



The Salvi Harps factory and the Victor Salvi Museum for the Harp (*Museo dell'Arpa Victor Salvi*) are located high in the Valle Varaita of the Italian Alps in the tiny, picturesque village of Piasco. Either an hour drive south-west of the Torino International Airport or a three hour drive south-west of the Milan International Airport, Piasco is surrounded by vineyards, ancient houses, small friendly towns, and a breathtaking mountain backdrop. This small village is very proud of its world-famous harp company Salvi Harps, and welcomes its visitors with signs and images of harps.

The Salvi Company is made up of a complex of buildings which house the museum, the design studio, the business offices, and the harp factory. The factory hums with skilled workers each performing their specialty on a particular aspect in the manufacture of the harp. The two factory buildings are where the story of Salvi Harps really takes on meaning. There is so much to see!

The Harp-Making

The on the first floor of one building, red spruce for the soundboard is received from the Fiemme Valley (the same valley used by Stradivarius for this violins), and maple and spruce for the frame arrive from Canada. The wood arrives here after several years of aging. The wood is cut into all of the rough pieces we will see later in assembly in the second building. It is this first building, however, where one can really see old world craftsmanship meet with the modern technology and innovation that have made Salvi a leader in the harp manufacturing industry for close to 60 years.





Across the room, the work benches are covered in glue dribbles where wood has been laminated together for strength. Nearby there is rack filled with columns that have just been roughly-cut. The columns look like large square q-tips at this point. It is difficult to imagine that this large piece of wood, which is clearly labelled Diana, will ever look like the finished project. In this room, there are saws, clamps, and large tools wherever you look. The ceilings are high, and the wood goes on forever. It smells very clean, with a savory smell of freshly sanded wood.

Upstairs at the Research and Development team is immersed in their designs and projects. From early in the morning, until late in the evening, Giorgio Peirano, Armando Belmondo, and their team bustle back and forth between their computers and the factory floor checking for precision in the manufacturing and quality-control processes. Every part of the harp must meet the exact specifications that were designed, and the final instrument is tested for acoustic fidelity using state-of-the-art acoustic equipment. There is an excitement in their voices that never stops! With one new idea, they set off on a new exciting adventure. This department is also constantly working on each department in the factory to assure continued innovation and quality. With this lever of passion and love, it is incredible to think where harps will continue to progress in the future!

Down the hallway of the Research and Development, there is a door opens to the Gilding and Painting Department. Three women inside carefully apply delicate sheets of gold leaf to two columns and a base. All the hand painting also happens here. Next door is the Final Production Department where harps are finally getting their strings, pedal harps are fitted with actions. Further down the hall, harps receive regulation by five regulators who each have their own rooms. In the midst of all these activities, the large centre of these rooms stands a forest of harps boxed up for shipping



On the second floor of this building are offices where multiple languages are heard as directors plan events, take orders and arrange shipments.



In the second building, you will see how the harp is built from the beginning. The harp is not just one piece of wood, but thousands of pieces that come together to make each instrument. Here is where wood is cut, aged for several years, carved, assembled, finished, gilded, and regulated over countless hours of hands-on labour. There is a great feeling of camaraderie between the craftsmen of all ages who displayed tremendous pride of passion in their work. It isn't big machines that form the harp, but individual people, often several from the same family, who shape and create the various pieces.

The next workspace belongs to a young man who is carving the hat of a Minerva. Carved using hand tools, shaving by shaving, the wood is cut away to reveal beautiful leaves and flowers. In his hands, the pattern gradually emerges becoming intricate artwork. The carved wood eventually will be covered in pure gold leaf.



Just round the corner, his mother, covered in sanding dust, smoothens out the inside of a column preparing the harp for the pedal mechanism. She likes to speak what Salvi means to her, where she works every day with her son and daughter.



The Harp Museum



Across the complex from the factory is the Victor Salvi Museum for the Harp (Museo dell'Arpa Victor Salvi). This is the first museum exclusively for the harp. Located on the second floor of one of the factory buildings, the room is filled with harps of all shapes and histories. The collection houses early instruments, some carved into animal shapes, along with showing the development of the mechanism to its present form. There are harps collected from over the centuries which contributed a great impact to the evolution of harps.

The Showroom

Down one floor houses the heaven for harpists: the beautiful Salvi Harps Showroom where finished harps are at display. These beautiful instruments await to be taken home and to provide their owners the joy and harp-playing for years to come!

