

NEWS FOR CELLISTS AUTUMN 2006

Cello Bridge Design

In this newsletter we focus on cello bridge design, giving an insight into how the style of a bridge can radically affect an instrument's timbre and response. (Pages 2-3)

Cello Bow Collection

Although we are not holding a major bow exhibition this autumn, we have asked some of our finest modern and period bow makers to send bows to us this autumn. Cellists looking for a bow will have at least a dozen excellent contemporary bows to try when they visit us in Ely. More bows will be arriving through October and we will keep the website up to date as they arrive.

Modern bow makers sending bows include: Thomas Gerbeth (Austria) Robert Pierce (Belgium) Pierre and Gilles Nehr, Paul Sadka and Yannick Le Canu (France) Stephen Salchow (USA) and Christian Wanka and Hugo Gabriel (Germany). Period bow makers include: Pieter Affourtit and Gerhard Landwehr (The Netherlands) Ralph Ashmead, Philip Davis, Andrew Dipper and Christopher English (USA).

Free Cello Care Guide Postcards

We have just printed a set of eight postcards featuring favourite cartoons from the Cello Care Guide. If you would like to receive a free set, do contact us. (details on page 3)

Strad String Trial

In June *The Strad* magazine and the Carducci String Quartet came to Ely for a day-long string trial with Robin. The aim was to test a wide range of professional quality strings, working out a combination which would best suit each player and the quartet as a whole. A detailed article about the day is printed in the *Sfz* supplement to the September edition of *The Strad*.

Following this trial, we are happy to announce our widest ever selection of cello strings available for string trials: **D'Addario**: Helicore and Kaplan Solutions; **Jargar**: Standard and Silver Sound; **Larsen**: Standard, Soloist and Wire Core; **Pirastro**: Eudoxa, Oliv, Evah Pirazzi Standard and Soloist, Permanent Standard and Soloist and Obligato; **Prim**; **Thomastik Infeld**: Dominant and Spirocore. The cost of a string trial is £40 (free to full-time students in higher education).

Tartini Rosin Re-issue

The excellent rosin previously known as **Tartini** has been re-issued under the new name: **Andrea**. As before, Andrea cello rosin is available in Soloist and Symphony grades, but the cake size is now 50% bigger than before (the new diameter is 5cm) and the price has therefore increased to £19.50 per cake. We have plenty of Andrea Soloist and Symphony rosin in stock, along with Salchow Dark (£9).

Bridge Design

The bridge and sound post are at the heart of a cello's set up, forming the fundamental link between the resonant body of the cello and the strings. The design of a bridge therefore has a profound influence on an instrument's tone and response.

The design of the bridge should complement the inherent tonal characteristics of a cello, bringing the projected and 'under the ear' sound of the cello as close as possible to the player's ideal. The bridge contributes to the quality of support and resistance experienced under the bow and is used to achieve the desired balance between power and flexibility of response. Bridges can be cut to influence the timbre of a cello's sound, making it more or less open, balancing the registers of the cello to create an even tonal response and adding brilliance or depth to the sound.

Modern cello bridges are based on designs known as 'French' and 'Belgian'. The French bridge was widely favoured by players and luthiers in England in the second half of the 20th century. The legs of the French bridge account for approximately half its height and within this basic design there is plenty of latitude for the luthier to choose slightly different shapes and thicknesses to control the tonal outcome. The French bridge is often a good choice for bright-sounding cellos.

The Belgian bridge has longer legs than the French model and a more compact heart and upper body. The reduced mass of wood above the Belgian heart produces a sound which is brighter and more open than the French bridge - and often louder. The Belgian bridge emphasises the upper register of the cello and can also be used to make the sound of gut G and C strings more crisp and clean. Cellos with an inherently dark sound often benefit from the fitting of a Belgian bridge

A good cello bridge is made from un-figured maple with an extremely fine growth and a very strong cellular structure. Scientific study into bridge design is now under way, but bridges are still - like instruments - based on traditional models and their design has changed only slightly through history as tastes and fashions for instrument sound have changed. For example, in the 1960s the French bridge was widely used in the UK and was often cut with a lot of wood above the heart, producing a dark sound with a narrow, focussed brilliance in the upper register. The current fashion is for a bright, open sound. For some cellos this can be achieved with a French bridge; for others a Belgian bridge is needed.

We believe that the a cello's set up should be treated with the greatest respect, only making changes when it is clear that the original

Bridge Design (continued)

bridge and post are not functioning well. When an old bridge needs replacing, we follow as closely as possible the elegant, organic models passed down to us by earlier craftsmen.

Our bridges are cut from a reliable and consistent stock of wood and we produce only first class cello bridges (i.e. no 'student' models or violin/viola bridges) so that every piece of work contributes to our working knowledge of tonal control.

When assessing a cello we focus on the existing set up and try to understand the player's tonal ideal. If the current bridge has clear shortcomings, we will consider our

portfolio of bridge designs and decide which model will come closest to producing the player's ideal sound. We will then adjust the design of this model to suit the individual instrument and player, cutting the bridge to influence darkness and brightness, resistance and flexibility.

As with every other vibrating part of a cello, the bridge will improve with age provided that it is looked after well. When fitting a bridge we always make a special wooden measuring gauge which fits between the end of the fingerboard and the bridge. This gauge is a useful tool for checking that the bridge is standing straight and, if used regularly, will help to maintain the cello's sound adjustment and prevent the bridge from warping.

SELECTED CELLOS AND BOWS

Thomas Kennedy Cello 1846

L.O.B.: 29 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (740mm) String length: 27" (685mm)
Price: £32,000 (Cello Exchange)

A fine cello by Thomas Kennedy in very good condition, with deep red-brown varnish and a beautiful craqueleur. The tone is focussed, powerful and extremely expressive. Inscribed at the endpin and inside on the back:

"Thos Kennedy, Maker, 44 Oxford Street,
London, 1846."

Betts School Furber Cello c.1820

L.O.B.: 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (758mm); String length: 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (698mm)
Price: £21,000 (Cello Exchange)

A glorious sounding cello from the golden period of English cello making. This instrument was made by a member of the highly regarded Furber family and is in excellent condition. It has a deep, expressive sound and quick response; the beautiful red varnish suggests that it was made for the prestigious Betts shop.

Fine German Cello c.1900

L.O.B.: 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (749mm) String length: 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (693mm)
Price: £12,500 (Cello Exchange)

An attractive cello in excellent condition, with unusually fine red brown varnish and a rich, colourful tone. The instrument is based on a Strad model. Labelled 'Bernadel'.

Furber Cello c.1840

L.O.B.: 28 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (734mm); String length: 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (680mm)
Price: £10,000 (Cello Exchange)

This elegant cello was probably made by John Furber. It has a rich tone, attractive golden varnish and a repaired sound post crack in the back – hence its modest price.

Mittenwald cello c.1840

L.O.B.: 29" (736mm) String length: 27 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (690mm)
Price: £9,000 (Cello Exchange)

A distinguished instrument with excellent arching, handsome red brown varnish and a rich, dark tone.

German Cello c.1880

L.O.B.: 30 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (768mm) String length: 27 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (690mm)
Price: 8,000 (Cello Exchange)

A handsome cello with boldly figured maple and antiqued red brown varnish. The tone is rich, bright and resonant. This cello was for many years the second instrument of a principal orchestral cellist and is in excellent condition.

Anthony Elmsly Classical Cello

L.O.B.: 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (750mm) String length: 27 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (690mm)
Price £8,500 (Cello Exchange)

A pleasing contemporary cello with a classical set up which would be equally suitable for baroque or classical playing. This cello has an open, resonant sound and is very responsive.

Student Cellos

German cello c.1900: £3,250
Hungarian and Chinese cellos from
£1,500 to £2,500.

Selected Modern Cello Bows

Stephen Salchow	84.5g	£2,350
Pierre Nehr	81.7g	£2,200
Paul Sadka	81.8g	£2,100
Robert Pierce	83.4g	£1,950
Andrew McGill	81.9g	£1,950
Christian Wanka	82.5g	£1,500
David Tempest	80.2g	£1,500
Pierce & Co	82.5g	£1,050

Selected Period Cello Bows

Ralph Ashmead	Baroque	£1,000
Philip Davis	Baroque	£800
Andrew Dipper	Baroque	£1,220
Christopher English	Transitional	£1,030
Gerhard Landwehr	Baroque	£890

This is just a small selection of cellos and bows in stock. Please see our website for full, up-to-date details of cellos and bows available. For photographs, please email sarah@aitchisoncellos.com or telephone 01353 668559.

