
NEWS FOR CELLISTS FEBRUARY 2022

String Reviews

The R & D departments of Thomastik Infeld, Pirastro and Larsen have released several important families of strings over the past few years, including Versum Solo, Rondo, Il Cannone and Perpetual Edition and Cadenza.

We spent a dynamic day in December testing these strings with Julian Ogilvie and Sophia Ramnarine and have also received some very helpful feedback from Ben Chappell, Dan Harrison, Morwenna del Mar, Philip Hewitt, Jeff Barnardo, Michael Doran and Drury Loveridge. Thank you all for your help.



Updated Covid Policy

Although Covid restrictions are being progressively relaxed, we aim to keep our visitors as safe as possible. We are both triple vaccinated and currently take lateral flow tests twice a week.

Unless you have recently recovered from Covid, we will wear masks during your appointment and ask you to do the same. We'd also be very grateful if you could take a lateral flow test shortly before your visit, while these tests remain freely available. Thank you!

LEMONADE IN THE ARMENIAN QUARTER

Sarah Mnatzaganian



Some you already know about Sarah's other life as a poet. Her first book, *Lemonade in the Armenian Quarter*, is being published this month by Against the Grain Poetry Press. In response to the book, poet Wendy Cope writes: *'This collection includes several loving poems about family, with characters who come alive on the page. Her poems about children leaving home will bring tears to some eyes. And she writes so deliciously about food that she makes me hungry.'*

Lemonade in the Armenian Quarter isn't available in bookshops as it's published by an independent press. If you'd like to order a copy of the book, here's the link: <https://againstthegrainpoetrypress.wordpress.com/shop>

Sarah will read poems from the pamphlet at a free online launch event at 3pm on Sunday 20 March. The Eventbrite link is <https://t.co/T0kTkI6B6c> if you'd like to reserve a place or please visit: <https://sarahmnatzaganian.co.uk> where you'll find all this information and links to some poems.

International Pernambuco Conservation Initiative (IPCI)

The IPCI was formed in the year 2000 by a group of committed and far-sighted bowmakers to help conserve the pernambuco tree by working with farmers and environmental research groups in Brazil. You can read about their current projects on their website: <http://www.ipci-usa.org/>

It's now 20 years since we held our first international contemporary bow exhibition, *Take a Bow 2002*. Although we've evolved this event into a year-round opportunity to try contemporary bows, we still donate a percentage of our annual bow sales to the IPCI. Planting trees in Brazil is a perfect way to reduce your carbon footprint as well as to ensure the future of bow making for years to come.

STRING REVIEWS 2022

Thomastik Versum Solo strings have been available since 2017 and have a strong following. Players describe them as long-lasting strings with more texture, power and projection than a standard or solo Larsen. During our tests, **Versum Solo A** felt more flexible under Sophia's left hand than a light tension Larsen Solo A that she had used before on her contemporary cello. She liked the responsiveness and the slightly textured edge to the sound and enjoyed the string's ability to project and the way it settled down quickly.

Versum Solo D sounded more textured than the A and had more structure, power and clarity, which created a good transition to a Spirocore G. The A and D played fifths cleanly. After about 2 months Sophia wrote: 'The soft and supple tension in the new strings facilitated my playing of Haydn's D major cello concerto, without compromising on projection. I enjoyed the resonance of the Versum Solo D so much that I changed my fingering in the second movement in order to play the D for longer. After 2 months, I remain delighted by the overall clarity, the resonant D string and the ease of playing (noticeable in thumb position) that Versum Solos provide me.'

Morwenna del Mar loves her new Versum Solo A & D. 'I've had them on for about 2 months, after switching from Larsen Solo, using Magnacore on the bottom. My cello has absolutely fallen in love with them – they're like silky chocolate! The D took a while to settle, but the A settled straight away.'

Both Julian and Sophia preferred Versum Solo A and D to the G and C. They described Versum Solo C as 'a fat string with a softer texture than Spirocore, powerful but rather over resonant and less immediate and structured; also, harder to control than a Spirocore.'

Thomastik Rondo. Players described Rondo strings as quick to play in, with a durability equivalent to Versum Solo and with a substance and brilliance that can help to brighten an over-dark bass. Our testers described the **Rondo A** as resonant, pure, clear and soloistic, powerful and sweet up high. The sound was 'shiny' as opposed to the 'matt' effect of Versum Solo. Sophia commented on Rondo's interesting quality of core and clarity, suggesting it would work well as a string for the Dvorak cello concerto but possibly not for Haydn.

Rondo D projected clearly, matching the texture of Rondo A and overall providing a closer match than between a freshly fitted Versum Solo A & D (but Versum D may take longer to settle down than a Rondo). Rondo D wasn't as clear in fourth position as Versum Solo but had the same overtones as Rondo A. 5ths were a little different and required the player to play the A string sharp. **Rondo G** spoke clearly straight

away, with hardly any of the 'tungsten edge' often associated with tungsten-wound G strings. The sound was strong and clear right up into the thumb position. **Rondo C** initially seemed a little reluctant to speak and the player had to work to get a clear sound, and also needed to play nearer the bridge, but this may simply mean that the string needed playing in. The testers described Rondo C as less gravelly than a Spirocore.

Il Cannone 'Direct & Focused' and 'Warm & Broad'. Julian was delighted with the response from his English cello when we fitted a set of Larsen Il Cannone Direct & Focused. 'They work together very well as a coherent set. When we first put the A and D on, I felt the freedom and quick response of those upper strings. They had more core sound and texture than Versum Solos. The C has a lot of power, and a bit more bite than Arioso. The G has lots of power and possibly more texture than an (admittedly older) Arioso. The G spoke well immediately, although with a bit of the classic new G tungsten 'edge' but settled after 3–4 days. After 2–3 days playing one hour a day the C sounded fully settled and even more open and free than when initially put on. G and C have similar clarity to Spirocore but more warmth, and more texture than standard Larsens. Overall, the Il Cannone Direct & Focused set has great power and bite, and a lovely resonance to all the strings, which makes them very enjoyable to play. They ring very well in pizzicato too.' Drury Loveridge has been using Il Cannone Direct & Focused A and D on his 1820s cello for 18 months. 'Easily the best strings I've ever had. The extra volume and brightness are exceptional, but in a controllable, nuanced way. They don't collapse under too much bow weight and seem to last forever.'

We haven't yet been able to test the Il Cannone 'Warm & Broad' set extensively, but the consensus is that they are a warmer version of standard Larsen strings. Michael Doran of Doran Violins, Seattle, finds the Warm & Broad set as having 'a lot of different colours, while still having a solid core that was loud and direct. I felt I could hear a lot of flexibility to the sound, and the response was still quick and precise. It's rare and very difficult to find that balance in a string. One customer wanted warmer strings, so we tried Evah Pirazzi Gold set which she really liked, but the IC Warm & Broad were even better and gave her things she didn't even know she wanted.'

Pirastro Perpetual Edition. Julian and Sophia described Perpetual Edition A as a 'reedy, narrow, textured, resonant and colourful string with a nice feeling under the left hand.' Perpetual Edition D was much warmer than the A, but the sound decayed quickly and didn't do the contemporary cello any favours. On Julian's old English cello, the Perpetual Edition D made a clear tenor

sound, but lacked the punch of Il Cannone Direct & Focussed. Philip Hewitt finds that Perpetual Edition strings take about 5 days to play in. He enjoys the power on the C and G, but never liked the A and D to the same extent as 'although powerful, they could be a bit strident and harsh, particularly in thumb position.' Jeff Barnardo finds his set of Perpetual Editions very well balanced and the sound quality and tone colour very attractive. 'The A string has a good core and projection while retaining a singing quality. The D string is a perfect bridge between the A and G strings. The lower strings of the Edition set for me have the rather distinctive taste of Pirastro lower strings. The G and C strings have an extremely broad distinctive baritone sound. The texture and the tone colours are very attractive. I can definitely see many cellists would fall in love with the set.'

Sophia tested **Perpetual Cadenza G and C** and decided to keep them both on her cello, paired with Versum

Solo A and D. She enjoys the lower tension of the string and the comfort this gives her left hand, particularly in thumb position and she loves the clarity of sound they produce, even when playing in a resonant acoustic. Daniel Harrison tried Perpetual Cadenza G & C strings for his Joseph Hill cello as they are advertised as being particularly suitable for old or fine instruments. 'They had a similar feel under the bow as gut, but the sound did not develop as gut stings do, in volume, tone or attack. For me, they lacked focus, and the resonance of the instrument was lost.' Ben Chappell found that he had to replace his Perpetual Cadenza strings more regularly than he would have hoped.

If you would like to send your feedback on any of these strings, please don't hesitate to email us your thoughts and we will be delighted to add them to the online version of this article.

String tensions and materials

Manufacturer and name		Medium tension (lb)	Windings	Core materials
Thomastik Versum Solo	A	40.1	Multialloy	Steel
	D	31.5	Multialloy	Steel
	G	31.5	Tungsten/Chrome	Spiral
	C	30.2	Tungsten/Chrome	Spiral
Pirastro Perpetual Edition	A	39.2 (38.1)*	Chrome steel	Steel
	D	31.1 (30.2)*	Chrome steel	Steel
	G	30.9 (30.0)*	Tungsten	Rope core
	C	30.0 (29.1)*	Tungsten	Rope core
Pirastro Cadenza	G	30.4 (29.5)*	Rope core	Tungsten
	C	29.0 (28.2)*	Rope core	Tungsten
Thomastik Rondo	A	41.4	Multialloy	Carbon steel
	D	31.5	Multialloy	Carbon steel
	G	31.5	Tungsten/Chrome	Spiral
	C	30.4	Tungsten/Chrome	Spiral
Larsen Il Cannone Direct & Focused	A	40.8	Unique material	Unique material
	D	31.1	Solid steel core	Stainless steel
	G	30.6	Steel rope core	Tungsten
	C	29.8	Steel rope core	Tungsten
Larsen Il Cannone Warm & Broad	A	40.8	Solid steel core	Stainless steel
	D	31.1	Solid steel core	Stainless steel
	G	30.4	Steel rope core	Tungsten
	C	29.8	Steel rope core	Tungsten

***Most manufacturers publish string tensions for a vibrating string length of 700mm but Pirastro publish data based on a string length of 690mm. Professor Jim Woodhouse of Cambridge University's Engineering Department has confirmed that 3% is the correction to apply to make Pirastro's data comparable to other manufacturers, so we offer the adjusted figure first, for continuity, followed by Pirastro's published data in brackets.**

SELECTED CELLOS & BOWS

FENDT CELLO c.1800

L.O.B: 29¼" (743mm) String length: 26⅞" (682mm)

£105,000

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.

JOHN MORRISON CELLO c.1820

L.O.B: 29⅞" (740mm) String length: 26½" (675mm)

£55,000

A late cello by John Morrison (1760-1827) in excellent condition, with refined arching and translucent red-gold varnish. The bass is rich, the treble clear and effortless.

A quick, rewarding response under the bow.

FINE CELLO, POSSIBLY FLEMISH c.1790

L.O.B: 30¼" (770mm) String Length 27⅞" (687mm)

£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: 27⅞" (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

COLIN IRVING CELLO 1988

L.O.B: 29¾" (755mm) String length: 27¼" (690mm)

£tbc

A fine example of Colin Irving's work, this cello has had extensive professional use and is in excellent condition. The tone is even, dark and rich.

FINE GERMAN CELLO c.1850

L.O.B: 29½" (750mm) String length: 26¼" (665mm)

£tbc

An attractive German cello of very good quality that has recently arrived for sale. The tone is surprisingly powerful and the bass response rich and rewarding.

SMALL ¾ CELLO c.1780

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

£tbc

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

CELLO BOWS

James Tubbs c. 1870	85.4	S	£14,000
André Vigneron (fils)	81.3	S	£12,750
Thomas Tubbs	86.6	S	£10,000
Dodd bow, Tubbs frog	93.2	S	£10,000
W. E. Hill & Sons (Yeoman)	78.9	S	£8,000
David Samuels	80.2	S	£7,200
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	£5,270
H.&S. (Albert Leeson)	75.5	S	£5,000
David Forbes (Dodd copy)	80.0	S	£5,000
Steve Salchow	81.6	S	£5,000
Evan Orman (Dodd copy)	80.6	S	£4,580
Mark Yakoushkin	83.8	S	£4,500
Eric Lane	81.0	S	£4,070
Bernd Etzler	82.2	S	£4,000
Bernd Etzler	82.0	S	£4,000
Mark Drehmann	80.5	S	£3,980
Jacobus van der Geest	80.7	G	£3,900
Robert Pierce	80.5	S	£3,510
Richard Grünke	80.8	S	£3,300
Andrew McGill	83.2	S	£3,250
Christian Wanka	81.4	S	£3,020
Didier Claudel	82.5	S	£3,000
Bernd Etzler	81.2	S	£3,200
Didier Claudel	82.5	S	£3,000
Klaus Grünke	80.7	S	£2,970
H. R. Pfretzschner	83.0	S	£2,750
David Tempest	77.3	S	£2,500
Heinz Dolling	77.8	S	£2,500
M Francisco	81.5	S	£1,250
Jackson Fornaciari	82.6	S	£1,250
Juliano Oliveira	83.4	S	£1,250
Gunther Paulus	81.5	S	£1,200
Juliano Oliveira	82.6	N	£975
S. Trindade	79.6	N	£975
Luan Ruy	81.1	N	£975

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

www.aitchisoncellos.com