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Monday Music Memo 21 – 14 August 2023

A bit of a fiddle!

Artist & Instrument - Male – violin

Joshua David Bell (born December 9, 1967) is an American violinist and conductor. He plays the *Gibson Stradivarius*.

The *Gibson*, while owned by Bronisław Huberman, was stolen twice. The first time it was returned shortly afterward. The second theft, possibly by musician Julian Altman, occurred on the evening of 28 February 1936, backstage at Carnegie Hall, while Huberman performed with his *Guarnerius* of 1731.

Though Huberman never saw the *Gibson* again, it was recovered 50 years later, in 1985, as a result of Altman's deathbed confession to his wife that he had bought the stolen violin from a friend for \$100. In 1988 she turned it in to Lloyd's, which paid her a \$263,000 finder's fee and then sold it for \$1.2 million to Norbert Brainin, an acclaimed English violinist.

It is currently owned by violinist Joshua Bell. Bell had played the violin, and Brainin jokingly told him it could be his for four million dollars. Shortly thereafter, by chance, Bell came across the violin again and discovered it was about to be sold to a German industrialist to become part of a collection. According to his website, Bell "was practically in tears."

Bell sold his then current Stradivarius, the *Tom Taylor*, for a little more than two million dollars and purchased the Gibson ex-Huberman for a little under the four million dollar asking price. His first recording with it was *Romance of the Violin* in 2003.

In 2019, the instrument's value increased to an estimated \$14 million.

Joshua played it in the Washington Metro as an experiment to see how many people would stop and listen.

Joshua Bell's 'Stop and hear the music' experiment at the Washington Metro

https://youtu.be/hnOPu0_YWhw

2.30 minutes

