
NEWS FOR CELLISTS APRIL 2008

What is a Full Sized Cello?



Should we be happy with the current definition of the full sized cello? On pages two and three we conduct an extensive survey of fine cellos from 1650 to 1900, revealing the extraordinary variety in the back length of the full sized instruments used by virtuosi over the last three hundred years, made by masters including Banks, Forster, Gagliano, Gofriller, Guadagnini, Guarneri, Landolfi, Montagnana, Rogeri, Ruggieri, Stradivari and Tecchler.

Four Peaks, Three Cellos, Two Charities, One Goal

Since 2003, the Extreme Cellists have been raising eyebrows and funds for charity by performing concerts in extraordinary locations such as cathedral roofs and hilltops. In July this year, Jeremy Dawson, James Rees and Clare Wallace will carry their cellos to the summits of Ben Nevis, Scarfel Pike, Snowdon and Carrantouhill and perform concerts from each summit in order to raise £10,000 for two charities: Aspire and Mountain Rescue. For more information: www.extreme-cello.com

New Sabbatical Fund for UK Musicians

The *Get a Life Fund* has been set up in memory of Katherine, sister of baroque cellist Alison McGillivray. The fund aims to assist professional musicians over the age of 30 who need to take a sabbatical or similar break from their normal working lives, to re-inspire themselves and their work.

Up to two awards of £10,000 will be made each year to individuals who are 30 or over and are either UK or Eire nationals or domiciled in those countries. The Fund will support broadly educational or developmental projects across the range of the creative spectrum, not necessarily musical, as long as they involve a sabbatical or an extended period of time away from a player's usual employment. Projects will normally last between six months and a year, but the trustees would be willing to consider other periods of time. For more information about the Fund, see www.getalifefund.org.uk

Cello Transport Research

Thank you to everyone who has so kindly responded to our cello transport survey. There's still time to take part if you'd like to contribute to the research, which aims to make life easier for cellists travelling by car and train. All participants will receive a free set of Cello Care Guide postcards as a small thank you for their help.

The survey questions can be found at www.aitchisoncellos.com/transportsurvey

WHAT IS A FULL-SIZED CELLO?

The standardisation of cello size is a relatively modern phenomenon. Until the mid 19th century, most cellos were built according to makers' individual designs which varied considerably in size (see the table opposite). Only in the late 19th century did the mass-production of cellos lead to a standardisation of back length of approximately 758mm (29⁷/₈") which is still recognised today as indicating a 'full sized' cello.

The cello first emerged as a solo instrument during the second half of the 17th century, the earliest instrumental music published for the violoncello being the Sonatas by Arresti (1665). Prior to this time cellos were very large bass members of the violin family with a back length of around 812mm (32") which was determined by the length required for an uncovered gut string to function effectively in the lower register.

However, between 1670 and 1690 Francesco Ruggieri and Andrea Guarneri dramatically reduced the back length of their cellos. This reduction in size was partly in response to the demands of new repertoire: players needed a shorter string length to play increasingly virtuosic pieces. The adoption of metal-wound G and C strings also meant that shorter cellos could



produce a convincing C string sound. The reduction in cello size during the late 17th century was only the start of a long trend which saw cello back lengths shrink to

28" by 1750, as ever more virtuosic repertoire was written for cellists. This downward trend

in size was neither even nor universal: Stradivari developed his *Forma Buono* (B Form) 758mm (29⁷/₈") model in 1710 followed by his *Piccolo* cello model with a back length of 745mm (29¹/₂") in the 1720's followed by even smaller cellos in the 1730's. Meanwhile, in Venice Matteus Goffriller made three sizes of instrument to cater for different musical tastes and Montagnana produced his distinctive short, broad instruments with a back length of 741mm (29¹/₄"). Giovanni Battista Guadagnini's cello design was inspired by his famous contemporary, virtuoso cellist Carlo Ferrari and Guadagnini made over forty cellos on a 711mm (28") pattern after 1750.

By 1800 there was still no dominant or standard cello size. Most early nineteenth century instruments had a back length of between 738 and 749mm (e.g. Banks 1800 cello 734mm (28⁷/₈") Gagliano 1805 cello 738mm (29") and Lupot 1815 cello 749mm (29¹/₂"). Variety



remained the absolute norm until the late 19th century, although from the early 19th century onwards, increasing numbers of makers based their work on historic models, rather than developing their own distinctive model. The majority chose the Stradivari B Form as their model for cellos. In the late 19th century, French and German workshops sent thousands of cellos into circulation based on the B Form Stradivari model, creating an industry standard by sheer force of numbers.

So how should we classify the large proportion of cellos in professional use which are significantly smaller than 758mm? Should they be labelled 'ladies' cellos', or ⁷/₈ instruments, unsuited to the serious adult cellist due to their smaller size? Or should

cellists rejoice at the extraordinary variety of instruments available to them and not worry about back length?

Throughout history, cellists have sought out instruments which best suit their physique, technique and repertoire. A well balanced partnership between a cellist and a comfortably sized, tonally effective cello will produce more power than if the same cellist played an over-large instrument and was unable to tap its resources efficiently and comfortably. Powerful cellists such as Rostropovitch or Zara Nelsova were able to release the huge tonal potential of their larger instruments, whereas fine soloists such as Steven Isserlis, David Geringas and Natalie

Clein prefer their smaller instruments which still easily fill large concert halls.

In conclusion, perhaps we should review our definition of 'full sized' based simply on the modern standard back length. Instead, using our knowledge of the history of cello making, we can be confident that a cello is 'full sized' if it was made as the primary model of its maker, for his professional adult customers.

We have assembled below a collection of data on the back length of cellos during the development period. It is important when looking at data in the earlier period (1650-1730) and especially pre-1700, to be aware that many extant instruments have been cut down or reduced in size. We have been careful to include only instruments which we are confident remain unaltered.

Maker	Date	L.O.B.
Guarneri Filius Andrea	1669	807 mm
Francesco Ruggieri	1689	738 mm
Antonio Stradivari	1690	792 mm
Joseph Guarneri Filius Andrea	1692	758 mm
Antonio Stradivari	1700	766 mm
GB Rogeri	1700	754 mm
Francesco Ruggieri	1706	740 mm
Joseph Guarneri Filius Andrea	1709	749 mm
Antonio Stradivari	1710	756 mm
Francesco Gofriller	c.1710	758 mm
Joseph Filius	1712	727 mm
Barak Norman	1716	716 mm
David Tecchler	1717	732 mm
Francesco Gofriller	1720	745 mm
Alessandro Gagliano	1724	753 mm
Peter Guarneri of Venice	1725	749 mm
Matteo Gofriller	1728	757 mm
Antonio Stradivari	1730	745 mm
Michael Platner	c.1730	752 mm
Carlo Tonnoni	c.1730	737 mm
Nathanial Cross	1730	717 mm
Antonio Stradivari	1731	742 mm
Joseph Guarneri del Gesu	1731	737 mm
Antonio Stradivari	1732	717 mm
Antonio Stradivari	1732	690 mm
Domenico Montagnana	1739	741 mm
Peter Wamsley	1739	750 mm
G F Celoniati	1740	735 mm
Sanctus Seraphin	1741	725 mm
Carlo Ferdinando Landolfi	1749	714 mm
Carlo Ferdinando Landolfi	1750	740 mm
Domenico Busan	1750	748 mm
Joseph Hill	1760	747 mm

Richard Duke	1760	734 mm
GB Guadagnini	1764	711 mm
Michele Deconet	1764	714 mm
Carlo Antonio Testore	1766	744 mm
Benjamin Banks	1774	749 mm
Sebastian Klotz	c.1780	755 mm
John Carter	1780	738 mm
GB Guadagnini	1783	716 mm
William Forster	1785	740 mm
James and Henry Banks	1790	730 mm
G B Ceruti	c.1790	745 mm
William Forster	1794	733 mm
J B Vuillaume	1798	757 mm
Thomas Dodd	1800	752 mm
Thomas Kennedy	1803	736 mm
Giuseppe Gagliano	1805	738 mm
Francois Louis Pique	1808	750 mm
Nicholas Lupot	1815	749 mm
Joseph Panormo	1820	758 mm
Charles Harris	1820	767 mm
John Betts	1825	752 mm
G F Pressenda	1830	742 mm
Charles Adolphe Gand	1830	762 mm
Henry Lockey Hill	1830	743 mm
Giuseppe Rocca	1833	760 mm
Giuseppe Rocca	1838	738 mm
John Furber	1840	734 mm
Thomas Kennedy	1846	740 mm
J B Vuillaume	1847	737 mm
George Craske	1850	729 mm
Giuseppe Ceruti	1870	759 mm
Henry Furber	1887	755 mm
Pierre Silvestre	1890	762 mm
Giuseppe Rocca	1901	756 mm



SELECTED CELLOS AND BOWS

JAMES & HENRY BANKS CELLO 1802

L.O.B: 28¾" (730mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)

Price: to be confirmed

BETTS SCHOOL CELLO c.1830

L.O.B: 29¾" (745mm) String length: 26½" (678mm)

Price: £22,000

ALDO PAGLIACCI CELLO 1973

L.O.B: 29¾" (755mm) String length: 27½" (688mm)

Price: £20,000

SIMON ANDREW FORSTER CELLO

L.O.B: 29½" (738mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)

Price: £18,000

BETTS SCHOOL CELLO C.1820

L.O.B: 29½" (740mm) String length: 27¼" (691mm)

Price: £18,000

PETER WAMSLEY CELLO 1730

L.O.B: 28¾" (730mm) String length: 26½" (675mm)

Price: £17,000

HENRY FURBER CELLO 1887

L.O.B: 29½" (752mm)

Price: £16,000

MATHIAS THIR CELLO C.1770

L.O.B: 29¾" (755mm) String length: 27" (686mm)

Price: £15,000

ROBIN AITCHISON CELLO 2004

L.O.B: 737mm (29") String length: 682mm (26¾")

Price: £13,500

CHARLES BUTHOD CELLO C.1880

L.O.B: 30" (761mm) String length: 27¼" (691mm)

Price: £10,750

DAVID RUBIO BAROQUE CELLO 1978

L.O.B: 29½" (750mm) String length: 26¾" (670mm)

Price: £9,500

RUSHWORTH & DREAPER CELLO 1927

L.O.B: 29½" (752mm) String length: 27¼" (692mm)

Price: £9,500

GERMAN CELLO c.1880

L.O.B: 30¼" (768mm) String length: 27½" (690mm)

Price: £8,000

GERMAN CELLO c.1890

L.O.B: 30¼" (767mm) String length: 27¾" (693mm)

Price: £6,500

¾ SALOMON SCHOOL CELLO c.1770

L.O.B: 27½" (700mm) String length: 25½" (643mm)

Price: £6,000

ENGLISH CELLO 1992

L.O.B: 29¾" (757mm) String length: 27¼" (692mm)

Price: £6,000

SELECTED CELLO BOWS

Etienne Pajot	77.7g	£11,500
James Tubbs	79.5g	£8,000
John Dodd	77g	£4,000
Emile Ouchard (nickel)	77g	£3,500
Christian Wanka (gold)	81.1g	£2,700
Stephen Salchow	84.5g	£2,350
Robert Pierce	82.8g	£2,250
Pierre Nehr	81.7g	£2,350
Charles Bazin	72g	£2,000
Michael Duff c/fibre	82.4g	£2,000
Johannes Miething	82.8g	£1,850
Robert Pierce	83.6g	£1,800
Josef Gabriel	81.3g	£1,400
Walter Mettal	79.2g	£1,200
Claudio Righetti c/f	80.3g	£1,100

PERIOD CELLO BOWS

Andrew Dipper	Baroque	£1,220
Andrew Dipper	Classical	£1,220
Andreas Grütter	Dodd	£1,200
JS Finkel	Classical	£900
Gerhard Landwehr	Baroque	£890
Roger Doe	Baroque	£600

Photographs are available on request. For detailed descriptions of all cellos and bows see:

www.aitchisoncellos.com