
NEWS FOR CELLISTS SPRING 2018

Orchestral Auditions

Preparing for an orchestral audition is a challenging process, so we asked six distinguished cellists for their advice: **Professor Jo Cole**, Head of Strings at the Royal Academy of Music and former co-principal cellist, City of London Sinfonia; **Kristina Blaumane**, principal cellist, London Philharmonic Orchestra; **Timothy Gill**, principal cellist, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and London Sinfonietta; **Rebecca Gilliver**, principal cellist, London Symphony Orchestra; **John Heley**, co-principal cellist, Academy of St Martin in the Fields for 29 years and **Nicholas Trygstad**, principal cellist, Hallé Orchestra.

Huge thanks to our magnificent panel for sharing their wisdom and experience which you can read on pages 2-3 of this newsletter.

Cello Poster

We hope you'll enjoy the enclosed poster about Robin's three main cello models and some of the wonderful cellists who play them. If you would like further copies of the poster for friends or colleagues, please let us know and we'll pop one or more into the post.

If you are interested in trying one of Robin's cellos, we are often able to arrange visits to existing owners; alternatively, we will let you know when instruments are available to try before delivery.

Robin's current waiting list for commissions is twelve months. Videos and recordings of his instruments being played by their owners can be found on our website: www.aitchisoncellos.com/gallery/video-gallery/

GDPR: 31 December 2018 deadline

Thank you to everyone who has responded so far to our Spring mailing which included a GDPR form and an SAE for postal replies. We are still receiving responses by post and email, so we have extended the deadline to 31 December 2018. **If we haven't yet heard from you, you will find a reminder slip enclosed with this newsletter.** If you've mislaid your original form and SAE, please complete the reminder slip and pop it into the post, give us a ring on 01353 668559 or email sarah@aitchisoncellos.com. For email subscriptions only, you are welcome to use our simple online form at: www.aitchisoncellos.com/contact-us/subscription-form/

The GDPR story so far: 45% of newsletter recipients have confirmed their postal subscription, 17.5% have subscribed to receive email links rather than post and 2.5% have unsubscribed completely. We would love to hear from the remaining 35% before 31 December. After this date we will reluctantly have to delete the details of all non-respondents from our mailing list. If you have received this newsletter in error, it's possible that your response has gone missing in the post, so please phone or email us when you have a moment to confirm your decision. For our online privacy notice, please see www.aitchisoncellos.com/contact-us/privacy-notice/



'First impressions count'

Cello Care Guide

We have recently re-printed our *Cello Care Guide*. Do let us know if you would like a free copy for your own use or up to ten free copies for your students. The *Cello Care Guide* is also available to download at www.aitchisoncellos.com/publications/cello-care-guide/

ORCHESTRAL AUDITIONS

UK orchestras normally have 1 or 2 rounds of auditions and then select a short list of candidates to work with the orchestra for a trial period, after which – if everyone is agreed – an appointment is made. Each orchestra has a unique approach to auditions and trials but the first-round audition normally consists of standard solo repertoire and orchestral excerpts.

Our panel believe it would be ideal if students learned the most common audition solo repertoire (Haydn D, Haydn C, Schumann, Dvorak), as well as the main orchestral excerpts, while they are still studying at a conservatoire, ideally during undergraduate study but definitely by the end of a postgraduate course. 'It's a lot to prepare in 4–6 weeks,' Gill observes, 'so it's ideal if you have at least the solo pieces learned, so that you just need to brush them up. You should certainly ask your teacher to cover – or revisit – some of this repertoire when you're a post-grad.' Blaumane looks forward to hearing solo repertoire if players have something to offer musically. 'Sometimes people think they should under-play in a tutti audition but the one place not to worry about that is in the concerto. If you're playing pieces such as Haydn and Schumann, show us the stylistic and tonal contrasts and give us a performance-like quality that we will enjoy.'

Orchestral excerpts require more thought and discipline than solo pieces, many of our panel believe. 'Preparing orchestral music is like being a conductor,' says Trygstad. 'You need to show that you are in control of the whole orchestra's interpretation, that you realise when your part is subservient to something else, not just playing your part as if you're a soloist.' Gilliver recommends listening to good recordings. 'If you can find a recording by the band you're auditioning for, so much the better. Download the score from the imslp.org website and know the context.' Blaumane agrees. 'It's important to show in your sound that you're aware of what function the cellos are playing at that moment, whether melody, counter melody, bass line, rhythm – for example the second movement of Symphony No. 2 by Brahms, which starts with the cello theme, after which the cellos invite the wind to take over while cellos play the counter melody. It's important to show in your sound and expressivity that you are hearing the piece in your head.' Trygstad says that if you imagine the sound magnified by nine other cellists as you practice at home, this will be recognised at audition.

Gill says that the fundamental qualities needed are a good tone, intonation and rhythm. 'Whichever of these is your weakest quality, it is likely to get worse under pressure, so try to be aware of this when you are preparing for audition.' Gill also encourages students to take part in as many orchestral performances as possible, so that they can experience the repertoire at

first hand. 'Even playing *Don Juan* with a pro-am orchestra will be really valuable'.

Accuracy is crucial when preparing excerpts. 'Playing exactly what's in the part, attention to detail and accuracy are essential,' Cole explains. 'That includes everything from tempo, hierarchy of dynamics, to understanding of style, to a grasp of the appropriate expression and tone colour – NOT just the notes. When a panel is hearing the same excerpts played over and over again by a stream of people, important things that get omitted are screamingly obvious.' Gill advocates very careful rhythmic preparation of excerpts with a metronome. 'A good example is Debussy *La Mer* first movement – the cello part has a double dotted rhythm like a Scots snap and then a single dotted one. It's a very slight difference but it's amazing how many people play them just the same.'

Blaumane agrees: 'People often take liberties in excerpts. It's OK to show your personality in a concerto but we need to see that you are aware of every marking from the composer. When you get sent music from an orchestra, I suggest you follow the bowings and markings carefully.' When candidates skip a bar's rest when playing an excerpt, Blaumane is forced to wonder if the player is aware of the rest. 'Do they know what is happening in the score in that bar? Do they have good rhythm?'

When Heley coaches players preparing for audition, a common problem is being able to play a difficult excerpt quietly enough. 'The overture to Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* is often used as an audition excerpt as it's a real test of dexterity within the marked dynamic of *pp* and *ppp*. Playing very fast and very quietly together in a section of 8 people is really hard. You often find people playing this passage really well *mezzo forte*, but they can't play it any quieter with clarity.'

Playing staccato in an orchestral context is equally difficult. 'If someone's staccato sounds a bit like a machine gun, you have to ask how this sound is going to blend with 9 other people playing the same part!' Gill says. 'What you're looking for is a slightly more brushed stroke, with a bit more flexibility but which will still sound "together". Orchestral playing is a compromise and it's important to show that you realise that.' Trygstad admits that orchestral spiccato is not that gratifying to practise. 'To make a whole section sound *pianissimo*, you have to barely move.'

Gilliver and Cole believe that the most common mistake is forgetting to perform excerpts with as much expression as pieces. 'For tutti roles, there can be a bit of a misconception that orchestral section players need to blend into the section to the point where they lose any identity,' says Cole. 'I believe orchestras – and section principals – want players who will contribute to

the quality of the sound and add something in the way of a musical personality to the section.' Trygstad coaches his students to pour all their musicianship into their excerpts. 'Even after a long day listening to candidates, if someone plays in a way that interests you musically, they will have your full attention. If you aim for absolute musicianship when preparing excerpts, you will get the very best out of yourself too; if you just think about technique, you will never reach as high, or gain the panel's interest.'

Cole and Heley both advise checking excerpts for practical challenges such as swift changes from *arco* to *pizz*. 'Pizzicato technique tends to be underdeveloped because it's something people think they don't need to practice', Heley says, 'but you need to know how to get from *arco* to *pizz* to *arco* efficiently without dropping your bow or leaving notes out. You could try using the thumb and second to *pizz* and hold the bow in the other fingers, so that your hand stays still, and you use two digits to *pizz*, which is something I've developed.'

Gill recommends preparing for an audition by playing to friends, even at the same time of day as your audition if you're not used to playing at this time.

On the day. Gilliver advocates nurturing a mind-set of calm confidence during an audition, as with any performance. 'Remember above all that the panel want you to play your best even more than you do.'

'First impressions count,' Cole advises. 'Dressing smartly matters – even if choosing to wear less formal clothing, you should look tidy and at ease. Smile and greet the panel but be reasonably business-like. Don't say "I'm terribly nervous," and don't make a big fuss about the facilities ("the warm up room is too cold..." etc.) or excuses ("I've got a really bad cold,") but do make sure you are comfortable with the chair you are sitting on and be certain your spike isn't going to slip. Genuinely cheerful and positive people are more employable, and if you smile and seem under control and confident (without seeming at all arrogant) then this can feed into your own mental state and be a general benefit.' Gill advises getting plenty of sleep and eating well to ensure you're on best form.

The Screen. Some orchestras use a screen for their first round of auditions, to ensure applicants have anonymity and to protect the panel from charges of discrimination or favouritism. Some candidates find screens liberating; others find them inhibiting. Gill suggests seeing the screen as a positive thing and taking the opportunity to imagine your friends behind it. Cole suggests playing as naturally as possible and not to fight the odd acoustic which can be associated with screens, as the panel will be used to this. Trygstad finds: 'Some people are so nervous behind the screen that even if you've asked them not to talk, they reply to you when you give them an instruction.'

Play it again. 'The panel might ask you to play something again, slightly differently,' Gill advises, 'and some cellists get defensive or flustered by this. Generally, if you are asked to play something again, it's a good sign, because they like you or want to see if you are flexible in the way you play. So be open to that possibility and don't be put off!'

Trials. If you're selected for trial, the advice from our panel is, 'Be yourself'. Trials can go on for a long time and you won't be able to sustain an adopted persona. 'You want them to give the Real You the job,' Cole advises. 'Don't try to second guess what people want of you,' says Gill. 'You're there because people like your playing and if you're trying to be someone you're not, that's going to confuse matters.' On a practical level, show that you can be relied upon to have a professional approach. 'Be sociable but not intrusive,' Cole says, 'and observe things like the orchestral dress code. Make sure you're on time, and if you witness other members of the orchestra turning up late, using their mobiles, reading a paper or wearing inappropriate clothes, don't assume that means it is OK in that band and that you can do it.'

Blaumane advises cellists to arrive well-rested, 'so you have stamina - and be super prepared, so you really know the music inside out. For a triallist for no 2 or tutti position, you need to observe where the other strings are playing so that you use exactly same attack, placing, pressure, bow speed, width of vibrato – otherwise it can make a very uneven sound in the section. Even the way you share your stand and give your colleagues to left and right the space they need to play: all these things are crucial.' Heley compares this alert, co-operative state to having a set of musical 'antennae', so that you are constantly tuned in to everything happening around you.

Blaumane warns against under-playing when trialling for a position. 'Don't play above the dynamic marked and adapt to the sound around you but do show that you are contributing to the sound of the section – not just shadowing – but giving support to the sound. Trygstad's cello section looks for musicians who connect to each other. 'You can't be a passenger. Playing in a cello section requires an intimate connection to the music in the same way as when you're working on your concertos, but it's tailored to the restrictions of playing in a large group.'

Gill and Cole both feel that trials are a two-way process. 'Without in any way being arrogant, you have an opportunity to trial the orchestra too, so if you're not getting on with people or you don't like the lifestyle, it's good to be honest with yourself,' Gill advises. Gilliver sums up the challenge beautifully: 'Be prepared, be conscientious, be true to yourself. Try to be the person you would like to sit next to and if you get the job, then keep that up for the next 30 years!'

SELECTED CELLOS & BOWS

CARLO ANTONIO TESTORE c.1730

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

£320,000

A very fine example of Testore's work in excellent condition. This versatile cello has a natural capacity for soloistic projection as well as the tonal flexibility to blend beautifully in a chamber or orchestral context. Beare certificate.

FLORENTINE CELLO c.1750

L.O.B: 30" (760mm) String length: 27¼" (693mm)

£80,000

A handsome Italian cello labelled Lorenzo Carcassi with a colourful, deep, fine tone and powerful upper register projection. Previously played by an orchestral principal and soloist. In good restored condition. J&A Beare letter.

JAMES W BRIGGS CELLO

L.O.B.: 29¾" (757mm) String length: 27½" (689mm)

£38,000

This handsome cello by James William Briggs belongs to a principal cellist and is in excellent condition. It is a fine example of his later work and has attractive craqueled varnish. The tone is rich and powerful.

ROBIN AITCHISON GUADAGNINI COPY

L.O.B: 28⅞" (715mm) String length: 26⅜" (668mm)

£29,000

This beautiful cello was made in 2003 and has a fine, Italianate tone. Robin has recently re-graduated this instrument following his latest research into the c.1755 Guadagnini cello that he has copied for many years.

JOHN YOUNG CELLO c.1730

L.O.B: 29" (735mm) String length: 26¾" (681mm)

£25,000

A handsome unpurpled early English cello in very good condition, with a clear, powerful tone and quick response.

FINE GERMAN CELLO c.1820

L.O.B: 29½" (754mm) String length: 27" (685mm)

£20,000

A distinctive and beautifully made German cello in good condition with a noble, deep tone and swift response.

LOCKEY HILL SCHOOL CELLO c.1780

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

£20,000

A beautiful English cello with lush red-brown varnish and a very rich, colourful tone with good projection.

CHAROTTE-MILLOT CELLO c.1830

L.O.B: 28¾" (731mm) String length: 27" (684mm)

£15,000

A handsome, comfortably sized cello by Joseph Charlotte-Millot in very good condition, with a fine tone.

LÉON MOUGENOT CELLO 1914

L.O.B: 30⅞" (765mm) String length: 26⅞" (683mm)

£14,500

An appealing example of the work of this respected French maker in repaired condition with an even, beautiful tone.

A. BACHMANN BAROQUE CELLO 1756

L.O.B: 29⅞" (740mm) String length: 26¾" (680mm)

£14,000

A small baroque cello with a characterful tone.

GERONIMO BARNABETTI CELLO c.1880

L.O.B: 30¼" (770mm) String length: 27" (683mm)

£10,000

A cello in excellent condition with an open, resonant tone.

Selected Cello Bows

Claude Thomassin	76.0	S	£12,000
C N Bazin	75.5	S	£9,000
Samuel Allen	78.8	S	£8,000
W E Hill & Sons (Johnston)	81.0	S	£8,000
W E Hill & Sons (Yeoman)	78.9	S	£7,500
Matt Wehling	81.8	G	£5,950
Roger Zabinski	80.5	S	£5,240
Steve Salchow	81.0	S	£4,760
Malcolm Taylor	83.6	G	£4,500
Victor Bernard	80.9	G	£4,300
Bernd Etzler	81.9	S	£4,000
French bow	73.0	S	£4,000
John Aniano	80.5	S	£3,970
Tim Baker	78.5	S	£3,800
Bernd Etzler	81.9	S	£3,500
Victor Bernard	81.2	S	£3,300
Robert Pierce	83.8	S	£3,210
Christian Wanka	83.2	S	£3,070
Bernd Etzler	81.0	S	£3,025
Rudolf Neudörfer	82.6	S	£3,000
John Clutterbuck	84.8	S	£3,000
H R Pfretzschner	83.0	S	£2,750
David Tempest	80.2	S	£1,950
Gunther A Paulus	79.0	S	£1,700
Alfons Riedl	81.0	S	£1,500
Jackson Fornaciari	81.8	S	£1,100
Siqueira	80.0	N	£880

For a complete list of cellos and bows visit www.aitchisoncellos.com