
NEWS FOR CELLISTS AUTUMN 2017

Cello-teaching philosophies

We had a flood of appreciative emails following our January article on the teaching relationship between Ben Davies/Sheku Kanneh Mason and Leonid Gorokhov/Laura van der Heijden. In this edition we interview another renowned cellist about her teaching philosophy: Hannah Roberts, Principal Cellist of Manchester Camerata and Professor of Cello at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester and at the Royal Academy of Music, London.

You can read Hannah's interview on pages 2-3, along with selected quotes from past and present students Nick Trygstad, Mikhail Nemtsov, Rowena Calvert and Abel Selaocoe. Full interviews can be found on our website, along with Hannah's reflections on teaching each of her students.

On 21 October there is a chance to hear Hannah performing Tchaikovsky's Roco Variations with Manchester Camerata at Leeds Town Hall. <http://www.manchestercamerata.co.uk/>



'...imagine that it's a fountain pen'

Newly arrived cellos and bows

Over the summer we have received baroque cellos by Jacob Haynes and Anton Bachmann and a Joseph Hill with a gut string set up. They are beautiful and characterful instruments which we look forward to exploring with visiting cellists.

Other new arrivals include a beautiful William Forster cello, restored by us, as well as stunning bows by James Dodd and Eugène Sartory. Brief details of all cellos and bows can be found on the back page; further details and photos are published on our website. We have a waiting list of players looking for fine instruments so please let us know if you have a cello or bow needing to find a new home.

Take a Bow 365

Our first international exhibition of contemporary cello bows took place 15 years ago and was inspired by an article Sarah wrote about contemporary bow making for the Strad Magazine called 'Objects of Desire'. Hundreds of cellists have found bows through our subsequent exhibitions and we have helped now world-famous bow makers such as Yannick Le Canu to establish their reputations early in their careers.

Recent feedback from players has been that they would love to be able to come to try a wide range of contemporary cello bows all year round, when they have the time to visit and when the funds are available. In response, we have decided to evolve the exhibition into a new, permanent format: *Take a Bow 365*.

Thanks to our generous bow making colleagues, we will be offering an exciting collection of contemporary bows from October onwards. Participating makers will include Victor Bernard, Emmanuel Carlier, Bernd Etzler, the Grünke family, Tino Lucke, Robert Pierce, Steve Salchow and David Samuels. All bows will be published on our website: <http://www.aitchisoncellos.com/antique-cellos/bows-for-sale/>

CELLO TEACHING PHILOSOPHY: HANNAH ROBERTS

'I will always be grateful to my first teacher, my mother, for her unfailing dedication and for striking such a skillful balance between keeping things fun and maintaining discipline. I'm also very thankful that she tested the set up and response of my modest childhood instruments to be sure that they would work well for me because the way an instrument is set up is tremendously formative to a person's concept of sound and physical approach.

'I was offered a place at the Menuhin school when I was 8 years old. William Pleeth had just started teaching there and Menuhin himself was also spending a lot of time at the school during this period, playing chamber music with us and conducting. Menuhin was such a humble person and was genuinely interested in sharing music with young people. He had an unmistakable voice as a player: his personal, expressive and flexible sound opened my ears and mind to seemingly endless musical possibilities and his influence has stayed with me ever since.

'I had lessons with Pleeth once a month – how lucky was that?! For me, the hallmark of his influence was the way he taught independence of thought. He would poke fun, in a nice way, if he thought a student was thoughtlessly following a piece of received wisdom and would encourage us to go back to the score and think around it another way. Analogies poured out of him when he taught. In the early days, he was trying to encourage me to have a more fluent wrist and bow and said, 'Darling, imagine that it's a fountain pen.' He was always ready with an image to help his students to connect with something they already found natural in everyday life.

Every week I would also study with Jennifer Ward-Clarke who was very kind, consistent and thorough. She made us work through all the Feuillard exercises, and even created her own which she wrote out by hand for us all. She also set all forty Popper *High School études* (to be learned from memory) during my time at school, which I would probably not have had time to do in that depth later on.

'After leaving the Menuhin school I was very fortunate to get a place in Ralph Kirshbaum's class at the RNCM. Ralph made me think very carefully about my playing and homed in on essential details, for example whether the bow was acting enough as the foundation of the sound, or whether the left hand and the bow were matching up and working in tandem to create sound in the right way. His laser-like concentration, profound musical insights and warm generosity of spirit continue to be a great inspiration, and his wisdom in guiding the decision-making process on developmental and career opportunities was also invaluable, even when youthful

enthusiasm to take on attractive but possibly ill-timed engagements had to be curbed!

'I started teaching at the junior department of the RNCM as an undergraduate and a few years later, just as I graduated, Rodney Slatford asked me to fill in at the RNCM when two distinguished professors decided to move on. It was initially somewhat daunting as my first class was made up of a group of young men, some of whom may have taken a little persuading to accept help and advice from someone both younger AND female! But I am enormously grateful for the trust that was placed in me at that time.

'It's such a privilege to be involved in the evolution of another person's progress and the benefits of this stimulating process are mutual. You learn as much as you give. The essence of it however, remains the same: sensing as much as you can about the other person's thought process and their way of understanding is the key to being able to help them. That is the cornerstone, whether in a consultation lesson or working with a long-term student. You are constantly trying to sense what the person needs at that stage and how they are processing what you are trying to give them. Are they able to utilise it there and then? Or are you sowing the seed of the idea that may mature or re-surface later?

'What excites me about the potential of a student, in addition to innate 'giftedness', is their thirst for learning, exploring and self-improvement. I want to see signs of self-motivation born of a deep love of music, as well as a genuine fascination with the craft of playing the instrument. I'm not so drawn to work with students who are just content to soak up what I say. The potential for conversation, a bit of repartee even, and an open but independent mind are all healthy ingredients in the learning process. When working with a talented student you are dealing with something very precious. It is essential to gain the student's trust that you're not attempting to diminish or damage the potency of their gift.

'Hannah has so many students, but I always felt that the entire experience was really made for me.' Abel Selacoe

For a young player to whom everything has come very naturally from childhood, it can initially feel that if a teacher focuses stringently on detail, this may diminish their spontaneity and flow. For example, if you feel that someone needs to work on their bow hold, you need to demonstrate the future advantages of a changed bow hold, instead of merely showing what's wrong with the existing one. Once you gain the trust of the student that you are there 100% because you want them to improve, they can accept the compatibility of

your guidance with the shared goal of their ultimate progress. There is no one-size-fits-all in cello teaching. Every student has a different physique and a different personality and it's essential to work with each student on an entirely 'tailor-made' and individual basis.

'If someone has a major problem that pervades all of their playing, such as a collapsed left elbow, they definitely need some exercises that allow them to focus almost exclusively on that. There is no point trying to reinvent the wheel; there are some technical matters that we know are good practice, for example not having your left elbow too low when you go up above thumb position. It is good to be clear which issues are subject to an individualistic approach and which aspects of the instrumentalist's playing discipline are best served by existing exercise books and materials which can then be adapted to specific circumstances.

'You can't give second-best to Hannah because she's always giving you her absolute best.'
Nick Trygstad

'So, to focus on the left elbow, we would look for simple exercises that already exist, for example in Feuillard. But I am also very keen that students come up with their own exercises, because it's so important to maintain creativity in practice. You need a very solid goal and then to be inventive in adapting and developing existing exercises for yourself. I often advise students to imagine they were trying to help someone else with a problem - how would they approach it? Which aspects would they emphasise? And how would they make the message clear for the other person? Using this thought process, they often clarify what they need to do for themselves and identify the simple nuts and bolts that form the problem.

'The interaction between my personal practice and teaching is very strong. Teaching is a real challenge and I'm always asking myself, how can I put this point across in a way that will unlock this student's problem? When I'm teaching, I often demonstrate to students the 'bad' way and the 'good' way of doing something and to do this, I really need to have crystallised for myself

'She just seems to have this knack of drawing music out of people.'
Rowena Calvert

what elements each consists of - and I explore this in my own practice. Often through that process you find the nugget that's going to help the student: which physical feeling it is that you are asking them to find or

change. There's no doubt that teaching continually informs my playing and my learning process.

'I hold a performance class with my students almost every week. There are so many benefits to these classes because they provide a natural, rotating experience of performing and giving feedback to other performers. Students also get to see when someone has made

progress because they have put more work into their preparation, which leads to a very healthy, mildly competitive ambience created by the students!

'I usually pick four people to perform each week, so that one week you will be in the spotlight - whether you like it or not! - and the next week you will practice how to offer comments which will help that week's performers the most. In class, I offer my feedback to the performer first and then invite the other students to contribute their ideas. I try to foster a culture of trust and mutual help in the way I put my comments as a teacher in front of the group. The comment should always have the end goal of helping. Of course, it's important to be honest and to say something critical, to help them to improve, but you also need to give the student the tools with which to pick themselves up and, ideally, make most of that improvement there and then.

'If a student has a problem with wobbly vibrato and the group sees a teacher repeat over and over again 'you have wobbly vibrato,' it doesn't help them to know *why* the vibrato is too wobbly or what could be done about it. Whereas if you say, 'I think we need to explore the balance of the left hand and what it is that underpins the vibrato. Let's try it without any vibrato and see whether you are honestly balanced when you shift onto the 3rd finger,' - this is a different and hopefully, constructive way of arriving at the point. Of course, there is the risk that in the class situation a student may make a point in an undiplomatic way, but I have found that most students quickly adjust to the culture of the class and learn a lot about how to effectively share ideas and opinions to the benefit of their peers. The whole process is a learning experience for the entire group.

'With Hannah you don't get frustrated with technical things; you are always focussing equally on the music.' Misha Nemtsov

'As a teacher, I hope to foster inquisitive, intelligent and generous musicianship. I try to help my students to develop tools as well as an ever-expanding manual on how those tools can be used in their playing. I encourage them to question and investigate, to be creative and imaginative in their approach to technical and musical matters, making connections between issues rather than separating them. Above all, I hope that my students will become generous musicians. Generosity of spirit is essential for music-making to be of any value - and for it to transmit the music effectively to the listener. For me, that is at the core of what it is to be a musician.'

Interviews with Abel, Nick, Rowena and Misha can be found in the publications section of our website along with Hannah's reflections on teaching them. Our warmest thanks to Hannah, Abel, Misha, Nick and Rowena for making this article possible.

SELECTED CELLOS & BOWS

CARLO ANTONIO TESTORE c.1730

L.O.B: 29½" (755mm) String length: 27¼" (691mm)

£320,000

A very fine example of C A Testore's work in excellent condition with all the exquisite tonal qualities you would expect from a healthy instrument of this pedigree. This versatile cello has a natural capacity for soloistic projection as well as the tonal flexibility to blend beautifully in a chamber or orchestral context.

Beare certificate.

WILLIAM FORSTER CELLO c.1770

L.O.B: 29" (738mm) String length: 26¾" (670mm)

£75,000

An elegant cello by William Forster fully restored in our workshop, with an expansive, rewarding tone and very good projection. Labelled internally.

Beare receipt.

THOMAS KENNEDY CELLO 1823

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

£50,000

This handsome Kennedy cello has a powerful, rich tone and quick response. The cello was restored in our workshop on arrival and is in excellent playing condition.

FLEMISH CELLO c.1800

L.O.B: 28" (720mm) String length: 26½" (674mm)

£23,000

A pleasing cello of a comfortable size in good repaired condition, with a warm and expressive tone. This cello was the first instrument of a principal cellist for many years.

LOCKEY HILL SCHOOL CELLO c.1780

L.O.B: 29" (735mm) String length: 26½" (675mm)

£20,000

A beautiful English cello from the workshop of Lockey Hill made circa 1780 with lush red-brown varnish and a very rich, colourful tone with considerable power and projection.

JOSEPH HILL CELLO c.1780

L.O.B: 29¾" (755mm) String length: 26⅝" (678mm)

£20,000

A characteristic example of this maker's work which is well suited to its classical period gut string set up. The cello has an excellent tone and response, despite extensive repairs.

JACOB HAYNES BAROQUE CELLO 1745

L.O.B: 29½" (747mm) String length: 27" (686mm)

£20,000

An attractive and fine sounding example of this rare early English maker's work with some historic repairs.

A. BACHMANN BAROQUE CELLO 1756

L.O.B: 29⅞" (740mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)

£14,000

A small baroque cello with a characterful tone. The front is in excellent condition; the back has repairs.

VIENNESE CELLO c.1850

L.O.B: 29⅝" (754mm) String length: 27¼" (693mm)

£14,000

A rich and warm sounding mid-nineteenth century Viennese cello restored by a respected craftsman.

GERMAN CELLO c.1880

L.O.B: 30" (762mm) String length: 27⅞" (690mm)

£10,500

A handsome instrument from the Glaesel & Mossner School in excellent condition with a good, clear tone.

SMALL ¾ CELLO c.1780

L.O.B: 25¾" (655mm) String length: 24¼" (614mm)

£8,000

A beautiful small cello, possibly Dutch, with a distinguished provenance and very rewarding tone.

Selected Cello Bows

Eugène Sartory	82.3	S	£21,000
James Dodd	86.4	S	£17,500
Samuel Allen (Hill) bow	78.8	S	£8,000
Steve Salchow	81.0	S	£4,690
Roy Quade	87.0	S	£4,300
W E Hill & Sons	77.5	S	£4,500
W E Hill & Sons	83.2	S	£4,500
Michael J Taylor	76.0	G	£4,500
Roger Zabinski	82.1	S	£4,350
Victor Bernard	80.9	G	£4,300
Bernd Etzler	81.9	S	£4,000
Hill (H&S brand)	78.0	S	£4,000
Malcolm Taylor	83.0	G	tbc
Bernd Etzler	81.9	S	£3,550
Robert Pierce	83.8	S	£3,300
Christian Wanka	80.8	S	£3,160
Bernd Etzler	81.0	S	£3,025
J S Finkel	80.7	G	£2,800
Klaus Grünke	80.4	S	£2,750
Risto Vainio	80.0	S	£2,290
Andrew McGill	80.0	S	£2,200
David Tempest	80.2	S	£1,950
Howard Green	81.5	S	£1,800