



French Polishing & Varnishing String Instruments A Step-by-Step Guide

Stephen Frith

Description

Discover the art and science behind one of the most beautiful, durable and acoustically sensitive finishes ever developed. French Polishing & Varnishing String Instruments is a comprehensive, expert-led manual for applying spirit varnish and French polish – ideal for classical guitars, violins and other fine stringed instruments. Whether you're a luthier, restorer or hands-on enthusiast, this practical guide takes you through every aspect of the process, from raw materials to final burnish – delivering a finish that looks stunning, protects the instrument and enhances its tonal character.

Biography

Stephen Frith is a luthier and stringed instrument specialist. He trained at the London College of Furniture and later in Spain with renowned luthier José Romanillos, refining his craft in classical guitar making. He went on to teach instrument making and serve as Senior Technician at Stentor Music Co. Ltd, working with violins, guitars and folk instruments. Now retired, he continues to build, repair and play classical guitars.

Planned Publicity

Features and review in Fine Workworking magazine

Sales Points

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO TRADITIONAL FINISHES FROM BARE WOOD TO REPAIRS FOR GUITARS, VIOLINS AND MORE.

Topics covered include:

Why choose French polish? Understand the unique acoustic, aesthetic and practical benefits – non-toxic, scratch-resistant, repairable and historically revered

The materials and chemistry behind shellac, resins, and spirit varnish, including how to make and store your own
Step-by-step instructions for preparing surfaces, building up coats, applying final finishes and achieving professional-grade burnishing

Detailed repair techniques, including invisible crack repair, shellac dust fills and touchups that blend seamlessly with the original finish

Care and aftercare tips for protecting your polish, plus essential advice for first-time storage, heat exposure and restoring dulled areas

Expert guidance on polishing violin fittings and guitar hardware, using both traditional and innovative methods

Also included is a curated list of suppliers for high-quality tools and materials, ensuring you have everything you need to get started.

Keywords

French polishing, spirit varnish, shellac, string instruments, guitar finishing, violin finishing, luthier techniques, instrument repair, classical guitar, violin making, instrument varnishing, woodworking, musical instrument restoration, traditional finishing, handmade instruments, luthier guide, shellac polish, instrument craftsmanship, wood finishing, invisible repairs, burnishing, guitar making, violin repair, luthier book, woodworking finishes



Publication date: 05 June 2026

189 x 246mm

112 pages

ISBN 9780719846397