over and above the technical components of his instrument - those notes which long before had completely enthralled him. In the never waning wake of these memories he undertook to study classical guitar at the Music Conservatory in Naples under the guidance of Maestro Vincenzo Amabile.

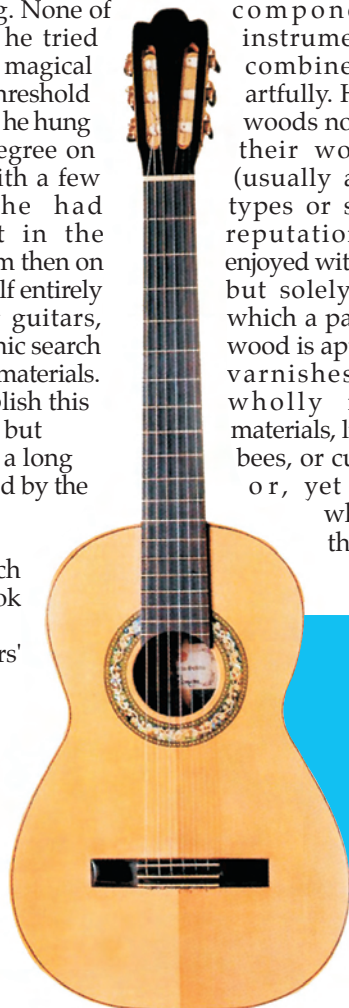
While studying to become a classical guitarist, he kept on trying to bring back to life the melodies he so much cherished, but no guitar seemed to fully satisfy his yearning. None of the many guitars he tried could recreate that magical sound. So, on the threshold of his 40th birthday, he hung his engineering degree on the wall (along with a few others which he had managed to get in the meantime) and from then on he dedicated himself entirely to manufacturing guitars, with an almost manic search for the most suited materials. In order to accomplish this he chose very fine, but unusual materials, a long way from those used by the modern industrial production of this instrument, so much so that he never took much interest in luthiers or in luthiers' craft. He does not consider it worthwhile. He assesses the present stage of guitar manufacturing as craftsmanship

at best, rather than as an art.

He manufactures his guitars in his workshop in Caserta, a true temple to the art of sound creation. There he assembles what amounts to far more than just guitars; they are true works of art, obtained from diverse types of wood and yielding very distinct sounds. Each one gets its own name. Number 0, the first one he made, dates back to 2005 and was called the "Dolorosa". The passion Sellitto pours into making his guitars finds its inspiration in Antonio De Torres, a great master luthier, the Stradivarius of the guitar. The superior quality of the instruments Stellitto creates stems also from his choice and use of materials: only the finest woods and varnishes obtained from ancient, natural raw materials are employed. His keen sensitivity to sound allows him to bring in innovations by "interpreting" and analyzing all the components of his instruments, which he combines and blends artfully. He uses different woods not on the bases of their wonted qualities (usually associated with types or species), or the reputation which they enjoyed with master luthiers, but solely on the sound which a particular piece of wood is apt to yield. For his varnishes he employs wholly natural, raw materials, like propolis from bees, or curcuma and aloe or, yet again, incense, which strengthens the varnish.

"For his guitars he uses only the finest woods and varnishes from natural, raw materials, like propolis, incense or aloe."

"Before manufacturing a guitar, I delve into the issue of what kind of sound may eventually come from a given piece of wood. I will then paint it with various sorts of varnishes, assessing the outcome in terms of quality and speed of sound, varnish by varnish" has explained this master luthier, time and again. His guitars have been adopted and used by prestigious concert guitarists like Piera Dadomo and Luigi Attademo, who showed attention and appreciation for the quality of his instruments. Stellitto's guitars are acknowledged the world over. Maestro Angelo Gilardino, one of the most authoritative figures in the world of classical guitar, wrote: "One perceives in his work that aggregate of cares which bespeak not only the skillfulness of the craftsman, but the mind of a learned master luthier".



Marco Sellitto succeeded in writing what amounts to the most complex and important chapter on the sound structure of a musical instrument. Before him only Antonio De Torres, a master luthier, had successfully reached such a goal: he attained the realization of a "template" all of his own, thus creating a unique sound which no other existing instrument had.