
NEWS FOR CELLISTS JANUARY 2010

London Day Sunday 31 January

London cellists are warmly invited to Upper Park Road, Belsize Park (NW3) on the afternoon of Sunday 31st January (2-5pm). If you'd like to try any cellos or bows currently in stock or would like to bring an instrument/bow for possible inclusion in the Cello Exchange, please let us know as soon as possible and we will reserve a time for you. For booking and venue details, please telephone 01353 668559 or email sarah@aitchisoncellos.com

Cello Case Survey Results

We are pleased to report the results of our 2009 cello case survey on pages 2-3. You can read the original survey at: <http://www.aitchisoncellos.com/casesurvey.htm>



Get a Life Fund deadline: 15th March

Katherine McGillivray's Get a Life Fund has been set up to assist musicians in taking a sabbatical or similar break from their normal working lives, to re-inspire themselves and their work. Broadly educational or developmental projects across the range of the creative spectrum, not necessarily musical, are supported.

The Fund welcomes applications from individual professional musicians over the age of 30. The deadline for applications is 15th March 2010 and more information and application forms can be found at <http://www.getalifefund.org.uk/>

Pernambuco Update

We are proud to continue our support of the IPCI (International Pernambuco Conservation Initiative) in its ground-breaking conservation, education and research work in Brazil. Their work ensures that future generations of string players will be able to continue using pernambuco bows and assists the fight against global warming by re-foresting the Mata Atlantica and helping local people to preserve remaining areas of virgin rainforest.

The IPCI has planted 150,000 pernambuco seedlings, as well as supplying additional seedlings to three settlements maintained by an organization supporting Brazil's landless people. The IPCI also donates seeds to the Ecological Corridor Project, a national forest in the north of Espiritu Santo, where pernambuco is being re-introduced.

Research is central to the IPCI's work: they have recently conducted a forest inventory studying the population dynamics of pernambuco trees in 139 sites and have studied the DNA of 69 pernambuco trees. The IPCI also works hard to educate local Brazilian communities about the pernambuco tree and provides instruments and instruction for two youth orchestras in Bahia. By working in partnership with local organisations, the IPCI ensures that its work is relevant and sustainable. In 2010 the IPCI hopes to begin collaboration with new partners in the Brazilian states of Pernambuco and Paraiba. However, much more work is needed to bring pernambuco back from the threshold of extinction and to ensure that it does not have to become certified as an endangered species by CITES. This would require every string player with a pernambuco bow to complete complex paperwork every time they wanted to travel abroad. Anyone wanting to make a contribution to the fight against global warming in a way which will also help to preserve the future of string playing as we know it, can donate by visiting: <http://www.ipci-usa.org/> and clicking on the Paypal button on the bottom left of the page.

A SURVEY OF CELLO CASES 2009

What would be your dream cello case? This question provoked an outpouring from the respondents to our 2009 survey: lightness and strength were at the top of everyone's wish lists, followed by stability when standing. Most also longed for a small number of strong catches, a rigid, heat-reflective shell which opens and closes as easily as a front door, plenty of string/music pockets and handles, shock-absorbent internal supports, an integral adjustable padded rucksack system and an affordable price. Some went even further, saying that the ideal case would come with a Sherpa to carry it everywhere; one fantasised about using helium balloons to take the weight...

It's clear that everyone dreams of a weightless cello case but there is a fundamental conflict between lightness and utility. Strength, solidity, handles, feet, good quality catches, stability when opening and closing – all can be compromised in the quest for minimum weight in a case.

95 cellists kindly gave detailed feedback about their cases for our survey. 20 cellists used BAM cases, 17 Accord, 10 Alan Stevenson, 9 Gewa, 9 Hiscox, 8 Headcase, 8 Paxman and 5 Brack. The remainder used cases including Baccello, FEL, Deranleu, Hima, Winter and Jargar. We have decided not to include Paxman and the minority cases in this report as Paxman no longer make cello cases and the small response samples of the minority cases do not give sufficient data for useful comparison with the more popular brands.

Alan Stevenson cases are hand made in Norwich, UK: *Original* fibreglass 8.7kg; *Original* carbon composite 5.5kg; *Original* carbon composite 4.7kg; *Small* fibreglass 7kg; *Small* carbon composite 4.2kg; *Small* carbon/kevlar 3.3kg. Alan Stevenson cases were the undisputed favourites; their owners gave them the highest or very high marks on every single parameter in our questionnaire except the issue of the ease of opening and closing their cases when standing or lying down. We are particularly impressed by the internal support system of these cases, but full protection is only achieved when the padding is custom fitted to a particular cello.

Accord cases are hand made in Croatia. *Flight* carbon fibre/kevlar 5kg; *Robust* carbon fibre/kevlar, 3.5kg; *Hybrid* glassfibre/carbon fibre 3.4kg; *Standard* carbon fibre 2.8kg; *Ultralight* carbon fibre 2.3kg. Accord case owners clearly adore them for their lightness, but mark their cases down in other respects. Owners find it difficult to open and close

their carbon fibre cases while standing up as they are very flexible. Cellists also regret the absence of a handle in the shoulder area and scored their cases rather low on the quality and durability of the internal padding. Accord cases came out worst on the durability of their catches – but please note that Accord have now changed the design of catches on new cases. Accord also scored low on stability while standing so it seems well worth paying to have feet fitted to Accord cases. Accord also appeared to be the most difficult cases to get repaired. The magnetic bow holder is very convenient to use but one player said their bow came loose from the magnetic holder when the cello was in the hold of an aeroplane.



Bam cases are made in France, the USA and Thailand and are built from a triple-ply shell which incorporates a layer of Airex, a light, high density foam, which gives the case great strength and rigidity: *Classic* 5.4kg; *Newtech* 5kg; *Hightech* 2.9-4.4kg. Bam cases are very popular with their owners. They were given the highest marks for the ease of opening and closing the case while standing or lying down and also scored highly for the ease of fitting the cello into the case. They scored second highest after Alan Stevenson on the quality of their internal padding. Most other scores were high, except that many find that the handles break all too easily and the quality of the bow holders was also poor. Owners often wish these cases were a little lighter.

Brack cases are hand made in Switzerland from composite materials and weigh 3.5kg. They scored high on lightness, stability when standing, ease of repair, quality of bow holders and ease of fitting the cello into the case, but scored low on internal padding, and the catches are clearly very difficult to use and tend to wear out quickly. As there are only four catches, opening and closing is quick and simple, but safety is soon compromised if one or two catches malfunction; one player's case fell open when the catches failed.

Gewa are a German company making a variety of cases including *Idea Futura* fibreglass, 4.8kg; *Idea X-Lite* carbon fibre reinforced resin, 3.9kg and *Original Carbon* carbon fibre 2.9kg. These cases scored very well in all areas except the quality and durability of internal padding and lining. No respondent has found it necessary to have a Gewa case repaired, which is quite an accolade.

Headcase are based in Wales and make fibreglass (6.3kg) and carbon fibre (3.9kg) cases. They had the lowest scores of any carbon fibre case, scoring lowest on ease of opening and closing standing or lying down and also had the worst score on stability when standing. Owners also marked them very low for internal padding and bow holders and said that the catches are very tricky to use.

Hiscox are based in Staffordshire, UK and make double moulded fibreglass cases (5.2-5.5kg). They are perceived by their owners to be very safe (second after Alan Stevenson) and they do have a good safety record. We know of a lot of cellists who use them as flight cases provided they are given extra internal padding. The downside is that these cases are bulky to handle and are perceived as being heavier than their actual weight, due to their awkwardness to handle. The aluminium band around the edge of Hiscox cases can cause damage to the varnish when the cello is being put away. We have seen many examples of strained or malfunctioning catches on Hiscox cases.

Paxman cello cases are no longer available. They scored rather low in all parameters in our survey.

Shoulder straps. Metal carabiner hooks are currently in fashion with case makers, but they are sprung internally and can come undone gradually. For complete peace of mind, carabiners should be tightened every time you use the case. The threaded section of the carabiner can cause wear on the exterior of cases – so the threaded section is best positioned away from the case.

Rucksack straps. The majority of survey respondents prefer to use some form of rucksack strap to carry their cello, but many encounter problems when using two simple shoulder straps rather than a backpack system such as Fiedler. Any case with just two straps will hit the back of your legs as you walk and the shorter you are, the worse it is. The Fiedler back pack system is very comfortable although it does hold the cello very high - beware of doorways - and adds 1kg to the weight of the case. Fitting a Fiedler back pack

system is a major and not easily reversible process as it requires 29 holes to be drilled into the case.

Flight cases. We did not include questions about flight cases in our survey, but here are some notes based on conversations with cellists and case makers. No case - whether a well made standard case or one marketed as a flight case - can guarantee the survival of cello checked into a baggage handling system; it is always safest to buy a seat for your cello. If you do have to put a cello into the hold, some cases have better safety records than others, including Alan Stevenson and Hiscox.

There are three possible levels of protection for a cello in the hold: firstly, the external padding (flight cover) to reduce the shock experienced by the hard shell; secondly, the strength of the hard shell itself and thirdly, the quality of the support of the instrument inside the hard shell. The support issue is where in our opinion, Alan Stevenson cases score exceptionally highly if the internal supports are custom-fitted to the cello. Soft flight over-covers definitely improve security but again they are no guarantee of safety and some players are concerned that baggage handlers take even less care of cellos if they see them swaddled in flight covers.

Repairs. Survey respondents whose cases had become worn or damaged reported good experiences with Brack and Alan Stevenson, followed by BAM and Headcase. We received no repair feedback regarding Gewa cases as none had needed repairing. Accord cases scored very low, along with Hiscox. We consulted some big case dealers, asking why some cases are harder to get repaired than others. One dealer said that it is easier to repair or replace spare parts on cases by major European makers such as Brack, Accord and Bam, as their accessories are easily available, but they would not be able to replace accessories on Chinese cases such as HIMA, as no accessories are supplied by these manufacturers.

No dealer we spoke to would consider repairing a case if it had not been bought from them. One said that they had decided not to attempt repairs on carbon fibre cases in future, due to the difficulty in spotting hair-line cracks in the shell. The conclusion seems to be that it is best to buy your case from a reputable dealer (not just an on-line store) who is happy to carry out repairs on the case if necessary. It's also worth checking the warranty period of your case and making a note of it at the time of purchase.

SELECTED CELLOS AND BOWS

JAMES & HENRY BANKS CELLO 1802

**L.O.B: 28¾" (730mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)
Price: £45,000**

This important instrument is in very pure condition with crackled dark brown varnish and a rich, rewarding tonal response.

MARIO MACCAFERRI CELLO 1929

**L.O.B: 30" (761mm) String length: 27½" (699mm)
Price: £27,000**

This cello is a rare example of Maccaferri's work and is in excellent condition, with a dark, compelling tone and fine varnish.

WOLFGANG SCHNABL CELLO 1999

**L.O.B: 30" (760mm) String length: 27⅛" (690mm)
Price: £18,500**

An immaculate instrument by this sought-after maker, based on the 'Cristiani' Stradivari model.

SIMON ANDREW FORSTER CELLO c.1840

**L.O.B: 29½" (738mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)
Price: £18,000**

A beautiful instrument with characteristically rich red-brown varnish and a powerful, colourful tone. Inscribed 'Forster No. 7' on lower rib.

COLIN IRVING CELLO 1987

**L.O.B: 29¾" (758mm) String length: 27" (688mm)
Price: £18,000**

This handsome instrument has been the main cello of a fine professional cellist for many years and is in excellent condition.

ARISTIDE CAVALLI CELLO c.1910

**L.O.B: 29" (738mm) String length: 26⅞" (682mm)
Price: £16,000**

This late Cremonese cello is an example of the maker's more superior work, with elegant arching and a refined sound.

GERMAN CELLO c.1840

**L.O.B: 29½" (741mm) String length: 27¼" (691mm)
Price: £14,000**

An appealing and responsive cello in good condition with rich golden brown varnish.

MARC LABERTE CELLO 1924

**L.O.B: 30" (764mm) String length: 27¼" (693mm)
Price: £14,000**

This handsome cello has a powerful, open tone, and is in very good condition.

PAUL MEINEL-GRÜNWARD CELLO 1914

**L.O.B: 29¼" (745mm) String length: 27½" (698mm)
Price: £12,000**

A handsome instrument by a respected German maker. The tone is deep, rich and even.

TYROLEAN CELLO c.1780

**L.O.B: 29¼" (745mm) String length: 27⅞" (690mm)
Price: £12,000**

A very engaging instrument with a lively, richly textured tone and beautiful 18th century varnish.

LAURENT BOURLIER CELLO c.1840

**L.O.B: 29" (738mm) String length: 26⅞" (682mm)
Price: £12,000**

This attractive Mirecourt cello has a fine, rich and even tone and a quick response.

MIRECOURT CELLO c.1890

**L.O.B: 30⅞" (760mm) String length: 27¼" (691mm)
Price: £6,500**

A appealing cello in good condition. The tone is rich, even and powerful with fine varnish.

GERMAN CELLO c.1850

**L.O.B: 29" (738mm) String length: 27" (685mm)
Price: £6,000**

SELECTED CELLO BOWS

John Dodd	79.3g	£5,000
E Ouchard	77g	£3,500
K W Knopf	81.5g	£3,500
William Salchow	80.2g	£3,450
Christian Wanka	81.3g	£3,210
Paul Sadka	78.8g	£3,030
Mike Maurushat	78.9g	£2,760
Klaus Grünke	81g	£2,750
W E Hill & Sons	74g	£2,500
Bernd Etzler	82g	£2,500
Thomas Gerbeth	81.5g	£2,290
John Aniano	81.9g	£2,280
W E Hill & Sons	82.1g	£2,200
Josef Gabriel	80g	£2,200
Klaus Grünke	79.8g	£2,110
Bazin	79.9g	£1,700
Rudolf Neudörfer	81.1g	£1,500
Ronaldo Sequeira	81.3g	£950
Lawrence Cocker	73.1g	£900
German c.1920	78g	£900
Lawrence Cocker	77.1g	£850
Penzel	80.5g	£700
Emil Werner	83.9g	£600