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## AUTUMN NEWS FOR CELLISTS 2022

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### *Cello Enterprise: Mats Lidström*

Our next interview in the Cello Enterprise series is with renowned cellist, teacher, transcriber, arranger and composer, Mats Lidström. The interview is presented in a Q & A format, to show how Sarah coaxed details of some past and present projects from this modest cellist!



### *Thank you for supporting Lemonade*

Thanks to everyone who has read and supported Sarah's first book, *Lemonade in the Armenian Quarter*, which has won the Saboteur Best Poetry Pamphlet Award 2022 and is already on its third printing.

Copies can be ordered via your local bookshop or online from the following suppliers:

<https://againstthegrainpoetrypress.wordpress.com/>  
<https://www.poetrybooks.co.uk/>  
<https://www.toppingbooks.co.uk/books/>

### *Trees for Cellos*

Only a tiny fraction of a mature spruce and maple tree goes into making a cello, but we hope that every player of Robin's instruments will be happy to know that many more branches and leaves will reach into the air as a result of their ownership.

We are supporting a tree planting and rewilding project in Scotland called Jamie's Wood. For every cello Robin completes, we will fund the planting and protection of a small grove of ten native broadleaf trees on the Glenlude Estate, fifteen miles west of Selkirk. <https://jamieswood.carrd.co/>

### *Videos*

We're excited to let you know that we're working with Thibault Blanchard-Dubois and Samara Ginsberg on a series of practical cello care videos. We hope to publish the first video before Christmas. More details will be released on social media and there will be an update in the next newsletter.

In December, Robin was invited to appear alongside distinguished US luthiers Samuel Zygmuntowicz and Andrew Ryan at a 'First Fridays' Oberlin Acoustics Online Seminar. The video can be viewed here: <https://www.aitchisoncellos.com/cellos-by-robin/video-gallery/>

### *International violin makers meet again*

In June, after a two-year Covid-induced pause, Robin was delighted to join senior international colleagues at the VSA Oberlin Violin Makers' Workshop, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his first visit. In August, Robin joined a similar gathering in the mediaeval German city of Brandenburg. We send our warmest thanks to Christopher Germain and Ian McWilliams the directors of both workshops, for the enormous energy and inspiration they bring to the international violin making community.

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# CELLO ENTERPRISE : MATS LIDSTRÖM

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**S:** *One look at your website shows that you're a very enterprising cellist! How would you describe your philosophy?*

**M:** There's a wonderful quote from William Pleeth: 'Our heart has the most beautiful partner in our hands. Their gestures are the outward expression of what we feel inside.' I believe that everyone is extraordinary and has the capacity to do extraordinary things with their time. I need to feel productive and creative, that I'm not idle in any way and that everything I do is done with integrity. If I have spare time, I don't want to lose it just reading the paper for 15 minutes – I would rather work on a project, and get it finished a little sooner.

**S:** *How did you cope during the lockdowns?*

**M:** None of us knew when the pandemic would finish, but I knew I must have something to show for that time! My main focus, apart from trying to teach and support my students online, was writing two movements of a cello concerto, and I'm hoping to write the last movement in December. Life is particularly busy at the moment. I normally practice for four hours a day but I'm currently practising for five and a half hours, just to cover the repertoire I'm recording with one of my sons in in two weeks' time – a tribute to Saint-Saëns called *The Swan*. I'm also preparing for three concerts in Oxford, including the premiere of my Puccini fantasy for cello and orchestra for which I'm just proofreading the orchestral parts!

**S:** *I'd love to hear more about the Puccini project.*

**M:** I have this desire to create cello concertos from the music of those masters who didn't write for the cello. I started with Verdi (the *Rigoletto Fantasy*) which was straightforward; his work is full of hits, and you can compose bridges between each section and put it together quite easily. I thought I would be able to put together the Puccini fantasy within a fortnight, but I hadn't realized that his operatic solos are so integrated with the narrative and the theatrical aspect. So I listened to all the Puccini operas and made note of which sections I found really attractive and then photocopied those sections and made piles of extracts over the floor, labelled with their tempo and time signature – then picked extracts from all these piles and started putting it together like a jigsaw. You then have to compose bridges between some of the sections, composing in the style of the composer, and above all elaborating the voice part to make it sound instrumental. A lot of Puccini's music is in 6/8 and I had to work hard to find sections in 2/4 so it doesn't start

sounding predictable to the orchestra. Sometimes I look at the score and think, "Who am I to interfere with Puccini?", but maybe I can hide behind the fact that I love Puccini and I want to do something for us cellists.

**S:** *And the Saint-Saëns recording?*

**M:** It's a tribute to Saint-Saëns called *The Swan*. It's a really fun project with my pianist son Leif: we've found 25 'swan' compositions from all parts of the world including the Vatican and New Orleans. I went through the work of the 750 women composers on IMSLP and found one 'swan' by Fanny Mendelssohn and, quite by chance, a Swedish swan piece by Hélène Tham. Most of the pieces were songs or written for other instruments, so I've arranged them for the cello - I'm always working to extend the cello repertoire by writing transcriptions, including the *If Bach had been a Cellist* series. You learn so much from the research and get so many ideas for future projects.

**S:** *I see from the Stainer & Bell website that you're a prolific composer as well as an arranger and transcriber.*

**M:** I've written a great deal for cello and piano and other instruments, of varying difficulty, including sets of concert cello pieces for young children. One is called *Ballroom Dances*, and then there's *Hotel Suite* (the movements have room numbers instead of titles, plus a mini bar!) and also *Traffic* and *Spooky Pieces*.

The idea is to offer some proper recital pieces with an easy cello part and a complex piano part so the student can really feel a blast behind them and learn what it may be like to play in a proper concert. I'm already pondering which composer will inspire the next Cello Fantasy. Maybe Berg or *Wozzeck*? We'll see. I also need to complete the concerto I'm composing to the memory of Robert F Kennedy; it's scored for strings, piano, bass clarinet, timpani and three male voices singing quotes from the speeches of Robert Kennedy and of his favourite philosopher, Aeschylus.

**S:** *Please tell me about the books you've written for your students.*

**M:** The most recent book is *Heritage: Cello Etudes of Past Masters*, a compilation of 77 cello studies. I didn't want my students to have to carry around all these study books, so I decided to put them together in one volume! For example, Popper published 40 studies, but I use maybe 12 of them, so these are the ones I've selected for this book along with studies from Dupont, Grützmacher, Lee, Piatti, Dotzauer, plus transcriptions of Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Bach and others. I had really

hoped to collect material from female cellists such as Lisa Cristiani, Guilhermina Suggia, Raya Garbousova or Beatrice Harrison but sadly I was not able to find suitable material - not even from my own teacher, Maja Vogl. The pieces are all selected to help develop technique but also to work as concert encores. For the latter purpose I've made some slight alterations to the pieces. The book is called *Heritage* because I want my students to know who came before them.

Background and history are very important to me. This book is dedicated to the English cellist Leo Stern, who died in 1904. After the Foreword follows a big article about him, which includes newspaper clippings. Stern was born in Brighton to an English mother and German Jewish father. He had spectacular career, one of the greatest of all UK instrumentalists. He premiered the Dvorak Cello Concerto, he was a soloist with the leading orchestras of the world but died aged only 42. He could have been a major name in British music history but there are no recordings, nor a teaching legacy. Last year the RAM awarded me the title Leo Stern Professor of Cello, which means his name lives on.

Inside the covers of the book are 70 photographs of all the composers in the book and many more cellists whose history I list in the back of the book. Here I show players who ought to be remembered, including the three cellists who were lost on the Titanic. So many forgotten cellists had spectacular careers. William Willeke, for instance, moved from Germany to the USA and edited the Dvorak concerto for Schirmer. He was also a pianist, and he played the Dvorak cello concerto in the first half and the Brahms D minor piano concerto in the second half of a concert! The French cellist Lisa Cristiani had a sensational European debut and went to Russia to perform on her Strad but died of cholera in 1853 aged just 26. She could have lived to the turn of the century and been remembered as a great teacher.

Then there's *The Beauty of Scales for Cello*. In the past when I set students work, I would write their scales out and put in the fingerings, which was very time consuming - but that all changed with this book. I believe there's rather too much of the 19th century left in the way we teach. In the Foreword I quote from jazz pianist Mark Levine: 'The goal when practising scales is to de-programme yourself from years of root biased conditioning.' This means we can leave behind the concept that the C major scale must start and end on the C. It can start and end on the D. or an A or any other note belonging to the C major scale, nor does the scale need to start from its lowest note; a scale can just as well

start on the top note. If you're able to start a scale from any of its notes, you will end up with a fantastic flexibility, freed from stationary thinking. It's crucial that you bring your musicianship and your care to your scales and not separate them from your musical experience.

My other two books are a volume of orchestral extracts - *The Orchestral Cellist* - and then the *Essential Warm Up Routine for Cellists*. I believe that string players need to prepare for their day of practice just as a ballet dancer warms up on the bar

*S: I'm very struck by your historical focus.*

**M:** My father was much older than my mother - he was born in 1920 - so I sense a connection with the past through him. I feel a link with a composer like Puccini, for instance, who died when my father was 4. Or with Saint-Saëns who died in 1921. Or Ravel, Rachmaninov and Strauss. Yes, I like the fact that my father was around when these masters composed music.

Nowadays, I read history almost exclusively - not novels anymore. I think the more one knows about the past, the closer it gets to you. The 1600s don't have to be as far away as they sound; you can work your way back there easily. I do have an instinct to preserve and refresh the memory of people from the past. They deserve it. These days we can make recordings - I feel my own recordings are really for my boys, something they can listen to in the future - but in Leo Stern's case and many other men and women of the past, there is nothing remaining, sometimes not even an etude or a piece. You have to do something for them.

We need love in life, we need fun, empathy, warmth - but we also need knowledge. Having a wide knowledge of musicology makes being a musician more fun. If I were asked to play a Brahms sonata, I would probably suggest an alternative such as Robert Fuchs' E flat minor sonata, but a promoter may not be familiar with Fuchs, who was Brahms's friend and Korngold's, Sibelius', Mahler's, Schreker's and Hugo Wolf's composition teacher. For this reason, it can be difficult to motivate students to research and explore the wider repertoire: I would suggest for example that if you want to play Beethoven A major maybe you should look at Josef Wölfl's D minor, a stunning piece, a gem. But it's hard to get that across if they've never even heard of Wölfl.

Da Vinci said, 'Poor is the student that does not surpass the teacher' - which I think is a bit tough! I prefer my version: 'Poor is the teacher who does not empower the student to surpass him.'

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# SELECTED CELLOS & BOWS

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## B. S. FENDT CELLO c.1800

L.O.B: 29¼" (743mm) String length: 267⁄8" (682mm)

**£105,000**

This outstanding cello by Bernhard Simon Fendt Senior is in exceptionally good condition and has a rich tone and an even, quick response.

## THOMAS KENNEDY CELLO 1823

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

**£55,000**

This fully inscribed and labelled cello is remarkably original, with deeply crackled dark oil varnish. It has benefitted from some excellent internal work and plays beautifully.

## JOHN MORRISON CELLO c.1820

L.O.B: 29½" (740mm) String length: 26½" (675mm)

**£55,000**

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

## FINE CELLO, POSSIBLY FLEMISH c.1790

L.O.B: 30¼" (770mm) String Length 27½" (687mm)

**£48,000**

A very fine cello with an expansive, beautiful tone and well-preserved pale orange-gold varnish. This was the treasured property of a fine professional cellist and is a joy to play.

## JAMES W. BRIGGS CELLO 1899

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

**£45,000**

This immaculate, rich and rewarding cello was the first instrument of a fine professional player and features in *Violin Making in Scotland 1750-1950* by D. Rattray.

## THOMAS SMITH CELLO 1762

L.O.B: 29" (740mm) String length: 26½" (674mm)

**£36,000**

An appealing cello in very good condition with a powerful, colourful tone and a quick response. Letter of authenticity from Charles Beare.

## MITTENWALD CELLO c.1830

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

**£20,000**

An attractive Mittenwald cello in very good condition with a powerful treble and a rich bass.

## PRESTON SCHOOL CELLO c.1790

L.O.B: 29" (738mm) String length: 265⁄8" (676mm)

**£20,000**

After 10 years with a fine professional cellist, we are delighted to offer this cello for sale again, which delivers way beyond its humble pedigree and price.

## SMALL ¾ CELLO c.1780

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

**£8,500**

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

## SELECTED 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	£8,000
Roger Zabinski	82.1	S	£6,170
W. E. Hill & Sons (Bishop)	76.0	S	£6,000
A. R. Bultitude	80.8	G/T	£6,000
Steve Salchow	81.6	S	£5,860
Paul Sadka	80.2	S	£5,600
W.E.H.&S. (Hill)	82.0	S	£5,500
W.E.H.&S. (Scarbro)	77.5	S	£5,500
J. S. Finkel	83.0	G	£5,250
John Stagg	85.3	G	£5,000
H.&S. (Albert Leeson)	75.5	S	£5,000
Eric Lane	81.0	S	£4,880
Mark Yakoushkin	83.8	S	£4,500
Bernd Etzler	82.2	S	£4,000
Mark Drehmann	80.5	S	£4,000
Jacobus van der Geest	80.7	G	£3,900
Robert Pierce	80.5	S	£3,510
Andrew McGill	83.2	S	£3,250
Bernd Etzler	81.2	S	£3,200
Didier Claudel	82.5	S	£3,000
Klaus Grünke	80.7	S	£2,970
Christian Wanka	81.4	S	£2,940
H. R. Pfrezschner	83.0	S	£2,750
David Tempest	77.3	S	£2,500
M. Francisco	81.5	S	£1,250
Jackson Fornaciari	82.6	S	£1,250
Juliano Oliveira	81.3	N	£975
S. Trindade	79.6	N	£975
Luan Ruy	81.1	N	£975

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We welcome cellos for the Cello Exchange over £20,000. Please contact us for more details.

[www.aitchisoncellos.com](http://www.aitchisoncellos.com)