
NEWS FOR CELLISTS AUTUMN 2016

String Reviews

Since our last review in Autumn 2014 there has been a rich offering of new strings from Pirastro, Larsen, Thomastik-Infeld and Jargar. In this issue we review Pirastro *Perpetual Medium* and *Perpetual Soloist*, Larsen *Magnacore Arioso G & C*, the Thomastik *Versum* set and the Jargar *Superior* set. A table of selected string tensions can be found on the back of the newsletter subscription insert and the full table is viewable on our website which we will also keep updated with further feedback from players. As ever, our reviews are based on a limited number of trials with a range of cellists and instruments; we hope that they give some insight into the qualities of each string but please do not regard them as definitive, since the response of each player and instrument to each string is unique.

Farewell, Cat Jary

We were deeply saddened to hear of the sudden death of our friend Cat Jary from an asthma attack. Cat, a fine cellist and Alexander teacher was one of those rare people whose energy and passion for music, people and communities could have filled and fulfilled many lifetimes. In her incandescent 46 years she inspired audiences and other musicians as a cellist, choir leader and therapist. After moving to Spain in 2002 she founded and ran a unique mountain music festival in La Alpujarra near Granada. Our son Will was lucky enough to work for Cat as a volunteer at the 2013 festival which was a transforming experience for him. May her generous spirit live on in everyone who knew her. For more information and to leave your condolences: <http://www.alexandermusicschool.com/>

Newsletter subscription update

We hope that you enjoy receiving *News for Cellists* by post or email but if for any reason you do not wish to receive future newsletters - or would like to inform us of a change of postal or email address - we enclose a form giving all the necessary details for your unsubscription or subscription update.

New endpin holder

Samara Ginsberg recommends a solid wood endpin holder called Artino. Samara uses the Artino SP-25, an appealing cello-shaped design made in beech with three positions for different spikes and a slip-proof backing pad attached to a sturdy nylon strap which fits to any chair leg using a simple clip-on loop. Also available are the Artino SP-20 which is a simple rectangular shape with four endpin positions and is available in maple or walnut. The Artino SP10 is also rectangular with just two endpin positions and is available in walnut. Both the SP-20 and SP-10 rely on having a chair leg the right size to fit into a 5.5cm circular cut-out. All these models are available from www.alangregory.co.uk/

Carbon fibre endpin gel

Huge thanks to Corinne Frost for telling us about *Finish Line Fiber Grip*, a 50ml tube of gel available from Halfords and designed for cyclists but which can be used safely and advantageously on carbon fibre cello endpins to prevent slipping. Just one application seems to condition the surface of the end pin for a long time. Highly recommended for all carbon fibre endpin users.



Funny kind of bike prop...

STRING REVIEWS

Larsen Magnacore Arioso is a low tension version of Magnacore G and C. The C string is almost as low in tension as a Eudoxa and can significantly free the response of some cellos while giving a powerful, beautifully textured sound which is darker in tone than a standard Magnacore. Both the C and G are described by players as gutsy and powerful. Larsen recommends trying Arioso C with your existing G as it can work well with other G strings.

Arioso feedback: 'The Arioso G and C took a good week to play in. Initially the C string felt 'boomy' in certain positions but as the string settled, the sound focussed and became more even. The G made my cello feel wolfy and although it did settle a little, it didn't quite reach the focus and immediacy of the C. The point of contact with the bow needed to be nearer the bridge to get a focussed sound and the strings spoke better with a more legato bow stroke when playing off the string. The strings are powerful but I felt they lacked beauty. They are nicely made and feel good under the left hand and the transition between the G & D is easy and smooth. They ring very well when playing pizzicato. I felt that the lower tension Arioso C opened the top of the cello a little, but not as much as using Spirocores. I would use the C, but not the G as it stayed quite "tungstony".' (Cellist 1)

Cellist 2 tried the Arioso G on his fine French cello: 'Very textured, good core, broad, resonant but fuzzy in 5th position. Smoother and warmer than Perpetual Soloist. Still a tungsten sound but not quite as bright and with more core than Perpetual. A nice expressive edge, husky sound, warmer and broader than Spirocore. A real powerhouse.' Cellist 3 tried Arioso C on a fine Henry Lockey Hill cello and found it 'quick, light and immediate, a lovely rich, free sound which was darker than standard Magnacore and which suited the cello very well.'

Jargar Superior G and C: Jargar issued Superior A in 2011, Superior D in 2012 and have now completed the set. We reviewed the A and D in our Autumn 2014 newsletter and these reviews can also be read on the website page *A and D string reviews*. The G has an excellent response and good, clear and colourful sound. We found the C rather slower to respond under the bow than the G.

Jargar Superior feedback. Cellist 1: 'Lovely warm sound and when played alongside a Larsen Magnacore A & D, the whole cello felt free and open. These felt like very stable Obligatos. They responded really well under the bow, much better than standard Jargar G and C which feel thick & sluggish by comparison. The bottom strings feel thinner than other makes. The G didn't have an

overly aggressive tungsten fizz and both strings settled well.' Cellist 6 loved the feel of the G but not the metallic edge to its sound. She found it free and open to play, with a quick response and she felt she could hear her cello more clearly than when using Helicore bottom strings. When the C was fitted, it felt fantastic under her fingers and bow but the G became more 'wolfy' and the C lacked the sound quality and easy response of the G.

Cellist 2 really enjoyed Jargar Superior G and preferred it to either Perpetual or Arioso G strings. He found the sound clean, clear, rich and colourful with a good core and plenty of power, much more so than a standard Jargar. The G spoke very clearly on his cello in 4th position and cleared up the wolf note.

Pirastro Perpetual. This new family of cello strings are making waves in the cello community. There is a full set of Mediums and also a Perpetual Soloist G and C. The Medium set is powerful, nicely rich in harmonics and the top strings have significantly more core than other Pirastro A and D strings. The Mediums have a distinctive and appealing grainy texture to their sound while the Soloists are much smoother and richer in texture. Several players have mentioned that these strings increase their wolf note a little. Perpetuals do take time to play in: a day or two for the top strings and up to a week for the lower strings.

Perpetual Medium feedback. Cellist 1: 'They are well balanced, rounded, warm and powerful and feel good under the left hand. They took a good week to break in properly, but became rounder and warmer as they did. Initially the set was very powerful and lacked colour and the quieter dynamics were not easy. As they settled the range of colours and dynamic possibilities became easier to achieve. They respond well to the bow, have a lot of clarity and are even across the full set.'

'The A & D feel a bit like Passione but with more power and roundness. The A settled quickly and sounds dark/full with a good dynamic range and projection. The D is a good match for the A but initially it felt a bit dead in 4th position but once it settled it was really lovely. The C & G took longer to play in and were less stable in pitch than the A & D. They felt a bit 'tungstony' to begin with and it wasn't always easy to articulate clearly, but now they have settled, they are even across the strings and in higher positions. My cello doesn't normally have a wolf note but with a Perpetual G there is a little wolf on F natural. The strings have proved very stable and consistent. I've had a run of pit work and they cope really well with the heat and humidity. However, for me the bottom strings

aren't quite a match for Spirocores as they lack that gravelly quality and also make the wolf note worse on my cello.'

Cellist 6: 'The A and D were initially uninspiring when first fitted but quickly developed a depth and range of tone I would normally only associate with covered gut. The quality of the sound is lovely, quite like the Evah Pirazzi, but with more resonance and richness of tone.'

Cellist 3: 'Perpetual A medium is deeper than a Larsen, smooth in texture and quite colourful. It gives the top end of the cello 'wings' and the instrument sounds fuller and with a nice balance between treble and bass. The effect is a powerful Italianate sound, with real life and momentum. The string has an 'older' timbre than a Larsen and I like its malleable feel. Cellist 5: 'Medium A & D had an immediate response, lovely resonance and slightly grainy sound which made the cello sing. G and C medium offer just a little more resistance and texture than the Soloist version, which on my Banks were almost too smooth and direct.'

Perpetual Soloist G and C feedback. Cellist 6: 'These are 'Soloist' strings in the true sense of the word. They have a loping, long-legged quality, rather like going into 5th gear. They are very free and resonant, but with a slight metallic edge. The initial reaction is astonishing, but they may not be suited to the pianissimo playing required orchestrally. Ultimately I, and my Forster, couldn't handle them, but I feel sure they would be ideally suited to another player.'

Cellist 2: 'Perpetual Soloist G was smoother than Medium, but sounded wolfy in 4th position and made my Permanent C sound colder.' Cellist 5 loved Perpetual Soloist G for its resonance, warmth and generous qualities under the bow but the Soloist C didn't resonate as well on his cello as the G. Cellist 3 found Perpetual Soloist C soft, round and mellow sounding, with more structure than the medium C, but it made the whole cello harsher and it was very hard work with the bow. He thought it would probably take time to play in like an Evah Pirazzi.

Versum. Thomastik Infeld have long been famous for their Dominant and Spirocore strings. Last year they released a completely new set: Versum. We find Versums a very good, cohesive set of strings with a distinguished, clear, sound and a particularly attractive G. Some players find the C a bit slow and hard to manage.

Versum feedback: Cellist 7 liked Versum A but found it a bit simple in sound quality; he also liked the straightforward 'steel string' sound of the D but felt it was lacking in colour and sounds a bit nasal. He much preferred the G for its smooth, attractive playing qualities but found the C too heavy in tension with an

artificial sound and slow to respond. Cellist 3 found the Versum A smooth and singing, with slightly less depth than a Larsen and less texture than a Jargar Superior D.

Cellist 6 thought Versum A had a strong core, a textured edge to the sound and a nice quality once it had settled down. She sensed some tension in the string but it still felt malleable and had a nice range of tonal colours on her cello. Versum D felt tight and unresponsive under her left hand and bow and the grainy surface texture of the windings made it hard for her to shift smoothly. Cellist 2 thought Versum G was very powerful with a good core. He described the G as 'a noble sound, quite soloistic, which would brighten up a dark cello.'

Cellist 8 thought Versums had a lovely coherent sound and voice. The A was rich, refined and responsive, with depth, colour and clarity like a mezzo soprano voice and was easy to mould. The D was rich, clear, responsive and expressive and very good when played quietly, and made a good transition to Versum G which was rather harsh on the open string but direct, clean and bright when stopped. He felt there was a metallic foundation to the sound which would be likely to improve on playing, like many tungsten G strings. Versum C had a metallic edge when first fitted, and was powerful, rich, and strong, but not very quick on the uptake and difficult to play quietly or with smooth bow changes. He decided to play Versum A, D and G with Arioso C for the next few weeks. After one month, he decided that the strings required too much effort to achieve contact and sound, so he returned to an earlier combination of strings.

Cellist 4: 'The combination of the full set of Versums is excellent both on my older instrument and my modern cello. On the older cello the A and D are rich without too much mellowness or thickness, and are very lively. The bottom strings sit well with the upper strings. They resemble Tungsten Spirocores but I find them nicer. They are rounder in tone and they complement the upper strings well. The set is a real success – it's great. They are my preferred strings on both cellos. On my modern cello, they are very even and give a range of colours with the lightest of touch. These strings give you lots of possibilities to explore.'

Huge thanks to everyone who tested these strings and contributed their feedback, including Nick Cooper, Leonid Gorokhov, John Heley, Hilary Jones, Nicholas Jones, Andrew Skidmore, Chris Slatter, Toby Turton and Bozidar Vukotic.

For a chart of the string tensions of the strings reviewed here, plus selected strings mentioned by players in this article, see the reverse of the subscription form. A complete chart of string tensions can be found at www.aitchisoncellos.com

SELECTED CELLOS AND BOWS

HENRY LOCKEY HILL CELLO 1827

L.O.B.: 29¼" (742mm) String length: 26½" (674mm)

Price: £70,000

A beautiful example of this famous maker's work in very good condition with a colourful, expressive tone and good projection. The varnish is a translucent golden brown.

THOMAS KENNEDY CELLO 1814

L.O.B.: 29" (735mm) String length: 27" (688mm)

Price: £65,000

A handsome cello in good condition with an exceptionally good tone. Inscribed on the inner table and back. Peter Biddulph certificate.

BERNARD SIMON FENDT CELLO c.1830

L.O.B.: 29¾" (755mm) String length: 27¼" (686mm)

Price: £62,000

This beautiful cello is in excellent condition, with very fine red-brown varnish and a rich, powerful and colourful tone. Certificate from J & A Beare.

THOMAS KENNEDY CELLO 1823

L.O.B.: 29½" (740mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)

Price: £50,000

This Kennedy cello has been restored in our workshop and has a powerful, rich tone and quick response. The dark varnish has a very deep craqueleur.

GEORGES ADOLPHE CHANOT 1895

L.O.B.: 29¾" (755mm) String length: 27½" (698mm)

Price: £35,000

A handsome, powerful and expressive instrument with a rich, cavernous bass and melodious treble. The cello is in very fresh condition.

WAMSLEY SCHOOL CELLO c.1750

L.O.B.: 28" (712mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)

Price: £33,000

This elegant English cello has beautiful golden varnish, an expressive, colourful tone and impressive projection for a cello of its size. Hill receipt.

WILLIAM BOOTH (II) c.1840

L.O.B.: 29½" (751mm) String length: 27¼" (693mm)

Price: £32,000

A beautiful instrument by William Booth II (1816-1856). The cello has a powerful, rich, even tone and handsome red-brown varnish. The condition is excellent.

ROBIN AITCHISON GUADAGNINI COPY

L.O.B.: 28 ⅛" (715mm) String length: 26⅜" (668mm)

Price: £24,000

This cello was made in 2008 and is a close copy of a Milan period Guadagnini cello circa 1755 with a colourful and powerful tone and characteristic orange-brown varnish.

FINE GERMAN CELLO c.1860

L.O.B.: 29½" (748mm) String length: 27¼" (693mm)

Price: £18,000

An excellent Mittenwald cello made from very fine quality materials and with a rich, deep and colourful tone. The workmanship is impressive and the cello is a real pleasure to play.

GUERSAN SCHOOL CELLO c.1790

L.O.B.: 29½" (748mm) String length: 27¼" (688mm)

Price: £12,500

A lovely early French cello with a very fine tone and excellent projection. Extensively repaired, this instrument has been in professional use for many years.

SECOND HAND ACCORD CELLO CASE

With Fiedler back pack; weight: 3.6 kg; price £tbc

Selected Cello Bows

Eugène Sartory	80.8	S	£35,000
Bazin	77.0	S	£tbc
W E Hill & Sons	74.7	S	£6,000
W E Hill & Sons	80.0	S	£5,000
Jean-Pascal Nehr	82.4	S	£4,780
John Clutterbuck	81.9	G/T	£4,750
Charles Ervin	80.0	G	£4,500
W E Hill & Sons	83.2	S	£4,500
Michael J Taylor	76.0	G	£4,500
Christophe Schaeffer	82.8	S	£tbc
Hill (H&S brand)	78.0	S	£4,000
Roy Quade	87.0	S	£tbc
John Aniano	81.4	S	£3,970
Yannick Le Canu	80.0	S	£3,740
Tino Lucke	81.8	S	£3,650
Sebastian Dirr	81.9	G	£3,480
Risto Vainio	80.4	S	£tbc
Christian Wanka	80.8	S	£3,010
Roger Zabinski	83.3	S	£2,980
Robert Pierce	81.8	S	£2,850
Martin Beilke	81.9	S	£2,750
Richard Grünke	82.9	S	£2,750
Klaus Grünke	82.7	S	£2,750
Bernd Etzler	81.0	S	£2,750
Andrew McGill	80.0	S	£2,400
Howard Green	81.5	S	£2,200
Alfons Riedl	81	S	£1,500
Juliano Oliveira	82.6	S	£960
Siqueira	80.0	N	£780