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## NEWS FOR CELLISTS JANUARY 2007

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### *London Visit* *Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January*

If you live in the London area you might be interested to hear that we will be resident for the day at the Belsize Music Rooms in Hampstead on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2007. If you would like to experiment with strings, work on sound adjustment, try a selection of cellos and bows (see back page) or consult us about your cello, please telephone or email us as soon as possible to make your appointment. For more details, see page 3.

### *Cello Challenge*

On pages 2 and 3 we explore some of the issues facing cellists when they try out cellos. What is the best way to assess a cello? How do you negotiate the variables of set up, stringing, bow choice and acoustics in order to understand the sound of each cello you try?

### *Silicone bow grips*

Some players like to use rubber tubing on their bows to increase the comfort of the bow stick and to cushion the thumb at the frog. We have a good supply of soft, transparent silicone tubing which works extremely well. It costs £1 per inch and can be ordered by telephone or email.

*[www.aitchisoncellos.com](http://www.aitchisoncellos.com)*

You can find a complete list of articles from previous newsletters, up to date instrument and bow stock lists and information about our holiday opening plans on our web site.

### *RNCM Manchester* *International Cello Festival*

We are very much looking forward to this year's cello festival *From Britten to Britain* which takes place from Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester.

As well as attending as many of the concerts and master classes as possible, we will be sharing a stand with a bow maker friend. We will have at least one of Robin's cellos with us as well as our stock of strings, sound post tools and glue pot. So if anyone needs a sound adjustment, an emergency repair, would like to experiment with strings or to ask advice about anything to do with their cello – or just to say hello - please don't hesitate to come and find us. For full details of the festival, see [www.cellofestival.co.uk](http://www.cellofestival.co.uk)



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# The Challenge of Trying Cellos

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Receiving admirers in his green room one evening, Jascha Heifetz was confronted by a delighted member of the audience who told him just how wonderful his violin sounded. Whereupon (so the story goes) Heifetz lifted the violin to his ear and said, quizzically, 'I don't hear anything!'

Heifetz's point – that it is the player who makes the sound, not the instrument – is as true today as it was then. It is also true that players need to find the right instrument to give them maximum freedom of expression. Working with the right instrument can be as fruitful and liberating for the cellist as a happy relationship with a life partner. So it's no surprise that finding the right instrument is often as much of a challenge as finding your other half.

Even the process of trying cellos is like courtship; in the early days you may not be sure what it is that you are looking for. As you try each cello, you will be learning as much about your own needs, your likes and dislikes as you are learning about the personality of each instrument. Or you may start with pre-conceived ideas about what will suit you, but in the process of searching you may discover sounds and responses you had never thought possible. For a really fruitful relationship, you are likely to be seeking an instrument which will broaden your horizons as a player rather than one which is merely compatible with you.

When encountering a cello – or a person – for the first time, it can be difficult to judge their underlying qualities at first acquaintance. It sometimes requires experience, or the help of a luthier, to find what lies beneath the surface.

**Set up:** Every cello has a substantial range of different tonal complexes which are dependent on the set-up which the instrument has been given by the luthier. For example, the luthier may have chosen to set up a cello to give a broad, nutty timbre and good projection. This style may suit you beautifully, but if your sound priority is to have a mellow top string, you may reject the

cello out of hand, unaware that it might have been your first choice with a different bridge, sound post and strings.

It is always worth discussing the set-up of the instruments you try, so that you can get a feeling for the range of tonal possibilities which each instrument offers. If you like a particular cello, but are uncomfortable with its response at the top end, it may be possible to adjust the sound post and strings to suit you better. For more valuable cellos it is sometimes possible to arrange for a new bridge to be cut to suit you better.

'**Resistance**' is the term given to the feeling experienced by the player under the bow. A cello that is set up with high resistance can be pushed harder by a powerful player and will project well in a large concert hall. However, a player not accustomed to such a hard set-up may find such an instrument unmanageable or difficult to play. It may also be that an instrument set up in such a way would be inappropriate in certain chamber music settings. If you feel the resistance of an instrument is too hard or too soft, it may be possible for a luthier to adjust the sound post and bridge to suit you. With skilled adjustment, the resistance of each individual string can also be controlled to suit the player.

**Strings** are a very important part of the set-up as they profoundly influence the style of sound that the instrument produces. If you are interested in a cello, it is worth experimenting with different strings in order to explore its potential further. Bear in mind that some strings may cause a cello to feel alien because they require a different bowing technique from your own.

**Projection:** It is very difficult to judge an instrument's projection from the sound you hear 'under the ear' when you are sitting behind the cello. It is a great help to bring a friend or colleague with you to judge an instrument's projection and the absolute ideal is to bring a fellow cellist with you who is happy to play instruments back to you, so you can judge their sound from a distance.

When you have an instrument out on approval, it makes sense to test it in as many different spaces as possible, including concert halls; a cello which sounds magnificent in a medium sized room may fail to project well in a larger space. If you are trying cellos in a busy festival or exhibition environment, you may find yourself preferring an instrument which has been set up to project well, but which may lack more subtle qualities of sound when you get it home to your music room.

**Bows:** There is an intimate three-way interaction between the bow, the instrument and the player. Sometimes there can be a strong match or mismatch between a particular cello and bow which can be good news, bad news, or just misleading. In order to limit the number of variables and the problems of discrimination, we always advise players to try out cellos with a familiar bow, even if a change of bow is part of the plan.

**Acoustics:** The size and acoustics of the room in which you play will have a profound effect on the sound you experience as a player and as a listener. If the acoustic is fairly dry, you are likely to hear a realistic impression of each instrument's sound. However, if the room has its own resonance it is likely to be very

flattering to the cellos you try. So it is well worth taking time to assess the acoustic of the room in which you are trying cellos. The simplest way to do this is to bring your current instrument with you, and to use it to test the acoustic.

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*"It can be alarming to think that the tools we've been perfectly happy with for years can be improved upon and it can be overwhelming to try too many different sounding instruments (the wine tasters suggest a limit of three or four).*

*However, we need to play on other cellos and bows, even if we are not thinking of buying, just to expose ourselves to different tonal possibilities. As a matter of fact I make a point of playing on the cellos of my students in lessons and I've noticed that at first the positives show themselves... it is a pleasure to find things that are easier than on my own cello. It's only after a much more rigorous workout that I become aware of the problems of an instrument and it requires some considerable time to determine whether these problems can be overcome. Here perhaps the marriage analogy is more appropriate than the wine-tasting!"*

Colin Carr

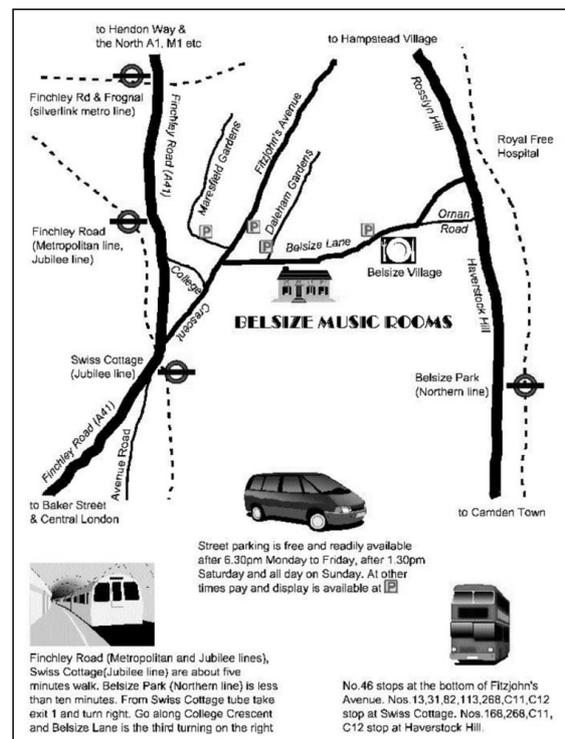
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## London Visit - Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January

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Cellists often arrive on our doorstep saying: "I've been planning this trip for several years – here I am at last!" We are regular visitors to Manchester so we thought we should plan a day in London to work with cellists. Our first London visit will be Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January at the well-known Belsize Music Rooms in Belsize Lane, Hampstead NW3 5AX. You are welcome to book a string trial, a sound adjustment, a general consultation or to try a selection of cellos and bows. If there are particular cellos and bows you would like to try on that day, please let us know and we will do our best to bring them with us.

One or two-hour sessions can be booked in advance and are available on a first come, first served basis; please telephone or email as soon as possible to reserve your time: 01353 668559 or [sarah@aitchisoncellos.com](mailto:sarah@aitchisoncellos.com)



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# CELLOS AND BOWS

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## Henry Lockey Hill Cello

L.O.B: 29 ¼" (743mm) String length: 27¼" (690mm)  
Price: to be confirmed

## Dodd Cello c.1800

L.O.B: 29½" (750mm) String length: 27" (687mm)  
Price: £32,000

## Lockey Hill Cello c.1780

L.O.B: 29" (737mm) String length: 26½" (669mm)  
Price: £28,000

## Robin Aitchison Guadagnini Copy

L.O.B: 28¼" (715mm) String length: 26½" (668mm)  
Price: £12,500

## Fine German Cello c.1900

L.O.B: 29½" (749mm) String length: 27½" (693mm)  
Price: £12,500

## Robin Aitchison Montagnana Copy

L.O.B: 29½" (739mm) String length: 27¼" (693mm)  
Price: £11,500

## Nigel Crinson Cello 2001

L.O.B: 29½" (751mm) String length: 27" (688mm)  
Price: £11,000

## Furber Cello c.1840

L.O.B: 28⅞" (734mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)  
Price: £10,000

## Caussin School Cello circa 1860

L.O.B: 28⅞" (735mm) String length: 26½" (673mm)  
Price: £10,000

## Mittenwald Cello c.1840

L.O.B: 29" (736mm) String length: 27⅞" (690mm)  
Price: £9,000

## Jeremy Mahrer Cello 1990

L.O.B: 29⅞" (760mm) String length: 27¾" (682mm)  
Price £9,000

## Anthony Elmsly Classical Cello 1995

L.O.B: 29½" (750mm) String length: 27⅞" (690mm)  
Price £8,500

**N.B: L.O.B = Length of Back**

## German Cello c.1880

L.O.B: 30¼" (768mm) String length: 27⅞" (690mm)  
Price: £8,000

## Caussin School Cello c.1900

L.O.B: 30¼" (768mm) String length: 27" (688mm)  
Price: £8,000

## Neuner & Hornsteiner School cello c.1880

L.O.B: 30" (762mm) String length: 27¼" (689mm)  
Price: £8,000

## German Cello c.1850

L.O.B: 29" (737mm) String length: 27" (685mm)  
Price: £6,000

## Salomon School ¾ Cello c.1770

L.O.B: 27½" (700mm) String length: 25½" (643mm)  
Price: £6,000

## Cello labelled Léon Mougenot 1908

L.O.B: 30⅓" (770mm) String length: 27¼" (690mm)  
Price: £5,500

## German Cello c.1900

L.O.B: 29¾" (757mm) String length: 27½" (699mm)  
Price: £4,900

## German Cello c.1900

L.O.B: 29½" (750mm) String length: 27½" (701mm)  
Price: £3,250

## Student Cellos: £1,500 - £2,500

## Selected Cello Bows

W E Hill & Sons	82.3g	£2,500
E.F. Ouchard	82.5g	£4,000
Vidoudez	82.3g	£3,500
Stephen Salchow	84.5g	£2,350
Pierre Nehr	81.7g	£2,200
Paul Sadka	81.8g	£2,100
Klaus Grünke	83.2g	£2,160
Roger Zabinski	78.9g	£2,000
Robert Pierce	83.4g	£1,950
Christian Wanka	82.5g	£1,500
Josef Gabriel	81.3g	£1,260
Pierce & Co	82.5g	£1,050

**For detailed descriptions of cellos see:**  
[www.aitchisoncellos.com](http://www.aitchisoncellos.com)