



STRADA UPGRADE STAND OWNER'S MANUAL

PERFORMANCE AND DESIGN

The Gallo Strada is an astonishingly good speaker, certainly Anthony Gallo's best design to date. Its treble is even purer than the widely acclaimed Reference 3.1. The soundstage is even larger, more three dimensional and more focused. The bass, though not as deep, is significantly more resolving.

Mounted on the factory stands—either the Gallo table mount or the floor mount—the Strada sounds excellent—but far from its true potential and definitely in need of subwoofer help. Mounted on our Strada Upgrade Stand, the speaker sets the absolute reference standard for small speakers regardless of price—and makes the purchase of any floor stander, even the megabuck speakers, questionable. With the Upgrade Stand, treble and midrange improve to a breathtaking level of clarity and warmth. Bass extension and bass punch improve to the point where the use of a subwoofer becomes an option, not a necessity.

The idea of the Strada Upgrade Stand is to adapt our low, on-the-floor mounting approach—Mapleshade's highly successful Bedrock concept for small box speakers—to the special mounting geometry of the Strada. Briefly summarized, the physics of the low mounting approach are:

- The highly rigid and massive maple platform and brass footer mounting drains sound-muddying vibrations out of the Strada's enclosure into the floor far more effectively and cleanly than any tall stand. The improvement in warmth and midrange detail over metal stands, particularly hollow tubing stands, is striking.
- Mounting the Strada's mid/woofers close to the floor eliminates the sound-thinning mid and upper bass suckout caused by high-mounted woofers (the famous Allison effect). It also provides a 3-db acoustic boundary reinforcement from the lowest bass upwards.
- The direct, rigid coupling to the floor lets the Strada drive the floor at bottom octave frequencies, thereby greatly increasing the bass radiating area.
- Lastly, the Upgrade Stand's tiltback has been set, by ear, to time align perfectly the leading edge attacks of the tweeter and woofer.

The Strada Upgrade Stand adapts the Bedrock low mounting concept by the following design changes:

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- The Strada is attached rigidly to a 4 inch maple mounting column using two brass bolts clamping the column to the back of the Strada using the original threaded mounting holes already in the Strada. Four miniature brass cones couple the Strada's back to the column, to ensure clean, efficient draining of vibrational energy into the column—and to avoid the sound-muddying effects of large area, flat-to-flat contact between speaker back and column.
- The front face of the column is set to the optimum tiltback angle for a seated listener at normal chair height at 8 feet or for a listener at 5 feet on a low easy chair or sofa.
- The column couples to the maple platform base via four more miniature brass mini-points (for the same clean energy transfer reasons) and is pulled tight against the base by a long brass screw coming up from the bottom of the platform and screwing into the column base from below.
- The platform, like the Bedrock, is shaped and beveled to minimize reflections of the Strada's downward-dispersed wave fronts off the front of the platform.

INSTALLATION TIPS

1. Use the superglue provided to glue four of the brass minipoints provided to the bottom four corners of the two speaker mounting columns. Then, using the attached template, mark the four minipoint mounting spots on the back of each Strada. Put a small dot of superglue on each of the marked spots, then place a minipoint on each glue dot and press down hard for 30 seconds.
2. Attach each mounting column to a Strada using two brass woodscrews with one of the cupped washers provided under each screw head. Do NOT tighten hard; tighten only enough so that the four minipoints sink in slightly.
3. Place the unfinished wood block horizontally on a table or countertop with the narrow base facing you. Lay the Strada (with its attached mounting) column horizontally onto the jig block, speakers facing up. Align the bottom of the column flush with the end of the jig block. Place one of the Strada platforms vertically, wide end down, up against that end of the jig block. The top of the Strada platform should be facing the jig block. The pre-drilled screw hole in the platform should line up with the hole in the bottom of the column. Fasten platform to column using one of the two brass screws and a cupped washer. Tighten the screw only until the minipoints dig slightly into the column; do NOT tighten hard. To test whether the column screws and the platform screw are tight enough, rock the upright Strada assembly. If you feel any free play between the Strada and the column—or between the column and the platform, tighten the appropriate screws SLIGHTLY. Tightening too hard makes the speakers sound dead and over damped.



SET-UP AND SPEAKER PLACEMENT

Our recommended initial placement for the Stradas is 7 feet apart and 5 feet from the ear to the tweeter—with the Strada toed in to point directly at the listener. Though the Strada has more than enough output to overpower listeners 15 feet away in a 25 x 35 foot room, it still sounds better at 5 feet (as do most other speakers, simply because the close-in 5 foot listening distance always greatly reduces any room's sound-muddying influence). When first placing or re-placing the speaker on carpet, always put your full weight on the platform to make sure the footer points penetrate the carpet and lock to the floor underneath.

If you have a dedicated listening room, then the ideal listening chair or sofa placement is right up against the wall, in the middle of the long wall. The 7/5-foot speaker geometry recommended above as a starting point still applies.

To fine-tune the initial 7/5-foot placement, add 6 inches at a time to the 7 foot distance between speakers, adjusting toe-in at each move. In general, the more distance between the speakers, the more clarity and soundstage depth you'll hear, at least until the center image collapses. At that point, we recommend you undo the last 6-inch increment.

If you have a non-dedicated listening room, the middle of the long wall placement may well be impractical. If practical considerations dictate keeping the speakers as close as possible to the wall behind them, start with the back of the Strada platform 1 foot from the wall behind and, if possible, with the 7/5-foot geometry. Listen, and then move them forward 6 inches at a time. At each position, listen for expansion of the soundstage, particularly in depth. You will quickly find the point at which the wall's depth-degrading influence becomes minor.

In a room dedicated to home theater, the listening position may well be dictated by the comfortable viewing distance from a large screen video monitor on or at the wall—distances of 10 feet or so are not unusual. In this case, bring the left, center and right front speakers much closer than the monitor, i.e., as close to an equal 5 feet from the listener as possible—and with the usual 7 foot or more separation between left and right fronts. Placing the rear surrounds at the same 5 foot distance behind the listener yields the major sonic advantage of perfect front and rear time alignment (time aligning physically sounds way better than time aligning using the distance setting on the receiver/processor menu).

ADDRESSING FLOOR PROBLEMS

The single most important factor in determining whether a room sounds good is the structure of the floor; in comparison, room size and shape are minor players. That is simply because the floor is the direct sink for

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receiving the vibration that is drained out of the speaker enclosure via the speaker's spikes or footers—and it is essential to drain that vibration in order to get really first rate sound out of the speaker.

A good sounding floor is one that accepts enclosure vibration efficiently and cleanly while reflecting almost no energy back into the speaker. Careful listening tests show that the best floors are old-fashioned plank-on-heavy-joist floors, preferably 3/4" or thicker planks of maple. Next best are spruce or pine. Least desirable acoustically are oak floors, though they are still very much to be preferred to the floors listed below.

The worst floors we have tested are concrete, carpet-over-concrete, wood-laminate-over-concrete, tile, granite, marble or brick. Such materials reflect back almost all of the vibrations they receive—and reflect those vibrations back in highly distorted, out of phase form. That greatly muddies and weakens the speaker's bass while smearing and harshening the midrange and treble. Almost as bad are the modern plywood-based floors, particularly ones that use treated wood laminate planking, acoustic damping layers, and/or "engineered" wood support trusses: they make fine speakers sound astonishingly dead in the bass with lifeless, over damped treble.

Mounting the Strada on our maple Upgrade Stand goes a long way towards alleviating these major floor problems. However, the sonic degradation effect of bad floors is so powerful that a second layer of massive maple yields further and very worthwhile improvements in the sound of the Strada. For those who have problem floors and wish to hear the full, world class potential of the Strada, we recommend adding, at some point in time, a 12 x15 x 4 (or, even better, a 15 x 18 x 4) Maple Speaker Plinth under the Strada Upgrade Stand.

BREAK-IN

The Strada needs at least 200 hours break-in to reach its full sonic potential—though it should sound very impressive indeed after only 10 hours. We recommend using music, not break-in discs, preferably music with strong transients such as loud percussion and/or plucked bass. To hasten break-in, we recommend that whenever you are away, put your CD player on repeat and play your break-in music at the loudest volume feasible within the constraints of keeping the peace with your neighbors.