



LIVING ART
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TAFT HISTORIC HOUSE
BICENTENNIAL

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Rare “Taft” Stradivarius Violin Makes Special Appearance at Former Home, now the Taft Museum of Art

CINCINNATI, OH—November 23, 2021—Once belonging to Anna Sinton Taft, the [“Taft” Stradivarius Violin](#) made a special appearance this Tuesday at the Taft Museum of Art. The rare instrument is currently on loan to Canadian violinist Chris Whitley from the Canada Council for the Arts as part of the Musical Instrument Bank’s [national competition](#).

Whitley and the Thalea String Quartet (including musicians Kumiko Sakamoto, violin; Lauren Spaulding, viola; and Cincinnati-native Titilayo “Titi” Ayangade, cello) were in town for the week to perform with [Chamber Music Cincinnati at Memorial Hall](#). The special violin, initially only on loan through 2021 to Whitley, was extended through August 2022 due to the pandemic. This was a silver lining for the quartet who could now reunite the special instrument with its heritage.

“I thought it would be really wonderful to bring the violin ‘home,’ if only for a short while,” said Whitley. “It has been at least 20 years since the instrument has been in Cincinnati and I wanted to make the most of this opportunity.”

While in the midst of its \$12.7 million Bicentennial Infrastructure Project to preserve and protect the Taft historic house, the museum’s iconic Music Room was inaccessible for a performance. However, the violin still got the chance to reunite with many of the artworks that would have graced the halls of the residence during its time with the Tafts. During a private lunch-hour concert, the quartet played a selection of songs from their repertoire amongst 80 highlights from the Taft’s collection in the special exhibition, *In a New Light: Treasures from the Taft*, located in the Fifth Third Gallery. [Download the press kit and watch an excerpt.](#)

According to the Musical Instrument Bank, the violin is characteristic of the early part of Antonio Stradivari’s golden period (about 1700 to 1725) for which the violin is named. Anna Sinton Taft—Taft Museum of Art’s co-founder, former historic house resident and a founder of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra—purchased the violin from Rudolf Wurlitzer of Cincinnati, Ohio. Anna Sinton Taft later presented the violin to Emil Heermann, the concertmaster of the



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Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, for his use. After the Taft's deaths, the violin was sold to the private collector and amateur violinist Ernest Ruder, of Cincinnati, where it remained until 1987, at which point it was sold by Jacques Français to its current owner (anonymous).

Titilayo "Titi" Ayangade is elated to be back home for this unique opportunity. As an inaugural member of the CSO Nouveau Chamber Players, a CCM graduate, and former student of CSO Principal Cellist Ilya Finkelshteyn, Ayangade recalls the moment when her colleague was awarded the violin, exclaiming "that's the violin from my hometown!" Ayangade in reflecting on this homecoming shares, "chamber music just takes you so many places and you get to touch the minds of so many people, see so many things...it's an amazing vehicle for exploration," concluding in reference to the Taft and Cincinnati "I have to come here more often."

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About the Taft Museum of Art:

The Taft Museum of Art is a living landmark tucked away in downtown Cincinnati, where art and history lives on the walls—and *in* the walls. Built around 1820 as a private home for several of Cincinnati's most prominent citizens, the Taft Museum of Art is now one of the finest small art museums in America and holds National Historic Landmark status for its historic house and Duncanson murals. Throughout our grounds, guests can enjoy special exhibitions, the historic outdoor garden, the Museum Shop and Lindner Family Café, events and programming for all ages, and complimentary on-site parking. It is all under one roof, culminating in a one-of-a-kind, multi-sensory experience that puts you at the center of art and history.

For more information, visit taftmuseum.org.