

L'Archet 1750-1950 is a comprehensive encyclopedia of French bow makers focusing on 116 makers, their lives and work, their brands and stylistic characteristics, even the subtleties of their work—metalwork, finishing methods, & structural elements. By means of over 3,000 detailed color photographs—showing angled images of heads, buttons and frogs, both on and off the stick—the authors take you deep into the creative process, revealing the working practices of each maker.

Jean-François Raffin, a student of Bernard Georges Louis Millant, ranks among the most highly regarded experts of French bows. Born in Paris on May 20, 1947, Raffin began his career during a period in which French violin and bow making was undergoing profound changes. After World War II, France's music trades experienced a long phase of stagnation in which instrument makers could not regain their previous greatness. One example of this is the history of the prominent Bazin family of bow makers. Their story also serves as an illustration of how the artisan trade reoriented in the 1950s to 1970s, an epoch which shaped the path of Raffin. In 1968, not yet 20, Raffin traveled to Mirecourt to begin his apprenticeship under Jean Eulry (1910-1986), the great master teacher in modern violin making. As Raffin later described in *L'Archet*, his training there was entirely in keeping with the old French craftsman tradition: "ten hours straight at the bench and ... 'not a word'". In 1970 the National School of Violin Making was founded, and by the time Raffin graduated in 1971 as one of the first to complete the program, a new period had already begun. Raffin initially worked as a journeyman for Etienne Vatelot (b.1925), the founder of the Mirecourt violin-making school, but within short order was hired in 1972 by Bernard Millant (1929-2017) in Paris. There he learned the art of making bows, which would become his true calling. In the 17 years he spent under Millant, Raffin studied the old masters of bow making; he later opened his own shop in 1989 in Rue de Rome no. 68, remaining in Bernard Millant's neighborhood. His wide-ranging knowledge of French bow making helped Raffin quickly become a sought-after expert, so much so that his atelier work, patterned after the titans of the 19th century, waned. In 1996 he was appointed an appraiser at the appellate court.