
NEWS FOR CELLISTS SPRING 2021

First aid for cellos

We started writing an article about first aid for cellos during the latest lockdown, motivated by several phone calls from players who'd had an accident but weren't able to see a luthier immediately. We have put together some initial 'first aid' guidance, answering questions such as, *Do I need to see a luthier or repairer? Is it safe to play my cello? What should I do now?*

See pages 2-3 for the full article which is also available to read on the website.



Free Solidarity Service to 31 May

Our free solidarity service is still up and running for professional cellists until the end of May 2021. So if your cello needs some sound post adjustment or (particularly after the very cold winter) you think a seam has come open somewhere and needs gluing, please don't hesitate to phone or email us and we'll make an appointment for you to visit.

There is no charge for sound adjustment or gluing – we would just like to help ensure that your cello is ready for action once things ease this spring/summer. It will be great to see you!

Join the new Cello Community

We keep hearing about the ways cellists have been keeping focussed and inspired over the last year and we have set up a new area of our website called *Cello Community* to help publicise cello projects and activities. <https://www.aitchisoncellos.com/cello-community/> So if you've started or developed an existing project, such as making recordings, extending your teaching practice online or posting videos, please send us about 100 words and a photo/video/link and we will share your project on our new *Cello Community* page. If you're planning a course or concert more than two months ahead, please send us the details and we'll list it on our *Courses and Concerts* page.

If you'd just like us to simply share a link to your web page to improve its status on Google, please send us the link and we will add it to our new *Links for Cellists* page. Let's stay connected and informed, inspired and reassured that musical life is continuing. Please encourage your friends and colleagues to get in touch with their details too.

Andrea Orchestra Rosin

The makers of Andrea Rosin have discontinued their slightly grittier textured 'Orchestra' rosin in favour of the Solo version which has been rebranded as 'Cecilia'. We still have some Orchestra rosin here if you love it and would like to carry on using it while it's still available. We also stock a smaller size of the new Solo cake which is a bit more affordable.

Cello Care Guides and postcards

We have reprinted our much loved *Cello Care Guide*, in case you'd like to have something to give your students when you finally see them face to face again. We have also reprinted some of our postcards, so just drop us a line and we'll post you some copies free of charge. Here's a link to the Guide so you can see it in pdf form: <https://www.aitchisoncellos.com/article-library/cello-care-guide/>

FIRST AID FOR CELLOS

Accidents happen. Whether it's a knock or bump to a cello which leaves it buzzing or sounding different, or if it's a more severe accident with visible damage, accidents are stressful and upsetting. The first golden rule – before an accident happens – is: **be insured.** Whatever the value of your instrument, you should take out a policy at the start of your ownership before anything goes wrong. If you are insured and you have an accident, you can be confident of getting your cello back to normal with considerably less worry, stress and expense. It's also a good idea to update your insurance valuations every three years or so.

The second golden rule is: **never attempt DIY.** A lot of damage can be done to instruments by attempted or makeshift repairs, particularly if the wrong glue is used. Violin makers only use a hot hide glue which is traditional and versatile but requires quite a bit of skill to use. Its greatest quality is that it creates a completely reversible repair.

The next rule: **keep all the pieces.** This could mean simply conserving one broken corner, but in a more severe accident, there could be many more wood fragments to collect and preserve. No matter how slight - or appalling - the damage to an instrument is, if you manage to keep all the pieces together, these will be used by the restorer which will both improve the quality of the repair and reduce the cost.

The last golden rule is: **use a good luthier or repairer.** A good luthier will ensure that your cello comes back playing the same - or better - than it used to play before the accident. They will also make sure that you are fully compensated for any loss of value to the instrument as a result of the accident.

Is the cello safe to play if I can't see any damage? Let's explore the least daunting scenario: an accident has occurred but there is no obvious damage – so you just need to know if the cello is safe to play. The best test of this is to try playing the cello. If the cello plays as well as it did just before the accident, the odds are that the cello has escaped any kind of damage.

If you experience any loss in response, or if it just doesn't play the same as it did before, then you need to establish what has changed and this will almost certainly mean consulting a luthier. Your cello might have suffered virtually invisible damage such as seams coming open, which has a big effect on the sound, or the bridge legs may have splayed, which also has a big effect on the sound. (If you know where your bridge feet stand and you know how to pull the legs of a

bridge back in again, this may be something that you can remedy yourself.)

Another symptom to watch out for is a change in string heights/clearances. If the fingerboard has become partly unglued from the neck, this can be hard to spot with the naked eye, but you may notice that the string clearances have increased, particularly in 4th position. Another warning sign might be a buzz. So, if there is a loss of response, if string heights have changed or if there is a buzz it's a good idea to get the cello checked over by a luthier.

My cello has some visible minor damage: what next?

One of the most common examples of minor damage to cellos is when a corner gets knocked off. It's very easy to damage the corners on cellos, particularly on the front as spruce is far more brittle and breakable than maple and it's generally very exposed to wear and tear as a result of playing. For this reason, it's very common to find that the treble side front corners on old instruments have been reconstructed, while the corners on the bass side are repaired and worn but still original. The most vulnerable corner of all is the lower treble corner as it's easy to knock it off with the bow tip on an A string up bow. As explained above, the number one rule is to pick up all the pieces. Corners are easy to repair if all the pieces are there and particularly if it's a clean break. If pieces are missing, then it will involve a lot more work and expense.

Corner repairs rarely qualify for insurance claims because the cost is usually less than the standard excess. But if you collect all the pieces, it will be a quick and easy repair and won't involve an insurance claim or affect your no claims bonus. If there is damage to a corner and you can't get to your luthier immediately, be sure to treat all the damaged surfaces with the greatest possible respect; if they can be kept clean and untouched that will also help the repair. If a broken surface gets further damaged, that just makes the repair more difficult.

Cracks – new or old? When an accident happens, it's easy to become unnecessarily anxious. We often see people who have started worrying about old/pre-existing cracks they never worried about before, because they think they are new and caused by the recent accident. Here's an easy test to see if a crack is new or old. Unless they are immaculately repaired, all old cracks have some sort of dirt in them while the unvarnished surfaces in a new crack will look

startlingly pale. So, if you have an accident and then spot a crack that is dirty or dark, be reassured that it's not new and you don't have to worry about it any more than you did before the accident.

Rib cracks. It's very easy to make small cracks in cello ribs with quite a minor incident or bump. Small rib cracks under 5cm long don't pose a structural risk to the instrument but it's good to get them seen to before they become dirty. Rib cracks are often out of register – one side is slightly higher than the other – but they can usually be persuaded, with skill, to lie flat again and can then be glued easily. Bigger rib cracks are more of a concern. Even a long, simple rib crack can release quite a lot of tension in the wood; long rib cracks also start to compromise the sound of the cello. More complex rib cracks where there is a hole or if a crack is in the shape of an 'H' should be attended to by a luthier as quickly as possible. It's often necessary to remove the front of the cello in order to repair longer rib cracks properly which is quite a costly job that will involve an insurance claim.

Major damage. Most cracks in the front or back should be taken rather more seriously than rib cracks. Cello fronts are more prone to cracking than any other part of the instrument due to the structure and nature of spruce wood. If a crack is close to the edgework, you may be able to live with it for a while, but any crack that starts or finishes in a sound hole or is close to the sound post or bass bar needs immediate attention and the cello really shouldn't be used if it has a crack of this nature. Sound post cracks are always a serious concern, whether in the front or back of an instrument and they need to be attended to straightaway. Sound post cracks have an immediate effect on the sound and value of a cello, especially if the crack is in the back, so it's essential to include this loss in value in an insurance claim. Small shrinkage or internal cracks in the back may not be too serious but should ultimately be checked out and attended to.

Insurance claims: we often hear from players uncertain whether they can make a valid insurance claim after an accident. The answer is simple: if damage has occurred to your cello because of a clearly identifiable accident or mishap - no matter how big or small, no matter how silly, embarrassing or avoidable it was, then you can make a valid claim without worrying and your insurer will cover the cost of the repair and any loss in value. If you need a temporary repair for your cello to make it safe until there is an opportunity for you to leave the

cello with a luthier, the cost of this should be covered by your insurers if the claim is made correctly.

How to make a claim: If you have an accident and need to make a claim, inform your insurers immediately. They will send you a claim form and a claim number. Choose your luthier carefully and as soon as possible, file a written report with your insurers describing how the damage happened along with a full assessment from the luthier about the remedy and any potential unknowns (sometimes the extent of the claim isn't known until you open an instrument) and the likely loss in value (if any). NB Keep your valuations up to date. It's very important to get your instruments and bows valued regularly by a trusted and experienced luthier. If your valuation gets too out of date, you would not be compensated for the true value of your instrument if it were lost, destroyed or stolen.

What insurance doesn't cover Things that are not covered by your insurance are general wear and tear – including varnish being rubbed off while a cello is played, and small scratches and bumps that will in any case fall below the excess for most policies. It's also important to know that insurers don't cover the cost of damage that occurs to an instrument through atmospheric changes. So if you travel with your cello to somewhere very hot or dry you should protect yourself against this kind of damage by making sure you humidify your cello case.

Sound effects. Players often worry if the sound of their repaired cello will be as good as it was before the accident. This is another reason to use a good violin maker. A good luthier will have enormous respect for the instrument's original set up and set up history and will try wherever possible to reinstate your original set up after the repair is complete. Often a change in the sound of a repaired instrument is caused by changes from the original set up and not actually by the repair itself. Sometimes a repair introduces extra strength to the instrument, and this is bound to change its sound and potentially its response – but if you work with an experienced luthier, they will design reinforcements in order to change the instrument as little as possible. They will also be able to compensate for the repairs in the final set up and sound adjustment of the instrument after the repair is complete. Finally, a good repairer will make sure you are compensated correctly if there is any loss of value to the instrument at all. This is the only way to preserving the long-term value of your instrument – and your investment - after an accident.

SELECTED CELLOS & BOWS

FENDT CELLO c.1800

L.O.B: 29¼ (743mm) String length: 27" (682mm)

£95,000

This outstanding cello was made by Bernhard Simon Fendt between 1798 and 1809 when he worked for Thomas Dodd in Covent Garden. The cello is in exceptionally good condition and has a rich tone and an even, quick response.

WILLIAM EBSWORTH HILL CELLO 1876

L.O.B: 29" (735mm) String length 27½" (694mm)

£40,000

A rare cello by William Ebsworth Hill with a smooth, expressive tone, in very good condition after a full restoration in our workshop. The varnish is a beautiful golden brown.

AITCHISON MONTAGNANA COPY

L.O.B: 29½" (740mm) String length: 27¼" (690mm)

£34,000

A close copy of the ex-Pergamenschikow Montagnana cello made in 2017. This cello has a rich, complex tone, a quick response and powerful projection. The cello is in immaculate condition and has benefitted from three years of playing to a high level.

PRESTON SCHOOL CELLO c.1800

L.O.B: 29" (740mm) String length: 26½" (679mm)

£25,000

An attractive English cello with painted on purfling in very good condition with a clear, crisp, even tone.

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, excellent power and projection and a swift response.

PETER WAMSLEY CELLO C.1740

L.O.B: 29¼" (745mm) String length: 27" (685mm)

£20,000

A beautiful Peter Wamsley cello in good, repaired condition with a rich, crisp tone of great quality.

KENNEDY SCHOOL CELLO c.1830

L.O.B: 29" (738mm) String length: 27¼" (693mm)

£20,000

A handsome Kennedy School cello with a beautiful resonant tone and attractive red-brown varnish.

SELECTED CELLO BOWS

Victor Fétique	76.0	S	£17,500
F N Voirin	76.2	S	£15,000
John Dodd	86.6	S	£13,500
W E Hill & Sons	81.8	S	tbc
W E Hill & Sons (Yeoman)	78.9	S/T	£7,500
David Samuels	80.2	S	£7,040
C H K Schmidt	82.4	G	£7,000
H&S Hill (Scarbro)	77.5	S	£6,500
A R Bultitude	80.8	G/T	£6,000
Bernd Etzler (gold medal)	83.3	S	£6,000
Roger Zabinski	82.1	S	£5,150
Roger Zabinski	83.6	S	£5,000
H&S (Albert Leeson)	75.5	S	£5,000
David Forbes (Dodd copy)	80.0	S	£4,890
Steve Salchow	81.6	S	£4,890
Evan Orman (Dodd copy)	80.6	S	£4,350
Mark Yakoushkin	83.8	S	£4,500
John Aniano	79.1	S	£4,070
Bernd Etzler	82.2	S	£4,000
Bernd Etzler	80.4	S	£4,000
Bernd Etzler	82.0	S	£4,000
Mark Drehmann	80.5	S	£3,980
John Aniano	83.7	S	£3,700
Robert Pierce	80.5	S	£3,510
Robert Pierce	79.0	S	£3,510
Richard Grünke	80.8	S	£3,300
Andrew McGill	83.2	S	£3,200
Bernd Etzler	81.2	S	£3,200
Christian Wanka	80.7	S	£2,940
Klaus Grünke	80.7	S	£2,890
H R Pfretzschner	83.0	S	£2,750
Heinz Dolling	77.8	S	£2,500
Siqueira	82.0	S	£1,250
M Francisco	82.0	S	£1,250
Jackson Fornaciari	82.6	S	£1,180
Luan Ruy	81.1	N	£950

We are seeking cellos and bows for the Cello Exchange. Please contact us for more details. For a complete list of cellos and bows for sale:

www.aitchisoncellos.com