
NEWS FOR CELLISTS AUTUMN 2021

Cello Enterprise

Our article this month is the first in a series of in-depth interviews with cellists who are engaged in creative projects that complement their musical careers. Our first interview is with cellist Jamie Walton. As well as being a successful soloist and chamber musician, Jamie has run a festival in Yorkshire since 2009 and is now launching a recording studio in the North York Moors. On pages 2 – 3 he describes how he managed to keep the festival going through two pandemic summers and expresses his vision for the arts in the post Covid era.



String reviews

We're rather behind with reviewing the latest cello strings! If you have any experience of the following strings, please could you let us know? Or if you could spare a day to test these strings on your cello with us, we could thank you for your time by giving you your favourite strings from those you tried.

The strings to be reviewed are: Thomastik Infeld **Rondo** and **Versum Solo**; Pirastro **Perpetual Edition** and **Cadenza**; Larsen **II Cannone**. Thank you!

Cello Community

We always knew cellists were an amazing community, but the past two years have given an insight as never before into the creativity and energy of so many. Last year we created a new 'Cello Community' area on our website, where we aim to publicise as many activities and achievements as we can. If you have a project which you'd like us to promote, please let us know what you're working on – we would love to publicise your work, whether it's a cello course or event, a recording, or a completely new enterprise connected in some way with being a cellist. If you're inspired by what you see, please encourage your friends and colleagues to get in touch with their details too. <https://www.aitchisoncellos.com/cello-community/>

Congratulations, Abel!

Warm congratulations to Abel Selaocoe for curating and performing his first solo Prom concert in August with BBC NOW. He's also recently been shortlisted for the 2021 Royal Philharmonic Society Instrumentalist Award, and he'll soon be recording his first album with Warner Classics & Erato. What a year! Robin was honoured to make a Montagnana copy for Abel in 2020 and is delighted to see it thriving in his hands.

Cello Exchange Update

After a quiet period during the lockdowns of the past 18 months, there is suddenly a considerable amount of interest from people looking for an instrument. If you are thinking of finding a new home for an instrument, we would be very happy to welcome more cellos in the £20,000 – £50,000 range.

We aim to find the best possible home for loved instruments. The funds from the sale go directly from the buyer to the seller, to ensure complete transparency. All instruments are published on our website, and we keep in close touch with owners at every stage of the process. Our sales commission is 12.5% of the selling price (inclusive).

CELLO ENTERPRISE : JAMIE WALTON

In 2009 cellist Jamie Walton established the North York Moors Chamber Music Festival, bringing challenging repertoire to the local population.

‘The pandemic has tested what we believe in and live for, to put it mildly. The easy option would have been to cancel last year’s festival, but I was determined to make it happen. 75% of our audience are local people, many of whom had been stuck indoors all spring, unable to see their loved ones or to connect to culture, so I felt a real responsibility to them, as well as to my fellow musicians. It was hugely positive and inspiring to realise the significance of what we do.

The theme of the 2020 festival was *Revolution!* We had no idea how apt a title it would prove to be. For previous festivals, we had performed in churches and priories around the national park, but all their doors were now shut. Luckily, the law changed just over a week before the start of the festival, allowing people to gather in marquees with open sides. A local landowner offered us a beautiful area in his grounds, and in the space of 9 days we set up a 5000 square foot marquee, laid a wooden floor and installed lighting, seating and acoustical panels around the performance space, decorated with paintings by local artists. The environment of the marquee made everything about the festival more informal: the seating was all on the same level, and the musicians were surrounded by the audience in different positions, depending on the piece. The audiences loved this informality, and many said they much preferred the marquee to chilly churches.

As musicians, being in such beautiful grounds we felt able to communicate each programme in a more powerful way. When you experience something fresh with your senses, the music changes. In the first week we could hear sheep and tractors during performances, but nobody seemed to mind – perhaps as they were so focussed on hearing live music again after so long. One evening ended with the Messiaen *Quartet for the End of Time*, and just before the final violin solo by Charlotte Scott, an owl hooted, which was magical and changed the way everyone heard the piece. It reminded me how unfruitful it is to aim only for perfection, as if music were just a competition. It’s better to work towards something that expresses real meaning, and if it comes at the cost of a few wolf notes, so be it.

Happily for us, the festival has a loyal core audience who are used to being served an adventurous programme of music. It’s like any menu – you don’t want everything sweet; you want bitterness, sourness,

aromatics. When people sometimes question our challenging repertoire (Maxwell Davies, Ades, Bartok, Schoenberg) I remind them that you don’t go to an art gallery to stare at a Constable for two hours; you go from room to room and see a Rothko, a Picasso, a Matisse.

We have established a structure and style to help audiences navigate the experience; each festival has a theme and a narrative form, and each concert has its own title, so it’s a journey within a journey. We will try to explain, for example, why we’ve chosen a piece such as the Schoenberg *Chamber Symphony No. 1*. Last year, Matt Hunt, a fabulous clarinettist, talked about the themes throughout this piece and its historical context. This approach brought the audience even closer to the performers, and allowed a stronger connection between them. Given the times we were all living through, this sense of context was even more relevant, and to our surprise, the Schoenberg got the biggest cheer of the entire 2020 festival. Afterwards, people said, ‘That spoke to me. I didn’t like it and it made me feel upset and traumatised, but it was exciting, and it made sense.’

As musicians, we have to think about how we move closer to what music is meant to be. How should we engage with our audiences in the future, and change programming to attract them? How do we design programmes to express the times we’ve been through? After the success of 2020, we decided on the theme of ‘Epoch’ for the 2021 festival. The times we’re living in have shifted our understanding of previous epochs and we wanted to shine a musical light on different periods of history to give a sense of meaningful context to the current epoch.

We also decided to launch a Young Artists Series for the 2021 festival: five extra concerts by five student ensembles who would receive mentoring and coaching during their stay with us. We wanted our young artists to have a completely new experience of performing and I told them to prepare for the festival, not as if they were about to do an exam or win a competition, but to perform in an environment where they would be hugely appreciated, not judged. I wanted to say to young people who are having a difficult time or can’t really see a future: make your future and be the change you want to see.

We knew the Young Artists scheme was an ambitious development for 2021, but back in November 2020 when we were putting plans in place, we assumed that

we wouldn't have to work under such tight restrictions again, and that running the festival wouldn't be as intense and terrifying as it had been in 2020 when we had to track and trace every audience member. In fact, we had no idea what challenges lay ahead in 2021!

As we moved towards July this year, I started feeling real trepidation. We'd planned to use the marquee again, so all those logistics were under control, but the international travel situation was looking increasingly impossible. The European musicians I'd booked were saying they couldn't come to perform for us if they had to quarantine, so a month before the festival I decided we couldn't have our European and Swiss friends this year. I found wonderful UK artists to replace them, but five of them were due to be in Switzerland the week before they were due to perform with us, and at that stage, Switzerland was on the amber list. I'm good at holding my nerve, and I don't experience fear, but I was certainly feeling the pressure and a lot of people were asking how it was going to work. Even our young artists in London were saying they couldn't rehearse together as they kept being pinged. If anything, all this uncertainty made me even more determined to go ahead. I asked everyone to have confidence, and tried to reassure them that everything would be fine.

To our huge relief, Switzerland went onto the green list just in time to allow our UK colleagues back to play the Bartok quintet, of all things, which we had to rehearse on the day and perform that night! Although every single day of the festival had some major crisis, I enjoyed every moment. More importantly, the performances were hugely successful and the audiences had no idea what challenges were taking place behind the scenes - for example, arranging a cross-country car for a violinist to get him back from an emergency trip to New York for a funeral with one hour to go before his concert, after he missed a train.

All this has taught me that we have to learn to continue as normal: through a pandemic, through a festival, through life, no matter how challenging. We *can* do this. It's all an attitude of mind. Despite all the crises - and in fact, because of them - the 2021 festival was the most successful of all the 13 we've done. The audience numbers were unprecedentedly high and we as musicians felt as if we were on top of this perilous wave, surfing at an altitude we'd never experienced before and so the playing was off the scale. Everybody, musicians and audience, felt there was something very powerful going on to combat what was going on out there in the pandemic world, in a way new to everyone.

Our average audience size was 250 people over a total of 15 concerts, but for one concert, 'On Wenlock Edge',

40 people turned up without advance tickets and we had to open the back of the marquee and run to the nearest houses to borrow dining chairs. We arranged the seating to allow for social distancing, but the audience drew the chairs closer together, and since we were in a ventilated space there were no problems. I had planned a slightly less challenging programme this year, but to my surprise the hit performance was the Bartok quintet - when I'd been sure it would have been the Mendelssohn Octet. People seem to find the unfamiliar exciting. You feel you're going on a journey, and that stimulates different parts of the heart and mind.

The other pandemic project keeping me busy has been converting two barns into a state-of-the-art recording studio in the North York Moors national park. We hope that Ayriel Studios will free performers from normal constraints when making recordings. There's accommodation available on site, and in between takes, musicians can walk out into the open, look across the moors and breathe the extraordinary air. We launch in November, but we had an exciting early visit from Victoria Mullova and Alasdair Beatson who came to record Schubert's *Fantasie* last month, and I've just recorded the Bach Suites there with Adam Binks.

The success of the festival shows that there's an appetite for a substantial performance venue for this region. So my long-term project, ambitious as it might sound, is to build a concert hall for the area. The festival marquee has proved such a versatile, informal and accessible performance space, this it has inspired me to think of re-creating this environment in a permanent setting, to promote meaningful culture, and open to local schools and community groups. If we can construct a beautiful 21st century venue which encourages the engagement and interaction of an audience, it's future-proof. I've even found the ideal spot on a peninsula overlooking the sea.

For me, the lack of government support for the arts during the 2020/1 lockdowns felt like someone turning off the life support machine of a loved one. To anyone questioning the importance of our cultural life I'd say: if you think you can live without the arts, stop hanging paintings on your walls, take your curtains down, stop listening to music and don't watch television!

Maybe I should thank the last two years for being a catalyst propelling me forward in this way. The pandemic has been devastating for the arts, and many other industries, but you have to move with the times and be inventive in order not just to survive, but to thrive.'

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.

JOSEPH HILL CELLO 1773

L.O.B: 29½" (752mm) String length: 27" (683mm)

£50,000

This beautiful English cello was made by Joseph Hill at his Haymarket premises in London and has a colourful, elegant and expressive tone with considerable power. This cello was played professionally for 52 years by its current owner.

FINE CELLO, POSSIBLY FLEMISH c.1790

L.O.B: 30¼" (770mm) String Length 27¼" (690mm)

£48,000

A very fine cello, possibly of Flemish origin, with an expansive, beautiful tone and well-preserved pale orange-gold varnish. This cello is in excellent condition and is a joy to play.

JAMES W BRIGGS CELLO 1899

L.O.B: 29¾" (755mm) String length: 27½" (689mm)

£45,000

This handsome instrument was made by James Briggs in Glasgow and has a rich, powerful tone. It features in *Violin Making in Scotland 1750-1950* by David Rattray.
Labelled: James W Briggs Glasgow 1899

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

GUERSAN SCHOOL CELLO c.1790

L.O.B: 29½" (748mm) String length: 27¼" (688mm)

£15,000

A lovely early French cello with a very fine tone and excellent projection.

MIRECOURT CELLO c.1910

L.O.B: 30¼" (770mm) String length: 27" (682mm)

£12,750

A handsome Mirecourt cello in excellent condition with a rich, powerful and even tone.

SELECTED CELLO BOWS

F. N. Voirin	76.2	S	£15,000
Thomas Tubbs	86.6	S	£10,000
W. E. Hill & Sons (Yeoman)	78.9	S/T	£8,000
David Samuels	80.2	S	£7,040
C. H. K. Schmidt	82.4	G	£7,000
W.E.H.&S Hill (Scarbro)	77.5	S	£6,500
W. E. Hill & Sons (Bishop)	76.0	S	£6,000
A. R. Bultitude	80.8	G/T	£6,000
Paul Sadka	80.2	S	£5,600
W.E.H.&S Hill	82.0	S	£5,500
J. S. Finkel	83.0	G	£5,250
John Stagg	85.3	G	£5,000
Roger Zabinski	82.1	S	£5,150
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
Eric Lane	81.0	S	£4,070
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
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	£3,250
Didier Claudel	82.5	S	£tbc
Bernd Etzler	81.2	S	£3,200
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	£1,250
Juliano Oliveira	83.4	S	£1,250
S. Trindade	79.6	N	£975
Alfred Knoll	83.5	S	£975
Luan Ruy	81.1	N	£975

We welcome cellos for the Cello Exchange. Please contact us for more details.

www.aitchisoncellos.com