
NEWS FOR CELLISTS JANUARY 2009

London Day *Sunday 22 February*

London cellists might like to know that we're spending the day at Upper Park Road, Belsize Park (NW3) on Sunday 22nd February. If you'd like to try any cellos or bows that day, please let us know and we will do our best to bring them with us. 1-2 hour sessions can be booked in advance and are available on a first come, first served basis; please contact us as soon as possible to reserve your time and we will send you details of the venue. For bookings, please telephone 01353 668559 or email sarah@aitchisoncellos.com

Life on the Road

We had a deluge of responses to our cello transport questionnaire which give an amusing and thought-provoking insight into the trials and tribulations of being a travelling cellist. The colourful results can be read on pages 2-3.

Take a Bow and beyond

Take a Bow was inundated with exceptional contemporary cello bows this year and 37 bows have been sold by the time of going to press, raising an amazing £4,040 for the International Pernambuco Conservation Initiative. We'd like to thank everyone who supported the exhibition and helped to make such a great contribution to pernambuco conservation. Interest from cellists is still so strong that we have asked bow makers allow us to keep the bows in Ely until at least the end of January. (See page 3 for details).

In future we plan to keep a large stock of contemporary bows so that cellists will always be able to try bows by some of the finest makers in the world, either by visiting us in Ely or arranging to have two or three bows posted to you at home.

*We wish you all a very
Happy 2009!*



Michael Edwards

Farewell, Toscanini

The manufacturers of Andrea rosin have just announced their decision to discontinue Toscanini (Symphony) rosin and to produce only the 'Casals' (Soloist) version of the rosin, which will be produced in a slightly smaller cake size than before. We have just two blocks of Toscanini left if anyone would like a last chance to use it. We also stock Salchow cello rosin costing £10 per piece, an excellent alternative.

LIFE ON THE ROAD

Our recent questionnaire about transporting cellos struck a real chord in all those of you who kindly responded. Playing the cello brings with it the life-long challenge of getting the all-too-human-sized 'beloved brute' – as one of you expressed it – safely from A to B without too much stress to the back or the nerves.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the large majority of respondents prefer to travel by car with their instruments. Finding a safe space in the car to put the cello is their major concern. Most prefer to put the cello at a 45° angle into a car seat, either wedged behind a front seat or into the foot well of the front passenger seat. Peter Alsop shifts his front passenger seat back to get the cello case in, and then moves the seat forward again to hold it securely without the need for a seat belt. He likes to think that wedging the cello in would make it more difficult for a smash-and-grab thief to take the cello at a service station. In his younger days, Peter put a trilby hat onto the cello case in the passenger seat, but once got stopped by the police who wondered if he was carrying a corpse. One respondent admits that he always puts his cello in the front passenger seat, even if his wife is travelling with him, which inevitably attracts comment about the cello being more important than the tolerant back seat passenger!

Some of you lie the cello down across the back seat if there is room in the car. This technique is only safe if the cello is strapped or otherwise immobilised, as Muriel Daniels found when she braked hard to avoid hitting a squirrel: 'I jammed on the brakes and the cello fell into the foot well. You've guessed it – one damaged cello but one happy squirrel!' We were surprised how few people routinely use a seat belt to restrain the cello; sometimes the seat belt is not long enough to reach, particularly in back seats, but we'd strongly recommend taking the trouble to strap the cello down as you would a human passenger, not only for the cello's safety but to make sure that you would not be hurt by your cello case in a road accident.

Depending on the design of your case, it can be easier to put a cello into the car upside-down, though some of you worry that this would not be good for the cello. We regularly put cellos upside-down into cars, but taking care that there is nothing in the accessory pocket or loose in the case which could fall out and damage the varnish.

Others like to use the boot for their cellos if their car has a roomy enough rear, although some express concern that instruments in the boot could get damaged if a car went into the back of them. This is certainly a genuine risk; we were once unlucky enough to be in an M25 pile-up and our cello was damaged when we were hit in the rear.

Clearly, if expense and ecology were not an issue, it would be great if we could all drive our cellos around in Land Rovers. A real no-no for cellists (unless you have a cast-iron lower back) is a two-door car. In the real world, however, there are some makes of car which accommodate certain cello cases well.



Useful makes of car mentioned (often nostalgically) for their capacious boot-room include: Rover 25, Saab 900 and 9000, Volvo V40 estate, Volvo 740, Skoda Octavia Hatchback, Toyota Yaris T3 ('the biggest small car on the market' according to Yvonne Marie Parsons) and Renault Kangoo. The Peugeot 307SW was chosen as a family car by Melanie Woodcock especially for its helpfully-designed back seats: 'The middle back seat folds down, so we can fit two children in either side of the cello (which lies down) beautifully.' Clare Graham loved her Honda Civic for the way its back seats folded down really flat so that she could put the cello through the boot into the back seat area.

Few of us will have tried Peter Alsop's ecologically sound trick of carrying two cellos on a bicycle: 'I actually found that two cellos is easier on a bike than one – gets a better balance though hard to manoeuvre, and impossible on hills...'

Perhaps not surprisingly, your feedback about train travel with a cello was not always positive. The biggest problem is securing a safe place for the cello – the best place being the seat next to you, though this option is rarely available. Ruth Hardy has gone as far as buying a child's ticket for her cello when she travels by train but even this hasn't always protected her from the censure of the ticket

collector or other passengers. Buying a child's ticket may be the safest option as trains become more crowded and it's certainly not expensive.

Fiona Hedges has sometimes resigned herself to giving her seat to her cello and standing next to it, but still having to face down the disapproval of the guards and other unseated passengers. Nikki-Kate Hayes has had the same experience: 'Sometimes I'll stand up and give my cello a seat rather than myself. If I get questioned I say that 'she' (my cello) is older than me!!'

We often travel with cellos by train; our favoured method of securing cellos on trains with suitable carriages is to lash the cello firmly with a piece of cord to an upright luggage rack or other vertical support, in full view of our seat. The lashing protects the cello from falling over and also, one hopes, from opportunistic thieves. A bungee strap can be used instead of cord, as can a flexible bicycle lock. At other times we lie the cello down on its side in the gangway next to our seats and smile apologetically at people as they squeeze past. Colin Jackson regularly travels with his cello from Sevenoaks to London and finds it best to sit in the disabled section of the train, if the seats are not needed by wheelchairs, prams or bikes. Sonia Hammond finds the easiest train company is National Express East Coast (formerly known as GNER) where there is a space at one end of the carriage for a cello to stand behind a seat; some Virgin train carriages also have this feature. One distinct benefit of travelling with a cello mentioned by several people was the way a cello case parts the crowds in front of you at a busy station.

Our final question in the survey was about cello cases: do you use wheels, and if not, is your case comfortable to carry? This opened a rich seam of comment – regret from those still struggling with heavy Hiscox and Paxman cases and longing for lighter modern versions, happy comments from those of you with new light cases such as BAM, Deranleau and Stevenson. To our surprise, relatively few respondents use wheeled cases, and those who have them only wheel their cellos over a very smooth surface such as marble or carpet, for fear of damaging the cello inside. In our opinion, cellos are unlikely to come to any harm when wheeled over fairly rough ground as long as the padding inside is appropriate and the cello endpin does not make contact with the shell of the cello case.

Several of you mentioned the advantage of using double rucksack-style straps rather than single shoulder straps to carry a case. James Rees, one of the intrepid Extreme Cellists, carried his cello up the tallest mountains in Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales in the summer of 2008 and swears by his Fiedler back pack system on his Stevenson cello case.

Given the intensity of feedback about cello case design, we'd love to gather your comments about cello cases, for use in a future article. Please telephone or email if you'd like us to post you a questionnaire; alternatively you'll find one online at www.aitchisoncellos.com/casesurvey.htm

All respondents will receive a free set of Cello Care Guide postcards.

CONTEMPORARY BOWS FROM TAKE A BOW

Morgan Andersen	79.3g	S	£3,240	Michael Maurushat	78.9g	S	£2,760
John Aniano	80.7g	S	£2,650	Pierre Nehr	81.9g	S	£2,820
John Aniano	78.7g	G	£3,720	Paul Sadka	78.8g	S	£3,300
Bernd Etzler	81.6g	G	£3,840	Stephen Salchow	82.4g	S	£3,070
Ronald Fletcher	82.5g	S	£2,820	William Salchow	82.4g	S	£3,960
Boris Fritsch	83.5g	G	£4,200	David Samuels	81.2g	G	£4,950
Hugo Gabriel	82.2g	G	£3,000	Jean-Luc Tauziède	80.3g	S	£2,820
Josef Gabriel	81.2g	G	£3,200	David Tempest	82.2g	S	£1,950
Howard Green	82.1g	S	£2,040	Georges Tépho	81.8g	S	£3,400
Klaus Grünke	82.1g	S	£2,200	Matt Wehling	80.4g	G	£4,130
Richard Grünke	83.0g	G	£3,500	Mark Yakoushkin	85.8g	S	£2,350
Tino Lucke	82.5g	S	£3,200	Roger Zabinski	77.8g	S	£3,000

SELECTED CELLOS AND BOWS

JAMES & HENRY BANKS CELLO 1802

L.O.B: 28³/₄" (730mm) String length: 26³/₄" (680mm)

Price: £45,000

This fine instrument is in very pure condition with crackled dark brown varnish and a rich tonal response. This cello was noted by the Hills due to its inscription 'Varnished by T. Dodd' which supports the theory of a working relationship between Thomas Dodd and the Banks family.

LOCKEY HILL CELLO c.1780

L.O.B: 29" (737mm) String length: 26³/₈" (669mm)

Price: £26,000

The focussed and powerful response of this cello belie its modest dimensions. The model is typical of

Lockey Hill with very attractive golden brown varnish. Extensive documentation including valuations from J&A Beare Ltd dating back to 1970's.

BETTS SCHOOL CELLO c.1830

L.O.B: 29³/₈" (745mm) String length: 26⁵/₈" (678mm)

Price: £22,000

This is a very fine cello from one of the golden periods of cello making in London. The arching is particularly well conceived and the cello is in a pure state of preservation. It is satisfying to play and hear in any performance space.

SIMON ANDREW FORSTER CELLO

L.O.B: 29¹/₈" (738mm) String length: 26³/₄" (680mm)

Price: £18,000

A fine example of the work of the last generation of the Forster family with characteristically rich red-brown varnish and a rich and satisfying tone.

Inscribed 'Forster no. 7' on lower rib.

GEORGE CORSBY CELLO c.1810

L.O.B: 29¹/₄" (742mm) String length: 26³/₄" (687mm)

Price: £15,000

A beautiful English cello in good condition with a crisp, clear and colourful tone and a quick response.

The back and ribs are of very attractively flamed maple with a transparent honey-brown varnish.

ROBIN AITCHISON CELLO 2008

L.O.B: 30" (758mm) String length: 27³/₈" (695mm)

Price: £14,000

A close copy of a famous 1720's Stradivarius cello. The poplar back of this cello adds warmth to the tonal brilliance of the Strad B form model.

DAVID RUBIO BAROQUE 1978

L.O.B: 29¹/₂" (750mm) String length: 26³/₈" (670mm)

Price: £9,000

A lovely instrument by the late David Rubio in excellent condition. The cello has a deep, expressive bass and lyrical treble sound and the varnish is a rich orange madder brown.

MICHAEL WATSON CELLO 1992

L.O.B: 29¹/₄" (742mm) String length: 26⁷/₈" (682mm)

Price: £8,000

An attractive cello with antiqued warm brown varnish and a rich, mellow and well-projecting tone.

This instrument has been in full-time professional use since it was made in 1992.

PRAGUE SCHOOL CELLO c.1900

L.O.B: 29³/₈" (755mm) String length: 27³/₈" (696mm)

Price: £6,500

ADOLFE DURENZY CELLO c.1880

L.O.B: 30¹/₄" (762mm) String length 27" (690mm)

Price: £5,500

MITTENWALD CELLO c.1800

L.O.B: 29¹/₂" (750mm) String length: 26¹/₂" (674mm)

Price: £4,500

SELECTED CELLO BOWS

Emile Ouchard	80.8g	£5,000
John Dodd	77g	£4,000
Emile Ouchard	77g	£3,500
Fine bow c.1900	81.5g	£3,500
Fine Peccatte copy	81g	£3,500
Hill bow	74g	£2,500
Hill bow	82.1g	£2,200
Charles Bazin	72g	£2,000
Michael Duff c/fibre	82.4g	£2,000
Walter Mettal	79.2g	£1,200
Bazin School	80g	£1,200
Penzel	80.5g	£1,000
German c.1920	78g	£900
P Grippa	80.6g	£850
Old English	81.4g	£800

For details of contemporary bows see page 3
Photographs and further details about our instruments and bows are available on request.
More information also at: www.aitchisoncellos.com