

NEWS FOR CELLISTS AUTUMN 2013

Stradivari, Montagnana, Guadagnini

In this issue we introduce three cello models made by Robin Aitchison which are based on individual instruments by Antonio Stradivari, Domenico Montagnana and Giovanni Battista Guadagnini. These models are the 1726 'Marquis de Corberon' Stradivari, the c.1735 'Pergamenschikow' Montagnana and a c.1755 Milan period Guadagnini. All three cellos were made during a uniquely fruitful period in classical Italian cello making. By the beginning of the 18th century the cello had emerged as a solo instrument from its original bass role and had shrunk in length with the introduction of the metal wound C string. Eighteenth century cellists such as Salvatore Lanzetti and Carlo Ferrari required ever greater facility in the playing of new virtuoso repertoire such as the sonatas and concerti of Vivaldi and Bach. All the demands and conditions were thus in place for the classical makers to produce instruments which are still the first choice for the most accomplished cellists of our time.

Insurance valuations

We recently heard from a player who had bought a fine contemporary bow from us in 2002. She had accidentally broken her bow and needed to make an insurance claim, but unfortunately her insurance valuation was very out of date. Since 2002 the bow had almost doubled in value but she had only increased the insured value by 20%. Values of cellos and bows are increasing all the time so we would warmly encourage readers to check that their valuations are up to date. We provide free updated valuations for anyone who has bought a bow or cello through us in the past; just get in touch and we'll send you an updated valuation by return.

Cello Exchange

Several wonderful cellos have recently arrived for sale through the Cello Exchange, including instruments by Gaetano Gadda, Peter Wamsley and Jean-Baptiste Salomon. New instruments are listed on our website as soon as they arrive.

Cellos on Eurostar

For years we have heard cellists describing how easy it is to travel on Eurostar with a cello, so when we planned a trip to Paris this April we looked forward to a much more relaxed experience than flying with a cello. However, when we reached the ticket barrier at St Pancras we were stopped by an official who insisted that the cello was 'oversized baggage' and that we would either have to consign it to the baggage car or buy it a child's seat (£217 return). We couldn't contemplate putting a valuable cello in the baggage car, so we paid for a seat.

Once on the train we found that our original model wheeled Stevenson case fitted easily into the overhead rack, and left it up there on both journeys. We met a cellist on our return journey who was carrying her cello on her back and who hadn't been asked to pay for her cello.

We contacted Eurostar on our return to query their policy and they quoted their baggage restriction (published on their website and revised on 1 December 2012) which restricts carry-on baggage to a maximum length of 85cm. Eurostar said that they had been forced to introduce this restriction to ensure that there was sufficient space for normal luggage. They also said that they would be actively enforcing this limit in future.

We discussed this experience with a cellist friend who regularly uses Eurostar and is aware of the changed size restriction. He points out that, as well as being charged the full child fare, cellists without a ticket for their instrument risk not being able to travel with their cello at all if a train is fully booked. If booking eight weeks in advance, it is currently possible to buy a child's return ticket for £49.

It would be very interesting to hear from anyone who has travelled on Eurostar with a cello this year, to discover what proportion of our readers have been asked to buy a Eurostar ticket for their cello since the policy change. Please phone Sarah on 01353 668559 or email: sarah@aitchisoncellos.com We will report our findings in our January newsletter.

STRADIVARI, MONTAGNANA, GUADAGNINI

Stradivari 'Marquis de Corberon' cello 1726

This famous cello was given to the Royal Academy of Music in 1960, initially for the lifetime use of the cellist Zara Nelsova who played it for 42 years. Nelsova is recognised as one of the great cellists of the 20th Century, particularly famed amongst aficionados for her extraordinary tone production and the legacy of her recordings, to the extent that she and the 'Marquis' have entered cello folklore. Keith Harvey memorably described her as a 'very gutsy player who always sounded like about six men'. Her physical power combined with the rich tonal qualities of the cello produced an unforgettable 'warm, blooming tone' (Strad Magazine Feb 2003) which can be heard in her many recordings made after 1960. The cello is currently in the distinguished hands of Steven Isserlis who also plays a 1740 Montagnana cello.

The 'Marquis de Corberon' is one of the last cellos to have been made on Stradivari's Forma B mould. It was this mould that defined the outline shape of many of Stradivari's most famous cellos from 1709 onwards. The creation of the Forma B mould is seen as one of Stradivari's great achievements and its use coincided with the 'golden' period of Stradivari workshop production. Many of these cellos are works of extraordinary grandeur with a quality of wood, craftsmanship and varnish never before lavished on a cello. In contrast, the 'Marquis de Corberon' cello of 1726 is from the later period of Stradivari workshop production and was made during very lean economic times in Cremona. Everything from the use of locally grown willow wood for the back and ribs to the dark red brown varnish speak of a more earthy creation, but one which many believe to be the best sounding Stradivari cello of them all.

Stradivari cellos and contemporary copies of them are often criticised for lack of depth in the lower register. It is in this area that the 'Marquis de Corberon' is so exceptional. It has all the tonal elegance and golden colouring of the iconic Stradivari cello sound but also great depth and richness in the C string. A significant factor behind this aspect of the cello is its one-piece willow back. Willow can sound a little softer under the ear than maple, but produces an extra depth of colour and darkness of tone without sacrificing core sound and therefore projects extremely well in a concert hall.

Another significant advantage of this model is that the arching of the front is particularly low and subtly arched; many other Forma B cellos have higher, fuller front arching and thinner graduations. It is thought that the best sounding Stradivari cellos are those with

low front arching, as this allows the plate to vibrate more freely, providing greater vibrating mass for the player to connect with and creating the potential to move air in a very powerful way.

It is generally believed that Forma B Stradivari cellos have to be coaxed carefully – like nervy thoroughbreds - in order to get them to speak and perform at their best. Fortunately, the 'Marquis de Corberon' is not an extreme example of this (probably a factor of its thicker graduations and softer arching) so, by Stradivarian standards, you can play into the instrument more freely and it responds with more ease and warmth. The long body of the Forma B and Stradivari's placing of the F holes result in a full string length, so this model is best suited to players who are comfortable with larger intervals in the left hand.

Robin's copies of the 'Marquis de Corberon' are very generous under the ear, giving a lovely feeling of breadth, support and sonority to the player, along with a distinctively Stradivarian classical elegance of tone. These instruments are also very responsive to the choice of bridge design and can equally be set up to maximise the cello's warmth and resonance or to steer the instrument towards power and projection.

Montagnana 'Pergamenschikow' cello c.1735

This cello was played for 20 years by the much loved Russian soloist, teacher and chamber musician Boris Pergamenschikow. He won the gold medal in the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow in 1974 and emigrated to the West in 1977. He was revered as a musician of the highest quality and was once described as "a soloist in the 18th century mould." The cello is now owned by the Razumovsky Trust and is on long-term loan to the internationally acclaimed Belgian soloist David Cohen.

Montagnana was a pupil of Gofriller in Venice and inherited a more eclectic tradition of violin making than Stradivari, who was a direct descendent of the Cremonese School. The Venetian school may have looked to Cremona for inspiration but ultimately developed its own style, nowhere more strongly than in cello making. Venetian instrument making must be seen in the context of Venice as a secular republic and an important international trading hub. The role of music was predominantly commercial (rather than ecclesiastical) in Venice, whose vibrant arts scene and annual carnival drew in wealthy pleasure-seeking visitors from afar. Wood and varnish of exceptional quality were readily available for Venetian cello makers to turn into lush, extravagant instruments for an opulent and luxury-obsessed clientele.

Cello making formed a major part of Montagnana's output, partly in response to the popularity of the cello in Venice but probably also because the size and scale of the cello suited Montagnana's style of workmanship. His cello model, at 740mm, is not as long as Stradivari's but was very broad, causing many of his instruments (including the 'Pergamenschikow') to be reduced in width in later years. On the 'Pergamenschikow' cello, wood was removed only along the centre joints of the front and back plates which has resulted in an instrument of exceptional playing qualities for modern use whilst retaining all the details of Montagnana's voluptuous carving around the edges of the cello.

Unlike Stradivari, Montagnana was not a fastidious worker with a refined and highly premeditated style, but was a vigorous and spontaneous craftsman, working his luxurious materials with a casual hand and achieving dramatic results in a pragmatic way. The arching and edgework of this cello are very muscular and full of big gestures and powerful shapes which express the characteristic energy and strength of Montagnana's craftsmanship. There is no question that the character of an instrument's craftsmanship is reflected in its sound; the dark, complex and concentrated tonal powers of this instrument are the musical manifestation of Montagnana's distinctive sense of style.

Pergamenschikow was described as 'extracting from his 18th-century Montagnana cello a sound of rugged beauty that thrilled audience and critics alike'. (Daily Telegraph obituary May 2004) This cello certainly rewards strong playing; the more you push the instrument, the more complex and interesting it sounds. Under the bow, the response of the cello is surprisingly straightforward and biddable. Jacqueline du Pré famously described Martin Lovett's Montagnana cello as 'uncomplicated' to play. This was meant as a compliment and it is likely that she would have had the same positive response to the 'Pergamenschikow' cello.

The completion of Robin's most recent copy of the 'Pergamenschikow' coincided with a visit from David Cohen with the original instrument. Listening to both cellos played alongside each other it was clear that the strength and tonal qualities of the original were well captured in Robin's copy.

Guadagnini cello c.1755

Guadagnini had a long and varied career, working in four major Italian cities. In 1749 he followed his friend, the influential cellist Carlo Ferrari, to Milan where he developed the distinctive cello model which he was to use for the rest of his working life. His early cellos were based on a classical model by Andrea Guarneri but in Milan Guadagnini evolved a shorter,

full-waisted model with widely spaced f-holes and long C bouts which are easy to clear with the bow.

Guadagnini's execution of his model was not particularly geometric or symmetrical, and the model seems to have evolved in an organic and functional way. Guadagnini's cellos tend to be wider in the front than in the back and it appears that Guadagnini removed his mould from the ribs and glued them to the finished back *before* defining the shape of the front. When released from the mould the ribs splay out a little so that when Guadagnini drew round them to create the outline for the front of the instrument, the front was wider than the back. This design is comfortable for the cellist, since the narrow back sits easily between the legs. The design also has tonal advantages, since the wide front increases the tonal potential of the instrument.

Robin first copied this Milan period model in 2002 when its owner commissioned him to make a close copy of her cello to use on tour. This Guadagnini model is very sensitive, responsive and quick to speak, with a rich, complex tone and particularly beautiful colours on the A string. The copy was such a success and sounded so similar to the original that Robin has made more than 15 further copies in two sizes, thanks to the generosity of the owner who gives Robin extensive access to her instrument. As well as an exact copy of the original with a string length of 667mm (26¼ inches) and a back length of 711mm (28 inches) Robin also makes a 2% enlargement of this model which can be made with a string length from 680cm to 690cm, depending on a player's preference. This allows a lot of flexibility for cellists wishing to enjoy the freedom of shorter stop lengths and less extended intervals in the left hand.

Players using Guadagnini cellos include Natalie Clein (1777 'Simpson'), Maxine Neuman (1772), David Geringas (1761) Pieter Wispelwey (1760) and James Richter (1770). For more about Guadagnini. see www.aitchisoncellos.com/articleguad.htm

Vive la différence! Robin enjoys the discipline of copying three such contrasting classical models and delights in their huge stylistic and functional differences which have served the varied needs and tastes of cellists for hundreds of years.

Robin's work is partly commissioned and partly freely scheduled in order to achieve continuity for the development of ideas within each model. Currently, Robin will be able to deliver finished instruments after January 2014 but in the meantime has demonstration examples of the three models that can be tried immediately. His 2014 price is £23,000.

For photographs of Robin's instruments, feedback from their owners, detailed measurements of each model, discographies and video links, please visit www.aitchisoncellos.com/cellosra.htm

SELECTED CELLOS AND BOWS

GAETANO GADDA CELLO 1936

L.O.B: 30" (758mm) String length: 27¼" (689mm)
Price: £78,000

A beautiful example of the work of Gaetano Gadda in very good condition. The tone of this cello is powerful, rich, clear and colourful and the fine varnish is a transparent orange-brown. The scroll is later, and by another hand. Blot certificate.

SIMON ANDREW FORSTER CELLO 1836

L.O.B: 29" (735mm) String length: 26¾" (682mm)
Price: £60,000

This magnificent cello was made for the Bishop of Oxford in 1836. It is in extremely good condition, with a very rich, colourful and powerful tone. Labelled and inscribed: 'S. A. Forster, London, No. 14'.

JOSEPH HILL CELLO 1770

L.O.B: 29½" (740mm) String Length 26¾" (677mm)
Price: £55,000

A particularly beautiful example of the work of Joseph Hill in excellent condition, made from very fine materials with a intensely flamed slab-cut one-piece maple back. Hill certificate.

THOMAS SMITH CELLO 1762

L.O.B: 29" (740mm) String length: 26½" (674mm)
Price: £30,000

A handsome instrument in very good condition with a powerful, colourful tone and a quick, easy response. The varnish is red-brown over a golden ground. Beare letter of authenticity.

JEAN-BAPTISTE SALOMON CELLO c.1750

L.O.B 29½" (750mm) String length: 26¾" (681mm)
Price: £25,000

A fine cello with a deep, rich, powerful tone and transparent golden varnish, made from materials of exceptional quality.

Branded: SALOMON A PARIS.

PETER WAMSLEY CELLO c.1735

L.O.B: 29¾" (758mm) String length: 27¼" (690mm)
Price: £tbc

This cello has just arrived. More details online.

LONDON SCHOOL CELLO c.1820

L.O.B: 30½" (766mm) String length: 27½" (689mm)
Price: £20,000

A handsome English cello with a deep, complex tone and excellent projection.

MICHAEL KEARNS CELLO 1998

L.O.B: 29½" (750mm) String length: 27½" (698mm)
Price: £16,000

A responsive, lively and attractive cello by a respected maker in very good condition.

DAVID RUBIO CELLO 1986

L.O.B: 29½" (750mm) String length: 27½" (690mm)
Price: £14,000

This cello is a close copy of a 1729 Montagnana cello and is in immaculate condition.

GERMAN CELLO c.1850

L.O.B: 755mm (29½") String length: 700mm (27½")
Price: £9,000

GERMAN CELLO c.1910

L.O.B: 30¼" (767mm) String length: 27¼" (694mm)
Price: £7,000

GERMAN CELLO c.1910

L.O.B: 29½" (750mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)
Price: £6,000

Selected Cello Bows

Pierre Simon	75.8	S	£26,000
Eugene Sartory	82.4	S	£tbc
Victor Fétique	67.3	N	£tbc
William Salchow	81.9	S	£4,770
Jean-Pascal Nehr	82.0	G	£4,740
John Stagg	82.8	G	£4,500
Steve Salchow	82.8	S	£3,970
F N Voirin	75.4	S	£3,500
Carl Nürnberger	77.4	S	£3,500
Tino Lucke	76.5	S	£3,500
Victor Bernard	81.7	S	£3,330
Robert Pierce	81.9	S	£3,070
John Aniano	81.0	S	£3,020
Roger Zabsinski	81.2	S	£2,980
Martin Beilke	81.9	S	£2,750
Bernd Etzler	81.4	S	£2,750
Heinz Dölling	91.0	S	£2,500
Thomas Grünke	80.7	S	£2,110
Klaus Grünke	79.4	S	£2,110
W E Hill & Sons	75.6	S	£2,000
Richard Wilson	82.2	S	£2,000
D S Finkel	81.2	S	£1,500
J S Rameau	76.7	S	£1,500
Herman A Hoyer	76.0	G	£1,500

Weight = in grammes; S = Silver; G = Gold
N = Nickel £tbc = price to be confirmed