LONDON CELLO SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

24

NEWSLETTER
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Merk, of Course

• *Nancy Green*

When Felix Mendelssohn and his billiards buddy, renowned Viennese cello virtuoso Josef Merk, decided to collaborate on a set of bravura variations for cello and piano, little did they know that nearly two centuries later pianist R. Larry Todd (generally considered to be the world's foremost Mendelssohn scholar) and I would hatch our mad plan to resurrect this work (for which the cello part was lost) whilst sitting at a café suitably called the "Mad Hatter" on the campus of Duke University. While Mendelssohn's supposed concerto for cello (presumably drafted or written for the Italian virtuoso Alfredo Piatti) disappeared and was probably lost forever, we decided that we would try to help this set of variations come to life again and possibly avoid the same cruel fate of permanent oblivion.

Mendelssohn - Watercolour of Lucerne, Switzerland, (July 1847) , Art Resource, New York

All that is left today of the Mendelssohn/Merk Variations in A Major is a piano part, but not in the composer's own hand. These variations were a virtual mystery until a manuscript copy of the piano part surfaced recently in the Berlin *Deutsche Staatsbibliothek*. The authenticity of the work as an original composition is supported by Mendelssohn's letter of 13th August 1830 in which he speaks of his collaboration with Merk on a set of "brilliant variations," finished, according to his diary, two weeks later, on 13th September. We cellists are all very familiar with Chopin's *Introduction and Polonaise brillante*, opus 3, written in the same vein, a bravura showpiece intended for aristocratic salons; one wonders how much Mendelssohn may have been influenced by hearing the work of a composer Mendelssohn fondly nicknamed "Chopinetto." As it happened, Chopin had dedicated the piece to Josef Merk just prior to Merk's collaboration with Mendelssohn on the A major set of variations.

The Mendelssohn/Merk Variations are written in the style of 19th century salon music typical of the era—light and frothy like champagne, not particularly striving for depth or cosmic import. They are (except for a stormy passage in F-sharp minor in the last variation) amusing and light-hearted, but with considerable challenges for both instruments. The piece is fairly substantial in length, (thirteen minutes long), and consists of a theme and four variations with an extended finale, which begins after a short transition and with a theme that, although not strictly a Polonaise, is somewhat reminiscent of the Polonaise of Chopin's opus 3.

The friendship between Felix Mendelssohn and Josef Merk apparently began when Mendelssohn stopped for six weeks in Vienna on his way to Italy. Merk was the leading cellist in Vienna at the time, and the two developed a rapport. Larry Todd has written in the liner notes for our recording: "When Mendelssohn arrived in Vienna, he found Merk performing a poignant Adagio while puffing on a cigar, all the while endeavoring to keep the cigar lit. Merk had begun his musical studies as a violinist, but after a dog bite left him unable to raise his left arm, he took up the cello. According to Mendelssohn, Merk could dispense variations so that the windowpanes clattered and applauded." He must have been quite an impressive player.

Larry Todd

In the days following our first meeting, Larry sketched out a first draft of a possible cello part to fit with the existing piano score. His past experience in editing and completing several scores (including Mendelssohn's third piano concerto, in E minor, for Bärenreiter) and his understanding of Mendelssohn's musical mind and genius (he is the author of what is considered the definitive biography of Mendelssohn, *Mendelssohn, A Life in Music*), made him the ideal person for the task. I was amazed when, just a few days after our fateful meeting at the Mad Hatter café, he already presented me with a first draft of ideas. Over the next weeks we worked together, experimenting and revising details of the cello writing to see if it had the potential to bloom into something convincing.

This unlikely resurrection unfolded over a couple of months, an incredibly rewarding process that required us both to imagine what the actual Merk cello part may have been, as if it were still hanging in the ether, waiting to be plucked by whoever was willing (or foolish enough) to give it a try. In many of the later variations there are several strong clues about the cello part, especially in cases where melodic material appears first in the piano, followed by material obviously meant to accompany the cello, presumably when the piano handed the melody over to the cello. But finding the theme for this set of variations was problematic, because the piano part for the theme offered only a few simple chords, and no hints about what kind of theme Mendelssohn and Merk had devised for the cellist.

Larry was the mastermind of the cello part; my contribution was to tweak his ideas to make them as cellistic as possible, placing them in registers comfortable for the player, but also blending optimally with the piano register. Occasionally I offered something a little different, which we would give the test of time, continually polishing the ideas to create something that felt organic and convincing. Sometimes we went out on a limb only to return back to the original idea. We envisioned a work that could be enjoyed by as many cellists as possible, and perhaps even enter the standard repertoire for the instrument, much like Chopin's *Introduction and Polonaise brillante*. But if the writing became too unwieldy for the cellist, we would risk its rejection as an enjoyable piece for a great number of players.

Nancy Green

Trying to enter into Josef Merk's mind and musical imagination became somewhat more real after researching his études and other compositions. Merk's études use certain bowing patterns, trills and turns that gave an indication of what his strengths were as a cellist as well as his likely preferences in writing for the instrument.

Studying Merk's compositions (as well being familiar with 19th-century cello writing in general) helped in the task of choosing bowings and articulations. There were several passages where I tried every imaginable combination of slurs and separate notes, while Larry patiently repeated passages again and again. When first listening to our "finished" version, it might be hard for players and listeners to imagine how it felt for us, trying to make our way forward in the dark. I still don't know how Larry came up with many of his ideas, and if you hear the piano part alone there are several extended passages where the mind still flounders trying to imagine what originally existed for the cello.

At the time we recorded the Mendelssohn/Merk variations, (as a bonus CD to our original JRI Recordings disc of the complete cello works of Felix and his sister Fanny), it seemed to be my personal theme of the day to be working on projects that somehow felt like being lost in the dark and groping for something invisible. I had just finished a disc entitled "Jaguar Songs – 21st Century Cello" for the British label "Cello Classics" which required a lot of multi-tracking, a technique in which I was completely inexperienced. The multiple cello works on the disc had never been recorded (compositions by Venezuelan composer Paul Desenne) so, while working with the click track, layering on the different voices for trios and quartets of celli, I literally discovered the compositions as I recorded them. As the pieces emerged, I would often go back and re-record them with a better

understanding of the composition. I have the image of someone wandering around with a blindfold on, looking for the way forward.

Another project with its share of uncertainty involved two concertos I was recording for a company called Music Minus One: the Saint-Saëns opus 33 in A minor and Lalo Concerto in D minor. Unlike the Mendelssohn/Merk project, where the cello part had to be created, I had fully completed scores with which to work. However, my task was to record the cello solo part separately, to be put together later with an orchestra of sampled sounds (created by Stephen Ware, who resides in England). He uses actual sounds from real instruments and players and creates the entire orchestral part from scratch. I recorded the cello solo parts with great equipment in my own home and with an invisible orchestra that existed only in my head. I agreed to the project only after being assured that the orchestra would be made to follow whatever I did and not the other way around. The performances are uncanny because it's really hard to imagine that the orchestra and I couldn't hear each other and were made to mesh later. To create the tracks for the so-called "minus versions" they simply removed the solo cello line, and Stephen and I tweaked the orchestra so that the rubati were useful as a tool for other players.

Working on the Mendelssohn/Merk Variations with Larry Todd was a wonderful challenge. When I first listened to the piece as a whole in a practice recording, I actually couldn't help laughing as I reflected on how half of a composition had gradually shaped and transformed itself into a whole. Maybe it takes having experienced the project from the very beginning with no cello part, through all the stages, to be as rewarded as I was by the final product. Contributing to that, the nature of the piece up until the extended finale is extremely light-hearted and somehow befits the image of Felix and Josef playing billiards while Josef puffs on his cigar! This is not deep music, but has its place as pure virtuosic fun, and as a memory of nineteenth-century musical culture.

The CD recording, which includes the complete works for cello and piano by both Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn a well as the Mendelssohn/Merk Variations, is available from JRI Recording (jrirecordings.com) – there's a 10% discount for LCS members with the code LCS01.

Of Special Interest

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following letters were unsolicited and refer to the contributions by Susan Sheppard and Charles Medlam on Bach & Baroque bows, LCS Newsletter Issue no 23, Autumn 2015 / Of Special Interest. The contributors are Charles Medlam, cellist of the ensemble London Baroque and Jeffrey Solow, Professor of Cello at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and President of the Violoncello Society of New York.*

Jeffrey Solow - 10/10/14: I was surprised to see the statement by Charles Medlam that "It is as good as certain that J.S. Bach wrote the suites for himself to play on a *violoncello da spalla*." As far as I have heard or read, there is no evidence whatsoever that Bach played or owned such an instrument. That whole theory is merely the most tenuous conjecture even though it has been advanced fairly frequently in recent years.

Dimitry Badiarov discusses the instrument quite thoroughly in *"The Violoncello, Viola da Spalla and Viola Pomposa in Theory and Practice"* (The Galpin Society Journal, Volume LX) and notes that: "The list of composers with apparent links to the *da spalla* tradition is limited: Giovanni Battista Vitali, Domenico Gabrielli, Giuseppe Jacchini, Giovanni and Antonio Maria Bononcini, Antonio Caldara." Nor does Brent Wissick specifically associate the *violoncello da spalla* with Bach in his article, *"The Cello Music of Antonio Bononcini: Violone, Violoncello da Spalla, and the Cello 'Schools' of Bologna and Rome"* (The Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music, Volume 12, no. 1) stating:

> "The *violoncello da spalla* may have had its origins as a procession cello reinforcing vocal bass lines in sacred music. It may also have been useful for entertainments, dance ensembles, and other chamber music where mobility was required."

To verify that Bach himself played the suites on a *violoncello da spalla* one would have establish the instrument in Anhalt-Cöthen during the years 1717-23, the period that Bach was in residence and when it is as good as certain that (at least) Suites 1-4 were written. However, according to Spitzer and Zaslaw (*The Birth of the Orchestra*), Prince Leopold's court employed 3 violinists, 1 *viola da gamba* player (Christian Ferdinand Abel), 1 cellist (Christian Bernhard Linigke), 2 flautists, 1 oboist, 1 bassoonist, 2 trumpeters, 1 drummer, plus 3 other musicians: 2 Hofmusici and 1 Stadtpfeifer. In addition to these players, Bach could play violin, viola, and harpsichord and the prince could play violin, *gamba*, and harpsichord. The court instruments do not support the *da spalla*'s presence either; Charles Sanford Terry (*Bach's Orchestra*) lists 2 cellos by J. C. Hoffmann, dated 1715 and 1720, and one by Jakob Stainer. (Terry notes that one of these instruments might have been a 5-string cello and that after Bach left Cöthen the court owned a *violoncello piccolo* by Hoffmann dated 1731.) Not a *da spalla* player or a *violoncello da spalla* in sight in 1723! Wolff (*Bach: the Learned Musician*) says that Bach's: "Estate catalogue lists no fewer than eight harpsichords, one ped-

al harpsichord, two lute claviers, one spinet, two violins, a piccolo violin, three violas, a Bassetchen (viola pomposa), two cellos, a viola da gamba, and a lute." But that was in 1750 and has no bearing on his playing the Suites at the time he composed them.

I still hold to the view that the Suites were written for a professional cellist, not Bach, who played a cello held in the conventional manner - most likely Christian Bernhard Linigke (1673-1751). And my contention advanced in this publication in 2006, that his and other cellists' most likely bow hold for the suites (as played on the conventional cello during Bach's time) was underhand, gamba-style, is supported by Mark Smith's exhaustive study of early cello bow holds as represented in pictures *"The cello bow held the viol way; once common, but now almost forgotten,"* (Chelys The Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society, Volume 24.) "… There is such a strong preference shown in the pictures of non-French cellists for hand-under bow-holds before the year 1730 (101 under, compared to twenty-five over), that one can conclude that there were actually more non-French cellists using hand-under bow-holds than hand-over bow-holds before 1730."

Charles Medlam replies: The arguments against the Suites being for the conventional cello are as follows:

1. In the early eighteenth century the composer generally wrote music for himself to play
2. The lexicographers in Bach's immediate circle are quite clear that the violoncello is held on the arm and played like a violin (see below)
3. The instrumental idiom is quite unlike anything written for cello in Bach's environment
4. Parts for intermediate bass instruments (violoncello piccolo etc.) are habitually written in the violin part, suggesting that they are to be played on the arm by the violinist
5. We look in vain for the precocious virtuoso in provincial Saxony, who was at least a generation ahead of his nearest rivals

With reference to point 2 above, this is Bach's friend and cousin Walther describing the "violoncello". Mattheson agrees with this description: in Das Neu-EröffneteOrchestre Hamburg 1713 J.G.WaltherPreacepta der Musicalishen Composition Leipzig 1708 *Violoncello isteinItaliaenischeseinerVioladigambanichtungleiches Bass-Instrument, wird fast tractiretwieeine Violin, neml. eswirdmit der linckenHandetheilsgehalten, und die Griffeformiert, theilswirdesaberwegen der Schwere an des RockesKnopffgehänget .... Wirdgestimmetwieeine Viola* - The violoncello is an Italian instrument not unlike the viola da gamba, which is played almost like a violin. It is supported partly by the left hand, which stops the notes, and partly by being hung from a coat button because of its weight...it is tuned like the viola.

With reference to point 4:
Bach's cantata BWV 71 *"GottistmeinKönig"* was written for Mühlhausen (some 65k from Weimar) and performed there on February 4th. The cantata has a part for *"violoncello"*, the first so described, which is written in the first violin part (Bach's own part). The instrument was tuned g-d-a-e, must have been played with violin fingerings. We should perhaps now begin to assume that the *violoncello piccolo* is a "da spalla" instrument.
Contemporary drawings and engravings show famous "cellists" such as Bononcini and Lanzetti playing *violoncello da spalla*.

There is much more information about the Suites in my book, *Approaches to the Bach Cello Suites: A Handbook for Cellists*.

Jeffrey Solow - 11/10/14: Walther's description could just as well refer to a cello hung on a button but held vertically, as we know was often done. In that position, the left hand would still partly support the instrument as well as finger the notes. While there were perhaps players of the violoncello who played *da spalla* outside of Italy, almost all of its pictorial representations are Italian--the images from France and Germany are generally from much earlier than Bach's day and some of those pictured in Badiarov's paper look to me more like *lira da braccias* or *viola bastardas* than cellos. In 1620, Michael Praetorius calls the violoncello *"Bas-Geig de bracio"* and shows it with 5 strings, which from the name would imply its playing position to be on the arm in some fashion or other, but it also clearly has an endpin. Paintings and drawings of players and orchestras (such as they were) from Bach's period overwhelmingly show conventional cellos, not *da spalla* cellos, and the numerous 18th-century cellos that have come down to us from all makers and countries are overwhelmingly of the conventional sort with almost none appearing to be *violoncelli da spalla*.
C.P.E. Bach does not mention that J.S. Bach played any sort of cello, *da spalla* or conventional, nor does anyone else of that time that I have ever heard of. (Wolff does say that he "most likely" studied the cello.) The 5-string *violoncello piccolo* owned by the Cöthen court could possibly have been played *da spalla*, but it was made by Hoffmann in 1731, long after Bach wrote the suites and departed from Cöthen.

It is possible that Bach played violin in the performance of *"GottistmeinKönig"* since C.P.E. Bach states that he preferred to lead the orchestra in cantatas from the concertmaster position instead of from the harpsichord. However, KonradKüster states in his *Bach Handbuch* that: "In Mühlhausen he understood all his music making in terms of the organ which was his primary responsibility." Wolff discusses his Mühlhausen duties as organist, including the renovation of the organ at St. Blasius, with no mention of his playing violin (or violoncello) and, in fact, says that Bach's contract as organist did not specify among his duties any contact with choral or instrumental ensembles.

I agree that Bach, similar to other composers of the time, wrote mostly for himself, but not exclusively. In addition to the 6 Cello Suites (with which you would disagree), I count several other works for an instrument that he did not play and with which he would not have been involved in performance (there being no keyboard part): the "Partita" for solo flute, and the lute version of the 5th Cello Suite, plus perhaps the lute transcription of the E Major Partita for violin and a few other lute pieces, if one assumes they are really for the lute and not for the lute-harpsichord. I find it significant that the fair-copy autographs are missing for these works (excepting the lute version of the E Major Partita) while the autograph for the violin Sonatas & Partitas does exist. Is it not reasonable that Bach would have presented a fair copy of the Suites to Linigke (Christian or Carl, depending on the source), the cellist for whom I (and others) think he composed them, but retained his autograph for the Sonatas & Partitas since he himself played the violin? Similar logic explains why the extant autograph of the 5th Suite (whose watermarks place it between the fall of 1727 and the winter of 1731) appears to be a working copy containing many corrections; if the 5th Suite lute version was in fact sent off to its dedicatee, M. Schouster, Bach would have sent a clean fair copy and retained his working copy.

I respectfully remain unconvinced.

Charles Medlam - 12/10/14: Thanks for your exhaustive reply. We really do need Bach's phone number!

How do you tell a *da gamba* from a *da spalla* by looking at it (end of your first paragraph)? I don't think we can. And we can't assume that there were more than a very few of them, all possibly local to that small stretch of Saxony. Bach himself would only have needed two or three for the suites and cantatas.

The whole problem with all this is that the suites are now central to our identity as cellists, whereas from the other end of the telescope it's just one provincial Kapellmeister finding a way to play French bass viol suites on his instrument. (It's safe to assume that Ernst Christian Hesse showed him how it was done on the bass viol after his visits to Paris.)

Also from the other end of the telescope: who in provincial Saxony could possibly have played them on what we call a cello? We still find them difficult after all our Popper and Dvorak. Was Linigke really 30 or 40 years ahead of his nearest rival, better than anyone in Dresden, Amsterdam, Paris or London? If so, what was he doing in a rural backwater? Abel's cello pieces (to keep it in the family) from the 1780s are much easier. As you well know, a scale of Eb in the upper octave involves two shifts and a stretch. Is this really the technique of even a court cellist in 1715? Putting the Eb suite on a *da spalla* played with diatonic fingering solves all problems at a stroke, to say nothing of the easier keys. For me that's the nail in the coffin of the idea that there were written for what we call a cello.

As sad as it is for us cellists, I cannot escape the conclusion that the first repertoire for what **we** call a cello is probably Boccherini/Haydn. Surely all that unplayable stuff by Barrière, Lanzetti et al is for an instrument with diatonic fingering, likewise all those thoroughly unidiomatic Vivaldi concertos? We all manage to play them somehow, but all that shifting and stretching…?

Sorry, I am still convinced!

Cello Talk

The Beauty of Scales

An Interview with Mats Lidström by LCS Newsletter editor Amy Jolly

Introducing Mats Lidström, *a fabulous cellist and tutor at the Royal Academy of Music. Having helped with the editing of his new book The Essential Warm-up Routine for Cellists, I went to meet Mats to discover the inspiration behind the idea. Brace yourselves for his scale book, which has just been published. I'm sure there'll be readers at home thinking, "I've never even done a warm-up before practising!" So tell us Mats, what's the point?*

• Warming up is about concept and the ability to listen to what you produce as an instrumentalist. If you don't listen, you reduce your chances to improve your playing. The concept is about embracing what a proper warm-up does to your playing. For me, scales are not warm-up material. They're concertante material, music really, so something has to precede them. This is my concept about warming-up: beginning from the beginning, every day. That sounds harsh, but it's worth being properly warmed up, enjoying a left hand of perfect balance and strength, and a bow arm which is ready for any kind of contact with the string. I love it!

Did you come up with all of these exercises yourself or have they been collected over the years from teachers and colleagues?

• Some of them are by Bach and there's also a passage from Kabalevsky's *Concerto no. 2*. For the Kabelevsky, I've removed all the printed notes so that you play the entire passage on open strings. But the rest of the exercises are mine. Anything to fit the purpose: exercises of spiccato, sautillé, octaves. And vibrato. Gosh, that was difficult: to

notate vibrato on paper!
The exercises have indeed been collected over the years. It all started when I was heading back home from Washington D.C. after a disastrous audition for Rostropovich. It was a private audition arranged by a mutual friend. Rostropovich sat listening with his little dog in his lap. Afterwards he (and his dog) called me to his room where I was given advice on what to practise. Unfortunately, what I remember most clearly is the dog. Still, I knew I had to do some serious thinking and make some changes. So, I've warmed up on the cello since then.

I'm sure you don't go through the entire book every day, so tell us, which is the one exercise you never skip?
• Heavens no, I don't! That would give the day an uphill feeling! Well, when I'm out of shape, if I haven't practiced for a few days or come back from holiday, say, I WOULD have to do most of the exercises. But if I feel in good form (from having warmed up and kept my scales going) less time spent warming up is needed. You can find the answer to your question in the back of my book: a shortened version of my warm-up routine, about fifteen minutes worth. I would never skip, can't skip, rather, warming up on open strings, my vibrato and octaves. Octaves in the upper register sorts out the balance of the hand very effectively.

And you've just published a new scale book. What prompted you to write this?
• Many different things. I need it for my teaching and for myself. Most scale books on the market feel very dated, incomplete, and use fingerings based on fear rather than on brilliance.

There are so many scale books available, tell me why we should buy yours over all the others.
• Well, my book contains a lot of scales that haven't been addressed before, such as pizzicato, artificial harmonics, scales of unisons, 2nds, 4ths, 5ths, 7ths, 9ths and 10ths. Chapter 1 contains all the classical scales, but even here you will notice an expansion, a widening. I am especially pleased to include a pizzicato section. It is a desperately overlooked chapter of cello playing, and yet such a gorgeous one.

Many of our readers are amateur cellists, is it going to be useful to them as well?
• I'm sure it will. One may pick and choose, and use whatever feels right at the time, at any tempo one prefers. But like any scale book, the aim is perfection: to perfect something in one's playing. So, I guess, it will have to do with the ambition of the individual.

Our heart has the most wonderful partner in our hands – their gestures are the outward expression of what we feel inside.
—William Pleeth

Do you really still practice scales?!
• Can you imagine if you felt with your playing that scales were something of the past?! I remember asking Yo-Yo Ma once how he kept so much repertoire going: was he mentally practising on his long journeys, etc. He took a step towards me and almost whispered, "You know...I do my scales."

What's your favourite scale?
• F sharp melodic minor, three octaves.

Thanks Mats! You can pick up a copy of Mats' books at cellolid.com or spartanpress.co.uk – there's a 20% discount for LCS members until June.

Slippy Spikes?

• *Ruari Kenealy*

Hello, my name is Ruari Kenealy and I'm 14. I've been playing the cello for 6 years and started Saturdays at Junior Guildhall this year. When I was first asked to test and write about these ten spike holders, I was a little daunted: it seemed a bit overwhelming, but I accepted as I've had bad experiences with spike holders before and want to help anyone with the same problem.

I was given ten different endpin holders to try, consisting of: the 'Piatigorsky', 'Hemisphere', 'Smarty', 'Evolution', 'Evolution Plus' and the curiously dubbed 'The Black One.' These were all very generously lent to me by a company called CelloSticker. I also tried out 'Viva La Musica VivaCello Endpin Rest', 'Super Endpin', 'Cellino' and the frequently used Black Hole.

First, I tested the three wooden spike holders, all of which had the 'anti-slip gel pad', which worked well on all surfaces - carpet, wood and ceramic tiles. The only problem with the gel pad is that it quickly attracts hair and dirt. These pads can be easily removed and cleaned with soap and water, and they worked as good as new afterwards. The 'Piatigorsky' has a diameter of roughly 4cm, and is circular and flat. It comes in a very pleasing

golden pouch. It sticks to practically any surface, but due to its small size, it can make the cello feel unstable at times, as if I was going to flip it over with my spike, and though this didn't actually happen, it wasn't a great experience. The 'Hemisphere', so-called as it is in the shape of one, and has a diameter of around 5cm felt more stable initially but whilst I was playing, the spike forced it to flip towards me, possibly because of where the hole is positioned. The 'Smarty' was my favourite of the three, with a similar shape to the 'Piatigorsky', but with a diameter of 5cm. This worked efficiently on all surfaces and I had no trouble with it flipping over.

I also tried three acrylic endpin holders, all with a diameter of 6.5cm. The yellow-coloured 'Evolution Base' worked well on wood and carpets, but struggled a little on kitchen tiles. The 'Evolution Premium', coloured in orange, was a similar experience to the 'Evolution' but performed better on tiles. Thirdly, 'The Black One', which worked well on all the surfaces I used it on, but I disliked the hole where you place the spike, as the spike could slide around in it at times.

Finally I looked at the endpin holders sent from various other companies. First up was Dycem's Black Hole, which is a spike holder I've seen many cellists use. I found at first this worked well on most surfaces apart from carpet, where it felt unsteady. But after time it became worn and dirty, and stopped sticking as well even after washing it. The application of saliva does help it stick to wood and tiles when it is worn, but this is a bit repugnant, and not something I particularly enjoy. The Super Endpin from Wolf Music Products was an odd looking one: a rubber ball which screws to the end of the spike. Unfortunately it didn't work very well for me, and it not is one I would recommend. The Viva La Musica VivaCello Endpin Rest is a three-pointed tripod polycarbonate design. It works well on all surfaces and felt very stable and natural to use, as well as looking aesthetically pleasing, which is why I still use it as my primary endpin rest. The Cellino from Newtree is a spike holder that uses a cord wrapped around the chair's front legs, which again works well on all surfaces. It does take a while to set up though, which isn't ideal on stage.

So in conclusion, I would recommend all cellists to use the Smarty from CelloStickers. It's very aesthetically pleasing and very reliable on all surfaces. The Viva La Musica VivaCello Endpin Rest comes in a close second, due to its fantastic grip and its ease to carry and store. Thanks so much for reading and I hope this helps any cellist in need of a good spike holder!

Endpin Holder Name	How it worked on wood	How it worked on tiles	How it worked on carpet
Piatogorsky	Very well	Well, but it felt a little unstable	It worked but the cello felt most unstable here
Hemisphere	Worked well, flipped a few times	Very well	Not so good, flipped over occasionally
Smarty	Excellent	Also very good, no problems at all	Fantastic!
Evolution	It worked well	Slipped a few times	Worked very well
Evolution Plus	Very well	Good	Felt very stable, and worked well
The Black One	Good, but the spike felt unstable inside the endpin holder	Also good, but fell under the same problem	Worked well here, felt a little unstable
Vivacello	Very good, didn't slip at all	Also worked fantastically, no problems	Very good
Super Endpin	Not great, slipped a lot and was not stable	Slipped loads	Not great, also slipped a lot
Cellino	Very good	Slipped slide to slide rarely	Very good
Black hole	Stopped working well after a while	Worked fairly well throughout use	Didn't work very well at all

Members' News & Views

• From Peter Ball:
Reflections by Joseph Alexander is a short piece for solo cello, commissioned for me by my wife and brilliantly played at my 80th birthday party by John Sharp who was my cello teacher when I starting learning the cello at the age of 70.
Joseph is a young composer whom I met when the Kingston 3rd Age Orchestra (in which I play) commissioned and played his *An Eve Owl*. He saw enough of me in a brief meeting to put together *Reflections* catching different aspects of my character. It is very special for me and is also a stimulating piece in its own right.

• From Richard Holmes:
The initial run of eight handmade 'Holmes-Maslanka Starter Cello Bows' are now ready to try. The design can be viewed online at ipo.gov.uk reg. design no. 4036247. You could then upgrade to the 'Advanced Cello Bow' (4036248), which would be made by the wonderful luthier, Jerzy Maslanka, to your own particular requirements. He has so far made me two marvellous bows, each slightly different. Learning how to use them has been (and still is) an exciting adventure! So go on, step outside the box and get ahead of the crowd. Enquiries to holmesdrs@gmail.com. Don't delay, to avoid disappointment!

• From Kim Mackrell:
Chamber Cellos Course at La Maison Verte, Roujan (lamaisonverte.co.uk) 11th – 18th July 2015. £800.
A wonderful setting in Languedoc wine country for a week of musical luxury. With expert tutoring, home cooked food, single room accommodation and individual shiatsu treatment. A supportive environment in which to feel safe to take on challenges and enjoy some great music. The course is open to amateur cellists of Grade 6 to advanced level. Nearby are mountains, gorges, the sea, and local wine tasting.
Contact Kim: 07919030749
Website: chambercellos.co.uk

• And an update about the Brian Laurence cello, which you may remember from a few issues back :
The Brian Laurence cello has now found its home. Named after a mature student at Newark in the 1980s, who started making the cello there but never got far with it, the instrument - along with the rest of Brian's workshop - was donated to the Rowan Armour-Brown Memorial Trust after his death in 2012. Kai-Thomas Roth, the well-known maker, had been friendly with Brian at Newark and so decided to start on an ambitious project in collaboration with the Trust. He invited 3 outstanding current Newark students to join him in completing the cello. Their time together working intensively on this project was a valuable learning experience for them all and showed yet again how important the apprentice system is for passing on skills and knowledge. Stringers of London then undertook to display the cello and sell it on behalf of the Trust without charging commission. It has now found an owner – Hamish Jamieson (pictured).


Hamish Jamieson

Hamish lives in Brisbane and is currently working for his AmusA with the intention of going on to university to study music. He says of his new instrument: "I really like the overall warmth of the cello. It is unlike other cellos that I have played in that its sound fills the room with ease. The lower strings have a strong and deep tone that I love and I believe suits and betters my characteristics as a cellist."

So a new instrument is in the New World and will assist a young musician in achieving his goal, after having helped 3 young makers hone their skills, whilst at the same time providing funds with which the RAB Trust will continue its work of supporting talented students and maintaining the high standards of violin making and restoration in the UK. That certainly makes it a winner all round!