
NEWS FOR CELLISTS SPRING 2017

Feldenkrais for Cellists

Playing the cello is a considerable physical challenge, particularly as we get older and our bodies become less pliable. Cellists regularly mention the Feldenkrais Method to us as a refreshing and helpful way to support their playing lives, whether through group classes or one to one lessons, so we decided to find out more. See the article on pages 2-3.



Cello Summer Courses

Please let us know if you are running a cello course this year and we'll publicise it on our website. Here are brief details of three exceptional cello courses:

The 5th International Summer Course for Advanced Study will be held in beautiful Tereglio, Tuscany, Italy from 28 August to 4 September. Tutors are Raphael Wallfisch and Roel Dieltiens. For advanced students aged 17+. The course director is Sebastian Comberti. <http://www.celloclassics.com/summercourse/Home.html>

Summer Cello Masterclasses, a residential course at the Menuhin School from 24 to 29 July offers an opportunity to study with internationally renowned cellist Hannah Roberts, assisted by Leandro Silvera. This course is for advanced students aged 17+. <http://www.summerycellocourse.co.uk/>

Eminent cellist and teacher Gillian Thoday is running her fourth **Cello and Alexander Technique Summer Course** with Margaret Edis in Parçay sur Vienne in the Loire region of France from 3-10 August. Ages 16+. For more information: megantress@gmail.com, <https://www.lamariette.co.uk/>

Carlo Antonio Testore c.1740

We are delighted to announce the arrival of an exceptional Carlo Antonio Testore cello for sale through the Cello Exchange. Carlo Antonio Testore cellos are real players' instruments and have a tremendous reputation for sound. This example is in excellent condition and, like most others, has been reduced slightly in size, which has produced a very coherent model with a back length of 755mm. It has a certificate from Charles Beare written in 1979.

New Thomastik A & D strings

Thomastik-Infeld have just released two new strings: Versum Solo A and D. They kindly sent us samples before the 5 April launch and we have found them to be remarkably good so far: refreshingly low in tension under the left hand and bow, rich, rounded and expressive in tone, with considerable power. Nicholas Jones was the first cellist to test them for us and this was his feedback:

'I have been trying new strings with you for some time and these are the best I've tried to date. They sounded great immediately but by 24 hours later were even better. The sound is very free and warm and yet the volume range is the biggest I've experienced. I am especially enjoying the pliability of the string under both hands. It is allowing me to shape the sound so easily. Other strings that have this quality have tended to sound thin but these have a richness and a nice texture in the sound.'

Protective Cello Blankets

Luthier Helen Michetschlager is also a talented seamstress and we recently admired her beautiful protective cello blankets that prevent cellos from being scratched by a bow when stored in a cello case. They are made from attractive fabrics and are padded, lined, and edged with decorative binding. All profits go to the RAB Trust, a charity that awards grants and work experience placements to student violin makers. https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/instrumentblankets?ref=hdr_shop_menu

FELDENKRAIS FOR CELLISTS

Moshe Feldenkrais (1904–1984) was a distinguished scientist and martial arts teacher. When in his forties an old soccer injury threatened his ability to walk, he refused surgery and used his knowledge of anatomy, physiology, psychology and engineering, as well as his mastery of martial arts, to heal his own knee. He shared his discoveries in lectures, classes and books and toured the world, training others to teach the method. Feldenkrais practitioners address muscular–skeletal, neurological and orthopaedic issues as well as promoting general wellbeing and improved function in any physical activity from music making to sport to everyday movement. The Feldenkrais Method can be experienced in Awareness Through Movement classes (ATM) and one-to-one lessons with a practitioner (known as Functional Integration sessions).

Cellist Abby Wollston first encountered the Feldenkrais Method 17 years ago when she attended ATM classes at Morley College and she still practices Feldenkrais every week using online audio classes. ‘Two of those early group classes stand out in my mind. In one we learned to rotate the body far beyond our expectations. The teacher helped us to explore different ways to move small parts of ourselves which eventually all combined into a much bigger movement; it’s amazing how your comfort zone can expand and extend. The other memorable early class was about the pelvis, learning to experience it as grounded, supportive and independent of the rest of the torso. It’s wonderful to be able to feel rested and recharged when sitting, particularly as a cellist. Feldenkrais gives me a very unified feeling: inquisitive and non-judgmental, with a clear sense of kindness towards myself. It also allows me to find more balance and a softer approach to playing; if we want to solve physical problems we need to soften rather than tense up! I still start off feeling incredibly immobile when I begin a class and then discover this radical ability to move way beyond what I think is possible. The classes are very varied but the delight I feel is the same.’

Sarah McMahon volunteered to be a ‘guinea pig’ for Emma Alter when Emma was training as a Feldenkrais practitioner. ‘I had Alexander Technique lessons while I was a student and these would leave me feeling “magically transformed” whereas my Feldenkrais sessions gave me things to think about and to experiment with—a more interactive and conscious experience. Emma said she could feel the sound of the cello through my body when I played, like a tuning fork, and when she made some subtle movements to my spine to release areas of tightness, the sound of my cello increased as my body vibrated even more freely.’ Sarah says she still connects with the feeling of fluidity

she gained in those few lessons. Emma explained that there were parts of Sarah’s back that were working very hard and the muscle tension in these areas was high enough that the cello’s vibration couldn’t move through it. With Sarah lying on her side, Emma worked with the musculature of the spine, using her fingertips to show Sarah in which areas her muscles were over-working, and in which they were relaxed, helping the brain to process the differences between tension and relaxation in the body, and allowing the body to release unnecessary tension. Emma explained that when the brain realises that the body can use fewer muscles for the same movement (i.e. move in a more ergonomic way) this creates less stress, strain and shearing on muscles and discs. If movement is easier, the body can also achieve complex movements with less effort.

Cellist and Feldenkrais practitioner Josephine Horder first encountered Feldenkrais 20 years ago. ‘The effect of my first few lessons was like a key unlocking a door to my cello playing. I was an adequately functioning sum of parts before starting Feldenkrais, but after those lessons I felt I had become a seamless integrated whole. Suddenly, the tool-box of skills which I’d amassed during my career was responding effortlessly and immediately to my intention. Improvement to my technique is ongoing and much more effective than pre-Feldenkrais, and when it comes to giving a performance I can draw all my existing skills into one flowing whole, and I feel very confident in expressing myself freely.’

One unexpected benefit of Feldenkrais for Jo was the resolution of an old finger tendon problem in her left hand that had led her to create special fingerings to avoid over-use of the weak finger. ‘My tendon problem receded as a by-product of my Feldenkrais training, through which I integrated the actions of my fingers, hands and arms through recruiting support from the stronger muscles of my back and pelvis. Using Feldenkrais, you learn to take the pressure off weaker, shorter muscles that were never really designed for the tasks we are asking of them. That finger now works as well as the others.’

‘The Feldenkrais Method teaches that a key to brain plasticity—the ability of the brain to form new connections in different fresh ways—is through increased awareness of our movements, sensations, feelings and thoughts. In my experience the benefits have been cumulative. As well as transformation of my playing I notice my reactions are much faster, so if something slips off the kitchen counter I catch it without thinking. This is sheer reflex, an indication that my brain is organising my movements more efficiently.’

As well as one-to-one Functional Integration lessons, Jo recommends ATM classes as an excellent introduction to Feldenkrais. 'ATM classes offer a sequence of slow and gentle movements, possibly on a theme, designed to introduce you to moving in an unfamiliar way and unfamiliar context. You might be exploring how you walk while lying down; the unfamiliarity of the experience causes the brain to be engaged and curious; curiosity is a major part of the method. It's never prescriptive: Feldenkrais is a playful, explorative method where we open up as many variables and options as possible. Like practising away from your instrument, the sequences of movement can be carried out in your imagination, so if you have an injury you can do it in your imagination even more effectively than carrying it out with your body.'

Baroque cellist Alison McGillivray started taking individual Feldenkrais lessons in 2007 with London teacher Scott Clark and is now an experienced Feldenkrais practitioner working in Glasgow. 'When I had my first lessons I was looking for a way to help myself after my sister Katherine died and my instinct was to address the grief through my body. I had already worked with Alexander Technique and a series of friends told me about Feldenkrais. At my first lesson, I mentioned the trouble I had always experienced carrying my cello case around, which Scott solved in five minutes. He explained that when you carry a rucksack it tends to send a message to your shoulder girdle to stop its natural habit of moving in opposite directions to the pelvis when you walk. So he suggested that I could use the cello straps as a signal to my shoulders to keep moving and I've done this ever since.'

Alison discovered that Feldenkrais re-acquainted her with her own physical geography, with very positive effects. 'In my third lesson, Scott put his hands on my upper back and said, "So, what have you got here?" Answer: "My shoulder blades." "What's your sense of yourself here?" "Knots from playing the cello." "Anything else?" "No, just knots." "How about ribs?" I was amazed—of course I knew that I had ribs there, but in my mind's eye there were just knots. So he gave me a lesson on ribs and moved me around in all different ways so I could experience their movement in a huge variety of positions. At the end of the lesson my back, sides and ribs felt rounded, as if I had been inflated like a balloon. It was a completely different sensation of myself. Going home on the train I started to chuckle spontaneously and this went on for three hours. I hadn't laughed like that for a long time.'

Alison found the benefits of her training fed directly back into her playing. 'One week during my teacher training we were working a lot with the pelvis and hips. After one of those days spent rolling around on the floor holding our toes with our hands like babies, I

came back to play the cello. When I played the C string, the sound was completely different: so round and big and easy and so resonant, I completely shocked myself. I wondered what had happened. The sound of the cello had changed just through noticing what went on in my body when we'd been rolling around that day.

'Another lesson which transformed my playing was with Angelica Feldmann in Switzerland. It was a lesson about arms and elbows. I was lying on the table and she picked up my left arm and moved it around a little bit. Then she picked it up again and said, "You see, you move it like this at the moment but you can also move it like this..." and she showed me a way of rotating my arm which was different to the one I was doing habitually. Just a very subtle difference. First, she joined with my movement to see what my habit was and when she got a sense of that she offered me a different option, one that was not in my habit. It took just five minutes and I could feel my brain going "What???", my synapses lighting up with amazement. After that lesson, I went back and played my cello and the feeling in my left hand was the same as if I'd done ten years of practice. It was so smooth and so easy. I could get from one end of the fingerboard to the other in a fraction of the time. I couldn't believe it. I thought, OK I'm going to do Feldenkrais from now on and I'm not going to practise in the same old way. It proved to me that Feldenkrais systemically changes the brain, not the muscles. Repetitive muscular practice works, but it is really slow. What really speeds things up is paying close attention to what you're doing. What a way to learn!'

Alison had planned to leave music performance behind and focus solely on teaching Feldenkrais, but the experience of Feldenkrais training so increased her enjoyment of playing that she now works happily in both fields. 'The more comfortable I feel in myself, the more creative and flexible I can be, which means that I also I know when to stop and rest. There is so much to enjoy in music that it's easy to go way past the limit and to end up in pain because you've gone on for too long. I've learned how to be more sensitive to myself and I now know when I've run out of energy. One of the extraordinary things is after teaching Feldenkrais ATM workshops or individual lessons I feel better than when I started. Playing a concert has such a buzz but you tend to feel tired afterwards, while teaching Feldenkrais actually makes me feel better. Is there a way of living that is less depleting? I don't know the answer yet but it's a very different model from the expectation of being tired after working.'

The Feldenkrais Guild has a generous audio and article library: <http://www.feldenkrais.co.uk>.

For musicians: <https://feldenkraisresourcesformusicians.co.uk>

Jo Horder: <https://www.feldenkrais-westherts.co.uk/>

Alison McGillivray : <https://alisonmcgillivray.com/>

Emma Alter: www.themovingbrain.com

SELECTED CELLOS & BOWS

CARLO ANTONIO TESTORE c.1730

L.O.B: 29½" (755mm) String length: 27¼" (691mm)

Price on application

A very fine example of Carlo Antonio's work, with real solo potential. Certificate from Charles Beare 1979.

BENJAMIN BANKS CELLO

L.O.B: 28⅞" (733mm) String length: 26⅝" (677mm)

£tbc

A strong and characteristic example of the maker's work with Amati-inspired arching and powerful projection.

THOMAS KENNEDY CELLO 1814

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

Price: £65,000

A handsome cello in good condition with a very fine tone. Inscribed on the inner table and back.

THOMAS KENNEDY CELLO 1823

L.O.B: 29½" (740mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)

Price: £50,000

This Kennedy cello has a powerful, rich tone and quick response. The varnish is dark and deeply craqueled.

GEORGES ADOLPHE CHANOT 1895

L.O.B: 29¾" (755mm) String length: 27½" (698mm)

Price: £38,000

A handsome, broad-modelled cello inspired by the work of del Gesu, offering abundant rich colours and power.

BETTS SCHOOL CELLO c.1820

L.O.B: 29½" (740mm) String length: 26¼" (670mm)

Price: £35,000

A fine cello in excellent condition with a one-piece back and double purfling. Its tone is warm and clear.

WAMSLEY SCHOOL CELLO c.1750

L.O.B: 28" (712mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)

Price: £33,000

This elegant English cello has beautiful golden varnish, an expressive, colourful tone and impressive projection.

WILLIAM BOOTH (II) c.1840

L.O.B: 29½" (751mm) String length: 27¼" (693mm)

Price: £32,000

A beautiful instrument by William Booth II (1816–1856). The cello has a powerful, rich, even tone.

FLEMISH CELLO c.1800

L.O.B: 28" (720mm) String length: 26½" (674mm)

Price: £23,000

A very pleasing cello of a nice comfortable size in good repaired condition, with a warm and expressive tone.

LOCKEY HILL SCHOOL CELLO c.1780

L.O.B: 29" (735mm) String length: 26½" (675mm)

Price: £20,000

A fine English cello from the workshop of Lockey Hill with a very rich, colourful tone.

JAMES BRIGGS CELLO 1885

L.O.B: 29" (736mm) String length: 27" (685mm)

Price: £15,000

An appealing cello in good playing condition with a smooth, even, expressive response and attractive red-brown varnish.

VIENNESE CELLO c.1850

L.O.B: 29⅝" (754mm) String length: 27¼" (693mm)

Price: £14,000

A beautiful sounding mid-nineteenth century Viennese cello that has been restored by a respected craftsman.

GERMAN CELLO

L.O.B: 30" (762mm) String length: 27⅞" (690mm)

Price: £10,500

A handsome instrument from the Glaesel & Mossner School in excellent condition.

SMALL ¾ CELLO c.1780

L.O.B: 25¾" (655mm) String length: 24¼" (614mm)

Price: £8,000

A beautiful small cello, possibly Dutch, with a distinguished provenance and rewarding tone.

SECOND HAND ACCORD CELLO CASE

With Fiedler back pack; weight: 3.6 kg

Price: £1,200

Selected Cello Bows

Samuel Allen (Hill) bow	80.5	S	£tbc
Bazin	77.0	S	£5,000
Roy Quade	87.0	S	£4,780
Christian Wanka	84.0	G	£4,550
W E Hill & Sons	80.0	S	£4,500
W E Hill & Sons	83.2	S	£4,500
Michael J Taylor	76.0	G	£4,500
Roger Zabinski	82.1	S	£4,350
Hill (H&S brand)	78.0	S	£4,000
Charles Bazin	82.0	S	£4,000
Bernd Etzler	81.9	S	£3,550
Bernd Etzler	81.0	S	£3,025
Christian Wanka	80.8	S	£3,010
John Norwood Lee	80.8	S	£3,000
Richard Grünke	82.9	S	£2,750
Klaus Grünke	82.7	S	£2,750
Risto Vainio	80.0	S	£2,290
Andrew McGill	80.0	S	£2,200
Alfons Riedl	81	S	£1,500
Jackson Fornaciari	81.8	S	£1,100
Siqueira	80.0	N	£880