

Historical bows



Gerhard Landwehr *luthier*



Viola da Gamba bows

Throughout history viola da gamba bows have constantly changed and adapted to the requirements of the age. Although some models remain recognisable for many decades, and some characteristic details continue to exist for much longer in the form of traditions, you can also say that every generation has something new to offer.

I have included a number of all these possible models in this catalogue. Sometimes I have drawn as much inspiration as possible from historical examples and at other times have employed free thinking to satisfy modern-day demands.

Each model represents a conception of style and sound: there are lighter and heavier models, more flexible bows with low hair tension and also more powerful ones with higher hair tension. The most striking aspect of this is the change in the curve of the stick: in the course of time bows become progressively more curved.

More important, however, is the character of the attack and how the sound exists 'in space': how the sound wants to mix with other sounds. The earlier bows like to do this, resulting in beautiful and clear harmonics. The later bows' sound remains more independent.

The weight of the bow, measured in grams, is actually not that significant. It is often the lighter bows that have a prettier attack.

This attack can range from 'vocal', where the sound begins with resonance, or more 'plucked,' where the beginning of the stroke sounds like 'B' or 'P'.

A more direct, loud attack is also possible, resembling 'Ts'.

In general it can be stated that the convex curved bows must be played with a 'heavy' hand. Muscle strength will not help. The later, concave bows, require more pressure, and tolerate it. The attack becomes 'shorter', with a higher spectrum. The sound is then more focused.

In addition to these properties, which are obviously influenced by the player, effects such as balance, flexibility and weight can be achieved in consultation.

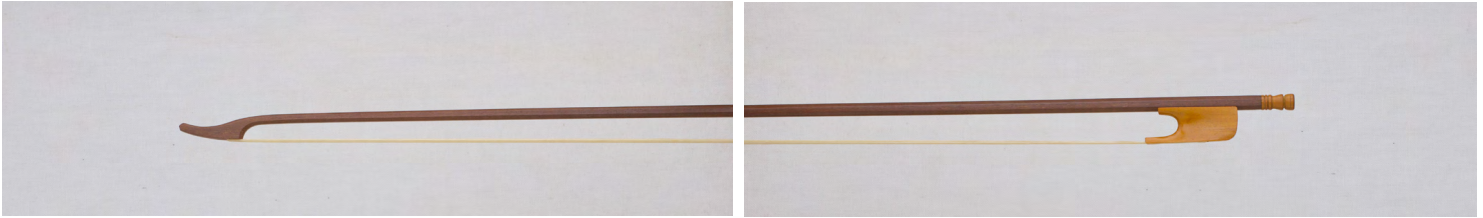
- Gerhard Landwehr
luthier

All bows in this catalogue have a name – it is as it is – and a short description. Every player will certainly have his own opinion about the characteristics of a bow. But nevertheless, after numerous discussions with all those who tried these bows, a common denominator came up, represented in these descriptions.

Treble viol bows



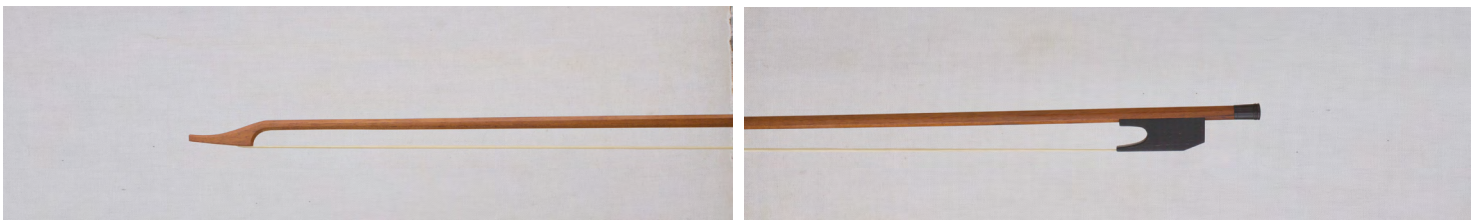
Treble viol bows



1. Student bow

Octagonal beefwood stick, boxwood frog and button. 700 mm. 52 - 54 gr.

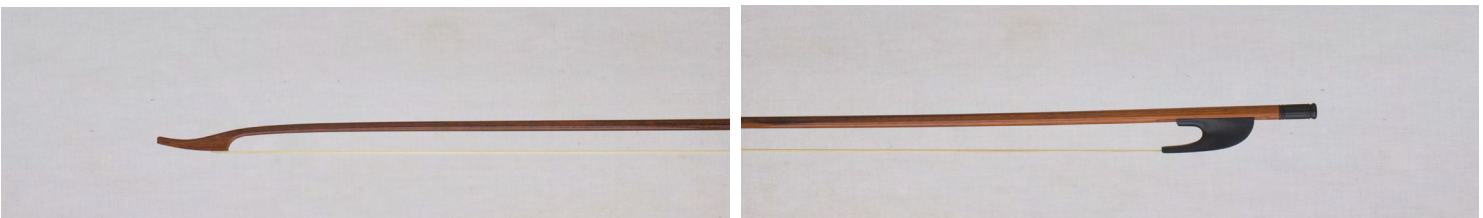
The student bow is above all practical. A simple but effective bow designed to make playing easy.



2. 'Heph'

Octagonal stick plain snakewood, ebony frog and button. 683 mm. 52 - 54 gr.

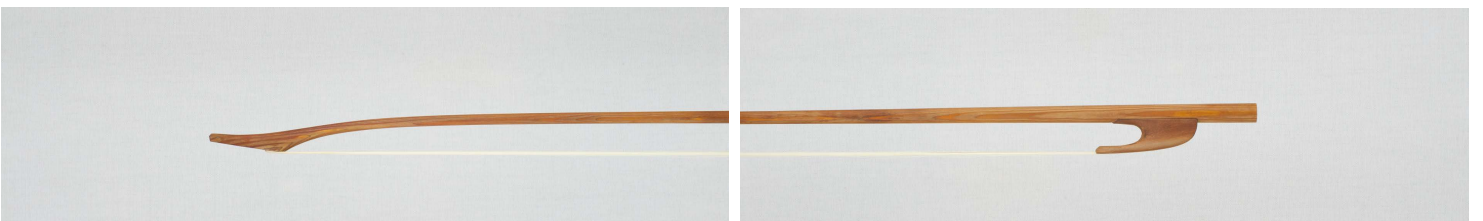
A student bow with a more elegant tone production than student bow nr. 1.



3. Floris

Round plain snakewood stick, ebony frog and button. 678 mm. ca 50 gr.

This model has a broad range of uses, and is above all easy to play.
Historical principles, though not restricted to a particular style, played a major role in its design.
It produces great clarity of sound.

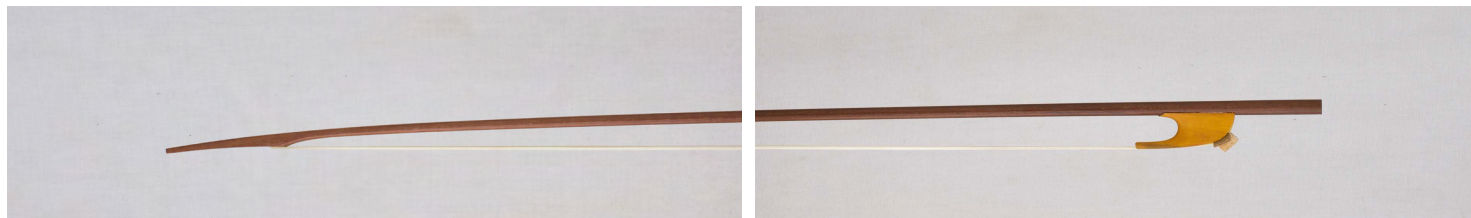


4. 'Ganassi'

. Round stick, lebanon cedar or larch, plumwood frog . 718/736 mm. 44 - 50 gr.

Based on the well-known illustration of Ganassi and inspired by the music of Ortiz.
Light bow, with a strictly vocal, surprisingly spacious sound.

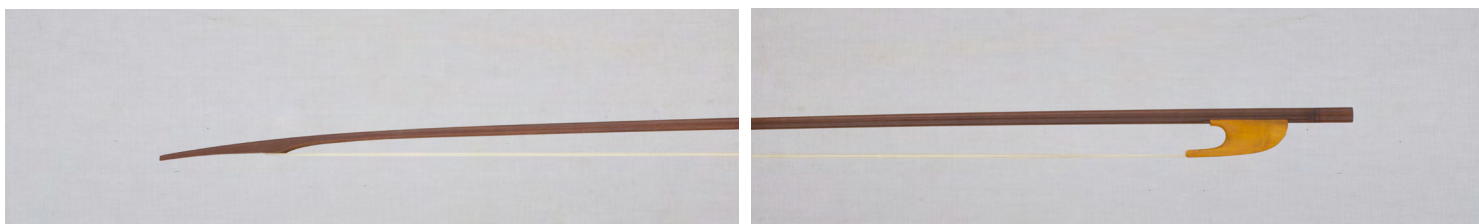
Treble viol bows



5. Consort bow

Round masseranduba stick, boxwood fixed frog. 718/736 mm. 44 - 50 gr.

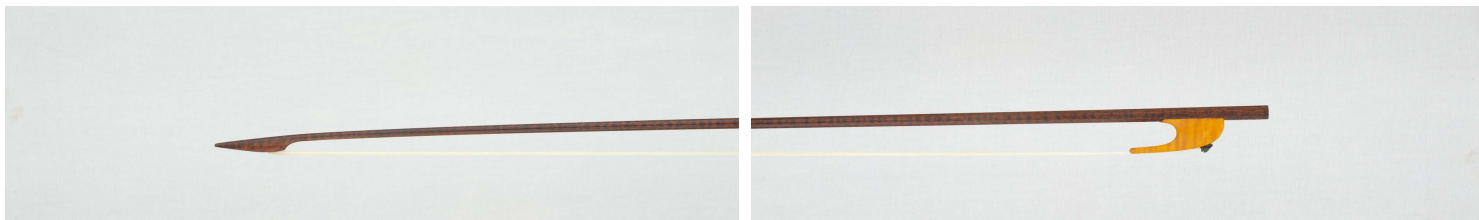
The consort bow was made in accordance with the common 17th-century model used for all stringed instruments. The sound is bright and clear, and blends well in an ensemble. The bow requires a relaxed style of playing. With the addition of a fixed frog, its sound and attack become even more relaxed. For a treble bow that is certainly a great asset.



6. Consort bow

Round, masseranduba stick and screw button, boxwood frog. 733 mm. 46 - 50 gr.

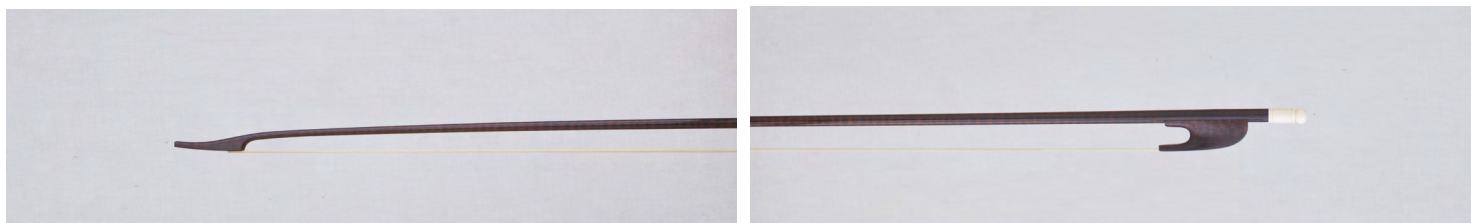
The consort bow was made in accordance with the common 17th-century model used for all stringed instruments. The sound is bright and clear, and blends well in an ensemble. The bow requires a relaxed style of playing. Adding a practical adjuster makes the bow somewhat heavier than the consort bow with a fixed frog, and also slightly stiffer.



7. Dou

Round snakewood stick, boxwood fixed frog. 650 mm. 42 - 45 gr.

The 'Dou' bow is based on 17th-century illustrations and a few preserved original bows. The bow derived its name from a painting by Gerard Dou. The broad head, reminiscent of a tadpole, is a distinctive characteristic. This is a slightly arched bow with low hair tension. Sonorous chords, a clear 'plucked' attack, without irritating background noise, plus great resonance, are what characterise the 'Dou' bow. A relaxed bowing arm is a must. Works particularly well with unwound gut strings. Choice and implementation of wood satisfy the highest criteria.



8. Jane

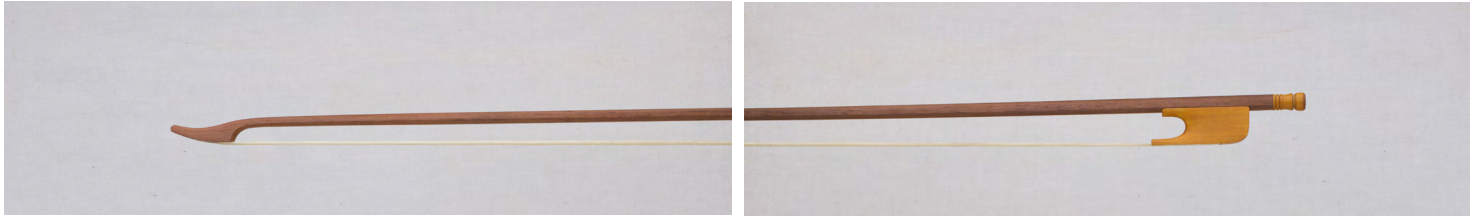
Round snakewood stick and frog, mammoth button. 687 mm. 48 -52 gr.

This 18th-century model is the bow for treble soloists. Its chief characteristic is its ability to produce shiny, lyrical and expressive sounds. The bow can easily be made a little heavier or lighter, and the degree of flexibility can also be varied. Choice and implementation of wood satisfy the highest criteria.

Tenor viol bows



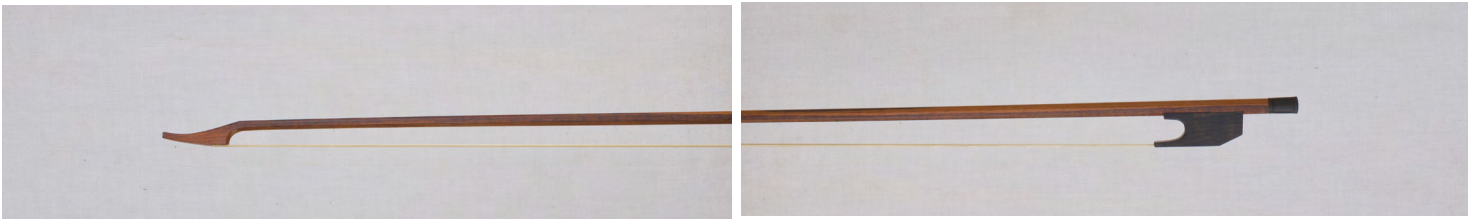
Tenor viol bows



1. Student bow

Octagonal beefwood stick, boxwood frog and button. 711 mm. 51 - 54 gr.

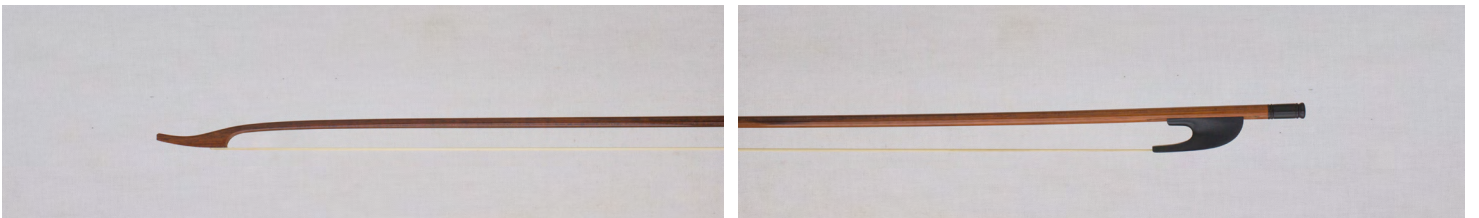
The student bow is above all practical. A simple but effective bow designed to make playing easy.



2. 'Heph'

Octagonal stick, light snakewood; ebony frog and button. 711 mm. 56 - 59 gr.

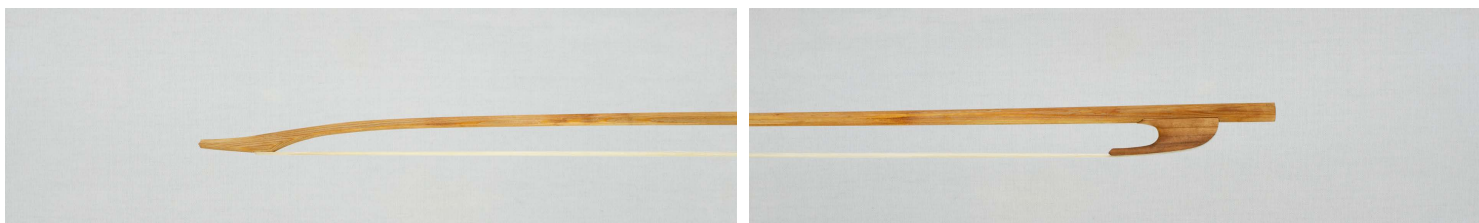
A student bow with a more elegant tone production than student bow nr. 1.



3. Floris

Round, plain snakewood stick, ebony frog and button. 697 mm. 50 - 54 gr.

This model has a broad range of uses, and is above all easy to play. It produces great clarity of sound. Historical principles, though not restricted to a particular style, played a major role in its design.

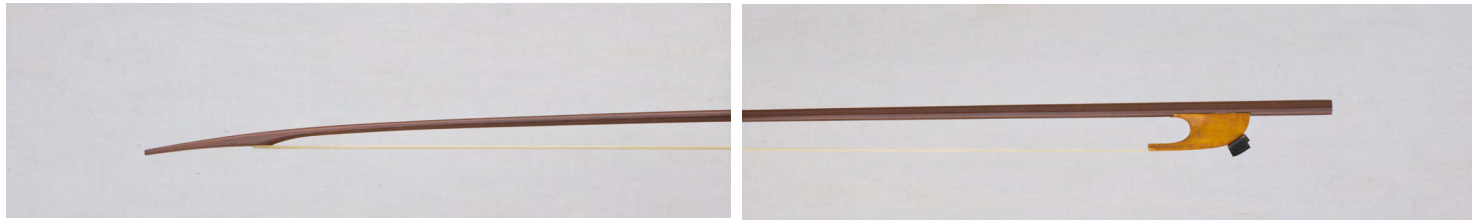


4. 'Ganassi'

Round, stick, lebanon cedar or larch, plunwood fixed frog. 755 mm. 50 -54 gr.

Based on the well-known illustration of Ganassi and inspired by the music of Ortiz.
Light bow, with a strictly vocal, surprisingly spacious sound.

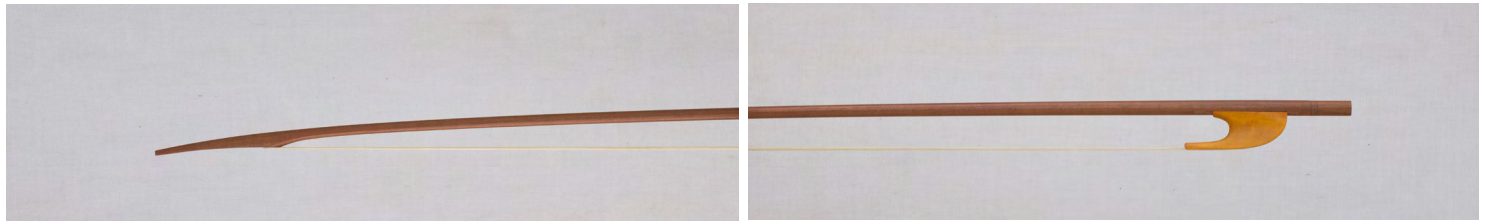
Tenor viol bows



5. Consort bow

Round, masseranduba stick, boxwood fixed frog. 755 mm. 50 -54 gr.

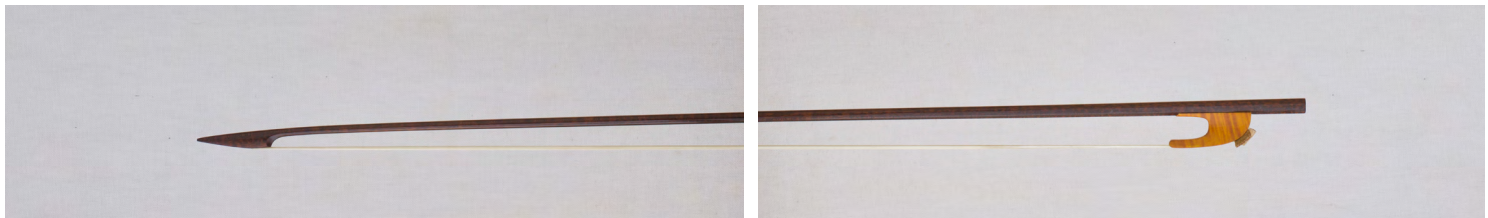
The consort bow was made in accordance with the common 17th-century model used for all stringed instruments. The sound is bright and clear, and blends well in an ensemble. Its easy performance properties make a relaxed style of playing possible. This bow does not lend itself to forceful playing. With the addition of a fixed frog, its sound and attack become relaxed.



6. Consort bow

Round, masseranduba stick and screw button, boxwood frog. 752 mm. 51 - 56 gr.

The consort bow was made in accordance with the common 17th-century model used for all stringed instruments. The sound is bright and clear, and blends well in an ensemble. Its easy performance properties make a relaxed style of playing possible. This bow does not lend itself to forceful playing. Adding a practical adjuster makes the bow somewhat heavier than the consort bow with a fixed frog, and also stiffer. The bow can then lie effortlessly on the string.

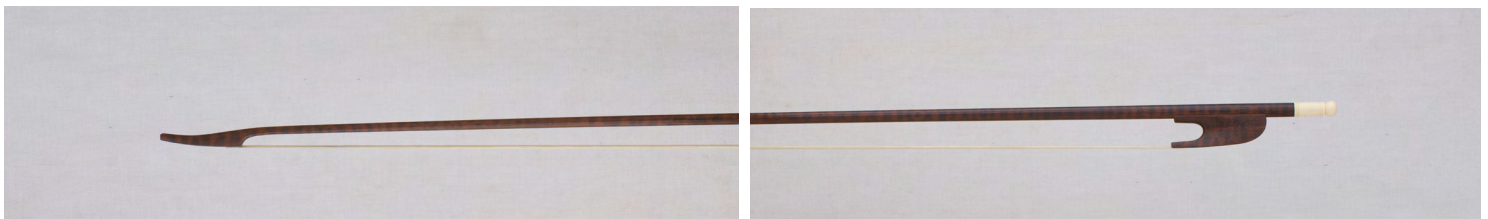


7 Dou

Round, snakewood stick, boxwood fixed frog. 683 mm. 45 - 47 gr.

The 'Dou' bow is based on 17th-century illustrations and a few preserved original bows. The bow derived its name from a painting by Gerard Dou. The broad head, reminiscent of a tadpole, is a distinctive characteristic.

This is an arched bow with low hair tension. Sonorous chords, a clear 'plucked' attack, without irritating background noise, plus great resonance, are what characterise the 'Dou' bow. A relaxed bowing arm is a must. Works particularly well with unwound gut strings. Choice and implementation of wood satisfy the highest criteria.



8. Jane

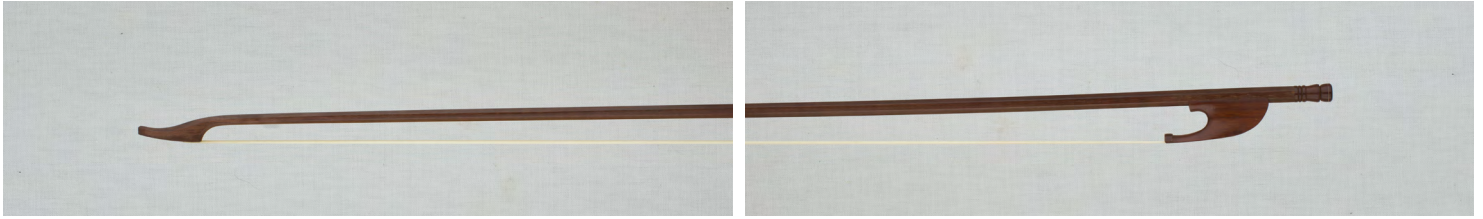
Round, snakewood stick and frog, mammoth button. 729 mm. 54 - 58 gr.

This 18th-century model is above all ideal for alto/tenor gambists with solo ambitions. Its chief characteristic is its ability to produce lyrical and expressive sounds. In consultation with the maker, the bow can easily be made a little heavier or lighter, and the degree of flexibility can also be varied. Choice and implementation of wood satisfy the highest criteria.

Bass viol bows



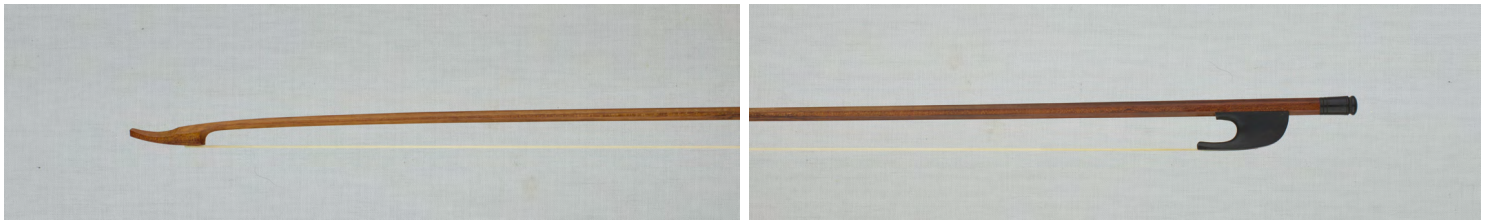
Bass viol bows



1. Student bow

Octagonal beefwood stick. Macassar ebony frog and button. 742 mm. 62 - 67 gr.

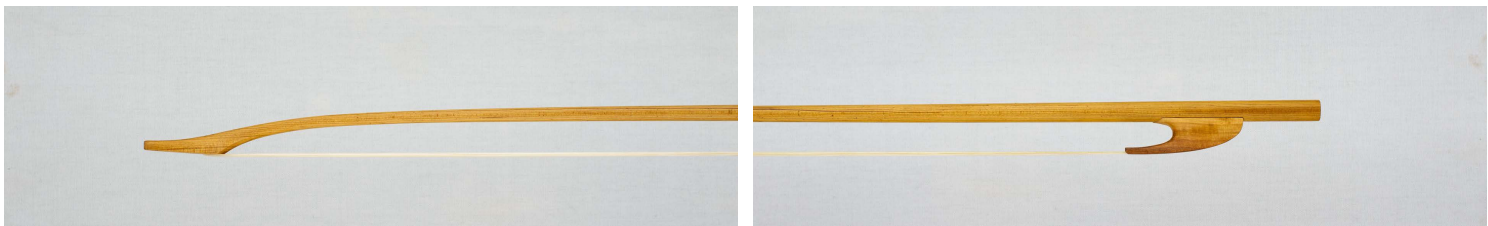
The student bow is above all practical. A simple but effectively designed bow.



2. Moordrecht bow

Octagonal stick, light snakewood; ebony frog and button. 760 mm. 64 - 68 gr.

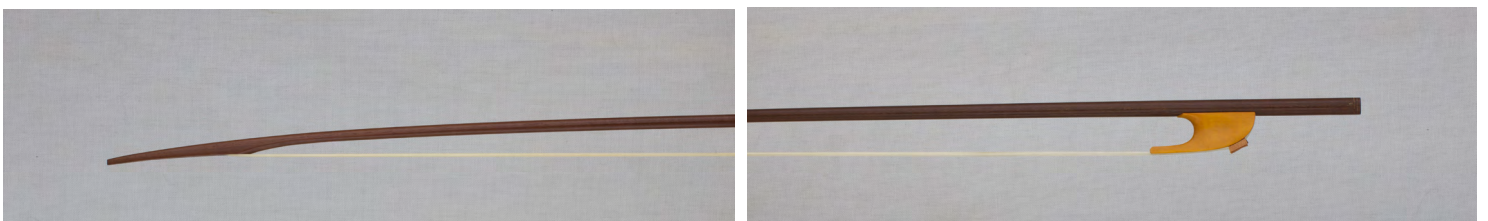
Based on a 17th-century German bow. More flexibility than the student bow.



3. Ganassi

Round, lebanon cedar stick, frog plumwood. 719 mm. ca 45 gr.

Based on the well-known illustration of Ganassi and inspired by the music of Ortiz.
Light bow, with a strictly vocal, surprisingly spacious sound.

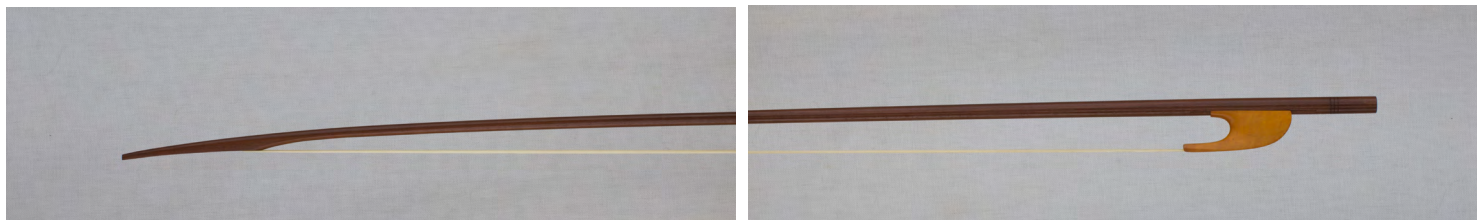


4. Consort bow

Round, masseranduba stick, boxwood fixed frog. 780 mm. 59 - 65 gr.

The consort bow was made in accordance with the common 17th-century model used for all stringed instruments. The sound is bright and clear, and blends well in an ensemble. Its easy performance properties make a relaxed style of playing possible. This bow does not lend itself to forceful playing. With the addition of a fixed frog, its sound and attack become relaxed. However, a fixed frog can also cause hassle, particularly with the bass bows.

Bass viol bows

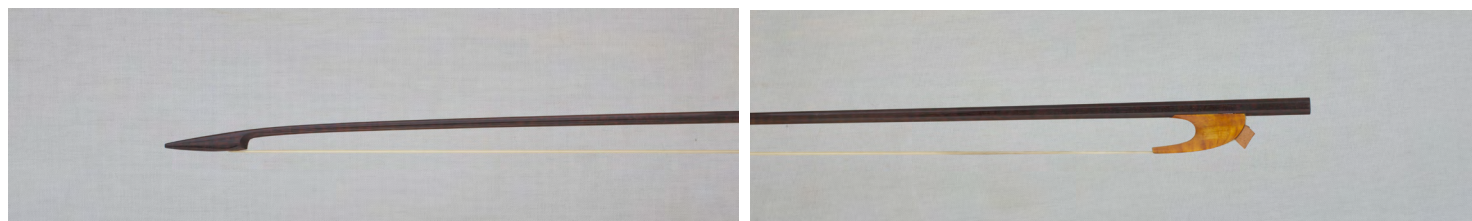


5. Consort bow

Round, masseranduba stick and screw button, boxwood frog. 780 mm. 62 - 67 gr.

The consort bow was made in accordance with the common 17th-century model used for all stringed instruments. The sound is bright and clear, and blends well in an ensemble. Its easy performance properties make a relaxed style of playing possible. This bow does not lend itself to forceful playing. Adding an adjuster makes the bow somewhat heavier than the consort bow with a fixed frog, and also stiffer.

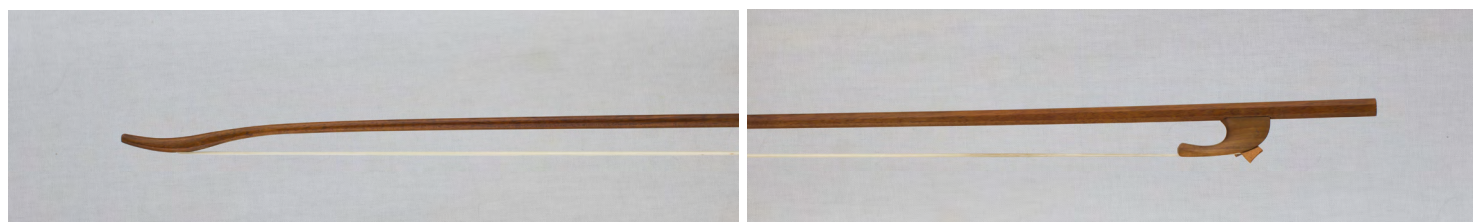
However, an adjuster is very practical.



6. Dou

Round, snakewood stick, boxwood frog. 717 mm. 59 - 61 gr.

The 'Dou' bow is based on 17th-century illustrations and a few preserved original bows of similar design. The bow derived its name from a painting by Gerard Dou. The broad head, reminiscent of a tadpole, is a distinctive characteristic. This is an arched bow with low hair tension. Sonorous chords, a clear 'plucked' attack, without irritating background noise, plus great resonance, are what characterise the 'Dou' bow. A relaxed bowing arm is a must. Works particularly well with unwound gut strings.



7. Simpson

Round, plain snakewood / ironwoodstick. Plum/box wood fixed frog. 781 mm. 55 - 66 gr.

The 'Simpson' bow is made according to the instructions of Simpson himself: he states its length and writes that the bow must be light and strong. The illustration in his book shows a fairly thin bow, suggesting the use of tropical wood. 'Strong' means strong compared with the flexible bows common in the middle of the 17th century. It also means a strong 'strong in the hand', a strong feeling.

I choose for tough wood, not as heavy as figured snakewood.

To give the bow a feeling of strength, it has a slight inner curve.

Add a clear sound, and the semiquavers fly out from it!

Bass viol bows



8/9. Marais

8. Round, snakewood stick, mammoth fixed frog and mammoth button. 725 mm. ca 65 gr.

9. Round, snakewood stick, mammoth frog and screw button. 725 mm. 66 - 71 gr.

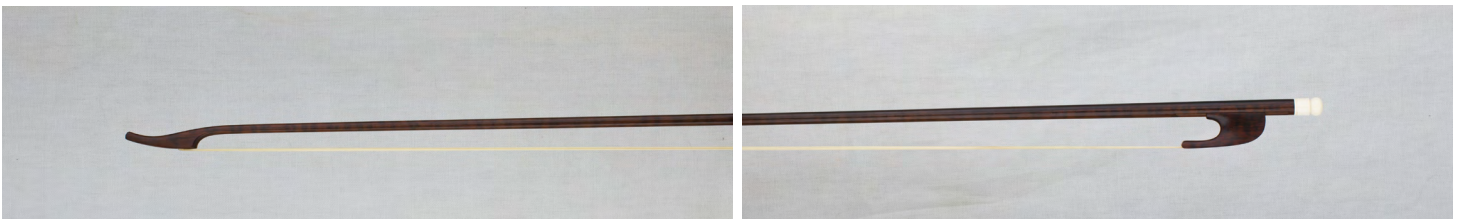
This bow is based on the illustration showing Marais with the gamba on his knee. The picture shows a short bow with a fattish head and a fixed frog. I make the bow with an adjuster and also a fixed frog. With the adjuster it is a little heavier and more robust. An expressive bow that draws as finely as a pencil, reacts immediately to every hand movement, and produces crystal clear chords.



10. Forq

Round snakewood stick, snakewood frog, mammoth endbutton. 761 mm. 60 -63 gr.

Loosely inspired by the well-known illustration of Forqueray's gamba-playing son. A fixed frog features here as well. Light bow, but due to its length it feels heavier. This sovereign bow also possesses that plucked attack.



11. Forq

Round snakewood stick, snakewood frog, mammoth button. 761 mm. 62 - 64 gr.

Loosely inspired by the well-known illustration of Forqueray's gamba-playing son. A fixed frog features here as well. Light bow, but due to its length it feels heavier. This sovereign bow also possesses that plucked attack, producing those crystal clear chords. The screw mechanism makes the bow somewhat more reliable, but at the expense of its deep resonance.

Bass viol bows



12. Jane

Round snakewood stick, snakewood frog, mammoth button. 754 mm. 70 -74 gr.

An easy-to-play bow with an attractive sound. Multipurpose, suitable for all styles of music. For the somewhat smaller and brighter 6-stringed instruments I choose a rather harder, plain snakewood. And for the larger instruments a somewhat more gentle spotted snakewood. This makes the sound a bit sonorous, as it were.



13. Long French bow (light version)

Round snakewood stick, snakewood frog, and button. 788 mm. 70 - 74 gr.

Many illustrations, particularly from the French era, show longer bows. Caution is advised, since length in particular is so difficult to judge based on an illustration. This 'long French' bow is indeed reasonably long, but above all it produces a long feeling. In any case it invites you to play with a large, where necessary powerful, bow movement. This light version is also a little shorter. It is made from a hard quality snakewood, which is what makes the bow so clear and immediate.

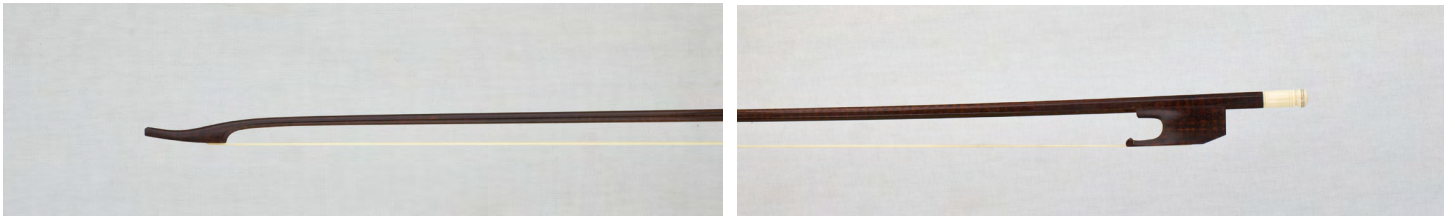


14. Long French Bow

Round snakewood stick, snakewood frog, and button. 805 mm. 72 - 76 gr.

Many illustrations, particularly from the French era, show longer bows. Caution is advised, since length in particular is so difficult to judge based on an illustration. This 'long French' bow is indeed reasonably long, but above all it produces a long feeling. In any case it invites you to play with a large, where necessary powerful, bow movement. For this heavier Long French bow I use attractively spotted snakewood, which is a bit more supple. This also gives the bow more sonority.

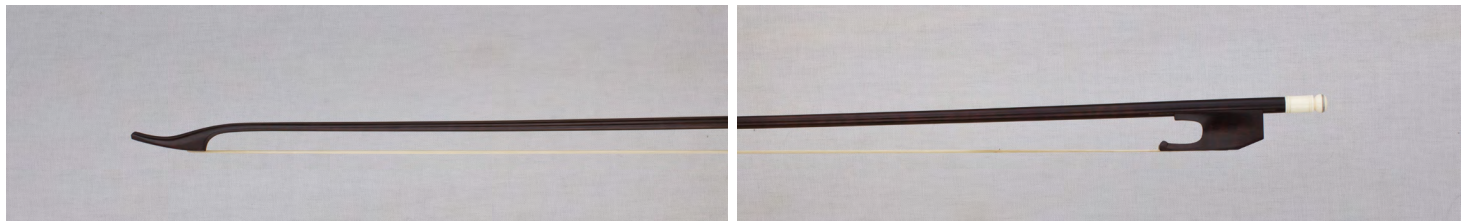
Bass viol bows



15. Boris

Round snakewood stick, snakewood frog, mammoth button. 739 mm. ca 75 gr.

A somewhat heavier bow, but still flexible. Produces a robust, full sound.
Suitable for the 7-stringed bass viol.



16. Lukas

Round snakewood stick, snakewood frog, mammoth button. 743 mm. 72 - 75 gr.

Lukas is a bow with personality, and has an inward curve that reaches almost to the tip. This is definitely not a historically correct element, but it makes the bow immediate and expressive. It can bear a lot of pressure at the tip.



17. French transitional bow

Round snakewood stick, snakewood frog, mammoth button. 710 mm. 74 - 78 gr.

This fluted bow is based on examples made in the mid-18th century in France.

The Tourte family features large in this context.

The curve is slightly S-shaped, and the frog is noticeably high. The bow has a neutral balance, and does not feel heavy in the hand. There is a lot of difference between the up-bow and down-bow.

'Painting with sound' sums up this bow.

Bass viol bows



18. Fatty

Round snakewood stick, snakewood frog, mammoth button. 714 m. ca 84 gr.

This bow is also not totally justifiable historically. Sturdy bent stick. Powerful sound.
Is also capable of making difficult instruments sound good.



19. Child

Fluted snakewood stick, mammoth frog and button. 741 mm. ca 84 gr.

Luxurious bow based on an example made by Child in England in about 1755.
Sturdy S-shaped stick. Also very heavy due to the large mammoth frog.



20. Abel

Round snakewood stick, ebony frog, mammoth button. 721 mm. 65 - 75 gr.

The wood for this bow is dense plain snakewood. As far as I am concerned, this is a real transitional bow. S-shaped stick, high head and frog. Nice attack, evenly spread over all the strings. Large volume, but gentle. Sound nuances, from suave to tough.

Contact

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