

HOLLIS SUMMERS

How To Make A Violin

It all begins with wood.
Now that wood is scarce
even in the highlands of South Tyrol
we must search farther than our fathers
traveled.

Choose the northern side
of the waiting tree;
maple for the back, red spruce for the front;
the northern side has known fewer suns,
stands dense and strong

for having waited, as you have waited.
Dry the wood carefully.
Carve the pieces as carefully
as if you carved your own bones.
You are a sculptor or a surgeon.

You are an apothecary, an alchemist.
Carefully apply your natural materials,
herbs, roots, compounds,
finding the varnishes that give
color, tone, resonance.

Perhaps you are not a musician.
But the violin will develop itself
if someone plays it every day
honoring your craft.
Perhaps your sons will listen.