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## NEWS FOR CELLISTS JANUARY 2015

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### *Cello Bows*

The feedback from cellists was so positive during our bow exhibition last autumn that we have decided to maintain a much larger collection of bows from now on, so that visiting cellists will always have a spectacular range of contemporary bows to choose from. We currently have over 50 bows by 36 makers in stock. If you are unable to visit Ely to try bows, do phone or email to discuss the type of bow you are seeking. We will then select and post up to four bows to you for a week's trial; the cost of postage (one way) is about £15 for four bows and there is no charge for insurance.

### *Facebook*

Like Marmite, Facebook is indispensable for some and loathsome to others! We've recently taken the plunge and created our own page: *Aitchison & Mnatzaganian*. If you're a Facebook regular, do visit our page and, if you 'Like' what you see, we'd be very grateful and will be very happy to reciprocate, like for like. We've just posted some workshop photos to give more of an insight into our work and life when you visit the page.

### *Bow certificates*

Over the past few years, Sarah has travelled regularly to Paris to consult the renowned bow expert, Bernard Millant, on behalf of customers who own fine French bows. Some owners wish to obtain a certificate of authenticity in order to satisfy a future buyer of the bow's identity or simply to ensure their own peace of mind. Sadly, there are many old and new fakes in circulation, and it is increasingly important to authenticate bows before purchase or sale. If you are considering acquiring a certificate for a fine French bow, please don't hesitate to contact Sarah to discuss your bow. Her next visit to Paris will be in April.

### *Free publicity for cello courses*

If you are running a cello course this year, please feel free to send us brief details (maximum 150 words) and we will gladly post these details for you on our *Cello Courses* page on our new website. We are also very happy to add cello groups, societies, courses and charities to our *Links* page – just send Sarah your web address by emailing [aitchmnatz7@ntlworld.com](mailto:aitchmnatz7@ntlworld.com)

### *Being Heard*

It is a strange fact of life for cellists – and for all musicians – that they never get to hear their own projected sound. Out in the auditorium, the audience experience something quite different from the sound you hear as you play. Ideally, your cello and its tonal adjustment will complement your playing style, balancing the desire to enjoy the instrument's sound under the ear, and the need to be heard. Even though the majority of cellists do not perform solo repertoire in large spaces, projection is a very significant issue, especially when auditioning, and can easily make the difference between success and failure when seeking a permanent position.

It takes experimentation and experience to ensure that you are able to convey your musical intention to your audience. Cellos which project extremely well and sound beautiful to the audience in a large concert hall can sound quite dry or harsh under the player's ear, but with time it is possible to come to terms with the sound under the ear which has the right qualities or signifiers (e.g. 'fizz', 'burr' or 'edge') for effective projection.

Our article on pages 2 - 3 explores cello projection, and also includes detailed accounts from cellists Matthew Sharp and Toby Turton.



*There's nothing quite like a cello with a 5 o' clock shadow...*

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# BEING HEARD

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**Testing projection.** The first step in testing projection is to work with a trusted friend or colleague who knows you very well and will be honest with you (i.e. can be trusted not to flatter you or the cello). Playing your instrument in a large, relatively dry acoustical space with a trusted listener is the best way to judge projection. If your listener is also a cellist and is happy to play the instrument to you, so much the better – though you will have different bowing styles and will almost certainly draw out different aspects of the instrument when you play.

**Improving projection.** If you think you may have problems being heard, there are a series of issues to consider relating to the condition and set up of cellos:

1. A common cause of poor projection is open or unglued seams, so get your seams checked if your cello is not projecting as well as usual.
2. Another major cause of poor projection is an inappropriately fitted sound post. Adjusting your instrument with a good luthier is not expensive and can make a dramatic difference (see case studies below).
3. If the bridge on your cello is not appropriately designed to suit both the instrument and your bowing style, this can compromise projection.
4. Played-out strings do not project well, so it pays to keep fresh strings on your cello, and to experiment to find which strings respond best to your cello, its set up and your bowing style.
5. If you have tried all the above but your cello still doesn't project well, it may be that you will have to find a different instrument that can be adjusted to respond well to your playing style.

**Finding a new voice.** Some cellos sound beautiful under the ear and also project brilliantly, but many others, including Cremonese cellos, sound better at a distance than at close quarters, and are not flattering to the player under the ear. If you have not had the experience of playing a cello that projects well, it is possible to rule out a well-projecting instrument because it does not feel rewarding to play under the ear. Your choice of cello model and set up will depend to a large extent on how you create sound with your bow. The archetypal Stradivari cello responds very well to players who have the ability to draw or coax (rather than press) the sound from the instrument with their bow, whereas classic Montagnana cellos work in a more linear fashion, and respond progressively to bow pressure, so the harder you play, the more the cello gives; this model works best for strong, heavy players.

Matthew Sharp and Toby Turton told us about some of their experiences of cello projection and how it has influenced their choice of instrument.

**Matthew Sharp, cellist, baritone, actor:** *'If you have something to say at an artistic level, whether singing, speaking or playing, people will want to listen – but there are some fundamental sonic qualities that definitely help when it comes to being heard, especially if you're wrestling with orchestras and big pianos. From my perspective as a cellist, a cello sound that "majors" in sweetness and warmth doesn't always work on a big stage or a big musical canvas. Committing and surrendering emotionally and physically to the music and to the idea of communicating it to a room full of people can - with the right cello - produce a very particular sound under the ear, a sound that a player attracted to warmth and sweetness may find striking or even disorienting!'*

*'My mum was in the RPO for years and worked with Pavarotti; when sitting right next to him, she said his sound was fizzy and grainy - it had what singers call "blade". This is a quality I always look for under my ear and then I know that someone at the back of a 2,000 seat hall will get something from the sound and from my physical engagement with that instrument.'*

*'Playing in a chamber music environment is often a good context to try a cello in – if you are working too hard and struggling to be heard in a chamber environment, then that tells you something is missing. A few years ago I was playing on a Tecchler cello - gorgeous on its own but lacking that turbo-charged edge that I look for and need. The chamber music context revealed this lack. Similarly, you can be standing next to a singer on stage who seems to be making a tremendous amount of really cavernous noise, but it turns out not to be the kind of sound which carries to the back of the hall. A couple of weeks ago I heard a lovely solo cello recital played on a beautiful Gofriller; it was very warm, creating a beautiful pool of sound when played gently, but under pressure it didn't appear to have oomph. Great for an intimate environment but not suited to a big performance space.'*

*'When I first tried Robin's cello (a copy of the Pergamenschikow Montagnana) backstage at King's Place it struck me as very exciting and incisive; I imagine someone might have said it was a bit sharp – bristly even! I was amazed at how much 'blade' it had. My teacher Boris Pergamenschikow's sound had a similar distinctive graininess, almost chiselled in quality - Promethean, dark and light not just with 'shiny' upper partials; a sound with a '5 o' clock shadow', which I really love.'*

*'When I stand next to amazing singers they all have that grainy quality too, even famous silvery sopranos have that distinctive texture in their sound. There's an essay by Roland Barthes called 'The Grain of the Voice' in which he compares the voices of opera singers Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Charles Panzéra, Fischer-Dieskau's voice embodying an*

almost spiritual perfection and Panzéra's voice communicating a more gritty, physical quality which Barthes called "grain".

*'For me, with both cello-playing and singing, I have a sense that creating beauty is deeply rooted in physicality, the act, imprint, aftermath of physicality - Rodin turning "A Slab" into "The Kiss". When it comes to beauty, I'm with Keats - keep it truthful and the beauty will out. And with the cello sound - whether snarling or serenading - it's "the grain" that excites me; that and witnessing a cellist "mining" a cello to extract that grain. It's such a physical instrument that "tickling" at the surface doesn't seem to serve its essence. But not all cellos have the capacity for a 'grainy' projection in their DNA. So I look for the monolith I can carve a sound from - flints, sparks, hammer and tongs - a cello that I can "lean into", that remains thrilling and keeps its core - that's capable of carrying the player's intention and inflection right to the back of the hall.'*

**Toby Turton, Sub-Principal No.2 with Northern Ballet Sinfonia and freelance cellist:** *'The difficulty for cellists is that the sound under your ear needs to be inspiring - you need to be in love with your cello, but it's hard to accept and realise that the sound under your ear isn't what is being experienced by the audience. For example, I once accompanied Gerard le Feuore to a shop to try some contemporary cellos when he was looking for a second instrument. Of the cellos we tried, I preferred a cello which was very easy to play and seemed very even and sounded good, but Gerard said the best cello we tried was one which I had found rather uneven, and had a few wolf notes. Gerard pointed out, rightly, that the more difficult cello would sound much better at a distance than the approachable cello.'*

*'My old cello produced quite a "bloom" of sound and gave the impression under the ear that it was creating a lot of volume. It is a really lovely cello with a sweet, creamy sound, and lots of people preferred it to my new cello when I played both instruments to them. However, although the sound was sweet and beautiful, I always struggled to be heard in large performance spaces and when playing in an ensemble. On one occasion I was playing continuo with an oboe and voice in Vivaldi Gloria, and in the sound check I was asked to play louder, and still louder. By the time they were happy with the sound that could be heard at the back of the church, the cello was producing so much sound around me that I was struggling to hear the oboe and voice. On my old cello I had positive responses at audition when playing in a small space, but was always told my sound was too small in a bigger space.'*

*'I explored the set up of my old cello with Robin, but although we found a post position which improved the cello's projection, this adjustment didn't suit my bowing style. Eventually I decided to sell my old cello and it's now with a great player whose strong bowing style suits the cello perfectly.'*

*'My new cello (a Boullangier) is very different - it sounds vibrant and exciting under the ear, with a real "fizz" or "burr" to the sound and I realised straightaway that it would open up new possibilities for me as a player. When the basic sound of the cello (with no input from the left hand) has a lot of texture and intensity, then when you add vibrato, the sound very quickly becomes incredibly intense. More mellow cellos can have a big, warm, plain, straightforward basic sound - a bit like a wide, shallow, calm river - and so you have to use the left hand if you want to create any excitement or intensity. Intensity, texture, burr, fizz - all these qualities create interest and give an extra dimension to both your sound and your playing, and they also attract the attention of the listener, and it was this quality which attracted me to my current cello.'*

*'I think that the great cellist Truls Mørk's Montagnana sound is the clearest example of this intense, textured sound and in my opinion he makes one of the greatest of all cello sounds. One criticism that is occasionally aimed at him is that he presses too much with the bow, but I'm sure it's the perfect playing style for his Montagnana and probably the reason why he doesn't play the wonderful Strad that he's been given to use.'*

*'When you are looking for a cello, the ideal scenario for testing an instrument is very hard to achieve: ideally you need a big performance space, with a colleague available to listen and to play to you, and also other instruments available, and also a piano available to play along with to test balance and projection. The reality for me was snatching a few minutes at the end of a rehearsal in a large space. During a trial of an instrument there is rarely enough time to feel completely confident in your decision, and to some extent it's a leap of faith. Cellos also respond differently depending on the acoustic space they are in, so this is another variable to consider. It's best to avoid a flattering acoustic when trying a cello and also to have another instrument to compare it with.'*

*'It definitely took time to make the transition from the first cello to the second; I had to give up my old obsession with always making beautiful sounds, softly and very accurately, and to move away from the fine detail to the bigger picture. After a year I looked at the set up on my Boullangier with Robin and he lengthened the sound post, which produced more resistance and also more projection. It was after this work that I got my position with the Northern Ballet Sinfonia; being a pit musician in a small ensemble requires a big sound and so projection is extremely important to me. Robin has also recently cut a new bridge for the cello, which seems to have enhanced my cello's tonal qualities and increased projection, making it really very exciting to play.'*

**We would be very grateful to hear your own insights and experiences of cello projection, as it is an important and complex field. We plan to publish further research into this field as well as a selection of further interviews with cellists in our website version of this article. Our warmest thanks go to Matthew and Toby for all their help with this article.**

*Front page cartoon by Michael Edwards.*

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# SELECTED CELLOS AND BOWS

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## **BENJAMIN BANKS CELLO c.1880**

L.O.B: 29½" (740mm) String length: 27" (686mm)  
**Price: £85,000**

A magnificent Banks cello in excellent condition, with beautiful red brown varnish and a deep, complex and powerful tone. This cello would work equally well as a solo or orchestral instrument. Hill certificate.

## **JOSEPH HILL CELLO 1770**

L.O.B: 29½" (740mm) String Length 26¾" (677mm)  
**Price: £47,500**

An exquisite cello in exceptionally good condition with a one-piece maple back and beautiful varnish. The tone is colourful and expressive. Hill certificate.

## **GEORGES ADOLPHE CHANOT 1895**

L.O.B: 29¾" (755mm) String length: 27½" (698mm)  
**Price: £35,000**

A handsome, powerful and expressive instrument in excellent condition with fine golden brown varnish. Labelled internally and inscribed at the endpin.

## **WAMSLEY SCHOOL CELLO c.1750**

L.O.B: 712mm (28") String length: 680mm (26¾")  
**Price: £33,000**

This cello is a very nice example of the Wamsley School and is in good playing condition. The tone is surprisingly powerful for a cello of this size and projects beautifully.

## **THOMAS SMITH CELLO 1762**

L.O.B: 29" (740mm) String length: 26½" (674mm)  
**Price: £26,000**

A handsome instrument in very good condition with a powerful, colourful tone and a quick response. Letter of authenticity from Charles Beare.

## **CHARLES J-B COLLIN-MÉZIN CELLO 1880**

L.O.B: 29¾" (764mm) String length: 27¼" (690 mm)  
**Price: £25,000**

A very fine example of this maker's Stradivari model, this instrument is in good condition and has a magnificent tone and excellent projection.

## **COLIN IRVING CELLO 2005**

L.O.B: 29½" (750mm) String length: 27¾" (696mm)  
**Price: £24,000**

A strong and handsome cello by a respected contemporary maker with a powerful, deep tone and good response.

## **MICHAEL KEARNS CELLO 1998**

L.O.B: 29½" (750mm) String length: 27½" (698mm)  
**Price: £16,000**

This elegant cello is in excellent condition and has a balanced response and satisfying tone. It would be an excellent choice for a student or professional player.

## **FURBER SCHOOL CELLO c.1820**

L.O.B: 29½" (740mm) String Length 26¾" (677mm)  
**Price: £12,500**

A very beautiful sounding English cello of the Furber School with painted-on purfling.

## **GERMAN CELLO c.1820**

L.O.B: 29¼" (744mm) String length: 26¾" (682mm) **Price: £10,500**

## **MIRECOURT CELLO c.1910**

L.O.B: 30¼" (770mm) String length: 27" (685mm)  
**Price: £9,000**

## **NEUNER & HORNSTEINER CELLO c.1880**

L.O.B: 29½" (748mm) String length: 27¼" (694mm)  
**Price: £7,500**

## **Selected Cello Bows**

|                   |      |     |        |
|-------------------|------|-----|--------|
| David Samuels     | 81.8 | S   | £5,740 |
| C N Bazin         | 74.0 | S   | £5,500 |
| William Salchow   | 81.9 | S   | £4,860 |
| John Clutterbuck  | 81.9 | G/T | £4,750 |
| W E Hill & Sons   | 75.0 | S   | £4,500 |
| Steve Salchow     | 81.3 | S   | £4,050 |
| Garner Wilson     | 81.2 | G/T | £3,950 |
| Christian Wanka   | 82.5 | G   | £3,950 |
| Bernd Etzler      | 81.6 | S   | £3,750 |
| Albert Nürnberger | 76.4 | S   | £3,750 |
| Paul Sadka        | 79.5 | S   | £3,500 |
| Noel Burke        | 78.5 | S   | £3,500 |
| H R Pfretzschner  | 84.0 | S   | £3,250 |
| John Aniano       | 81.4 | S   | £3,080 |
| Dirk Loescher     | 79.7 | S   | £3,010 |
| Roger Zabinski    | 81.2 | S   | £2,980 |
| Robert Pierce     | 81.8 | S   | £2,850 |
| Martin Beilke     | 81.9 | S   | £2,750 |
| Richard Grünke    | 82.9 | S   | £2,750 |
| Emmanuel Begin    | 79.5 | S   | £2,730 |
| Klaus Grünke      | 80.7 | S   | £2,600 |
| Victor Bernard    | 81.0 | S   | £2,440 |
| Eric Gagné        | 81.7 | S   | £2,440 |
| Stephen Bristow   | 83.3 | G/T | £2,400 |
| Emelie Sabathier  | 78.0 | S   | £2,200 |
| Christian Wanka   | 80.2 | S   | £2,110 |
| Richard Wilson    | 82.2 | S   | £2,000 |
| Juliano Oliveira  | 82.6 | S   | £960   |

Weight = in grammes; S = Silver; G = Gold

N = Nickel G/T = Gold and Tortoiseshell

There are over 50 bows in stock, all listed online

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For a complete list of cellos and bows, visit [www.aitchisoncellos.com](http://www.aitchisoncellos.com)