
NEWS FOR CELLISTS JANUARY 2016

Cello endpins and Acoustic Floor Tile

In the last newsletter we reviewed a range of 10mm endpins for their tonal influence on cellos. In this edition we take a broader look at other endpin options and issues and also report on our tests of a new acoustic floor tile produced in the US by Bowed Acoustics. We also publish a list of the endpins which we keep in stock for players.

Endpin anatomy. The endpin unit is made up of a metal or carbon fibre 'pin' and a 'bung' which is fitted into the cello bottom block and around which the tail gut for the tailpiece travels. In the first half of the 20th century pins were made with a diameter of approximately 7mm and were also much shorter than their modern counterparts. The majority of endpin bungs in current use are designed to hold 8mm pins. Most 8mm pins are made from solid stainless steel. There are also some titanium and hollow metal pins made in 8mm but these tend to be weak and will bend too easily in use. Since the introduction of carbon fibre endpins, increasing numbers of cellists have chosen to have bungs fitted to their cellos to accommodate 10mm carbon fibre pins, as carbon fibre is not stiff enough to work effectively at an 8mm diameter. There are a few 8mm carbon fibre pins available on the market but they tend to be rather flimsy. (*article continued on page 2*)

Newly arrived cellos

We are happy to have received some very beautiful cellos to be sold through the Cello Exchange. One is an impressive Italian cello of the Florentine School, made in the mid-18th century. It has a beautiful tone and the varnish on the back is extremely well preserved. Another new arrival is a handsome cello by the eminent maker Bernard Simon Fendt.

Robin has also just finished a facsimile front for an appealing Barak Norman cello whose own front is extensively damaged but which is supplied with the cello for future owners. More details of these and other cellos can be found on the back page and on our website.

Change of email address

We have a new email address, active from January 2016: **info@aitchisoncellos.com**. Please note that the old email address (aitchmnatz7@ntlworld.com) is no longer active.

Cello courses and groups

Please keep us posted with details of any cello course or group you are running. Just email us up to 250 words and we will publish the details on our website: <http://www.aitchisoncellos.com/events-and-links/cello-courses.htm/>. There is no charge for this service.

Current listed courses for summer 2016 include:

Summer Cello Masterclasses with Hannah Roberts at the Menuhin School: <http://www.summervcellocourse.co.uk/>

Summer Music Academy Sinaia an international chamber music course for violin, viola, cello and flute players in a beautiful Romanian city with cellist Josephine Knight: <http://jmevents.ro/evenimente/summer-music-academy-sinaia>

Cellos at Belle Serre a series of cello courses in France with Lowri Blake: www.cellosatbelleserre.com



WE WISH YOU A HAPPY AND PEACEFUL 2016

The cheapest end of the 8mm endpin market offers very low-grade units which suffer from a number of problems, particularly screw threads which wear or strip very quickly. We use two high-quality 8mm endpin fittings in our workshop, one made by Mark Jackson in the UK and the other by Bowed Acoustics in the US (for details and prices see table opposite). Both are fitted with strong 8mm steel pins and are built to last. The Jackson model is based on the traditional Hill endpin design and is very well engineered in hardwood and steel. The Bowed Acoustics endpin is more modern in design, made from black alloy and has received many plaudits for its positive tonal qualities. The Bowed Acoustics bung is supplied with a clever black plastic conical adaptor which can be quickly cut to fit any cello which significantly reduces the labour costs of installation.

Tonal qualities of 8mm steel endpins. We have not been able to carry out direct comparisons of the tonal results of 8mm steel endpins with their 10mm counterparts, due to the fact that they require different bungs and cannot be quickly or easily compared on the same instrument. However, from day-to-day experience, we find that both the Jackson and Bowed Acoustics 8mm steel endpins provide a solid, reliable, tonal result that many players will feel comfortable with. In a one-off comparison, we tried these 8mm pins on a cello made by Robin fitted with an 8mm Jackson bung and were surprised that there was a noticeable difference between them. The Bowed Acoustics pin improved the playability of the cello and produced a slightly brighter, clearer sound than the Jackson pin which gave a slightly darker sound with more texture.

More endpin anatomy: anchoring the pin. Most traditional 8mm endpin fittings anchor their steel pins using a screw fitting which simply clamps down on the pin and immobilises it in the fitting. This technique is not suitable for carbon fibre as the end of the screw quickly breaks up the carbon fibres, so manufacturers have developed alternative anchoring techniques which work well with both metal and carbon fibre pins. The 10mm fittings made by New Harmony, Mark Jackson and Bois d'Harmonie are tightened using a screw, but instead of bearing directly onto the pin, the screw connects to a ring inside the fitting which, depending on the design is either pulled or pushed against the pin when the screw is turned clockwise.

8mm or 10mm? We find that increasing numbers of cellists are deciding to move to a 10mm endpin fitting so that they have the freedom to experiment with the latest range of metal and carbon fibre pins. Some players end up choosing a metal pin for work in which they need to project well, and then use the carbon fibre

pin for more intimate performances (carbon fibre pins are supplied as standard with Bois d'Harmonie, New Harmony and Jackson 10mm fittings). Mitsuke pins are not supplied with a bung so we recommend using them in conjunction with either the Mark Jackson, New Harmony or Bois d'Harmonie bungs. Another advantage of 10mm fittings is the increased stiffness of 10mm pins, particularly for tall players who use a generous pin length. We recently observed a tall soloist using an 8mm pin which left the cello very mobile when played energetically.

If you would like to check the diameter of your endpin, just cut two rectangular slots 10mm and 8mm wide into a piece of thin card and see which one fits.

Acoustic Floor Tile. The US company Bowed Acoustics has recently launched the Acoustic Floor Tile, a natural stone tile which, when used as an endpin holder, significantly influences the sound and projection of a cello. The designer, cello maker Chris Dungey, discovered that his instruments sounded very different when played on a concrete floor as opposed to a wooden or carpeted surface. The theory is that the acoustic floor tile (made from natural stone and weighing 9kg) gives players a consistent tonal result, no matter what flooring they are playing on.

We tested the tile in our music room last summer alongside a range of 10mm pins using a Montagnana model cello and also, earlier last year, in a large church on a late 18c English cello. In our music room the tile noticeably increased the projection and playability of the cello in conjunction with light weight carbon fibre endpins, supporting the cello in all registers and allowing for more muscular playing. When fitted with a Manson Superspike the cello sounded bright, powerful and a bit richer when played with the tile. On carpet, the sound was harsher, louder, messier, with a loss of dimension. The overall effect of the tile on the Manson Superspike was less dramatic than with carbon fibre and Mitsuke pins. The acoustic floor tile worked better with Mitsuke pins than with carbon fibre endpins. When using Mitsuke Brass & Carbon the tile added 'fizz' in the upper register and the cello projected better with the tile. Using Brass & Iron, the tile gave more structure, power, concentration and excitement to the cello compared with playing on carpet.

Playing in a church on a fine English cello with a standard 8mm metal pin, a soloist and an independent listener both felt that the cello had lost depth in its sound, and that the cello sounded warmer without the tile. The soloist also felt he lacked under-ear feedback from the cello when using the tile. It is clear that when playing with the tile there is less feedback under the

ear to the player and this aspect can take time to adjust to and may not be to every player's taste.

Our conclusion is that, like a heavy metal pin, the tile acts as an anchor and has a stabilising effect on the cello, allowing for greater freedom to vary bow pressure and tending to clean up wolf notes. It tends to suppress some of the resonances which are experienced primarily under the ear and enhance those which are projected.

Acoustic Floor Tile case studies. Hannah Roberts, soloist, chamber musician and principal cellist of Manchester Camerata enjoys using her tile in concert halls. She describes the tile as very exacting under the bow, as it magnifies the details for the player under the ear. In drier acoustics she finds that the tile can have the effect of narrowing the overtones in the instrument and this can make it sound less warm despite the benefit of greater projection. A listener described the effect of the tile on a new cello Hannah played to us in our music room 'as if a thin net curtain had been drawn back, giving a much clearer sound.'

Nicholas Trygstad, principal cellist of the Hallé Orchestra, bought a floor tile at the recommendation of a senior colleague. In Nick's experience, the tile makes his Testore School cello sound between 25-30% bigger in tone and he now uses the tile for solo and chamber music performances. Here are Nick's comments:

'The tile gives a richer, more vibrant and even sound across the whole instrument. The increased feeling of tonal density allows the cello to project better into a large space. Before getting the tile, I was conscious of the varied effect which the floor surface had on my cello, so I also really appreciate the continuity of using the tile in the green room as I warm up, and then on stage for the performance, so that the cello feels similar

whether I'm playing on wood, carpet or stone. You basically bring your own floor with you to the concert hall, and it allows you to feel ready to play out on the stage even without a quiet on-stage tune up. Another unexpected bonus is that the tile almost completely rids my cello of its huge wolf note while also enhancing the sound. Other wolf note eliminators seem to cause a corresponding loss in resonance when they tame the wolf.

'It's well worth carrying it around with me, along with my cello stool - particularly if I can put it into the boot of my car. If I were a student travelling around in London on the underground I don't think I'd consider carrying it around with me as it does weigh 9kg. I don't use the tile in my orchestral work because it wouldn't be practical to get it on and off the stage as well as my cello.

'I often use it to practise with at home, but I also vary the surface I play on - from wood to rubber to carpet - because I don't want to rely on it as a norm. As the tile gives me a richer, darker sound, I find during my practice that it invites me to explore denser sounds on my cello and enables me to play very close to my bridge with a slow bow. Because the tile allows you to play differently, the cello seems to invite you to relax more and this in turn helps to change the tone of the instrument. In terms of the positive benefits, I'd say it's as powerful as having an excellent new bridge cut for your cello.'

If you are interested in acquiring an acoustic floor tile, please let us know. We have a sample tile here which we are happy to loan to players interested in trying one. Once we have an idea of the potential demand, we will make enquiries about the best way to get a consignment shipped to the UK.

WE STOCK THE FOLLOWING ENDPINS

ENDPINS ('BUNG' AND PIN)	Weight (pin only)	Length	Price *	Pin materials
MARK JACKSON (8mm)	201g	52cm	£330	S
BOWED ACOUSTICS (8mm)	217g	56cm	£210	S
MARK JACKSON (10mm)	81g	62cm	£330	C/F
BOIS D'HARMONIE (10mm)	78g	60cm	£220	C/F
NEW HARMONY (10mm)	45g	51cm	£120	C/F (hollow)
NEW HARMONY (10mm)	80g	61cm	£120	C/F (solid)
MITSUKE 10mm PINS - can be used in conjunction with any 10mm 'bung' above	Weight (pin only)	Length	Price *	Pin materials
MITSUKE TRIPLE BRILLANTE (10mm)	393g	55cm	£320	B Ti Tu
MITSUKE BRASS & IRON (10mm)	348g	55cm	£160	B I
MITSUKE QUARTET (10mm)	301g	55cm	£320	B Ti Tu C/F

* NB Prices do not include cost of fitting which ranges from £40 to £140 depending on time taken

S = Steel; C/F= Carbon Fibre; Tu = Tungsten; Ti = Titanium; B = Brass; I = Iron

SELECTED CELLOS AND BOWS

FLORENTINE CELLO c.1740-50

L.O.B: 29 $\frac{5}{16}$ " (744mm) String length: 27" (685mm)

Price: £tbc

This very fine Italian cello has just arrived. More information will be published online in the next few weeks.

BENJAMIN BANKS CELLO c.1780

L.O.B: 29 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (740mm) String length: 27" (686mm)

Price: £70,000

A magnificent Banks cello in very good condition, with beautiful red brown varnish and a deep, complex and powerful tone. Hill certificate.

HENRY LOCKEY HILL CELLO 1827

L.O.B.: 29 $\frac{3}{16}$ " (742mm) String length: 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (674mm)

Price: £70,000

A beautiful example of this famous maker's work in very good condition with a colourful, expressive tone and excellent projection.

THOMAS KENNEDY CELLO 1814

L.O.B: 29" (735mm) String length: 27" (688mm)

Price: £65,000

A fine cello in good condition with an exceptionally good tone and powerful projection. Inscribed into the inner table and back. Peter Biddulph certificate

BERNARD SIMON FENDT CELLO c.1830

L.O.B: 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (755mm) String length: 27 $\frac{1}{16}$ " (686mm)

Price: £62,000

This beautiful cello is in excellent condition, with very fine red-brown varnish and a warm, colourful tone.

Certificate from J&A Beare.

THOMAS KENNEDY CELLO 1823

L.O.B: 29 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (740mm) String length: 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (680mm)

Price: £50,000

This Kennedy cello has recently been restored in our workshop and has a powerful, rich tone and quick response.

CIRCLE OF ARTHUR BETTS CELLO c.1840

L.O.B.: 29" (738mm) String length: 27 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (690mm)

Price: £45,000

A strong and handsome example of this school of making in excellent condition with a dark, deep tone.

GEORGES ADOLPHE CHANOT 1895

L.O.B: 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (755mm) String length: 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (698mm)

Price: £35,000

A handsome, powerful and expressive instrument in excellent condition with fine golden brown varnish.

WAMSLEY SCHOOL CELLO c.1750

L.O.B: 28" (712mm) String length: 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (680mm)

Price: £33,000

This elegant small cello has a dark, colourful tone and is in good condition. Hill receipt.

COLIN IRVING CELLO 2005

L.O.B: 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (750mm) String length: 27 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (696mm)

Price: £24,000

A strong cello with a powerful, deep tone and good response, in excellent condition.

BARAK NORMAN CELLO c.1720

L.O.B: 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (750mm) String length: 27 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (690mm)

Price: £tbc

A beautiful Barak Norman cello with a facsimile front made for the cello by Robin Aitchison.

KENNEDY SCHOOL CELLO c.1820

L.O.B: 29" (737mm) String length: 27" (685mm)

Price: £14,000

An appealing English cello with painted on purfling in good repaired condition with a warm, clear tone

WILFRED SAUNDERS CELLO 1963

L.O.B: 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (750mm) String length: 27 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (690mm)

Price: £12,500

Selected Cello Bows

J A Vigneron père	79.3	S	£9,000
John Dodd	tbc	S/I	tbc
C N Bazin	74.0	S	£5,500
Stéphane Thomachot	83.2	S	£5,000
W E Hill & Sons	76.5	S/T	£5,000
John Clutterbuck	81.9	G/T	£4,750
Charles Ervin	80.0	G	£4,500
Malcolm J Taylor	76.0	G	£4,500
Albert Nürnberger	76.4	S	£3,750
Bernd Etzler	85.0.4	G	£3,750
John Aniano	81.4	S	£3,170
Tino Lucke	81.8	S	£3,180
Mark Drehmann	81.0	S	£3,000
Roger Zabinski	83.3	S	£2,980
Martin Beilke	81.9	S	£2,750
Richard Grünke	82.9	S	£2,750
Klaus Grünke	82.7	S	£2,750
Bernd Etzler	81.0	S	£2,750
Emmanuel Begin	79.5	S	£2,730
Robert Pierce	81.8	S	£2,650
Andrew McGill	80.0	S	£2,400
Eric Gagné	81.7	S	£2,270
Howard Green	81.5	S	£2,200
Richard Wilson	82.2	S	£2,000
Alfons Riedl	81	S	£1,500
Juliano Oliveira	82.6	S	£960
Siqueira	80.0	N	£780